

# **The Self-Identity of the Young Transracially Adopted Child**

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that the work submitted to the University of Pretoria in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Philosophiae Doctor is my own work and has not at any time been submitted to this institution or any other institution.

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## Ethical Clearance

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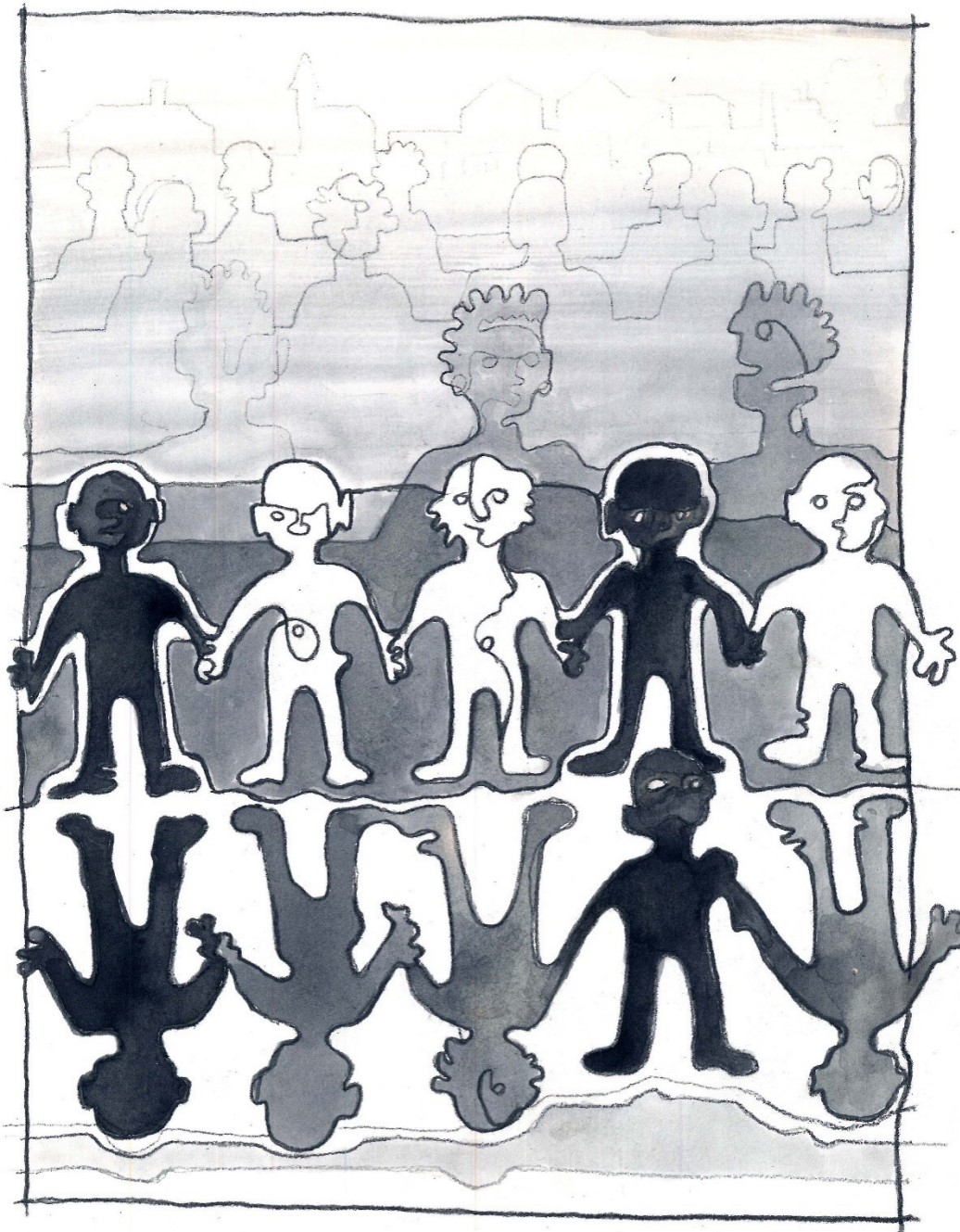
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This is for every child who does not belong to a family by right of birth.  
May your path cross with someone who loves you more than life itself.  
May you call them your family.  
May you always belong.

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## List of Abbreviations/Acronyms Used

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CBCL	Child Behaviour Checklist
DAP	Draw a Person Test
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
IPT	Identity process theory
KFD	Kinetic Family Drawing
NACSA	National Adoption Coalition of South Africa/Add-option
RACAP	Register of adoptable children and prospective adoptive parents
SIT	Social identity theory
TRA	Transracial Adoption/transracially adopted/transracial adoptee
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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## Abstract

Middle childhood is marked by latent physical and psychosocial growth, not least of which is the development of the personal and social self-identity. The presentation of this burgeoning self-identity of the six to ten year-old transracially adopted child was the focus of the current study. Of the 5,2 million vulnerable children in South Africa, more than 500 000 may benefit from adoption. This pressing welfare problem has forced Social Services to consider alternatives to traditional adoption, hence the escalation of transracial adoption. This is a universally contentious issue, possibly more so in South Africa, with its omnipresent racial tension following a long, well-documented history of forced segregation and racial disputes. While middle childhood has many normative identity developmental tasks, any adopted child must address the persistent need to belong while simultaneously dealing with intrinsic adoptive associated loss. Furthermore, transracially adopted children face these normative and adoption associated challenges in the presence of their observable physical differences from their family. The visible differences that distinguish their family unit deny the biological bond and evoke public scrutiny, and cultural dissent may compromise the building blocks that promote healthy identity development. Using multiple case studies (seven children) within a qualitative research design, the self-identity of the young school-going transracially adopted Black child was explored. Various sources of data were used, such as semi-structured interviews with the parents and teachers, who were requested to complete a child behaviour checklist. The parents also completed an additional biographical questionnaire and a Lickert-style response scale and were asked to describe their adoption journey with their child(ren). The children were psychometrically assessed by an independent psychologist using the draw-a-person test, the kinetic family drawing and scene building loosely based on the Von Staabs Sceno Test. The body of data generated from all the sources was subjected to Thematic analysis. The qualitative results were thematically analysed to identify themes that emerged for the two questions. Six themes emerged from the Thematic analysis and appear to be conducive to healthy self-identity development. The first two themes identified social strategies employed by the children, namely advanced communicative skills and a novel approach to group membership. These coping skills increased their accessibility to people and enhanced belonging and acceptance. The importance of having a dedicated space of their own and possessions to mark their permanence in the family emerged as a distinctive theme, and the importance of acceptance and the avoidance of rejection was confirmed. Intentional parenting was apparent throughout, and the need to school the children in an accommodating and sensitive environment to promote the wellbeing of the developing identity was noted. While this was not a comparative study, and the number of participants was small, the data revealed that transracially adopted (TRA) children growing up in a supportive system, i.e., a conducive home and school environment, have the opportunity to develop a healthy self-identity. The sensitive and purposeful environment established by the parents and school allows them



to learn appropriate coping and social strategies that facilitate access to significant interpersonal relationships, favourable group membership, and healthy self-esteem and worth. In the presence of the building blocks that nurture healthy psychosocial and identity development, the TRA child presents as “just a typical child”.

### **Key Concepts**

- Adoption
- Transracial adoption
- Personal identity
- Social identity
- Racial awareness
- Adoption identity
- Sense of belonging and acceptance
- Coping strategies
- Intentional parenting
- Conducive school environment

## Abstrak

Die middelkinderjare word gekenmerk deur 'n fase van latente groei, wat die ontwikkeling van die self-identiteit (wat uit die persoonlike en sosiale identiteit bestaan) insluit. Die aard van die self-identiteit van die ses- tot tien-jarige anderskleurige aangenome kind was die fokus van hierdie doktrale navorsing. Onder die meer as 5,2 miljoen kwesbare kinders in Suid Afrika is daar bykans 500 000 wat sou baat by aanneming. Dit het Maatskaplike Dienste genoop om ook van ander, minder tradisionele aannemingsopsies gebruik te maak, vandaar die toename in aannemings oor die kleurgrens heen. Sulke aannemings is wêreldwyd 'n omstrede sosiale kwessie, dalk te meer in Suid Afrika met sy lang geskiedenis van apartheid en rassespansing. Die latente ontwikkelingsfase behels uitdagende psigomotoriese en sosiale take wat suksesvol verrig moet word vir vordering na die volgende vlak. Benewens hierdie uitdagings moet enige aangenome kind ook die besef van aannemingsverwante verlies hanteer en voortgesette aanvaarding bewerkstellig. Die anderskleurige aangenome kind moet albei hierdie vlakke van ontwikkeling behartig asook die sigbare verskille van sy gesin. Hierdie waarneembare verskille dui op die afwesigheid van biologiese bande en lok openbare navrae en kulturele onenigheid uit, wat die boustene van 'n gesonde self-identiteit ondermyn. Die bedreiging van kontinuïteit, lewensbelang, vertroue, 'n gevoel van aanvaarding en selfwaarde sal die ontwikkeling van 'n gesonde self-identiteit belemmer. Die self-identiteit van die vroeë skoolgaande Swart aangenome kind is met behulp van 'n meervoudigegevallestudie (sewe kinders) nagevors en die data is kwalitatief verwerk. Verskeie databronne is benut. Semigestruktureerde onderhoude is met die ouers en onderwysers gevoer, en die ouers is versoek om die kontrolelyns van kindergedrag te voltooi. Die ouers is ook gevra om 'n biografiese vraelys, 'n Likert-tipe respons skaal en 'n kort uiteensetting van hulle aannemingspad te voltooi. Die kinders is deur 'n onafhanklike sielkundige psigometries geëvalueer met behulp van die menstekentoets, kinetiese gesinstekeninge en toneelbou wat losweg gebaseer is op die Von Staabs Sceno-toets. Die data uit alle bronne is tematies ontleed. Al ses temas, waar teenwoordig, bevorder skynbaar gesonde ontwikkeling van die selfidentiteit. Die eerste twee temas het sosiale vaardighede geïdentifiseer, naamlik uitstaande kommunikasievaardighede en 'n unieke benadering tot groepslidmaatskap. Beide hierdie hanteringsmeganismes bevorder sosiale toeganklikheid en vergroot aanvaardingsmoontlikhede. Die derde tema het die belang van besittings en 'n eie plek, wat aanleiding gee tot 'n gevoel van tuiswees en permanensie, geïdentifiseer, terwyl die belang van voortgesette aanvaarding en die vermyding van verwerping die fokus van die vierde tema was. Intensionele, doelgerigte ouerskap is deurgaans vasgestel, tesame met 'n skoolomgewing van aanvaarding, wat soos die vorige temas tot die ontwikkeling van 'n gesonde selfidentiteit van die anderskleurige aangenome kind bydra. Alhoewel hierdie nie 'n vergelykende studie was nie en die aantal kinders klein was, dui die data daarop dat in die teenwoordigheid van 'n sensitiewe ouer- en skoolstelsel die kind sinvolle en toepaslike hanteringsmeganismes kan ontwikkel wat goeie

interpersoonlike verhoudings en gunstige groepsverbondenheid bewerkstellig en 'n positiewe selfwaarde. Sodoende word 'n gesonde selfidentiteit geskep, en in die daaglikse lewe van die anderskleurige aangenome kind presenteer hy net soos 'n “tipiese kind”.

### **Sleutelbegrippe**

- Aanneming
- Anderskleurige aanneming
- Persoonlike identiteit
- Sosiale identiteit
- Ras bewustheid
- Aannemingsidentiteit
- Aanvaarding
- Hanteringsmeganismes
- Intensionele ouerskapstyl
- Bevordelike skool milieu vir identiteitsgroe

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1. Background

*“A self (identity) is not something static, tied up in a pretty parcel handed to the child, finished and complete. A self is always becoming” (Madeleine L’Engle, 1984).*

Living in a developing country, with the highest HIV infection and mortality rate in the world, many South African children are orphaned and in need of care (Luyt & Swartz, 2021; Etoori, Wringe, Kabudula, Renju, Rice, Gomez-Olive & Reniers, 2020; Warria & Gerrand, 2020; Van der Walt, 2018). According to Van der Walt (2018), there are 5,2 million abandoned and orphaned children living in South Africa, which exceeds the purported 3,6 million children deemed vulnerable in a special report published by UNICEF (2015). Both reports caution that this figure is an estimate, taking all forms of alternative placement of children into consideration.

Out of a total population of 58 775 022 (StatsSA, 2019), the 5,2 million abandoned and orphaned children constitute almost 10% of the country’s total population. According to Hall and Sambu (2018), 19,6 million children are under the age of 18 years, which statistically means that almost 35% of the general population consists of children. Although the statistics are from consecutive years, the implication remains that more than one out of four children under the age of 18 years in South Africa may be considered vulnerable or abandoned (Hall & Sambu, 2018; Van der Walt, 2018).

Ngconjana, Kwizera and Umejesi (2017) and Kgole (2008) offer several reasons for the high incidence of child vulnerability in South Africa. Kgole (2008) cites high unemployment figures with resulting socio-economic challenges as the foremost reason. Ngconjana *et al.* (2017) disagree, stating that the high mortality and morbidity rates of biological parents due to AIDS, poverty, crime, violence and fatal motor vehicle accidents result in one fifth of all children in South Africa being orphaned. Both sources agree that family disruptions and the dissolution of romantic relationships also cause children to lose their primary caregivers. Kgole (2008) claims that fear of reprisal for noncompliance with cultural practices and ancestral customs, such as an unplanned or incestuous pregnancy, may cause a mother to abandon her baby rather than lose her social acceptance or the prized guidance from her forefathers. Warria and Gerrand (2020) state that a number of parents choose to give their children up for adoption for undisclosed reasons. Since these are all ongoing and pervasive social issues in South Africa (Blackie, 2014), no decline in the incidence of vulnerable children can be foreseen in the near future.

Not all vulnerable, children in need of alternative care and orphaned children are available for adoption. Adoption is a legal process that allows for the permanent placement of a child with a non-biological adult, or adults, terminating the birth rights of the biological parent and transferring all parental rights and responsibilities to the adoptive parents (September 2008; Children's Act, No 38 of 2005). The adopted child is then regarded in all respects as being the child of the adoptive parents (NACSA, 2020).

Within this simple statement lies the crux of transracial adoption. Due to the permanent and very public visibility of the adoptive status in the absence of racial resemblance (Soares, Ralha, Barbosa-Ducharme & Palacio, 2019; Jackson, 2018), it is unlikely that the child may ever be regarded in *all* aspects as being the child of the adoptive parents. Unfortunately, the possible ramifications of this ubiquitous adoptive visibility on the developing self-identity of the young, Black transracially adopted child appears not to have been described in current South African literature, making the depth and scope of such an impact unclear.

Children become eligible for adoption when they meet one or more of the criteria stipulated in section 230(3) of the Children's Act, 2005 (Act 38 of 2005; September 2008). One such criterion is the absence of an indicated guardian or caregiver who is willing to take responsibility for the child. Children are also deemed adoptable if the whereabouts of the parents or caregivers cannot be established, even after investigation. Babies or children who have been abandoned with no manner of establishing their family or place of origin are also put up for adoption. Lastly, children who have been neglected, abused or are in urgent need of a permanent placement are also considered adoptable (Children's Act, No 38 of 2005). The stringent criteria reflect the challenging situations and loss that children must endure *prior* to being found adoptable, with all the possible implications for the development of their self-identity.

Same-race adoption is considered the preferred form of adoption in South Africa (Warria & Gerrand, 2020; Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012; Rochat, Mokomane & Mitchell, 2016; Children's Act, No 38 of 2005). However, when this is not a viable option and the survival of the child is at risk, transracial adoption (TRA) must be considered (Oliphant, 2014; Romanini, 2017; NACSA, 2020). White parents are increasingly being offered transracial adoption as an option due to the large number of adoptable Black<sup>1</sup> children and the dearth of prospective Black adoptive parents (Warria & Gerrand, 2020; Jackson, 2018; Oliphant,

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<sup>1</sup>Race in South Africa is determined according to the race of birth parent, self-classification and/or visible evaluation (Erasmus, 2017). For the purpose of this study, race is determined by birth parent if known, or by visible evaluation if no history of biological parent is available.

2014). The present qualitative, exploratory work was limited to early school-going Black South African<sup>2</sup> children who have been adopted by White South African parents.

TRA is not a new social phenomenon, and according to Barn (2013, 2014) and Marr (2017), TRA and international adoptions have taken place since World War II, when war orphans were adopted by residents of other countries in a humanitarian effort. However, TRA only became a legal possibility for White parents in South Africa in 1991 (Crowe, 1995), and it has increasingly become a recourse for many White parents. Current South African research in this field is limited and appears to focus mostly on TRA adolescents (Thomson, 2005; Tanga & Nyasha, 2017), the adoptive parents (Jackson, 2018; Romanini, 2017) and the legal issues surrounding TRA (Van der Walt, 2014; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012; Mosikatsana, 2003).

*All* young children leaving the security and familiarity of their homes to attend their first years of school are faced with unique challenges, tasks and demands to their developing self-identities, both personal and social (Rosnati & Ferrari, 2014). However, there is a possibility that the young school going TRA child may experience these challenges and demands in a different and more profound way, with more complex needs (Soares *et al.*, 2019; Snyder, 2017; 2012; Rosnati & Ferrari, 2014; Smit, 2002). These are the compounding and simultaneous challenges and demands of burgeoning racial awareness, adoption identity and indistinct group membership. These demands, tasks and challenges may impact on the development of their self-identity and change the way the young TRA child sees his or her place in the world. The current research attempted to gain some insight into the developing self-identity of such a young TRA child.

## 1.2. Purpose, Aim and Rationale of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the self-identity of six to eight young Black TRA children of school going age (six to ten years) who have to face the universal challenges of going to school (Erikson, 1963) and at the same time deal with racial awareness, adoptive identity, and loss and group memberships that are not clearly defined but come into play within the greater school community. This study used a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2012; Mouton, 2017) in order to collect rich and dimensional data, producing a thorough and descriptive exploration of young TRA children in South Africa (Cronjé, 2012). According to Creswell (2009), a qualitative approach is best when the

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<sup>2</sup> This does not refer to the country of origin, but where they live with their adoptive South African families. The country of origin is not always known in the case of an abandoned baby or child.

researcher wants to understand the phenomenon and its people by asking their opinions and assessing them within their environment, collecting sufficient data and understanding the context within which the phenomenon occurs, hence this approach for the current study.

South African TRAs appear to be unique for numerous social, demographic and historical reasons (Jackson, 2018; Romanini, 2017); it is therefore unlikely that international literature pertaining to TRA could be applied unconditionally to local TRA situations. These distinctive reasons are identified and discussed in depth in the following two chapters.

As previously stated, emerging research focuses on adolescent TRAs (Thomson, 2005), parenting skills and perceptions of adoptive parents (Jackson, 2018; Romanini, 2017; Finlay, 2006), and the legal process (Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Van der Walt, 2018; Mosikatsana, 2003; Kausi, 2014, Blackie, 2014). The present study aimed to contribute to the literature and understanding of the young, school going, Black TRA child with respect to his or her developing self-identity. More researched information regarding the TRA child is required to address the concerns of the adoptive parents, to ensure early detection of potential problems experienced by young TRA children, to design appropriate interventions and to provide guidelines for all role players, such as teachers and social workers.

Children of early school going age (six to ten years) need to interact with the greater community (Giuseppina, 2017; Erikson, 1963; Knight, 2017). They leave what is familiar and face the challenges of a relatively unfamiliar larger community without the constant presence, guidance and intervention of their parents. Giuseppina (2017) and Soares *et al.*, (2019) found that the conflicting demands of parents, school, and ethnic and racial group pressures had a significant impact on the self-identity development of a child who might, for reasons of race or gender (amongst others) face differentiation, discrimination and confusion.

In South Africa, Black TRA children who have lived with their White adoptive parents as a family and then commence their schooling, will be expected to interact within a different and larger community with many people that more closely resembles their families of origin. They are confronted with the visible dissimilarities from their adoptive parents while simultaneously being exposed to unfamiliar people who resemble them physically but differ from them in social aspects such as language and cultural practices. For this and other uniquely South African reasons, the study had to focus on South African conditions.

## 1.3. Research Questions

### 1.3.1. Primary Research Question

How does the self-identity<sup>3</sup> present itself in the early school going transracially adopted Black child?

### 1.3.2. Secondary Research Questions

The primary research question was refined by two subsequent exploratory questions:

1. How do the adoptive parents describe their engaged world as a TRA family?
2. How does the teacher of a young transracially adopted child describe the adoptees' self-identity?

The answers to these questions could allow the development of an initial base model in the second and third cycles of this research, ideally to be researched in more depth in subsequent research:

1. What are the individual predictors for a healthy self-identity in the early school going transracially adopted Black child?
2. What are the systemic predictors for a healthy self-identity in the early school going transracially adopted Black child?

## 1.4. Operational Definitions and Concept Clarification

To place information within an appropriate context and avoid possible misinterpretation, key definitions and significant concepts are clarified here as used in the current research. Other less significant definitions and concepts are explained as they occur.

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<sup>3</sup>Self-concept, often used interchangeably in literature with self-identity, is considered in the current work to be a reflexive capacity of a person, creating a situational memory structure of "me" (Leary & Tangney, eds., (2011) p.71). In research of children, self-concept is typically determined by closed-ended rating scales and evaluative descriptions of themselves as athletes, students, and so forth (Leary & Tangney, eds., 2011). This is distinctive from the exploratory and semi-structured assessment of the self-identity of TRA children, described in this research as the stable traits and characteristics, social relations, group membership and roles within a dynamic construct. As such, while self-concept and self-identity share commonalities, the term self-identity is considered best suited for this work.

### **1.4.1. Self-identity**

The working definition for self-identity for this study is derived from the concepts and postulates of Oyserman *et al.* (2009, 2017), Leary & Tangney (2011), Brown (2017), Corenblum (2014), Waterman (1988), Erikson (1963, 1968) and the sociologists Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1981), Breakwell (1986), and Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010, 2012). Self-identity is dynamic in nature and has both personal and social components. It may be considered to be a collection of mental constructs that are shaped by contexts, experiences and social situations, interaction with family, school, learners and teachers, the greater community and peer comparison. These social situations and contexts influence choice, behaviour and action.

The self-identity reflects the stable and committed characteristic traits, values, goals and beliefs, social relationships and group membership the child finds emotionally and socially satisfying. As awareness develops and relationships evolve, the self-identity may be sustained, developed, changed or transformed to achieve future success.

### **1.4.2. Early School Going Child**

The six- to ten-year-old school going child is in middle childhood (Finestone, 2014). While the literature often addresses identity issues during adolescence (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Thomson, 2005; Soares *et al.*, 2019), more recent literature (Corenblum, 2014; Brown, 2017; Carr, 2006) posits that middle childhood is the pivotal age for identity development. Children at this age are required to negotiate emotionally charged situations and increasingly complex social challenges without the involvement of their primary caregivers. Brown (2017) agrees with Corenblum (2014) that the self-identity, and especially the social identity of the early school going child is shaped by the family, the larger school environment, interaction with teachers, the greater community and comparisons with their peers. This developing identity makes constant social adjustments to establish meaningful social interactions and connections with all school environment participants (Brown, 2017). Social acceptance promotes a healthy self-identity, whereas discrimination, prejudice and lack of positive group membership inhibit the wellbeing of such an identity, with ensuing long-term implications (Hailey & Olson, 2013; Brown, 2017; Corenblum, 2014; Finestone, 2014). For these aforementioned reasons, a group of six- to ten-year-old school going transracially adopted Black children was selected.



### **1.4.3. Adoption**

Adoption, as stated by the South African Department of Social Development (DSD), "is the permanent placement of a child in the permanent care of a person who is not their biological parent or permanent guardian. Adoption<sup>4</sup> provides a permanent or stable family life for children who would otherwise be deprived of one" (Department of Social Development, n.d.).

### **1.4.4. Transracial Adoption**

According to Barn (2017), transracial adoption is the most visible form of adoption. In this study, using the concepts of Barn (2017), Rosnati and Ferrari (2014), Moos and Mwaba (2007) and Reitz and Watson (1992), transracial adoption is defined as the process whereby a child from one race is legally adopted by a non-biological parent or parents from another race, with the knowledge that this occurs in the presence of differing physical attributes, cultures, and ethnicity, and that a new kinship is formed containing these differences. In the current South African context, adoption of Black children by White parents is the most common, as there are more prospective White adoptive parents and more adoptable Black children (NACSA, 2020).

### **1.4.5. Race and Ethnicity**

Race and ethnicity are often used interchangeably in the literature (Du Plessis, 2014; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). Quintana (2006) and Quintana and Mahgoub (2016) view race as a social construct whereby people are classified by immutable genetic and biological characteristics. South African author Issac-Martins (2015) defines race as a social grouping based on genetic phenotyping. In this study, race is viewed as a grouping of people with similar biological and visible markers such as skin colour, facial features and hair texture that distinguish them from others. According to Issac-Martins (2015), and for the purpose of this study, ethnic groups share a history of less visible markers, such as language, religion and cultural practices.

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<sup>4</sup>Various forms of adoption exist in South Africa. Kinship/related adoption occurs when a child is adopted by a family member. In non-kinship adoption, there is no family relationship between the child and adoptive parents. Non-kinship adoption can be either foster adoption, where foster parents opt to adopt their fostered child, national adoption or international adoption. Non-kinship adoption can be either same-race or transracial adoption (Jackson, 2018: Child Care Act No 38 of 2005).

#### **1.4.6. Group**

Groups are social units that may vary in terms of size, composition, goals, norms and status (Levine, 2012). Groups are formed to address psychological, social belonging and supportive needs, share information and promote self-esteem (Levine, 2012; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Depending on the purpose of a group, the influence of and interdependence on the individual members may vary (Levine, 2012). In this study, a group is defined as two or more individuals that share a common social identification; their shared perception is that they are members of the same social category (Tajfel, 1981). When membership of a group is viewed as positive and conducive to self-esteem, the group is regarded as an ingroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

#### **1.4.7. Attachment**

Attachment refers to “the affectionate tie that one individual forms to another specific individual” (Ainsworth, 1969, p. 971). This bond is very specific and discriminating and is not age dependent. It is not necessarily linked to dependency and is enduring by nature. Healthy attachment forms between one individual and several significant others. In most cases the first attachment occurs between an infant and the primary caregiver, usually the mother (Bowlby, 1969). More recently, Berk (2013), in Harlow (2019), refers to attachment as the strong and affectionate ties that are formed by familiar people that allow for joyous and pleasurable experiences. Attachment also allows for mutual support in times of stress between the two attached parties. In infants, according to Berk (2013), attachment occurs after the first six months of life.

#### **1.4.8. Epigenetic Principle**

The term epigenetic is a neologism derived from epigenesis (embryonic development) and genetics (Peedicayil, 2012). The epigenetic principle is central to understanding Erikson’s work on psychosocial development. He believed that psychosocial development is a lifelong process and that individual aspects of development proceed according to a predetermined timetable and sequence. However, although the stages and order are predetermined, their outcomes are not (Pittman, Keiley, Kerpelman & Vaughn, 2011). Failure to achieve the set developmental tasks or resolution of conflicts of a specific stage would make the success of *all* subsequent development phases more difficult and incomplete. This failure would be reflected throughout the individual’s life as social, emotional, cognitive or even physical impairment, according to Sadock, Sadock and Kaplan (2009). Erikson

(1963, p. 65), referred to the epigenetic principle as the “ground plan” from which the identity and personality of the individual grow. Therefore, in this research, the earlier social and individual developmental stages of the early school going child are included and considered relevant. It also stands to reason that disrupted growth in self-identity during middle childhood would adversely affect subsequent adolescence and adulthood.

#### **1.4.9. Projective Techniques**

Terre Blanche (2013) uses concepts of Rabin (1981) to formulate a definition of a projective technique. This technique uses a stimulus situation, such as drawing a person or role playing, to obtain information from a child or person that he or she cannot reveal verbally. Terre Blanche (2013) states that three elements constitute a thorough projective technique. Firstly, the instruction must be ambiguous, and the child or respondent must be free and unguided in his or her chosen response. Secondly, the exact way in which the data will be used must not be made known to the child or respondent, and the data must be of rich and varying quantity. Finally, the assessor must use a holistic-ideographic analytical approach. Projective techniques are employed as data collection tools for the TRA children because of the non-threatening nature of the approach, which is essential for research in a vulnerable or young population (Aldridge, 2014) and to circumvent differences in verbal and vocabulary skills.

### **1.5. Preliminary Literature Review**

According to Cronjé (2012), a research question demanding a yes/ no answer is objective and stems from a positivist paradigm. If, on the other hand, the outcome of the research results in a picture, it elicits the question “What is the composition?” (Cronjé, 2012, para 3) and falls within the anti-positivist, social constructivist and interpretivist paradigm..

In light of my long personal and professional involvement with TRA in South Africa, as well as the proposed research participants living within a specific social phenomenon, a research approach that acknowledges and utilises such subjectivity had to be considered and applied. This resulted in a qualitative approach with the perspectives of social constructivism and interpretivism (Turner, 2018; Sefotho, 2018). Such an approach, while allowing subjectivity to contribute to the data collection and analysis process, demands an extensive literature review to place the research within a specified social context (Sefotho, 2018; Creswell, 2012).

Similarly, Turner (2018) posits that a comprehensive literature review is a critical precondition for thorough research. The literature review sets the context of the study, demarcates the study limits, justifies the need for the research, provides new perspectives and identifies shortfalls within the current literature.

Cooper (2003) and Turner (2018) advise using the taxonomy of six categories (*focus, goal, coverage, perspective, organisation, audience*) to present a literature review in research. I have implemented their arrangement in this work.

The *focus* of the literature, found in the next two chapters, is the presentation of the self-identity of the young Black TRA child in South Africa. In exploring this psychological entity within a social phenomenon, three significant components are addressed, namely race, adoption and the developmental theories of self- and social identity.

In the interest of presenting *organised work*, the literature is divided into chapters addressing specific content. International literature and research is included, together with South African literature pertaining to TRA, but specific efforts were made to place TRA within a South African context throughout the work. A synoptic table of each chapter precedes the body of the chapter.

An effort was made to review a comprehensive corpus of seminal works by developmental theorists, as well as current research and findings pertaining to this subject. Turner (2018, p. 114) categorises this as “*near-exhaustive coverage with selective citation*”. However, the literature review revealed a scarcity of observations pertaining to young TRA children (six- to ten-year-old) in South Africa. This justified the *goal* of this research, namely, to collect local information, compare such information with international findings and identify any issues that are unique to a South African situation or in conflict with international research (Cooper, 2003; Turner, 2018).

Chapter 2 deals specifically with race and adoption as well as the South African context of race and transracial adoption. Chapter 3 discusses the expected development of the six- to ten-year-old child. Included is a conceptual framework of identity development, as proposed by the individual theorists Bowlby, Ainsworth, Bell and Erikson as well as the social theorists Tajfel, Turner and Breakwell.

Lastly, as regards to Turner’s taxonomy (2018), the *proposed audience* remains diverse. Although this is an academic piece, it is hoped that the findings would be discussed in such a manner that all people concerned with TRA may benefit from it. Increased knowledge of this topic could serve as a guideline for teachers and parents to deal with possible issues regarding the self-identity of the early school going Black TRA child, enabling early identification and timeous and appropriate intervention. In the absence of specific issues, TRA role players would be able to make more informed decisions

regarding the adoption of a race different from their own. See Table 1.1 for a comprehensive study specific tabulation.

**TABLE 1.1**

**COMPONENTS OF THE LITERATURE STUDY FOR THE PRESENT RESEARCH**

*Note.* Adapted From Turner, 2018

Components of the literature review	Applicability to the present research
<b>Context of the study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Six- to ten-year-old Black TRA children in South Africa adopted by White parents.</li> <li>•Unique setting owing to inverse demographics (minority group adopting within majority race – unlike other countries such as USA and UK (Barn, 2014).</li> <li>•Occurring within a developing country.</li> <li>•Long history of enforced racial segregation in South Africa.</li> <li>•Now creating intimate family bond.</li> <li>•Areas covered in literature study – race, adoption, developmental theories and the uniqueness of South African racial and adoptive history, as well as current social situation.</li> </ul>
<b>Study limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Only one aspect researched – the self-identity of the TRA child – to ensure rich and detailed information rather than broad overview.</li> <li>•No quantitative data collected – all information gathered from 8 TRA children and their families in case study setting (a qualitative method).</li> <li>•Limited to children in urban setting (for logistical reasons).</li> <li>•Only children included who have no contact with biological parents.</li> <li>•Excludes alternative family structures such as single adoptive parents, mixed-race parents and same-sex parents.</li> <li>•Families experiencing problems could opt to not participate, skewing the findings and limiting diversity.</li> </ul>
<b>Need for research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Scarcity of universal information regarding adopted children in middle age group (six to ten years old).</li> <li>•Current available research focuses mainly on adolescents and legal aspects of TRA.</li> <li>•Applicability of literature published in First World countries to South African context is limited, as indicated in study context.</li> <li>•Middle childhood represents the formative years for adult self-identity (Erikson, 1963, 1968).</li> </ul>
<b>New perspectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Information on children in middle childhood: paucity of current literature.</li> <li>•Focus on self-identity – an essential, formative block in the building of an adult personality.</li> <li>•May reveal problem areas and indicate early intervention options and appropriate guidelines for therapeutic mediation.</li> </ul>
<b>Shortfall in current literature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The study will supplement the current literature on transracial adoption, specifically in South Africa, where this is becoming the norm rather than the exception (NACSA, 2020).</li> </ul>

## **1.6. Methodology and procedures**

### **1.6.1. *Meta-Theoretical Paradigm***

The human nature of this social phenomenon of TRA necessitated the paradigmatic assumptions of the social constructivist/interpretivist approach. With this approach, information and insight was gained from within the reality of the children, parents and teachers involved in TRA in a very visible and integral way, their interpretation of such an engagement, as well as my involvement in and experience of the subject (Creswell, 2009; Gaus, 2017).

### **1.6.2. *Research Design***

The research design selected was the collective/multiple case studies of seven purposefully selected TRA children and their families. All were voluntary participants. They were included in the research through a process that protected their confidentiality and their right to decline or withdraw at any time. The process of selection, inclusion and exclusion criteria, obtaining informed consent and data collection is described in detail in Chapter 4. According to Stake (2006), Yin (2014) and Creswell (2012), case studies are best suited for investigating a shared and contemporary phenomenon within a real-world context, which makes it particularly suitable for studying TRA.

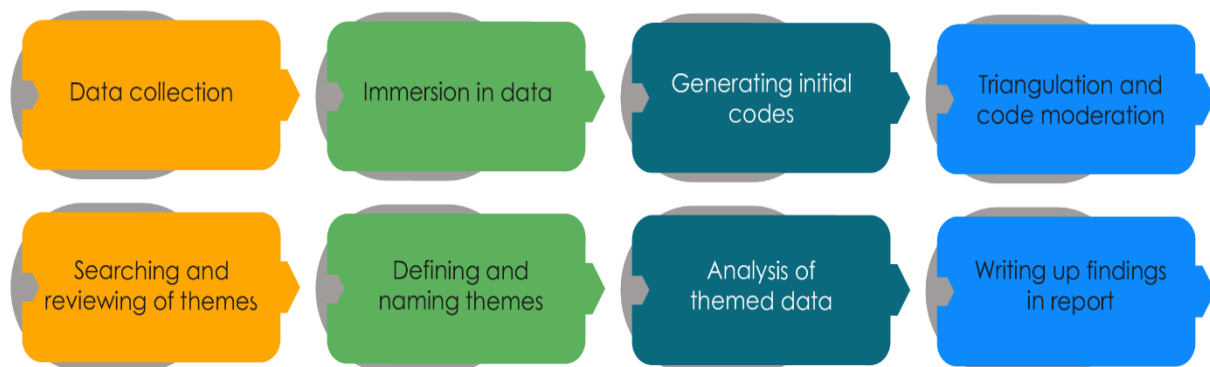
### **1.6.3. *Data Collection***

In compliance with the requirements of a multiple case study approach (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2012), data collection involved multiple sources of information. The parents, children and teachers all contributed to the body of data. Furthermore, various data collection tools were used. Teachers and parents were interviewed and requested to complete questionnaires. The children were assessed by an independent psychologist with the use of three projective techniques, namely the draw-a-person test, the kinetic family drawing and a scene building test reminiscent of the Von Staabs Sceno Test, albeit with more contemporary figures and stimuli. These adjustments were made according to the specifications and recommendations first described by Fliegner (1995) to update the Von Staabs and make it more current and applicable. All of the data collection tools are explained in Chapter 4 and the schedules and proforma questionnaires are attached as appendices at the end of this study.

The data collection measures described above resulted in triangulation. The form of triangulation employed here (multiple forms of measuring, more than one researcher and multiple theories posited in the literature) may be traced back to Fiske’s “multi-trait, multi-method matrix” (Ngulube & Ngulube, 2015, p. 4). This process allowed for divergent interpretations of similar TRA situations, while simultaneously providing for complementary and additional information and possible unique differences between families (Ngulube & Ngulube, 2015). This is especially salient when there is a dearth of literature to support the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002, 2018).

#### 1.6.4. *Data Analysis and Validation*

Since the subject was under-researched and predicted findings were absent (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013) the data was analysed thematically. This “sense-making” (Osbeck, 2014, p. 34) of collected data is set out in both schematic and descriptive forms and consisted of eight clearly demarcated steps and noted in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1**

*Process of Thematic analysis*

*Note.* Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006, Creswell, 2009; Jason & Glenwick, 2016

Various strategies were employed to ensure the quality of data. Since this was qualitative research, credibility, dependability and transferability were essential. To make confirmability possible, a thorough audit trail was established, and all data, findings and field notes (note to file) were stored according to prescribed research practices (Mouton, 2017). Irrespective of the manner or purpose of the research, researchers have an ethical responsibility towards their research participants (Mouton, 2017; Creswell, 2012; 2009). Ethical considerations were paramount in the planning and execution of

the study and are discussed at length in Chapter 4. A schematic representation of the research process is offered for clarity (Table 1.2)

**Table 1.2**  
*Schematic Representation of the Research Process*

Paradigmatic assumptions	
Philosophical paradigm	•Social constructivist/interpretivist paradigm
Methodological paradigm	•Qualitative design
Research design	
Collective/multiple case study	•Minimum of 6-8 purposefully selected TRA children and their families
Data collection strategies/source	
Demographic information and parental questionnaire	•Completed independently and collected from parents
Semi-structured and recorded interview	•Conducted with the parents
Child behaviour checklist	•Completed by teacher and/or parents as a couple
Semi-structured and recorded interview	•Conducted with the teacher
Projective techniques – DAP, KFD and scene building test-based on Von Staabs Sceno test	•Completed by the child and assessed by independent child psychologist <sup>5</sup>
Researchers' diary and field note/note to files	•Completed by researcher <sup>6</sup>
Data analysis strategies	
Triangulation	•Triangulation of measures, researchers and theory
Qualitative data analysis	•Thematic analysis

<sup>5</sup>Although a clinical psychologist by training, I decided to enlist the assistance of an independent psychologist for the assessment of the participating children to promote data quality and verification

<sup>6</sup>See addendum H for an example of a note to file/field note



## 1.7. Chapter outline

### 1.7.1. *Chapter 1. Introduction to the Study*

Chapter 1 provides definitions and background on the phenomenon of transracial adoption in South Africa. The overwhelming social problem of adoptable children in South Africa, the implied potential of TRA and the unique demographics of TRA in South Africa are best reflected by assigning a numerical and statistical value. The aim, purpose and goal of the study are set out in detail and the five research questions are expounded. Operational definitions and key concepts are included and the utilisation of certain data collecting tools is justified. The approach to the literature study is described in some detail. The research method and processes are explained briefly.

### 1.7.2. *Chapter 2. Literature Review: Race and Adoption*

The delineating terms of race and adoption in the study of TRA demand a comprehensive literature outline, separate from the literature review describing the development of self-identity in a conceptual framework. However, to better understand TRA in South Africa, these two pivotal subjects are placed within a local context. The social constraints, deterrents (both historical and implied), as well as possible ramifications of TRA are noted.

Secondly, Chapter 2 explores race as an entity, the development and understanding of race in a young child and the social and personal implications of race for an early school going child. Burgeoning attitudes and the modelling of the self-identity by these attitudes are described. There is also a discussion on the inherent importance and the role of race in group membership. Finally, there is a discussion on race and how it pertains to the young school going TRA child within the South African context<sup>7</sup>.

The third part of chapter 2 addresses adoption and TRA. In order to appreciate the long and profound process of adoption, a brief history of both past and current adoptive practices, as well as adoption in South Africa is provided. The importance of adoption and the implied loss, even though a new family is gained, is discussed at length. The development of an adoptive identity is also dealt with in this chapter. Grotevant and Lo (2017) provide a clear six-dimensional adoptive model that describes

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<sup>7</sup>Critical race theory (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017) is currently a highly publicised field pertaining to race and race awareness. It has, however, been excluded from this research as a theory, as much of it has political and international origins that are not applicable to South Africa, although the foreign findings may be applicable to certain TRA scenarios.

this identity development concisely. In conclusion, South African TRA, the early school going child and the social construction thereof are discussed.

### ***1.7.3. Chapter 3. A Conceptual framework of Self-identity Development***

Firstly, Chapter 3 deals with the expected development of the child aged between six to ten years old. Following the description, the chapter deals with well-documented psychosocial developmental theories concerned with identity formation and factors influencing that development. The self-identity in the current research is considered to consist of both a personal and social identity, and the developmental theories have been selected to reflect both components. As regards personal identity development, the seminal works of Bowlby (1969), Ainsworth (1969, 1979) on Attachment theory and Erikson (1963, 1968) on Psychosocial identity development theory are included. The Social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner (1979), Turner (1981, 1982) and Nesdale (2005, 2007) and Breakwell's (1986) and Jaspal's (2010, 2015) Identity process theory elaborate on the development of the social identity. Again, attempts have been made to link international findings to local findings and to highlight discrepancies and situations unique to a South African context.

### ***1.7.4. Chapter 4. Research Design and Methodology***

Chapter 4 sets out the research design and methodology referred to above, but in much more detail. The meta-theoretical and theoretical approaches are expounded. The processes of purposive sampling, the inclusion and exclusion criteria and data collection are explained. Data collection tools are described broadly, with reference to their applicability to and suitability for South African situations. Data analysis is set out using the processes posited by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) and Jason and Glenwick (2016). Steps to ensure data validation and ensure an auditable data trail are described. The anticipated limitations and ethical considerations are noted and described where pertinent.

### ***1.7.5. Chapter 5. Data Presentation and Analysis: Single TRA Child Family***

Chapter 5 presents the data collected from a single TRA child in middle childhood. Using the entire body of data obtained from the child, the parents, the teachers, the psychometric assessment and the completed questionnaires, initial coding is created to assist with the identification of emergent themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

### **1.7.6. Chapter 6. Data Presentation and Analysis – Families with Multiple TRA children**

The data of two families with more than one TRA child between six and ten years old is presented in Chapter 6. While the data of each child is managed individually as in Chapter 5, there is also some scope for intra-familial comparisons. As before, the entire body of data is used to create the initial coding for each child.

### **1.7.7. Chapter 7. Data Presentation and Discussion**

Using the initial codes generated from the body of data, main themes with their contributory subthemes are discussed in detail. Efforts are made to link the themes to existing data in the literature study presented in Chapters 2 and 3. In the event of a hitherto undescribed theme or finding, new information augmenting the understanding of such a finding is sought to offer a possible explanation.

## **1.8. Specific Considerations**

Although the adoptive process requires screening to eliminate psychopathology prior to adoption, there is usually no follow-up process after placement, since it is not legally required (Children's Act, 2005). In the event of a heinous discovery of hitherto undetected psychopathology by the child psychologist during her assessment of the child, a list of professional therapists willing to see the participants at their own expense was obtained. Reference to this possibility was made in the comprehensive participant information leaflet<sup>8</sup> received by the concerned parties prior to signing for informed consent.

## **1.9. Conclusion of Chapter**

Chapter 1 introduces the serious social problem of vulnerable children in need of care in South Africa, noting TRA as one of the possible remedial interventions. Operational concepts, the research questions that initiated the study, the research design that guided the study, and a preliminary literature research, together with the chapter outline, are described briefly to provide a structure to the body of work. Chapter 2 addresses race and adoption within a transracial adoptive context.

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<sup>8</sup>Please see participant information leaflet appended in Addendum B.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review: Race and Adoption

<b><u>BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONTENT-CHAPTER 2</u></b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
<b>TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION IN SOUTH AFRICA</b>	
<b>VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Black adoptable children, White adoptive parents</li> <li>•Scarcity of Black adoptive parents</li> <li>•International TRA versus South African TRA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Minority versus majority – S.A. demographics</li> <li>•The South African history of apartheid</li> <li>•Conclusion</li> </ul>
<b>RACE AND SELF-IDENTITY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race and ethnicity</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing racial awareness in the young child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrating affective and perceptual understanding of race and ethnicity</li> <li>• Literal understanding of ethnicity and race</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of racial preferences and attitudes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within the Social identity development theory</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race and the early school going Black TRA child in South Africa</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption and self-identity</li> </ul>	
<b>ADOPTION AND SELF-IDENTITY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to adoption</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Transracial) adoption law in South Africa</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption and the concept of loss</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of a “real” family</li> <li>• Loss of the sense of belonging</li> <li>• Forced social disclosure and communication about adoption</li> <li>• Cultural and ethnic loss</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>
<b>THE ADOPTIVE IDENTITY MODEL</b>	
<b>ADOPTION AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN TRA CHILD<sup>9</sup></b>	

<sup>9</sup>The following chapters commence with a short overview/outlay of the chapter content.in tabulated list form to enhance clarity

## 2.1. Introduction

To paraphrase the words of Raible (2005), two powerful constitutive discourses arise within the phenomenon of transracial adoption, namely race and adoption. I am of the opinion that the current study emphasises the potentially emotive and controversial aspects of race and adoption in TRA by placing it within the South African context, a country with a pervasive racial awareness and long history of racial segregation, racial violence and tension (Kausi, 2014; Seedat, 2015).

A theoretical and conceptual overview of the development of self-identity in the young TRA Black school going child is provided in the next chapter. However, to better understand the ramifications of transracial adoption in South Africa, the psychosocial self-identity development theories notwithstanding, the two socially contentious subjects of race and adoption demand a separate and comprehensive description and discussion. Their potential bearing on a TRA child must be reckoned with when examining the self-identity of such a child. In order to do this, a contextual understanding of TRA in South Africa is required and is described in the following section.

## 2.2. Transracial Adoption in South Africa

*“It takes a village to raise a child” (source unknown)*

### 2.2.1. Vulnerable Children in South Africa

“Children are vulnerable members of society, and the state and its relevant authorities are required to recognise and protect their rights at all times” (Van der Walt, 2018, p.618). With over 5 million children in need of care, an immense social and financial burden is placed upon the appointed social services. To address and alleviate this burden, various strategies and interventions to ensure alternative care have been put in place on governmental and social levels (Warria & Gerrand, 2020; Van der Walt, 2018; Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012; Oliphant, 2014). In South Africa, such alternative care usually takes the form of a temporary or permanent placement (Van der Walt, 2018; Pretorius, Jacobs & Van Reenen, 2013).

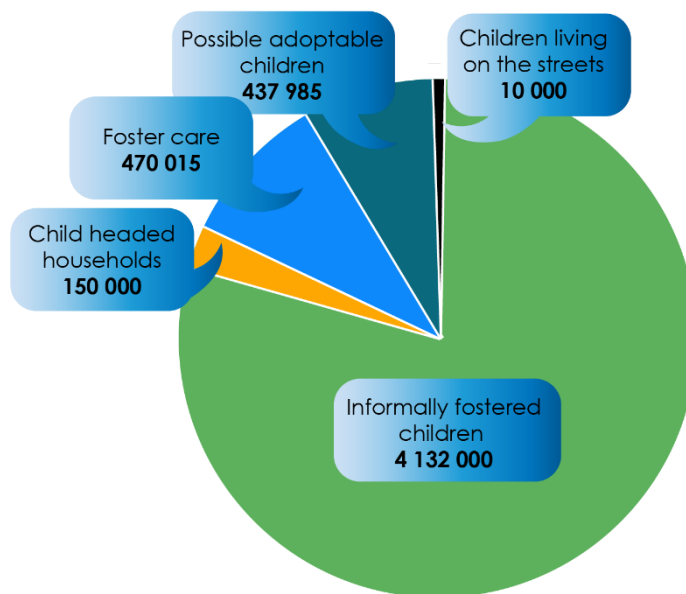
#### 2.2.1.1. Temporary Placement

Fostering, child-headed households or assisted independent living are forms of a more desirable temporary placement (Van der Walt, 2018; Pretorius *et al.*, 2013). Many vulnerable children find themselves in *formal* foster care, where authorities have placed the children through a legal process

(Pretorius *et al.*, 2013; Blackie, 2014). In 2016 a reported 470 015 children were registered for foster grants (Van der Walt, 2018).

Children are also *informally fostered* by family or friends who have volunteered to take care of the children in the absence of the biological parents. The exact figure of these informally placed children is not known, but Van der Walt (2018) and Hall and Sambu (2018) estimate that they total 4 132 000. Approximately 150 000 children are living in 54 192 *child-headed households* (Hall & Sambu, 2016; Pretorius *et al.*, 2013). A purported 10 000 children are *living on the streets* of South Africa (Van der Walt, 2018; Hall & Sambu, 2016; Pretorius *et al.*, 2013; Blackie, 2014).

These figures are informed estimates and are derived from various sources spanning at least four years, since all-encompassing and current statistics could not be found (Figure 2.1). Nevertheless, the implication is that more than 400 000 children are essentially unplaced and without a statutory allocation (Van der Walt, 2018). According to NACSA/Add-option (2020), there are approximately 500 000 children who could benefit from adoption.



**Figure 2.1**

*Schematic Approximation of Placement of 5.2 Million Vulnerable Children in South Africa*

*Note.* Derived from Van der Walt, 2018; Blackie, 2014; STATSSA 2019; NACSA, 2020; Pretorius *et al.*, 2013.

#### 2.2.1.2. Permanent placement

Permanent placement is achieved first through kinship or family adoption, secondly through national adoption by South African citizens of children born in South Africa or considered adoptable in South Africa, and thirdly through international adoption (Jackson, 2018; Van der Walt, 2018; Child

Care Act 38 of 2005). In keeping with the recommendations of the active African Charter (1997) concerning the rights and welfare of the child, South African policy prefers adoption to residential care and fostering. This policy is based on the premise that adoption is potentially a permanent solution for the child at risk (Warria & Gerrand, 2020; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012). However, in South Africa, the number of adoptable children far exceeds the number of prospective adoptive parents (Blackie, 2014; NACSA, 2020).

### **2.2.2. *Black Adoptable Children, White Adoptive Parents***

Adoption statistics released by the Department of Social Development (n.d.) for the periods 1 April to 31 March 2016, 2017 and 2018 to date, show that respectively 1165, 1349 and 1033 formal adoptions were finalised. A further breakdown as to the composition of these adoptions has not been provided by the Department of Social Development, and it is unclear how many of these adoptions are transracial or inter-familial.

To facilitate responsible and judicious adoptive matching, as stipulated by Section 232 of the Children's Act (38 of 2005), a national register of adoptable children and prospective adoptive parents (RACAP) was initiated in April 2010 by the National Department of Social Development (Adoption Coalition, n.d.). The notion was that it would ease the process of same-race adoption since all social workers could consult RACAP and ascertain whether an adoptable child of a specific race could be matched with a same-race prospective adoptive parent.

Table 2.1 below shows the RACAP figures for Gauteng<sup>10</sup> in October 2013 (Blackie, 2014) and July 2020 (DSD, 2020). While these RACAP listings are seven years apart, it is evident that the disproportion between adoptable children and prospective adoptive parents of the corresponding race remained unchanged. Children are only listed on RACAP for a period of sixty days. Failing same-race adoption matching, they are removed from the list and considered for TRA (Jackson, 2018; Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015). Children listed on RACAP have not been matched to any prospective parents and exclude those children adopted through privately arranged adoptions, family adoptions and foster care parents that opt to adopt the foster child in their care when possible.

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<sup>10</sup>Gauteng is one of nine provinces in South Africa, and also one of the most densely populated regions in South Africa.

**Table 2.1***RACAP for Gauteng 2013 and 2020*

**Note.** Parental figures are currently supplied as a column graph and not in absolute numbers, hence the indications > (more than) and < (less than) rather than a figure

Race	Year	Black	White	Indian	Mixed/ Coloured	Unspecified
Prospective adoptive parents	2013	14	190	43	0	0
	2020	<5	>1	<3	<4	0
Possible adoptive children	2013	398	3	0	9	8
	2020	520	0	1	74	0

From the tabulated figures in Table 2.1 the conclusion can be drawn that same-race matching is the exception rather than the rule. The skewed ratio between the race of prospective adoptive parents and potential adoptees is central to understanding that TRA forms a cornerstone of the South African Adoption Services in dealing with the overwhelming child welfare challenge. There are significantly more White than Black prospective adoptive parents, with disproportionately more Black babies available for adoption, a consistent trend (Blackie, 2014; Jackson, 2018; Warria & Gerrand, 2020). White parents will thus frequently be offered the option of transracial adoption.

The national spokesperson for the Department of Social Development, Lumka Oliphant, discussed the topics of race and adoption in a newspaper interview with Groundup journalist Ntongana (2014). Emphasising departmental policy that same-race adoption would always take preference, she noted in the interview that "...the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) stipulates that the child's social and cultural development, including the child's need to maintain a connection with his or her culture and tradition, must be taken into consideration" (Oliphant in Groundup, 2014).

However, Oliphant (2014) also indicated that parents of differing races could adopt a child once it was clear there were no prospective parents of the same race. Black adoptive parents would thus rarely adopt a White child, limiting this qualitative and exploratory TRA study to White adoptive parents with Black adopted children.

Oliphant (2014) noted in the interview:

"The challenge in this regard is that White babies available for adoption are very scarce in South Africa and the waiting list for White families wanting to adopt a White child is extremely long. Based on the information that White babies are not available for adoption, White prospective adoptive parents opt to adopt children irrespective of the race difference. The decision lies solely with the prospective parents."



According to NACSA (2020), very few Indian or White babies are available for adoption. It has become more socially acceptable for White and Indian women to keep their babies following a crisis pregnancy. The socio-economic reality of South Africa and the very high prevalence of HIV/Aids contributes to most orphaned and abandoned children being Black (NACSA, 2020; Van der Walt, 2018).

### **2.2.3. Scarcity of Black Adoptive Parents**

Although there has been a slight increase in the number of prospective Black adoptive parents, formal adoption remains an unpopular practice amongst the Black South Africans (Luyt & Schwartz, 2021; Vorster, 2018; Warria & Gerrand, 2020; Jackson, 2018; Blackie, 2014). There are many factors discouraging Black parents in South Africa from adopting Black children. Warria and Gerrand (2020), Gerrand and Nathane-Taulela (2015), Tanga and Kausi (2014) and Mokomane and Rochat (2012) postulate several reasons. They are mentioned briefly to display the deep-seated roots of the Black South African culture that determine their day-to-day interactions with other people of all races, including TRA children and their parents.

All these authors identify the Black cultural and ancestral belief system as the predominant barrier to adoption. Firstly, adoption is seen as severing the child's relationship with his or her family of origin and the family ancestors, resulting in serious consequences to the child's well-being and future lineage. A second barrier, which all the sources agree on, is the prospective parents' reluctance to be evaluated. They feel that their parental and caretaking abilities are being unreasonably scrutinised. Thirdly, there is the perception that considering adoption draws attention to undisclosed infertility (a cultural premium is attached to fertility). These factors are perceived as inhibitive factors (Gerrand, 2018; Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015; Tanga & Kausi, 2014; Rochat *et al.*, 2016; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012; Mosikatsana, 2003).

Considering that financial constraints may play a role, there have been adjustments in adoption fees, and prospective parents are billed according to a sliding scale as determined by their income. This has not, however, led to a significant increase in prospective Black adoptive parents (Jackson, 2018; Gerrand, 2018; Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012; Mosikatsana, 2003).

Gerrand (2018) has added another possible explanation for Black adoptive reluctance. She notes that Black people with a higher socio-economic status are afraid that they will be considered “coconuts”, a colloquial term used to describe Black people who occupy themselves with

predominantly White activities. Since more White people consider adoption, this would be a reason for being accused of being a “coconut”.

Perceptions of South Africans regarding the practice of TRA remain varied (Tanga & Nyasa, 2017). While many adults, both Black and White, support the notion that TRA may promote colour blindness and decrease racial segregation, the most voiced opposition is that of “cultural genocide” (Tanga & Nyasa, 2017, p. 233) or the theft of tribal culture. A significant amount of mainly older Black people feels the loss of traditional Black cultural ties will inhibit a positive racial identity and create social confusion, whereas White people reject this argument, stating that the wellbeing of the child and the placement of a child in a family rather than institutionalisation trumps cultural objections (Tanga & Nyasa, 2017; Snyder, 2012; 2017; Mosikatsana, 1997; 2003). It is interesting to note that younger Black and White people such as students exhibit a more positive and lenient approach to TRA (Kausi, 2014; Moos & Mwaba, 2007; Whatley, Jahangardi, Ross & Knox, 2003).

#### **2.2.4. *International TRA Versus South African TRA***

An extensive search for literature in other southern hemisphere countries with multiracial populations (such as Brazil and Argentina) for comparative purposes did not shed any light on TRA in those countries. According to Ramsay (2017) and Anderson (2014), TRA is not well received in first-world country Australia. Ramsay (2017) postulates that the long history of state-mandated forced child removal of Aboriginal children and the current tendency to remove the children of refugees from Africa discourage TRA. Anderson (2014), also discussing TRA in Australia, notes that 56 children were transracially adopted in 2011 and 45 in 2014, 80% of which were Asian. He states that this figure continues to decline. More recent statistics could not be found.

Barn (2012, 2013), Barn and Kirton (2012) and Marr (2011, 2017) have researched TRA extensively in the USA. They emphasise the fact that American TRA involves the placement of minority race Black children in majority race White adoptive families. This is opposed to South African TRA, where majority race Black children are placed with the minority race White families (NACSA, 2020).

As in South Africa, the USA authors found statistics pertaining to adoption difficult to validate and used various sources to collect the data. Marr (2017) states that the annual TRA adoption figure in the USA is estimated at approximately 23% of the total number of adoptions, with 8,7% being international TRA, mainly children from Asia. Domestic TRA is calculated at 14,3% and consists of Hispanic and Black adoptees (Marr, 2017). He found that in the case of domestic TRA, 84% of all adoptive parents are White, and that there are few incidents of Black adults adopting White or Hispanic

children. This supports his conclusion that the predominantly minority children of colour are adopted by the majority race White parents.

According to Barn (2012, 2013), international adoption of children by families in the USA (especially from Asian countries) has in the past been more frequent than domestic adoption, this is in contrast to adoption practices in South Africa. This bears out Marr's statement that "White adoptive parents in the United States prefer to transracially adopt internationally, as opposed to domestically" (Marr, 2017, p. 225). This may be due to the parents choosing children whose skin tones are more similar to their own (Barn, 2013; Marr, 2017).

Following the 1993 Multi-ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) promoting domestic rather than international TRA in the USA, there has been a gradual increase in domestic TRA. Barn (2013) states that the adoption of Hispanic children has doubled, while the adoption of Black children has increased by only 2% (Barn, 2013). Although TRA is sanctioned in South Africa, there is no law similar to MEPA to promote TRA, and, unlike the USA, TRA is seen, according to policy, as the less preferred option when compared with same-race adoption (Oliphant, 2014).

Section 17 of the Children's Act, 38 of 2005, together with The Hague Convention of May 1993 on intercountry adoptions, allows adoptive parents from Europe and the Scandinavian countries to adopt South African orphans (Child Care Act, 38 of 2005). According to ABBA Adoptions (n.d.), an adoption agency specialising in international adoptions of South African children, the converse is not true: South Africa is deemed to be a developing country, and internationally approved adoptions by South Africans of children from other countries appear to be very rare, if not completely absent.

#### ***2.2.5. Minority Versus Majority: South African Demographics***

When TRA occurs in South Africa, the White population group, which forms less than 10% of all South Africans, adopts children from the Black population group (which constitutes approximately 80% of the country's population, indicated in Table 2.2). The child is therefore raised within a racial and cultural milieu that represents the second smallest minority racial group of South Africa.

**Table 2.2***Racial Breakdown of South African Population, 2019**Note.* Adapted from <https://www.STATSSA.gov.za/publications>

Total population	58 775 022	% distribution of the total
Black	47 443 259	80,7
Coloured	5 176 750	8,8
White	4 652 006	7,9
Indian/Asian	1 503 007	2,6

The social community in which transracially adopted children interact as they reach school going age, moving outside of their immediate family, will mostly represent the majority racial group (StatsSA, 2019). The Black majority shares a racial genetic predisposition and physical resemblance with the young TRA adoptee, possibly evoking questions about his or her differences from both the Black and White race. He or she will be confronted with someone who looks like him or her, has the same physical attributes (e.g., hair texture and skin colour), but does not speak the same language or have similar cultural practices in a family setting (Snyder, 2017).

The young adoptee will also encounter interrogation by others about his or her family status, as TRA is a conspicuous form of adoption (Barn, 2017). Tanga and Nyasha (2017, p. 235) also refer to the concept of “modelling”, where TRA children may initially have the perception of Black people serving in a subservient role, such as a nanny or gardener or domestic worker, and then being confronted with powerful Black figures in the community, such as teachers, policemen and political leaders. The investigation of the effect, if any, of this contrary juxtaposition on the development of the self-identity as the child interacts in the larger society of South Africa has a place in this study.

### 2.2.6. *The South African History of Apartheid*

South Africa has a violent racial history, spanning many decades, which may play a role in TRA (Tanga & Nyasha, 2017). The long and well-documented history of apartheid<sup>11</sup> still influences the psyche of the South African people (Dalmage, 2018; Seedat, 2015; Rudolph, Sriprakash & Gerrard,

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<sup>11</sup>The National Party came into power in 1948 and instituted apartheid laws. The same party challenged these laws in 1991, with a full democratic election taking place in 1994. At least two to three generations were therefore directly impacted upon in this period spanning 46 years (Seedat, 2015).

2018), many of whom play a vital role in the daily interaction of the young adoptees. There are a number of reasons why the history of apartheid may impact on TRA.

The legislation of apartheid, which may be literally translated as “separateness”, decreed that people should be classified according to racial groups and then relocated in geographical regions of self-governed areas called homelands (Coullie, 2014; Renwick, 2015). This was based on the belief that different races could only coexist peacefully if they were separated (Renwick, 2015). Racial categorisation was often violently enforced (Dalmage, 2018).

White supremacy and White privilege resulted from this separateness and are still cited as a major cause of the social and political instability that continues to plague present-day South Africa (Dalmage, 2018; Renwick, 2015; Coullie, 2014; Atmore, 2013; Moos & Mwaba, 2007). “Oppressive systems such as apartheid, a form of internal colonialism, invaded and disrupted the oppressed(’s) psychological and collective identities, social and physical spaces, movement and patterns of attachment, eroding their time, agency, independence, and energies” (Seedat, 2015, p.23).

According to Dalmage (2018) and Fourie, Stein, Solms, Gobodo-Madikizela and Decety (2017), racism and inequalities remain extensive and pervasive in current South Africa, hindering the process of mutual trust and caring, limiting the sense of obligation across racial borders and inhibiting the reciprocity needed for true democracy. The historical disparity between races may still influence the approach to and acceptance of TRA in South Africa (Kausi, 2014). White people continue to be regarded as being in a position of power, and the adoption of Black babies may be perceived as another attempt at maintaining control or appropriation of what is not rightfully theirs (Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Kausi, 2014; Moos & Mwaba, 2007).

Separateness, for many years seen as desirable, has now made way for one of the most intimate forms of relationships, namely family. To this end, Dalmage (2018, p.410) states that interpersonal relationships are still complex, and “interracial couples and children do not yet have a place in the New South Africa but are forging new pathways that draw on both global and local understandings of race, culture, nationhood, and geographical location”.

According to Mokomane and Rochat (2012), Dalmage (2018) and Tanga and Nyasha (2017), the knowledge and history of apartheid change the perception and acceptance of TRA, a status that the young child must wear *visibly* throughout his or her interactions.

### **2.2.7. Conclusion: South African TRA**

The foregoing literature confirms that adoption is deemed preferable to foster care and institutionalisation in South Africa. The number of Black babies and children declared adoptable

through a lawful process significantly exceeds the availability of prospective Black adoptive parents. Simultaneously, the number of adoptable White children and babies is significantly less than that of the prospective White adoptive parents. Although same-race adoption is the desired outcome, the occurrence of TRA is increasing in South Africa, and research within this field is therefore imperative.

In the light of the documented reluctance of Black parents to adopt outside their extended families, several interventions should be implemented to encourage Black people to consider adoption. Addressing the Black adoptive barriers, thus potentially increasing the number of prospective Black adoptive parents, would increase the possibility of same-race adoption.

However, in the current absence of Black adoptive parents, TRA currently remains a viable option that warrants research to clear possible hurdles and implement suitable guidelines for dealing with the practice and people affected by TRA. There are many aspects demanding further investigation. A firm grasp of TRA within the South African context, a good understanding of both race and adoption, as well as their conjoined concept, are a prerequisite for this study.

### 2.3. Race and Self-identity

*“...the colour of our skin is an immediate signifier of similarity or difference and carries with it composite meanings around language, class, education, history and opportunity”*  
(Smith, Lobban & O’ Loughlin, 2013, p.38).

#### 2.3.1. Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are often used interchangeably and jointly in the literature (Chang, Feldman & Easley, 2017; Du Plessis, 2014; Quintana, 1998). Quintana (2006) and Quintana and Mahgoub (2016) view race as a social construct whereby people are classified by immutable genetic and biological characteristics, while ethnicity reflects social and anthropological characteristics (Quintana, 1998; 2006). Ross (2017) concurs, but states that in the current climate of political correctness, two schools of thought have arisen, race being *either* a social construct *or* genetic determination, i.e., an inclusive term. South African author Issac-Martins (2015) defines race as a social grouping based on genetic phenotyping. In this study, race is viewed as a grouping of people with similar biological and visible markers such as skin colour, facial features and hair texture that distinguish them from others.

According to Issac-Martins (2015), similarly understood for this study, ethnic groups share a history of less visible markers, such as language, religion and cultural practices. Phinney and Ong

(2007, p. 271) refer to ethnicity as a sense of “peoplehood” in a specific group, in a specific culture within a particular setting. Their work on ethnicity relies strongly on the Social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1981), which is considered relevant to this study and discussed at length in Chapter 3.

Jaspal and Cinnirella (2012) and Jaspal (2015) promote the possibility of change and re-evaluation in ethnic identity. They postulate that social history and culture generate and sustain certain patterns of ethnic identification within an individual at a certain time. In similar vein, Deaux (2018) and Rutland, Nesdale and Spears-Brown (2017) state that race and ethnicity have both a historical and contemporary force and usage. These authors posit that the understanding of race and ethnicity is based on the norms and practices of a specific society and communicated to children through multiple sources and in multiple ways (Rutland *et al.*, 2017). These ways take the form of verbal exchanges, observation of behaviour, interpersonal experiences, social regulations and patterns of resource distribution. Deaux (2018) posits that the understanding of race and ethnicity is internalised by the current population of that society. It is therefore open to change as the population within the society changes.

This thought-provoking statement renders a possible explanation, amongst many others, for the shift in racial and ethnic perceptions observed in South Africa since the formation of a new democracy in 1994. “Rainbow Nation” is a term of acknowledgement, initially used by Archbishop Tutu, of the embodiment of the many diverse races and ethnicities found in South Africa (Romanini, 2017; Modiri, 2011). Although not all signs of racialism have been eradicated (Modiri, 2011; Seedat, 2015) there has been a positive movement towards racial tolerance and inclusion of different races, a change profoundly beneficial to TRA.

### **2.3.2. *Developing Racial Awareness in the Young Child***

In 1940 and 1947, Clark and Clark (Quintana, 2007; Corenblum, 2014) found that Black American babies and young children exhibited a preference for white dolls to dolls with a dark complexion. This contentious finding sparked research of racial and ethnic awareness and development. Cross and Maldonado (1971) and Phinney (1989, 1992, 2000) contributed early work, still cited, on racial and ethnic development in America. Much of the later research in this field is based on a cognitive developmental perspective (Corenblum, 2014), in which children change their perspective on race as their cognitive skills develop.

A criticism of the research of racial development and awareness that is relevant to the current work is that much of it is conducted from a comparative perspective, with the majority race in America being White. There appear to be few studies on the development of racial awareness in childhood in South

African research, with authors preferring to focus on adult, adolescent and workplace racial integration (Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2019; Dunne & Bosch, 2015). International literature regarding racial development should be applied to South African children with caution, as the racial majority is inverted: the Black race constitutes a decisive majority, which changes comparisons and perspectives (Jackson, 2018; STATSSA, 2019, 2016).

Phinney (1989) developed a three-stage, hierarchical developmental model of racial and ethnic identity. These stages align with the four stages of identity status development described by Marcia (1980) and Cote and Schwartz (2002).

Stage one, according to Phinney (1989), is an unexamined form, similar to Marcia's *diffusion* and *foreclosure*. Diffusion is the most immature form of identity development, where the child shows a lack of interest in race. In foreclosure, the child accepts his or her racial and ethnic identity as defined by parents and current community but does not engage in exploration of that identity (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Godon-Decoteau, Ramsey & Suyemoto, 2018).

Stage two is known as *moratorium* where the child actively explores new possibilities within his or her race and ethnicity. This exploration is made possible as his or her cognitive abilities develop, and he or she acquires multiple classification skills. During this stage, commitment to a specific ethnic identity is not a prerequisite (Godon-Decoteau *et al.*, 2018).

Lastly, stage three is described by Phinney (1989;2000) as *identity achievement*. This stage is characterised by a sustained level of affiliation and commitment to a racial and ethnic group, accompanied by an acceptance of that membership within the group (Quintana, 2007; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Phinney, 2000, 1989).

Quintana (1998) acknowledged the work of Phinney (1989) and Selman, Schorin, Stone and Phelps (1983), to whom the construction of the theory of social perspective-taking ability is attributed, and then proceeded to create his own five-level model. This model portrays the child's understanding of race and ethnicity within a hierarchical construct. The fifth level is an adult understanding of race, while levels 2 and 3 describe children older than ten (Quintana, 1994; 1998), which falls beyond the scope of this research. Level 0 and level 1 are applicable to this research, as these levels describe racial and ethnic awareness of children up to the age of ten years.

In this model (Table 2.3), Quintana (1998) predominantly uses the term ethnicity as inclusive of race and the term race to indicate exclusively physical characteristics. Subsequently, Quintana and Mahgoub (2016) expanded on the initial theory to address identity development with special reference to race.



**Table 2.3***Ethnic/racial perspective-taking Ability*

*Note.* Adapted from Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016

Level and age	Stage	Perspective	Characteristics
<b>Level 0</b> Approximately 3-6 years	Integration of affective and perceptual understanding:	Physicalistic (sic) perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of race according to observable features.</li> <li>• Idiosyncratic terminology for race.</li> <li>• Affective differentiation of race.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 1</b> Approximately 6-10 years	Literal understanding of ethnicity	Literal perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of race and ethnicity in non-observable terms such as language and foods.</li> <li>• Conceptualisation of ancestry and heritage.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b>	Social understanding of ethnicity	Nonliteral and social perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of subtle manifestations such as socio-economic differences.</li> <li>• Awareness of racial impact on interpersonal relationships.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b>	Ethnic group consciousness and identity	Group perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active awareness and integration and expression of ethnic identity.</li> <li>• Group consciousness and sharing of racial experiences.</li> </ul>

### 2.3.3. *Integration of Affective and Perceptual Understanding of Race and Ethnicity*

At level 0 and at the onset of level 1, children are concrete in their thought processes and observe and recount race in idiosyncratic terms (Corenblum, 2014; Quintana, 1998). They may refer to Black people as “Brown” since this appears more accurate to them and describe White people as being “vanilla” or “peach” (Wright, 2000; Quintana, 1998, p.33).

Research indicates an "affective discrimination of race frequently based on a pro-White, anti-Black bias" (Quintana, 1998, p.29), except in communities where Black people are in the overwhelming majority. More recent authors (Shutts, Kinzler, Katz, Tredoux and Spelke, 2011) confirm this finding and postulate that this might be a result of children viewing the White population as being higher in status and possessing White privilege. Contrarily, Corenblum (2014) and Corenblum and Armstrong (2012) indicate that children from the present decade appear to be more aware and prouder of their race at an earlier age than previous generations.

It would appear that attitudes towards a race develop *prior* to an ability to categorise race. Quintana (1998), Quintana and Mahgoub (2016) and Rutland, Nesdale and Spears Brown (2017) found evidence of pervasive and embedded racial attitudes of the larger community that were reflected by the racial

attitudes of young children – especially at ages 4 to 5 years. However, these attitudes did not necessarily correlate with the racial attitudes of the parents.

This is significant for a young TRA child, who will reflect the racial attitudes of his or her community toward another race, with no understanding that he or she might genetically belong to that race. Aside from complicated group membership, unintended harm and discrimination may result if the young Black TRA child addresses an adult Black domestic worker in a condescending way, as might be the norm in that community, but not necessarily that of the parents.

#### **2.3.4. *Literal Understanding of Ethnicity and Race***

Between six- and ten-years, children develop a more sophisticated understanding of race and ethnicity that goes beyond visible distinctions (Quintana, 1994, 1998). They understand that there are multiple dimensions to race and ethnicity that supersede physical traits. The focus moves instead to aspects such as language, religion and cultural practices, with a gradual movement towards same-race preferences, *if* these aspects are shared within the group (Quintana, 1998, 2007; Godon-Decoteau *et al.*, 2018; Soares, Barbosa-Ducharne, Palacios & Fonseca, 2017).

Evidence of decreased colour bias by age 10 has been documented (Quintana, 1998, 2007; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016; Shutts, 2015). This may be attributable to a decrease in racial stereotyping and community-based racial attitudes, as well as the establishment of friendships that surpass differences, forming around a common interest such as sport instead.

The level of racial/ethnic awareness achieved by the child impacts on his or her perception of the changing world and his or her self-identity formation (Quintana, Cross, Hughes, Gall, Aboud & Vietze, 2006; Quintana, 2007; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). Corenblum and Armstrong (2012) and Corenblum (2014) opine that the achievement of racial identity has positive psychosocial outcomes, such as academic success, a higher self-esteem and more positive social behaviour.

#### **2.3.5. *Development of Racial Preferences and Attitudes***

*“Race matters, every day and in every way” (Hall & Steinberg, 2013, p.15).*

According to Shutts *et al.* (2011, 2013) and Shutts (2015), race carries a continuous underlying social meaning for adults. However, they argue that this is not the case in young, preschool children. In children up to the age of three and four years, extensive research consistently indicates the preference of same-gender over same-.

race without an underlying emotional content, despite the children being racially aware (Shutts *et al.*, 2011, 2013; Shutts, 2015; Hailey & Olson, 2013).

While Quintana (1998) declared that racial awareness occurred only from the age of three onwards, more recent literature disputes this contention. Bar-Haim Lamy and Hodes (2006), Hailey and Olson (2013) and Quinn, Pascalis and Xiao (2020) found that infants younger than one year exhibited racial recognition, not only limited to colour, but also to the shape of a face. In addition to race, Shutts (2015) states that children of one year can also distinguish gender, paving the way for early same-gender preference. By implication, the first race that a young TRA infant may recognise would be that of his or her White mother and father.

These authors do, however, in agreement with Quintana (1998), observe elicited racial attitudes reflecting the children's communities, as well as the progressive nature of racial awareness and attitude development. To this end, children in pre-school, aged four to five and six years, show robust favouritism for the same gender and mostly the same race, with higher-status groups showing a greater ingroup preference (Hailey & Olson, 2013). The higher status is assigned according to prevailing social norms. In South Africa, White people are perceived as being the wealthiest racial group and therefore as having a higher status. Children, both Black and White, show ingroup preference for the White group (Shutts *et al.*, 2011, 2013; Shutts, 2015).

In contrast to Quintana's findings (1998, 2006, 2007), Hailey and Olson (2013) argue that racial attitudes are derived from both the caregivers (initially the parents) and then from the larger community. These authors describe a consistent and high correlation between the racial attitudes of children and their adult caregivers that remains remarkably stable over time and space. Dunham, Baron and Carey (2011) found that these adult-like racial attitudes, resulting in social and racial categorisation, materialise in the child as soon as racial intergroup categories are demanded, such as in the school environment.

Children between six and ten years old, considered middle and late childhood by Hailey and Olson (2013), are firm in their favoured racial grouping, concurring with the findings of Olson, Shutts, Kinzler and Weisman (2012), Quintana (1998, 2006) and Quintana and Mahgoub (2016).

Explicit exhibition of racial and gender bias and favouritism, described by Hailey and Olson (2013), Olson *et al.*, (2012) and Nesdale, Durkin, Maass, Kiesner, Griffiths, Daly and McKenzie (2010), appears to *decrease* by the age of ten years, especially in the higher status ingroups. Hailey and Olson (2013, p.462) attribute this decrease to "...the social awareness of the social norm that racial discrimination is inappropriate" rather than a change in implicit racial attitude. This conclusion supports the findings of Quintana and Mahgoub (2016), although the latter authors also postulate that other group or team interests such as sports results contribute to the decrease in racial bias.

### 2.3.6. *Development of Racial Awareness and Attitude within the SIDT Theory*

Group membership in early childhood forms an integral part of self-identity. Nesdale's Social identity development theory (SIDT) for children draws strongly on Tajfel and Turner's Social identity theory (1979, 1981), discussed at length in the following chapter. Nesdale's theory describes the group membership process in children and introduces prejudice as a potential developmental level (Nesdale, 1999; Nesdale, Durkin, Maass & Griffiths, 2004; Nesdale, Maass, Durkin & Griffiths, 2005; Nesdale *et al.*, 2010; Nesdale, Zimmer-Gembek & Roxburgh, 2014).

The Social identity development theory proposes a motivational rather than cognitive selection of an ingroup in childhood. A positive identification with a favourable group will have a systematic effect on perceptions, cognition, behaviour and affect, impacting on self-esteem and identity formation (Nesdale *et al.*, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2010).

As with Quintana (1998) and Hailey and Olson (2013), Nesdale indicates three (potentially four) sequential phases in the racial and ethical developmental process in a child. An undifferentiated phase is followed by ethnic and racial awareness, then ethnic and racial preference (four/five years) and possible prejudice (older than six/seven years) (Nesdale, 1999; Nesdale *et al.*, 2005, 2010, 2014).

Nesdale *et al.* agree with Hailey and Olson (2013) that racial and ethnic preferences are present from the age of four/five years. He and his co-authors attribute this early same-race preference to fear of the unknown and preference for the familiar. Many children continue to prefer membership in a same-race group throughout adolescence, without disliking other racial (out)groups.

Children in multi-ethnic communities are aware of what makes a group have a higher status and often feel motivated to belong to that group for increased self-esteem and self-identity wellbeing (Nesdale *et al.*, 1999, 2004, 2010, 2014). This correlates with the South African findings of Shutts *et al.* (2011, 2013) and Shutts (2015). However, belonging to a same-race group or a higher-status group does not automatically result in outgroup prejudice (Nesdale *et al.*, 2004).

Prejudice is more than not liking another outgroup; it implies active dislike or hatred. For this reason, it is unlikely that children younger than six years are prejudiced, as they do not yet have the necessary cognitive and emotional abilities. According to Nesdale *et al.* (2004), there are three prerequisites for racial prejudice in a child. Firstly, there must be a very strong identification with his or her social group; secondly, negative feelings must be shared and normative within that group, and lastly, a conflict of interest, perceived as threatening to the group, must be present between the two opposing groups.

### 2.3.7. *Race and the Early School Going Black TRA Child in South Africa*

*“Unlike parents of colour, whose approaches to racial socialisation are informed by their own socialisation experiences and first-hand race-related challenges, the divergent racial reality of White parents complicates efforts to address the TRA children’s race-related developmental needs over time” (Chang et al., 2017, p.308).*

It is an uncontested fact that racial awareness and racial identity contribute to self-identity formation (Erikson, 1963; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Issac-Martins, 2015; Quintana, 1998; Nesdale *et al.*, 2014; Hailey & Olson, 2013, Tan & Liu, 2019). From the models proposed by Quintana (1998), Hailey and Olson (2013), Rutland *et al.* (2017) and Nesdale (1999) and Nesdale *et al.* (2004, 2005, 2014), all children of school going age encounter the developmental challenges of racial attitudes, preferences, stereotyping and possibly prejudice.

Being a South African Black TRA child with White parents may further complicate these developmental challenges. Although the end of apartheid in the 1990s resulted in a national transformation that promotes positive intergroup relations and racial desegregation, the violent history and memory of White power are still often reflected in the attitudes of the various South African communities (Du Plessis, 2014; Renwick, 2015). This concurs with Deaux’s (2018) viewpoint that there is both a contemporary as well as a historical force at play in racial identification and belonging.

Children begin to socially categorise themselves at the onset of school (Dunham, Baron & Carey, 2011). If race preference is initially based on what is familiar and recognisable (Nesdale, 1999; Nesdale *et al.*, 2004, 2005), then it follows that non-adopted children will exhibit initial racial ingroup preference. In contrast, the Black TRA child may prefer a White ingroup that is phenotypically or racially dissimilar, but more familiar in terms of ethnic and cultural practices of language, socialisation and food preferences (Olson *et al.*, 2012; Snyder, 2012, 2017).

Rutland *et al.* (2017) state that racial socialisation, exhibiting the behaviour, language, practices and social regulations of a specific race, initially occurs in the home environment. The parents are primarily tasked with racial socialisation as they help children “to construct the meaning of their racial group membership both from the inside – *the history and values associated with being us* – from the outside (*how others view us*) (Rutland *et al.*, 2017, p.254). For a young TRA child, the understanding of “us” will differ significantly from the larger community’s understanding of their “us”, making group selection and subsequent membership more complex. In addition, Black TRA children commonly speak the language of their White parents, often not understanding one of the multilingual Black

languages spoken in South Africa (Mkhize & Balfour, 2017), setting them further apart from the racial group that physically resembles them.

It is unclear whether explicit race bias (Hailey & Olson, 2013) may prevent full membership of the White group, since Shutts (2015) and Shutts *et al.* (2011) found South African White children to be more robust in their race preference than Black children. If the White race group is the group of preference for the TRA child, since it is culturally and linguistically more familiar, partial or full rejection by the group will be detrimental to the wellness of the self-identity of the adopted child. No data about ingroup membership of TRA children could be found, so it is uncertain whether this rejection is assumed or considered a possibility.

In documenting same-race preference in the school going South African child, Olson *et al.* (2012) also describe a consistent aspiration to membership of what is perceived as higher-status groups. As observed in both American children by Quintana (1998) and South African children by Olson *et al.* (2012) and Shutts *et al.* (2011), there is a controversial notion at a very young age that being White is preferable to being Black. Both preschool and early school going South African children exhibit a tendency to view White as being the higher-status race when associated with wealth and social status. This is despite the Black race being the numerical and political majority in South Africa (Olson *et al.*, 2012; Shutts *et al.*, 2011; StatsSA, 2019). More recent literature confirming or refuting this finding has not yet been found, and more investigation is required. However, Rutland *et al.* (2017) agree that there is a tendency to view a race with more lucrative resources as more desirable.

Shutts *et al.* (2011) draw four conclusions regarding race preferences and grouping in school going South African children. Firstly, *the size of the race group in a particular setting does not determine racial grouping preference*, which supports the later findings of Olson *et al.* (2013). Secondly, Shutts *et al.* (2011) found that *contemporary South African children are very sensitive to social status* when choosing racial ingroups. Thirdly, despite the emphasis post-apartheid South Africa places on national unity rather than racial and ethnic division, *children still develop race-based social preferences*. Lastly, as children grow older and move toward adolescence, there appear to be *other factors* rather than race that *determine group membership*, such as sport or common academic interest (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016).

There appears to be no singular and consistent element contributing to children's developing racial group favouritism. What is evident is that the early school going Black TRA child growing up in a predominantly White community must reconcile racial attitudes and social practices at home with a multi-racial and multi-ethnic school setting to ensure positive self-identity development (Soares *et al.*, 2017; Snyder, 2017; Smit, 2002).

The early school going Black TRA child does not yet possess the necessary cognitive skills described earlier in the racial and social identity hierarchical models (Quintana, 1998; Nesdale *et al.*, 2005; 2010) that might ease the transition between the known social groupings of family and the greater community. Concrete thinking and lack of abstract reasoning preclude multiple classification and categorisation (Piaget, 1929, 1971). It should also be considered that both the TRA children as well as their peer-group classmates are on the same level of cognitive development.

This has a twofold implication. Firstly, the visible status of a TRA family serves as a marker for the classmates to confront the adopted child with intrusive questions that force the examination of their vulnerable identities, such as why there is a physical difference between child and his or her parents, or where their *real* parents are (Morgan & Langrehr, 2019). These racial microaggressions<sup>12</sup>, while often committed unintentionally, are linked to negative identity development amongst transracial adoptees (Morgan & Langrehr, 2019). Godon-Decoteau *et al.* (2018) and Chang *et al.* (2017) raise a very salient point in this regard. In international research with TRA children, they found that adopted children (Korean) were often racially targeted and discriminated against by the very racial and ethnic groups they identified with (White race). This complicates the assault on the developing self-identity. No literature regarding this two-edged social construct could be found for South Africa.

Secondly, social interaction, such as group membership, which contributes to healthy self-identity development may be hindered by the concrete assessment and inclusion criteria of the other group members (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). As cognitive skills are honed, group membership becomes more refined and separate from definitive concepts such as race, rather including personal aspects such as sport prowess, residential proximity and mutual interests (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). The negative impact on the developing self-identity should ideally decrease, unless the children have experienced or are capable of prejudice, as described in the Social Identity Development Theory, requiring directed intervention (Nesdale, 2005; 2010, 2014).

The very young school going TRA child, in the absence of adequate social preparation by his or her family, may be adversely affected as he or she is placed in the larger community of school (Dunbar; Leerkes; Coard; Supple & Calkins, 2016). Being at school and away from family means that there is no caregiver or parent to intervene in awkward social settings or intercept questions as they occur. This

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<sup>12</sup>Microaggressions, intentional or unintentional, are brief and frequent verbal comments, as well as commonplace behavioural and environmental indignities, which communicate hostile and derogatory insults and affronts to the person perceived as differing from the mainstream, such as adoptees, immigrants and homosexuals. The accumulation of these often unintended microaggressions has a negative impact on self-identity and esteem (Yearwood, 2013).

might be potentially damaging to the young self-esteem and subsequently to the self-identity (Dunbar *et al.*, 2016; Smit, 2002).

However, as school progresses and the adopted child and his or her classmates develop higher cognitive skills and more reasoning ability (Piaget, 1929, 1971), the social division of race diminishes. The TRA child belongs to groups not defined by race and should be able to select such group membership based on preference, such as a shared extramural activity or sports team (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016).

Nevertheless, this is also the age where the young child, approaching puberty, may experience an affinity for his or her race (Quintana, 1998) and begin an active quest for Black ethnic and cultural practices and seek the company of other Black children to satisfy this affinity. In agreement with Quintana (1998), Guzman, Brodell, Langley and Waterman (2020) postulate that young TRA children often identify with the race and ethnicity of their adoptive parents but begin to question their racial and ethnic identity during adolescence. Research regarding the identity of Black TRA adolescents in South Africa posits internal conflict about being Black in a White world that commences at the onset of puberty (Thomson, 2005). Du Plessis (2014), in her research of Black South African adolescents, found a higher need for ethnic identity than their White counterparts, while Issac-Martins (2015) cautions that equal attachment to two ethnic groups in a mixed South African family may lead to confusion and isolation from all ethnic groups.

To this end, Anderson, Reuter and Lee (2015) and Morgan and Langrehr (2019) state that active, internal family discussions regarding racial differences in a TRA adoptive setting reinforce family cohesion. Chang *et al.* (2017) found that White parents were more willing to discuss and address cultural differences, but were inclined to avoid racial issues, citing “colour-blindness” (p. 309). All these authors maintain that increasing knowledge and instilling a sense of pride in the child’s racial, ethnic and cultural background promotes self-awareness and self-esteem, improves defences against discrimination and inhibits adoption stigma (Chang *et al.*, 2017; Anderson *et al.*, 2015; Morgan & Langrehr, 2019).

South Africa has 11 official languages and is a vibrant mix of many different races (Modiri, 2011; Shutts *et al.*, 2011; Mkhize & Balfour, 2017). Although it is not always possible to distinguish the racial heritage of a Black baby, especially when abandoned without a demographic history, discussing racial differences and instilling Black pride on an age-appropriate level may prepare the way and ease the transition from family to a greater community.

In conclusion, race is a constant factor in being a human being. South African children are confronted with racially charged situations from a young age, making them more racially aware than their international counterparts (Shutts *et al.*, 2011; Hailey & Olson, 2013; Shutts, 2015). The impact



of being transracially adopted in a country known for its historical racial divide (Seedat, 2015; Modiri, 2011) should not be underestimated. While identity issues are mostly described in adolescence, the early school going Black TRA child has his or her own racial hurdles to navigate, and these potential issues need to be intercepted and dealt with timeously and effectively to prevent problems in adolescence.

## 2.4. Adoption and Self-Identity

### 2.4.1. Introduction to Adoption

*"What does being adopted meant to me, and how does this fit into my understanding of myself, relationships, family and culture?" (Grotevant, Lo, Fiorenzo & Dunbar, 2017, para 2).*

Adoption is not an innovation of modern society. The practice of adoption is noted in the writings of the ancient Greeks, Romans and Egyptians (Van der Walt, 2014). Eugena (2015, p.172) succinctly defines adoption as "taking an individual born to others as one's own child" and describes the historical and legal path of adoption through the ages. Octavius, subsequently known as Augustus Caesar, was adopted by his uncle, Julius Caesar. This allowed him to become the first emperor of Rome through *adrogatio*. This socially accepted procedure, condoned by Roman Law, to adopt a young adolescent male and bestow on him the powers owned by his adopted parent, allowed for political shifts and economic acquisitions vital to the growth and well-being of the community (Eugena, 2015).

The ancient Mesopotamian practice of *adoptio* facilitated the adoption of a young child to continue the line of work of the adoptive parents. In this way, a childless blacksmith would adopt a young boy to continue and expand the family business. Women were also allowed to adopt orphaned girls and employ them as house workers and even prostitutes for additional income (Van der Walt, 2014; Eugena, 2015). In these instances, the main benefactors were the adoptive parents and not necessarily the adopted child.

One of the earliest written references to adoption may be found in the Bible (Van der Walt, 2014). Theologian Ngwa (2013) emphasises the influence of social and political structures in identity formation and identity wellbeing in the story of Jewish baby Moses, adopted by the Egyptian Pharaoh. Choosing, as an adult, to identify with his physically alike Jewish origins, which differed significantly in social and political structure from the Egyptian family he was raised in, Moses had to redefine his

identity, values and morals, with ensuing personal and social conflict and confusion. Whether this redefinition is a factor in modern-day TRA in South Africa begs further investigation.

#### **2.4.2. (Transracial) Adoption Law in South Africa**

According to South African constitution, every child has a right to parental or family care (September, 2008; Van der Walt, 2014; Jackson, 2018). A brief overview of adoption in South Africa depicts how TRA has become a product of more than a rising social need, but also reflects the changing political climate of this country.

Prior to 1923, adoption was an informal arrangement between adults, with the children having no legal relationship with their adoptive parents. Following the Children Act 25 of 1923, adoptive parents were legally bound to maintain and educate the adopted child sufficiently, thereby promoting the welfare of the child (Van der Walt, 2014). Although there was no explicit ban on transracial adoptions, Van der Walt (2014) and Mosikatsana (1997, 2002) posit that racial consciousness was so deeply entrenched that a legislative bar was unnecessary at that time.

By the same token, the subsequent Children's Act 31 of 1937, while advocating the establishment of a dedicated Children's Court and more expansive legislation promoting the interests of the child, did not make any provision for transracial adoption either. Again, the possibility of such an adoption was so contrary to the prevailing social view that the Act neither mentioned nor prohibited it. There is also no record of any transracial adoption at that time (Van der Walt, 2014; Mosikantsa, 2000).

Act 31 of 1937 was replaced by the Children's Act 33 of 1960, where race was specifically mentioned for the first time. While it was possible for Black cohabiting parents to adopt a Black baby, the wording of the Immorality Act 23 of 1957 allowed for children to be removed from their parents' care if the race of the family and child differed (Van der Walt, 2014; Jackson, 2018). The prevailing ideology of racial segregation during apartheid trounced the interests of the child. Chapter VII of the Children's Act 33 of 1960, section 35(2) reads: "In selecting any person in whose custody a child is to be placed, regard shall be had to the religious and cultural background, and the ethnological grouping of the child and, in selecting such a person, also to the nationality of the child and the relationship between him and such person" (Van der Walt, 2014, p.435).

To eliminate any confusion and prohibit misinterpretation of Section 35(2), Amendment Act 50 of 1965 was published, denying any person custody of a child if the racial classification of the child differed from the adult in terms of the population register (Van der Walt, 2014). The Population Registration Act, no 30 of 1950 stipulated that all South Africans were to be classified according to

three and then a fourth basic racial category, being White, Native, Coloured and fourthly Indian/Asian (Romanini, 2017).

The Child Care Act 74 of 1983 forbade intercountry adoptions and upheld the status quo of the stipulation concerning transracial adoption. Adoption of children who differed in racial classification from the prospective adoptive parents was still prohibited (Romanini, 2017; Van der Walt, 2014; Mosikatsana, 2003; Zaal, 1992, 1994). While many people from all races debated the fairness of this stipulation, many Black communities applauded it (Mosikatsana, 1997, 2003; Zaal, 1992, 1994). Mosikatsana (2003, 1997) posits that the legal right to adopt across racial lines exposes the child to racial prejudice from the adoptive parents and community, resulting in a damaged self-concept and an ensuing identity crisis due to the loss of racial and/or cultural identity.

Following the collapse of the apartheid system, references to race in the Child Care Act were removed (Romanini, 2017), allowing wily law practitioners to legally procure several transracial adoptions (Crowe, 1995). With the approach of the post-apartheid constitutional era, the Child Care Amendment Act 96 of 1996 made provision for a child's right to have a family and be in parental care with no reference to race at all. While limited TRA had been made possible by the deletion of the racial clause in the Child Care Act 74 of 1983, this new provision allowed even more leniency within TRA (Van der Walt, 2014).

Adoption, according to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, is the placement in permanent care of a person in terms of a court order (September 2008). The new and progressive constitution in South Africa considered the rising number of vulnerable children and acknowledged adoption as a welcome and more permanent option. According to this new Act, which is currently in force, the best interest of the child is paramount and outweighs any other consideration, and therefore does not use race as a preclusion to adoption (Van der Walt, 2014).

### ***2.4.3. Adoption and the Concept of Loss***

As seen above, adoption law emphasises the importance of adoptee wellbeing. However, adoption is not a single event in time. It is an ongoing, stage-like process (Gupta & Featherstone, 2020; Soares *et al.*, 2019). Adoptive status gains greater significance for and influence on the self-identity when understood in the context of societal attitudes (Brodzinsky, 2011; Grotevant & Korff in Schwartz, Luyckx & Vignoles (eds.), 2011).

“...the role of adoption in shaping identity is influenced by many factors, including those within the individual (e.g. temperament, self-esteem, etc.), those within the family (e. g. parents' attitudes,

quality of parent-child relationships, etc.) and those outside the family (e. g. experiences with birth family, peers, schoolmates, and the broader community)” (Brodzinsky, 2011, p.202).

Thus, losses encountered due to being adopted, will be present across the adoptees’ whole life, at different developmental stages and with varying coping skills, possibly having a profound and sustained effect on self-identity (Brodzinsky, 2011; Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019). Loss, as experienced by the child aged six to ten years within a school context, is described below.

#### **2.4.3.1. Loss of a “Real” Family**

The concept of adoption implies that the relationship between child and biological parent and siblings has been set aside, or, more bluntly, abandoned and ultimately terminated (Gupta & Featherstone, 2020; Harlow, 2019; Soares *et al.*, 2017; Brodzinsky, 2011; Hall & Steinberg, 2013; Smit, 2002). The ambivalence and sense of loss, as well as the role it plays in the development of the adopted child, is comprehensively documented. Brodzinsky (2011), Smit (2002), Soares *et al.* (2017; 2019) and Hall and Steinberg (2013) emphasise the multidimensional and unique nature of adoption-related loss.

Influenced by Piaget's cognitive theory (Piaget, 1971), Brodzinsky describes the developmental understanding of adoption as progressing from a childlike and positive attitude in pre-schoolers (the preoperational stage) to emotions including sadness, ambivalence and anger in the school going adopted child during the concrete operational stage, as logical thinking and perspective taking abilities improve (Brodzinsky, 2011; Pittman *et al.*, 2011, Grotevant *et al.*, 2017; Soares *et al.*, 2017). These negative feelings may be associated with ambiguity in the adopted child's realisation that being adopted means that a family had to be lost to gain another one (Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010).

Soares *et al.* (2017) and Rosnati and Ferrari (2014) further theorise that the emphasis a primary school may place on family ties places an adoptee in a very difficult social position, as biological ties are viewed as the “real” families (Soares *et al.*, 2017, p.464). Their research has indicated that the young adoptee may experience microaggressions such as “harmless” teasing and intrusive questions about their family composition and their “real” families that will have an impact on self-acceptance and self-esteem.

#### **2.4.3.2. Loss of a Sense of Belonging**

Adopted children, just like all their fellow classmates, need to comply with all the new social and academic demands within the school context (Rosnati & Ferrari, 2014; Soares *et al.*, 2017; Erikson, 1968). However, being adopted, especially transracially, makes him or her different from the majority

of his or her classmates and requires the adoptee to manage this difference in order to fit in and maintain social esteem (Soares *et al.*, 2017).

Erikson (1963, 1968) states that at the age of six to twelve years old, fitting in and encountering cooperation and balanced competition with peers is essential to healthy self-identity development and an achievement of competence.

Adopted children of early school going age report that their seemingly different status either evokes victimisation, microaggression and teasing or prompts social pity, all of which produce negative feelings regarding their adoptive status and subsequently impact on their self-identity (Brodzinsky, 2011; Soares *et al.*, 2017).

#### **2.4.3.3. Forced Social Disclosure and Communication about Adoption**

Even when children experience their adoption as positive, they appear to be hesitant to disclose their adoptive status (Gupta & Featherstone, 2020; Brodzinsky, 2011; Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019). In the case of the TRA child, their adoptive status is observable and open to public scrutiny; they therefore need to address a social and legal issue without necessarily being ready or in possession of the necessary cognitive and verbal skills (Grotevant, Reuter, Von Korff and Gonzalez, 2011; Soares *et al.*, 2017; Smit, 2002). In a recent study conducted on the social disclosure of adoption, it was found that children who were forced to disclose their adoptive status frequently and were in possession of good social skills, experienced a decrease in sadness, feeling different and confused and felt less anger (Soares *et al.*, 2017). However, the converse was also true: children lacking the protective factor of adequate social skills risked experiencing more negative feelings regarding their adoptive status and decreasing self-esteem (Soares *et al.*, 2017).

#### **2.4.3.4. Cultural and Ethnic Loss**

Rosnati and Ferrari (2014) and Gupta and Featherstone (2020) state that even though a TRA child may share an ethnic or cultural identity with his or her adoptive family, such as language and social practices, he or she shares ethnicity and the history of race and racial beliefs with his or her ancestors and biological family. TRA children have lost ways of establishing contact with their ancestors, which may predict a life devoid of ancestral privileges, promise and direction (Mosikatsana, 1997, 2003; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012; Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Rochat *et al.*, 2016).

#### **2.4.3.5. Conclusion-Adoption and Loss**

Adoption is not simply a win-win situation. Growing up in an adopted family is different from growing up in a biological family, and TRA makes the process more complex (Smit, 2002; Hall &

Steinberg, 2013). Expected developmental issues and socially awkward situations such as developing self-esteem and fitting into a new class may take on unique and intense meanings for an adoptee (Smit, 2002). Demands on immature coping and social skills may hinder the development of a healthy self-identity (Soares *et al.*, 2017; Grotevant *et al.*, 2017).

Loss is a primary adoptive issue from which many other adoption-related concerns such as grief and rejection and guilt or shame stem (Brodzinsky, 2011; Smit, 2002; Hall & Steinberg, 2013, Grotevant *et al.*, 2017). Often, this issue is compounded by the fact that the loss is concealed or undisclosed (Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010; Soares *et al.*, 2019). Certain social situations also create an emotional dichotomy expecting the adoptee to be “grateful for finding a good home” (Smit, 2002, p.145) in spite of the persistent presence of adoption-related loss. Awareness of all adoptive loss is essential in providing the (TRA) adoptee with the necessary skills and coping strategies to develop a healthy self-identity.

## 2.5. The Adoptive Identity Model

Recent psychodevelopmental theorists, acknowledging Erikson’s work on identity (1963, 1968, 1980), conceptualise identity “as a system of self-descriptions or definitions organized in terms of domain, salience, and other organizing principles” (Pittman *et al.*, 2011, p.33). A healthy self-identity contains domains over which the individual has a choice, such as occupation, religion and political views (Erikson, 1963, 1968). However, Grotevant (1997), Dunbar and Grotevant (2004) and Grotevant *et al.* (2017) draw attention to aspects of identity where there is little or no choice, such as gender, race or adoptive status. The authors posit that these aspects, despite being predetermined and without choice, must still be included and assigned meaning to form a healthy self-identity. Failure to incorporate these aspects will result in emotional problems, contradictions and ambiguities (Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004).

In addition, Beaupre, Reichwald, Zhou, Raleigh and Lee (2015) note that racial and ethnic identity issues are often found in conjunction with adoptive issues. Failure to integrate race and adoptive identity within the self-identity in TRA may also result in behavioural and emotional problems (Beaupre, *et al.*, 2015).

Constructive adoptive identity development needs adoptees to make sense of their adoption experiences and distinctive stories to build a meaningful narrative (Soares *et al.*, 2017). In order to achieve this, their adoptive status, together with other set and chosen domains, must be incorporated in the exploration of their self-concept (Soares, 2017; Grotevant *et al.*, 2017).

The adoptive identity model of Grotevant *et al.* (2017) is an integration of Eriksonian and narrative approaches and lists three tasks/processes and six dimensions to explain the examination of adoptive status and the resulting four possible adoptive identities.

In seeking a meaningful adoptive identity narrative, young adoptees must perform three processes. Firstly, they need to seek information that has bearing on their story. Secondly, they must explore and compare their perspectives with others and thirdly, they must reflect on the meaning of adoption and being adopted (Von Korff, Grotevant, Koh & Samek, 2010). The outcomes and/or characteristics of the explored dimensions are linked in Table 2.4.

According to Grotevant *et al.*, (2017), adoptees face unique challenges in their development of an identity narrative. Since aspects of their history may be unknown and undiscoverable, it is difficult to construct a coherent story that links the past, present and future. This is often the case in South Africa, where a high number of adoptable children have been abandoned without any identifying history or means to investigate it (NACSA, 2020). Although Grotevant *et al.* (2017) use this model to describe adolescent adoptive identity models, the process starts in childhood (Soares *et al.*, 2017) and intensifies as the child gets older. The way these dimensions occur in the adoptee determines his or her type of one of four adoptive identities, noted in Figure 2.2, which in turn plays a significant role in his or her self-identity (Grotevant *et al.*, 2017).

**Table 2.4**

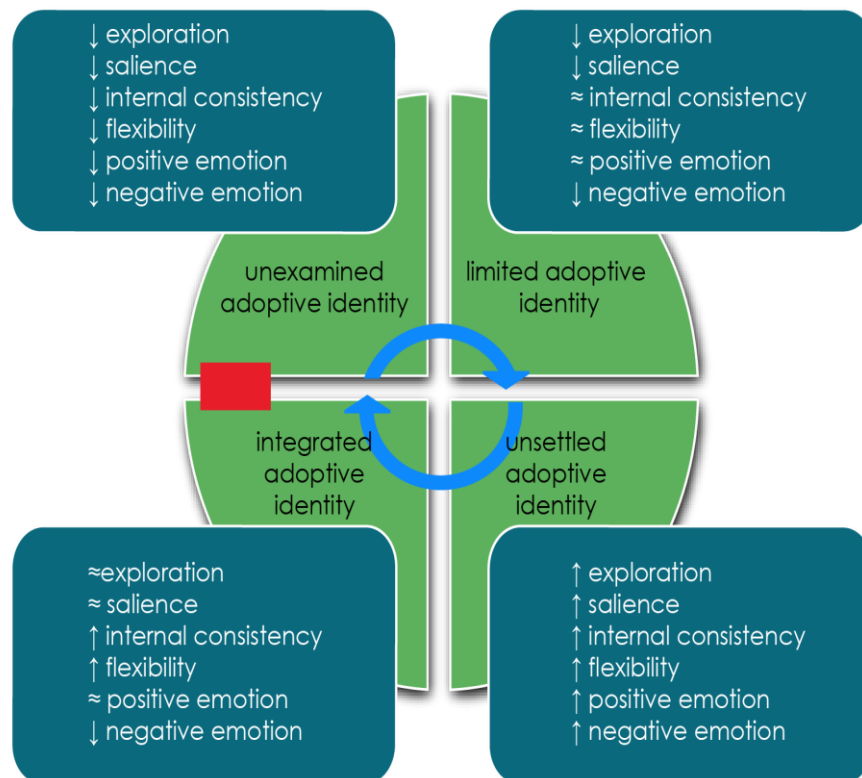
*Dimensions of Adoptive Identity*

*Note.* Grotevant, et al., 2017

Dimensions of the Adoptive Identity Model	Characteristic or outcome of the dimension
<b>Depth of identity exploration</b>	Creates meaning of adoption in the adoptee's life
<b>Salience</b>	Importance and impact of the adoptive identity on behaviour, feelings and decision-making processes
<b>Internal consistency</b>	Allows minimal contradiction between narratives and conclusions
<b>Flexibility</b>	Integration of possibly opposing viewpoints
<b>Positive emotion</b>	Present in the understanding of adoption
<b>Negative emotion</b>	Present in the understanding of adoption

These four adoptive identities, diagrammatically represented in Figure 2.2, are firstly the unexamined adoptive identity, with low levels of all six dimensions. The limited adoptive identity

exhibits moderate levels of internal consistency, positive affect and flexibility. The remaining dimensions are similar to the unexamined adoptive identity. In the unsettled adoptive identity, all the levels are high, but the negative affect is the most pronounced. The integrated adoptive identity, the most desirable and developed of the adoptive identities, shows a low level of negative affect, high levels of flexibility and internal consistency, with the other three dimensions at moderate levels (Grotevant *et al.*, 2017, para 8).



**Figure 2.2**

*Schematic Representation of Adoptive Identities with Specific Dimension Allocation*

*Note.* Adapted from the Adoptive Identity Model, Grotevant *et al.*, 2017

The young adoptee faces unique challenges regarding his or her adoptive status and nascent self-identity (Soares *et al.*, 2017; Grotevant *et al.*, 2017). These challenges usually start as the child commences school and escalates as adolescence approaches. He or she needs to deal with the sense of multidimensional loss that may evoke a range of negative feelings as progressive thought processes develop. To integrate his or her adoption with the other domains of his or her identity, an explorative process must be undertaken. If there is positive affect, internal consistency and flexibility, successful integration of the adoptive identity into the self-identity may be assumed. In the absence of an integrated adoptive identity, behavioural and emotional problems and contradictions may occur



(Grotevant *et al.*, 2017). In conjunction, failure to integrate his or her racial identity may exacerbate these problems (Grotevant *et al.*, 2017; Beaupre *et al.*, 2015).

## 2.6. Adoption and the South African TRA child

Nkosi Johnson, a young HIV-positive Black boy, was adopted in 1991 at the age of 2 by Gail Johnson, a White HIV/AIDS volunteer worker. Although he became known as an international activist against AIDS stigmatisation, Nkosi was also the first public face of TRA, albeit not the first TRA child<sup>13</sup> in South Africa (Nkosi Haven, n.d.). At the time of his death on 1 June 2001 at the age of 12, the suggestions and prescriptions for the new Children's Act of 2005 were being drafted. Changes would be made to the Act that would include TRA (Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005).

In the limited research pertaining to South African TRA, contradictory views regarding identity development emerged. Using analogies similar to Grotevant *et al.*, (2017), Thomson (2005) notes that South African TRA youths have racial and adoptive identities that are in conflict within themselves, and that being Black and concurrently a family member of a White family results in internal conflict during adolescence.

More recent work by Kausi Nashua (2014), Tanga and Nyasha (2017) and Gerrand and Nathane-Taulela (2015) found TRA to be largely favourable for both the adoptive parents as well as the adopted children, and somewhat favourable for the community. Tanga and Nyasha (2017) state that Black people are becoming increasingly more positive toward TRA, but that certain deep-rooted spiritual concerns persist. In the case of this study, where Black children are adopted by White adoptive parents, the relative importance of these spiritual concerns may be diminished within the family. However, the child will still need to interact with other Black children, for whom spiritual aspects are of paramount importance, and thus raise questions and possible confusion within the TRA child (Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012; Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Mosikatsana, 2003).

Adoption is not a chosen state, yet it forms an integral part of a child's self-identity (Grotevant *et al.*, 2017). Unsuccessful integration into the self-identity may result in ensuing behavioural and emotional problems. Race is another non-chosen state which must be similarly integrated into the self-identity to prevent psychopathology (Beaupre *et al.*, 2015). Although no child chooses its race and

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<sup>13</sup>Ningi, a Zulu baby girl, adopted in 1991 by Penny Haskell, a volunteer and mayor of Pietermaritzburg, KwaZuluNatal, a province of South Africa, was arguably the first TRA (Crowe, 1995).

gender (Grotevant *et al.*, 2017; Brodzinsky, 2011), the TRA must also integrate his or her adoptive status and all the implications to ensure optimal self-identity development throughout all stages of life.

## **2.7. Conclusion of Chapter**

To understand TRA, the pivotal concepts of race and adoption must be explored, as done in this chapter. However, the developmental level of the child should also be taken into account to understand the burgeoning self-identity of the TRA child. This has been done in Chapter 3 where individual and social developmental theories are discussed, since self-identity has both a social and personal component. A conceptual framework within which to describe the developing self-identity of a TRA child is provided at the end of the chapter.

## Chapter 3 A Conceptual Framework of Self-Identity Development

<b>BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONTENT-CHAPTER 3</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
<b>A DEVELOPMENTAL OVERVIEW OF A CHILD AGED SIX TO TENYEARS</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SELF-IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why the need for a conceptual framework?</li> <li>• Introduction to identity and the salient identity theories</li> </ul>	
<b>DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES OF IDENTITY</b>	
<b>INDIVIDUAL THEORIES</b>	<b>PRIMARY AUTHOR</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attachment theory</li> <li>• Attachment theory and adoption</li> </ul>	Bowlby Bell and Ainsworth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychosocial development theory</li> </ul>	Erikson
<b>SOCIAL THEORIES OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social identity theory</li> <li>• Identity process theory</li> </ul>	Tajfel and Turner Breakwell
<b>INTEGRATION OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	

### 3.1. Introduction- A Developmental Overview of the Child Aged Six to Ten Years

The terms middle-childhood phase and latent phase, when referring to six to ten-year-old children, are often used interchangeably (Finestone, 2014). Synonyms for latent include hidden and concealed which are accurate descriptions of the expected growth and development occurring in this phase. Although the changes observed during this phase are not as profound and conspicuous as those in the preceding phases, many new skills such as logical thinking and empathetic perspectives of others lay the foundation for the subsequent phases (Skuse, Bruce & Dowdney, 2017; Voigt, Macias, Myers & Tapia, 2018).

Compared with copious studies of the other developmental phases, such as infancy and adolescence, there appears to be a scarcity of available literature covering the middle phase. However, the social, emotional, cognitive and behavioural acquisitions during this phase have extensive ramifications for future adolescents and adults alike (Carr in Skuse, *et al.*, 2017). This work used case studies within the research design. As such, it is not a comparative study. However, there should be a rudimentary, normative description of a six to ten-year-old child to serve as a baseline for better understanding this early school going child. The developmental overview, as posited by seminal identity theorists, for the middle-aged/latent child, is depicted in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1***Predicted Development of a Six to Ten-Year-Old Child*

Developmental area	Expected developmental attainment
<b>Physical development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can walk and run independently</li> <li>• No longer requires a railing to climb or descend stairs</li> <li>• Improved motor skills, especially fine motor and perceptual skill, essential for learning</li> <li>• Integration of motor and sensory systems</li> <li>• Speed, balance and co-ordination – still room for improvement, but more controlled</li> <li>• Incremental growth spurts with mass and length gain</li> <li>• Subtle secondary sex characteristics with the onset of puberty, especially girls, either increasing self-esteem or causing embarrassment</li> <li>• Awareness and care of features considered attractive, such as a desired hairstyle</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibits concrete reasoning</li> <li>• Begins a slow but steady progress toward logical thought processing</li> <li>• Understands conservation of matter</li> <li>• Begins to place matters within a specific context – learns best through familiar culture and context</li> <li>• Able to grasp causal relationships and uses questions such as “Why?” and “What?”</li> <li>• Starts to master multiple-step problem solving</li> <li>• Begins to acquire and refine academic skills of arithmetic, reading and writing</li> <li>• Has magical thinking that may result in erroneous conclusion that they have caused something to happen – either detrimental or contributory to self-identity, depending on the outcome</li> <li>• Improved information processing abilities – more short-term memory capabilities, processing speed quicker and longer attention span</li> <li>• Begins to recognise academic and social feedback that will contribute to or limit self-identity growth</li> </ul>
<b>Linguistic development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a comprehensive vocabulary (dependent on exposure to new words)</li> <li>• Ability to retain new words and use correctly</li> <li>• While overtly concrete, begins to understand abstract words better, like death</li> <li>• Still experiences difficulty verbalising feelings and opinions due to concrete thinking</li> <li>• Use of pragmatic speech/social use of language<sup>14</sup> becomes more frequent</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibits less egocentric behaviour</li> <li>• Understands that his/her emotions are separate from others'</li> <li>• Begins to use acceptable expressions of emotion and behaviour to regulate reactions (talk rather than tantrum)</li> <li>• Begins to show a distinction between genuine emotional expressions with close and trusted others and a more managed display of emotion with</li> </ul>

<sup>14</sup>Pragmatic language is the use of “conversational skills, discourse, volume of speech and body language” (Voigt *et al.*, 2018:348)

	<p>strangers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider repertoire of emotional coping skills</li> <li>• Still views the world as “Black and White,” but less judgemental of others</li> <li>• Understands that other people may have a different perspective that is also acceptable</li> <li>• May encounter and practice incidents of prejudice and stereotyping</li> <li>• Understands that more than one emotion can be attributed to the same person – being angry with your mom does not preclude you from loving her</li> <li>• Begins to show more regulation of emotions rather than rapid mood changes</li> <li>• The child will distance himself/herself from a situation which he/she cannot control</li> <li>• Actively seeks positive approval</li> <li>• Strives for self-actualisation</li> <li>• The latter two acquisitions will impact on the formation of self-identity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ethical and spiritual development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands rules, mores and values, but usually follows rules in own interest</li> <li>• However, tries to practise values and mores within a social setting, often using them as guidelines for action</li> <li>• Begins to show respect for the rights of others</li> <li>• Exhibits integrity towards self and others</li> <li>• Has body awareness and understands privacy requirements for self and others</li> <li>• Expresses concept of faith through family exposure and practices</li> </ul>
<p><b>Psychosocial development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks own regulation of emotion and behaviour rather than guidance from the caregivers</li> <li>• Enjoys feelings of autonomy and success, which enhance healthy self-identity development</li> <li>• Enjoys co-operative play while simultaneously performing competitive tasks</li> <li>• Social comparison with peers begins and may contribute to or limit identity growth</li> <li>• Understands social rules and tasks intrinsic to a relationship</li> <li>• Begins to comprehend the subtle social cues within a relationship and responds to them</li> <li>• Exhibits cooperative and attentive behaviour towards others</li> <li>• Able to take on responsibility and chores within a family or school setting, with feelings of accomplishment</li> <li>• Often dismisses the knowledge of parents in the presence of peers and others – seeks independent thinking</li> <li>• Begins to actively seek a best friend</li> <li>• Strives for group membership of a group viewed as being desirable – essential to self-identity wellbeing</li> <li>• Feelings of belonging promotes self-identity growth</li> <li>• Can correctly identify people based on both race and ethnicity</li> <li>• Exhibits cultural and social practices observed at home</li> </ul>

*Note.* Adapted from Voigt *et al.*, 2018; Skuse *et al.*, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2019; Finestone, 2014

### 3.2. Introduction to the Conceptual Framework of Self-Identity Development

Developmental theories provide guidelines for the organisation and management of researched data and the formulation of applicable hypotheses. The reflection of these findings in a coherent and meaningful way allows for a clearer understanding of human development, making practical implementations and future predictions possible (Ramokgopa, 2001). Similarly, “a conceptual framework is a set of loosely connected assumptions and abstract concepts (derived from existing theories) that help us understand a particular phenomenon” (Dilworth-Anderson; Burton & Klein in Bengtston, Acock, Allen, Dilworth-Anderson & Klein, 2005, p.36). To this end, concepts and assumptions of four theories have been used to better understand the phenomenon of the self-identity, both personal and social, of the early school going TRA Black child.

The selection of theories for the conceptual framework was guided by several factors. First and foremost, theoretical emphasis on identity development was essential, as this remains the primary focus of the study. Theories deemed multi-culturally applicable and acknowledge the role of race were also favourably considered. Finally, I heeded the caution of Rice (1995) that development theories and assumptions must recognise the multidimensional aspects that contribute to being human. These four developmental aspects referred to by Rice (1995) are *physical and sensory* development, *cognitive* development alluding to learning, judgement and communication, *emotional* development of feelings such as love, trust, caring and lastly, *social* development, which allows for the establishment of social skills, moral development and relationship-building. The consideration of all of the aforementioned factors resulted in the selection of the Attachment theory, Psychosocial theory, Social Identity theory and Identity Process theory concepts to form a conceptual framework.

### 3.3. Introduction to Self-identity and Identity Theories

There are as many definitions of identity as there are authors on this topic. McAdams (2013, 1995) protests that “self” and “identity” are terms used incorrectly and interchangeably by laypersons and students alike. With reference to narrative and psychodynamic constructivism, he succinctly describes the identity as being the “storied self” (McAdams, 1995, p. 385). The identity provides “the quality of unity and purpose of the self” (McAdams, 1995, p.385). His statement that identity refers to the manner “in which the self may be arranged, constructed, and eventually told” (McAdams, 1995, p.385) is emotively appealing and corresponds to the views of Soares *et al.* (2017) that adoption is not a singular

situation, but forms an omnipresent and dynamic domain of an adoptee's life, demanding ongoing exploration and sharing.

Erikson (1963) theorises that throughout the life cycle of a person, identity development and formation takes place within “the process of establishing a coherent sense of self” (Knight, 2017, p.1048). According to Erikson (1950, cited in Read, 2008, p.59), self-identity refers to the “content and self-experience of identity, while the ego identity refers to the process of identity formation”. Pheifer and Brenkman (2018) refer to self-identity as a key developmental task in childhood. A healthy personal and social self-identity appears to be a prerequisite for a successful adulthood, manifested by emotional wellbeing, optimal performance and the establishment of significant interpersonal relationships (Pheifer and Brenkman, 2018; Erikson, 1963, 1968). It also makes provision for positive social and personal commitments and goals, motivation, autonomy and psychosocial well-being (Pheifer & Brenkman, 2018; Oyserman *et al.*, 2014, 2017).

Waterman (2020, 1988) recognises the connection between the past, present and future, which are relevant to an adoptee's experience, lived trauma and the importance of behaviour and motivation in identity development and well-being.

The working definition for self-identity for this study has been derived from the concepts and postulates of Oyserman *et al.* (2009, 2017), Waterman (1988), Erikson (1963, 1968) and the sociologists Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1981), Breakwell (1986) and Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010, 2012). Their definitions have been adopted because their theories regarding identity development are widely accepted and emphasise the aspects of identity deemed pertinent to this study.

Thus, for the purpose of this research, the self-identity comprises:

- the stable and committed characteristic traits,
- values, goals and beliefs,
- social relationships,
- as well as the membership of groups that the child finds emotionally and socially satisfying.

As awareness develops and relationships evolve,

- the self-identity may be sustained, developed, changed or transformed to achieve future success,
- while the constructed identity creates a sameness and continuity of meaning for others.

Most identity theorists approach identity development from within an individual and/or social framework. Here, postulations from both schools of thought have been used without preference and with equal emphasis to explain the researched phenomenon. It should, however, be noted that this is a

qualitative study, and the framework may be adjusted or expanded to accommodate the emergent nature of the qualitative research as data is collected (Creswell *et al.*, 2014).

### 3.4. Individual Developmental Theories of Self-Identity

*"Heredity proposes...development disposes" (Medawar in Bowlby, 1969, p.265).*

#### 3.4.1. Attachment Theory

Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth, together with Bell (1972), revolutionised the way the world viewed attachment of children to their parents or caregivers. Despite being challenged by 21<sup>st</sup> century researchers for placing too much emphasis on the mother as significant attachment figure, the Attachment theory remains influential and current (Pylypa, 2016; Pittman *et al.*, 2011; Fearon, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Van Ijzendoorn, Lapsley & Roisman, 2010).

Bowlby (1969) based his Attachment theory on the notion that an infant requires secure attachment to a significant caregiver to ensure survival:

- When the infant perceives danger, the significant caregiver must offer safety.
- Likewise, in distress the caregiver must administer comfort.
- If the infant experiences isolation, the caregiver should be in close proximity.
- Finally, in an environment of chaos, the caregiver is tasked with providing predictability and stability (Bowlby, 1969; Wilcox & Baim, 2016).

Contemporary attachment theorists such as Wilcox and Baim (2016) and social worker and author Harlow (2019) acknowledge the primary motivator of survival, but also make allowances for psychological, social and neurobiological aspects of human development, bringing the theory more in alignment with today's inclusive viewpoint. Bowlby identified the negative and far-reaching impact of a mother-child bond disrupted by separation, deprivation and bereavement. These are factors intrinsically implied and often encountered in adoption (Goldberg, Muir & Kerr, 1995; Brodzinsky, 2011; Brodzinsky & Smith, 2018). He also emphasised the importance of *infant* attachment, deeming the baby naturally programmed to respond to sensitive caregiving in the first three years (Bowlby, 1969).

As early as 1951, Bowlby made allowances for a maternal substitute figure, hence the applicability to the adoptive process (Barth, Crea, John, Thoburn & Quinton, 2005; Barone & Lionetti, 2012; Kerr



& Cossar, 2014; Piermattei, Pace, Tambelli, D'Onofrio & Di Folco, 2017; Barone, Lionetti & Green, 2017). He subsequently included other primary caregivers, such as the father, in his Attachment theory.

Both Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1972) described parent-child attachment as an essential and emotional bond between a child and his/her primary caregiver, based on the need for safety and security, while simultaneously instilling a sense of trust in the child (Pylypa, 2016). This concept has been supported by several adoption authors. Benware (2013), Barone and Lionetti (2012) and Kerr and Cossar (2014) concur with Bowlby (1969) that early, secure attachment between the adoptive parents and the adoptee will improve the well-being and future success of the child. Table 3.2 tabulates the ages as attachment develops.

**Table 3.2**

*Stages in Attachment theory*

*Note.* Bowlby, 1969

Stage of attachment	Age of baby
Pre-attachment	Birth to 6 weeks
Attachment in making	6 weeks to 8 months
Clear-cut attachment phase	8 months to 18 months
Formation of reciprocal relationships	18 months and onwards

Ainsworth and Bell and Ainsworth's (1969, 1972, 1979) independent and forefront methodology made it possible to test several of Bowlby's statements. She contributed the more dynamic concept of the "attachment figure as a secure base from which an infant can explore the world" (Goldberg *et al.*, 1995, p.45).

The focus of the current study is the TRA child. Thus, the cross-cultural mother and child attachment findings by Bell and Ainsworth (1972) warrant specific mention. The comparison was made with the aid of a longitudinal study of parent/child attachment in Ugandan and American families in the 1960s to 1970s. These findings, together with preceding work, led to Bell and Ainsworth identifying three styles of attachment, *irrespective of culture*. Subsequently, based on the work of and together with Ainsworth and Bell, Main and Solomon added a fourth style of attachment in 1986 (Main, Hesse & Hesse, 2011).

These styles, still referred to today (Pylypa, 2016), were identified as being firstly secure, secondly avoidant, thirdly, resistant and fourthly, disorganised and insecure attachment (Bell & Ainsworth, 1972; Main *et al.*, 2011). Parental styles of the Ugandan and American mothers varied, but the response of the babies and children to these varying styles was the same, irrespective of their nationality or race.

Children experiencing secure attachments were happier and more independent and positively inclined to explore.

More recent research (Fearon *et al.*, 2010; Pylypa, 2016) has elaborated on the attachment styles described by Bell and Ainsworth (1972). Acknowledging the importance of initial secure attachment, Fearon *et al.* (2010) identify five other contributors to a secure and healthy attachment and a child's subsequent healthy self-identity. Firstly, a *positive and parent-guided exploration of the child's social environment* improves self-confidence. Secondly, when children experience a *generalised positive social expectation*, their attachment is more secure. Thirdly, children are more secure in an environment where there are *moral ethics and values* that they understand. This is aided, fourthly, by the *prosocial modelling* of sensitive caregivers. Finally, healthy and secure attachment with subsequent vigorous identity development is prevalent when these contributions are made on a *continual and consistent basis*.

Piermattei *et al.* (2017) agree with Fearon *et al.* (2010) that other factors are also at play in guiding future relationships. They state that consistent and recurring emotional and cognitive exchanges between the young child and the parental figure that respond to the child's signals in a timely and appropriate manner result in the child experiencing a positive emotional state from which to develop his or her identity and limit negative impact.

However, the contention of the Attachment theory that the first three years of a child predict, and guide future relationships remains controversial (Pylypa, 2016; Fearon *et al.*, 2010). Barth *et al.* (2005) caution against oversimplifying the social and interpersonal processes at play in attachment as a predictor of healthy self-identity and emotional stability. Citing several longitudinal studies that do not prove the correlation between secure attachment and future success and well-being of the child, Barth *et al.* (2005) raise the objection that: "although attachment has been found to be stable over time... attachment representations are vulnerable to difficult and chaotic life experiences, and thus lack predictive power when considering the future life chances" (Barth *et al.*, 2005, p.258). Thus, secure attachment alone cannot ensure the well-being of the TRA child since both adoption and race are potentially difficult and chaotic life experiences.

### 3.4.2. *Attachment Theory and Adoption*

Pylypa (2016) cautions against pre-empting attachment issues as inevitable with transracially/transnationally adopted children. She posits, like Barth *et al.* (2005), that there are many factors influencing future attachment and positive relationships, and that if an adoptable infant is not

immediately placed with the adoptive parents<sup>16</sup> this will not necessarily lead to lasting attachment and/or subsequent relationship issues.

Furthermore, Pylypa (2016) warns against overly enthusiastic practices to create and simulate bonds to ensure attachment with an older (six months and older) adoptive baby or child. She states that isolation from all other people than the immediate nuclear family for a protracted period, baby-wearing against the body, co-sleeping and treating an older baby like a new-born are not sustainable practices, “extending beyond traditional good parenting” (Pylypa, 2016, p.435). These practices make severe demands on the new adoptive parents. She feels that the consistency and continuity of the caregivers, rather than the chronological age of the adoptee, are more important in establishing secure attachment (Pylypa, 2016). This statement is tested during this research, as the children were adopted at different ages (between one and eight months) and under diverse circumstances.

In conclusion, there is substantiated proof that an early secure attachment up to the age of three lays a good foundation, *albeit not a guarantee*, for future positive relationship development and positive identity development (Pylypa, 2016; Barth *et al.*, 2005). However, the Attachment theory does not explain the development of the identity beyond three years. Since this study focuses on the young school going TRA child up to the age of ten, the more age-inclusive developmental work of Erikson, dealing with the formation of the self-awareness and self-identity at an older age, must be included to establish a broader and further understanding.

### 3.4.3. *Erik Erikson’s Psychosocial Development Theory*

*“[Epigenetic principle] ...anything that grows has a ground plan, and out of this the parts arise” (Erikson, 1963, p.65).*

Erikson’s theory of identity development remains highly influential (McLean & Syed, 2015; Syed & McClean, 2016, 2017). This theory acknowledges an individual *and* social component of identity development. It also posits that psychosocial and emotional growth are sequential, making the negotiation and influence of the preceding stages significant (Knight, 2017). During adolescence, the

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<sup>16</sup>In South Africa, the various legal processes, the high case load that impedes rapid statutory placement, the appointment of a suitable adoption organisation, investigations regarding the child and the biological family, as well as the stipulation that a biological mother may rescind her consent to adoption within 60 days, imply that adoption of new-born and very young infants is rare (Children's Act, No 38 of 2005: NACSA, n.d.).

main focus is the consolidation of the self-identity (Neagu & Sebba, 2019; Knight, 2017; Erikson, 1963, 1968, 1980; Ramokgopa, 2001). Erikson believed that the self-identity becomes a firmer concept in adolescence, based on the coherent integration of the younger sense of self (McAdams, 2001, 2013), and allows for autonomy, purpose in life, agency and self-esteem (Noble-Carr & Woodman, 2018).

The adolescent faces the challenge of identity cohesion versus role confusion and begins to explore and employ specific social and interpersonal roles at the expense of others (Noble-Carr & Woodman, 2018; McAdams, 2001). Successful completion of this stage mandates effective negotiation of the preceding stages (Knight, 2017; Erikson, 1968). What sets Erikson's theory apart from its psychoanalytic predecessors is firstly his notion that identity is vigorous and fluid (Noble-Carr & Woodman, 2018) and will continue to develop throughout the life cycle of the person (Erikson, 1963). Secondly, this development occurs in the presence of society and ecology and not in intrapersonal isolation (Erikson, 1963, 1968; McAdams, 2013). Thirdly, his theory moves the focus away from constrictive, intrapsychic forces to an interpersonal and relational dynamic (Knight, 2017). Lastly, Erikson studied children and adults across different cultures, making his theory universally applicable (Ramokgopa, 2001).

According to Pittman *et al.* (2011), although Erikson did not use the language of constructivism, his identity framework is consistent with constructivist principles, the philosophical paradigm of the current study. Pittman *et al.* (2011, p.41) posit that identity is a "*psychosocial co-construction that arises through interaction with a culturally situated context and with the significant others who share that context*". Additionally, McAdams, a firm supporter of narrative identity development (a modern derivative of Erikson's theory (McLean & Syed, 2015)) states that a narrative identity is a psychosocial construction in which children reflect and try to make sense of past experiences, their world and relationships, linking life experiences and an imagined future to create a personal life story that has purpose and identity (McAdams, 2013) This links to Waterman's (1988) conviction that an identity is irrevocably connected to the individual's past, present and future. For all of these aforementioned reasons, Erikson's Psycho-social identity theory is a valuable conceptual instrument in the current research.

### **3.4.3.1. Brief Overview of the Psychosocial Stages Relevant to this Study**

In Erikson's psychosocial development theory, there are eight developmental stages that occur throughout a lifetime, of which the first four (up to the age of 12 years) are germane to this research. Successful completion of these stages will have a positive influence on future stages. These stages "emerge in the context of their parents' or other adults' development of intimacy" (Knight, 2017, p.1049). Each stage is characterised by two conflicting forces that need to be negotiated. Successful

task completion or negotiation of these forces results in an achieved virtue or skill that enables and empowers the self-identity (Erikson, 1963; Singer, Marcia & Josselson, 2013; Knight, 2017; Noble-Carr & Woodman, 2018).

Failure to resolve the conflict does not necessarily prevent progression to the next stage but will result in problematic identity formation specific to that incomplete task/unattained virtue. Erikson (1968) noted that previous stages echo in the current stage and influence the negotiation of future stages. Maldevelopment occurs in the absence of successful integration, with maladaptation being a mild manifestation thereof, while malignant tendencies require psychological intervention (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Knight, 2017; Syed & McClean, 2016). See Table 3.3 for a tabulated outlay of the eight stages, noting that the first four stages have relevance to this study.

**Table 3.3**

*Erikson's Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development*

*Note.* Adapted from Erikson, 1963, 1968; Knight, 2017

Stage	Age (+/-)	Task description	Challenge	Virtue/skill	Maldevelopment Maladaptive vs malignant tendency
<b>Infancy</b>	0-12/12	Basic trust vs mistrust	Develop sense that world is a good and safe place	Hope and optimism	Sensory maladjustment/withdrawal
<b>Toddler</b>	1-3 years	Autonomy vs shame and doubt	Realise one is independent and capable of decision making	Healthy will	Shameless wilfulness/compulsion
<b>Play age</b>	3-6 years	Initiative vs guilt	Willingness to attempt new things and accept failure	Purpose	Ruthlessness/inhibition
<b>Early school age</b>	6-12 years	Industriousness vs inferiority	Acquire basic skills and cooperation	Competence	Narrow virtuosity/inertia
<b>Adolescence</b>	12-18 years	Identity cohesion vs role confusion	Develop a lasting and integrated sense of self	Fidelity	Fanaticism/repudiation
<b>Young adulthood</b>	-	Intimacy vs isolation	Commit to long-term romantic relationship	Love	Promiscuity/exclusivity
<b>Middle Adulthood</b>	-	Generativity vs stagnation/self-absorption	Assisting younger people through rearing and caring	Care	Over-extension/rejectivity
<b>Old age</b>	-	Integrity vs despair	View that life is satisfactory and worthwhile	Wisdom	Presumption/disdain

- **Trust vs mistrust:** Expected or healthy self-identity development, according to Erikson (1963, 1968), begins in the first year of life (the trust vs mistrust stage). This stage shares similarities with the Attachment theory (Pittman *et al.*, 2011). The baby engages with the world through his or her mouth, the most sensitive part of the body (Ramokgopa, 2001; Erikson, 1963; Knight, 2017). Through timeous feeding, the satisfaction of needs and consistent caring, the baby forms a relationship of trust with his or her caregivers. When the baby has achieved enough trust in his or her "sameness and the continuity of the outer providers" (Erikson, 1963, p.248), he or she may consider the world a safe place (Erikson, 1963).

In this "sameness", reference is not merely made to the race or likeness of the caregiver, but rather the consistency and continuity of presence (Knight, 2017; Erikson, 1968). However, anecdotally, Quinn, Lee, Pascalis and Xiao (2020) note that the basis of racial recognition and identity in an infant result from the race of the primary caregiver. Therefore, in the case of a South African TRA baby, he or she will initially recognize and identify with a White race, since in most cases, the primary caregivers are White. Quinn *et al.* (2020) refers to this preferential occurrence as *narrowing*, a process that may be offset through regular visual exposure to faces of another race.

The achievement of trust is the first task of the ego and forms the basis of the identity and of a sense of self "which will later combine a sense of being "all right", of being oneself, and of becoming what other people trust one will become" (Erikson, 1963, p.249). The virtue of hope and optimism develops through successful task completion (Kaplan, Sadock & Grebb, 1994), allowing for an eagerness to experience the future.

- **Autonomy vs shame and doubt:** The psychosocial stage of autonomy vs. shame and doubt follows the trust/mistrust stage and continues until the child is three (toddler). This stage is made possible through increased physical control (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Knight, 2017). The child now has the physical ability of "holding on or letting go at will" (Ramokgopa, 2001, p.34). This is the period of choosing and refusing food and concerted efforts at potty-training. It is also the developmental stage where the child begins to experience the difference between what he or she wants to do and what he or she is told to do, often leading to emotional outbursts as a display of independence and will (Erikson, 1963; 1968, 1980). This burgeoning independence must be thoughtfully guided by the caregivers, as a sense of failure and shame will impact negatively on the child's self-esteem and sense of self (Knight, 2017; Ramokgopa, 2010; Noble-Carr & Woodman, 2018).

Erikson (1963, p.252, p.254) states that "shame supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at: in one word, self-conscious. One is visible and not ready to be visible". When a TRA child is exposed (within this psychosocial context) and is visibly different from those with whom he or she has formed a relationship of trust (the primary caregivers), the conflict may be more challenging to negotiate.

Erikson cautions that "from a sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem comes a lasting sense of good will and pride; from a sense of loss of self-control and of foreign over-control comes a lasting propensity for doubt and shame". The virtue of this stage is a healthy will, which contributes to the development of a healthy self-identity (Kaplan *et al.*, 1994; Knight, 2017).

- **Initiative vs guilt:** Once the child discovers the power of his body and mind (at three to six years), the psychosocial phase of initiative versus guilt begins. The preschool child begins to develop a superego, as the sense of self is heightened and there is an increased awareness of his or her gender and gender differences (Erikson, 1963, 1980).

Concurrently, the growing child develops cognitive abilities that allow them to observe and articulate more accurate and detailed self-descriptions (Pittman *et al.*, 2011). These descriptions often contain things that the children have heard others say about them, hence the individual and social component of identity development (Erikson, 1963, 1968, 1980; McAdams, 2013). According to Erikson (1963, 1980), these descriptions/identifications ultimately contribute to the Psychosocial identity, as all the identifications gradually integrate. "The emerging identity bridges the stages of childhood when the bodily self and the parental images are given their cultural connotations" (Erikson, 1963, p.235).

At this stage, the child may be in a conflict situation with his or her parents as he or she strives to become more independent (Kaplan *et al.*, 1994). The quest is to become self-reliant and self-fulfilling, which is often at odds with the wishes and guidance of the parents (Ramokgopa, 2001). Erikson (1963, 1968, 1980) identifies the potential for rage, both exhibited and suppressed, which may form the basis of adult pathology. A parental approach that encourages self-observation, self-guidance and self-punishment may prohibit the rage and possible psychopathology (Knight, 2017). However, Erikson warns that a stable sense of self is a prerequisite to this successful self-monitoring (Kaplan *et al.*, 1994).

For the TRA child, as for any other child, this is the stage where the child imitates his or her primary caregivers. He or she will imitate the way parents conduct themselves in social situations, adhere to the moral conduct practised by the parents and mimic the traditions and cultural activities displayed by them (Erikson, 1968, 1980; Knight, 2017; Ramokgopa, 2001; Hailey & Olson, 2013). This is a crucial step in the development of the self-identity and one that

will profoundly affect subsequent group membership. Successful completion of this potentially volatile stage results in a sense of purpose (Kaplan *et al.*, 1994).

- **Industry vs inferiority:** The preceding chapter emphasised the many new aspects, such as racial awareness and formation of more complex relationships within a larger and more complicated environment that the school going TRA child must manage (Barn, 2013, 2014; Shutts *et al.*, 2013; Shutts, 2015; Nesdale *et al.*, 2010; Quintana, 1998; Hailey & Olson, 2013). Successful management of these aspects is aided by a robust and healthy developing self-identity (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016; Quintana, 2007, 1998).

"School seems to be a culture all by itself, with its own goals and limits, its achievements and disappointments" (Erikson, 1963, p.259). McAdams (2013) describes children of this age as rational, playful and goal orientated. According to McAdams (2001, 2013), children will now hone their identity through the experiences and goals they encounter with others.

Industry versus inferiority commences at school going age (6 years) and continues up to the onset of adolescence (Erikson, 1963, 1968). It holds the virtue of competence as reward for successful completion (Kaplan *et al.*, 1994). Failure to negotiate the two conflicting forces of industry and inferiority may, in some instances, cause regression to a less demanding phase. Successful resolution of this phase allows the child to understand the larger community and to be admitted to its more meaningful and demanding roles (Erikson, 1963, 1980).

#### **3.4.3.2. Industry Vs Inferiority: The Early School-Going Black TRA Child in South Africa**

While dealing with Erikson's developmental challenges of industry versus inferiority, the early school going children must at the same time traverse potentially negative influences on identity development due to race and ethnicity (Erikson, 1963; Syed & McLean, 2016). Syed and McLean (2017) broach the subject of sensitively introducing culturally significant technologies that children are taught in school environments during this early enthusiastic and deeply curious phase (Ramokgopa, 2001). In South Africa, social subjects like history and life orientation have the potential to elicit an emotional response, trigger conflict or arouse racial dissent amongst the pupils (Mayeza & Vincent, 2019; Morgan & Langrehr, 2019). For the TRA Black child, this may potentially lead to confusion, as he or she has a vested interest in both races and may share an interest in both racial histories and cultural practices.

Although parents and primary caregivers are still important, the children receive much of their tutelage from other adults – teachers and coaches – in the community (Syed & McLean, 2017). A TRA child must consider and integrate the views of his or her parents, his or her own experiences, his peer group, as well as the teachings and guidance from other authority figures whose opinion and



knowledge might differ from his or her current understanding. According to Piaget (1929), a child of this age is not yet skilled in abstract reasoning. These possibly contradictory views from significant role players may lead to cognitive confusion and misunderstanding, emotional turmoil and relationship insecurity in the early school going Black TRA child. Any of these factors would be detrimental to healthy self-identity development, making this developmental stage particularly difficult to negotiate by the vulnerable TRA child in South Africa.

### **3.4.3.3. Psychosocial Development Theory; Conclusion**

Successful completion of these first four phases of Erikson's psychosocial development theory heralds an increase in a child's ability to cultivate a sense of wellbeing and a robust sense of self, a necessary requirement for a healthy self-identity. This also implies an accumulation of virtues which would contribute to the child's being "all right, of being oneself, and of becoming what other people trust one will become" (Erikson, 1963, p.249). Effective stage completion and skill accumulation are measures of great success for the early school going Black TRA child in dealing with possible adoptive and racial identity issues and the other naturally expected developmental challenges pointed out by Erikson (1963).

## **3.5. Social Theories Concerning Identity Development**

A criticism often directed at Erikson's Psychosocial theory is the seemingly insufficient emphasis placed on the role of social context in identity development, although the school environment is explained in detail in the theory (Knight, 2017). Faircloth (2012) and Gee (2000) state that identity is socially and contextually bound, demanding recognition as a specific person in a specific social context. Both authors opine that there is a constant interplay of social, personal and cultural dynamics that impact on identity development. Identity only takes form in relationship to others (Knight, 2017; Faircloth, 2012; Gee, 2000).

Acknowledging race, ethnicity, culture and even physical appearance is essential in determining identity development, according to numerous authors (Quinn *et al.*, 2020; Hailey & Olson, 2013; Schutts, 2015; Schwartz, Luyckx & Vignoles, 2011), as these factors affect group membership. Schwartz *et al.* (2011) state that identity development is embedded in membership of social groups, treasured material possessions and position within a geographical space. Heeding the criticism and acknowledging the social factors that contribute to identity development in TRA necessitates the inclusion of social identity theories.

### 3.5.1. *Social Identity Theory (SIT)*

*"Social identity theory focuses on how socio-structural factors affect self-definition, attitudes and behaviour" (Mols & Weber, 2012, p.506).*

An assumption critical to the understanding of the place of SIT in this research is that "...it holds that people sometimes see themselves (and act) as *individuals*, at other times as *group members* (the so-called *interpersonal-intergroup* continuum)" (Brown, 2020, p.798). Development of a group/social identity is based on the belief of an individual that he or she belongs to a particular social group through a process of categorisation (Mangum & Block, 2018) and self-enhancement (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995).

Earlier, Tajfel (1978, p.63) defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." Tajfel (1982) identified a group as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to share common characteristics, assign themselves a social category, impart similar emotional involvement and portray consensus within the group. Hogg *et al.* (1995) posit further that these groups are contextually bound, and that an individual may belong to many groups as determined by social environment.

According to the Social identity theory of Tajfel (1978, 1981) and Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1981), self-categorisation is an automatic engagement of a person with a group when in a social setting. A child or person places him or herself in a distinctive social group through three cognitive and sequential processes of *social categorisation*, *identification* and, lastly, *comparison* (Mangum & Block, 2018). Membership of and integration into a chosen/ingroup is predictive of the well-being of the individual's identity development (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Mols & Weber, 2013; Haslam, Cornelissen & Werner, 2017).

During initial social categorisation, membership and groups are randomly selected and loosely connected. There is a limited sense of loss at the termination of group membership. Members do not yet try and emulate or influence other group members, and the categorisation has very little influence on identity and self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Mols & Weber, 2013). This may be likened to the interaction of children at a birthday party, who may opt to be with the other same-gender or same-race partygoers. There is a cohesiveness that ends at the end of the party, with little sense of loss at the dissolution of the group.

Social identification results in a more intensely selected group in which values and norms are shared. There is a sense of belonging, and the personal and social identities are modified and developed

within the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This intragroup cohesiveness is strong, and there is a deeper affinity for the fellow members. Due to the strong identification, the group members adopt the consensual viewpoint of the group, and all members behave in a similar manner (Mangum & Block, 2018). According to Du Plessis and Naude (2017), individuals internalise the qualities of the in/chosen group.

Once social identification has been established, social comparison occurs. Group members will usually view their group as being the favourable ingroup, possessing desirable characteristics, as opposed to outgroups (Mangum & Block, 2018; Mols & Weber, 2013). The outgroup serves as an evaluative and comparative social instrument and tends to experience discrimination at the hands of the chosen ingroup. The difference between the ingroup and outgroup is referred to as the favourability gap by Mangum & Block (2018) and, more historically, as the minimal group paradigm by Tajfel and Turner (1979).

The most inclusive form of social grouping is social identification and subsequent social comparison, according to Tajfel and Turner (1979). It is vital for identity wellbeing to be viewed as worthy by the preferred group. Self-esteem is dependent on being part of the ingroup of choice. When the member is found favourable to the ingroup, the social identity and self-identity are satisfied. The converse is also true: being unwanted by the group of choice results in a dissatisfied and unhealthy identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1981).

Mangum and Block (2018), Mols and Weber (2012) and Buckingham, Frings and Albery (2013) postulate that belonging to the group positively affects individual identity, behaviour and attitudes. The social support lent to a group member acts as a barrier to physical, psychological and interrelationship challenges. In addition, Du Plessis (2014) states that social classification organises the social environment, allowing the individual to define others and be afforded the opportunity to define him or herself through group comparison.

The TRA child may, through similar physical characteristics such as skin colour and facial features, potentially belong to a Black group, while at the same time prefer to belong to the White group, with whose culture and traditions he or she is more familiar. This is similar to the conclusion reached by Brown (2020) that attributes the multiple facets of a social identity to the choice and concurrent membership of different groups, citing immigrant groups that opt to identify themselves as biracial, belonging to two racial groups concurrently rather than to an exclusive racial group.

The result of potentially belonging to both groups which, depending on the membership, may be perceived as either the in- or outgroup, may become quite complex and warrants further exploration (Brown, 2020). Confusion may arise during the process of social classification, profoundly affecting

the self-identity. It is hoped that the research questions of this work may provide some answers regarding group membership.

### 3.5.2. *Identity Process Theory (IPT)*

Social categorisation, a fundamental step in SIT (described in section 3.5.1), requires specific socio-cognitive processes. The cognitive processes that facilitate social grouping and categorisation referred to by Barth; McDonald; Lochman; Boxmeyer; Powell; Dillon and Sallee (2013), Mols and Weber (2012) and Mangum and Block (2018) are explained using premises of the Identity process theory (IPT). IPT is based on the early work of Breakwell (1986), Vignoles, Manzi, Regalia, Jemmolo and Scabini (2008) and the more recent work of Jaspal (2014, 2015), and Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010, 2012).

Children do not develop physically, socially and emotionally in the absence of significant influences in the community (Erikson, 1963). The external world, represented by the immediate family, extended family, community, school and others, plays a significant role in the development and definition of self-identity. Breakwell's IPT (Breakwell, 1986; Vignoles *et al.*, 2008; Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010, 2012; Jaspal 2014, 2015) deals with the way the person (child) defines, constructs and modifies his identity within the extended community and changing social environment to avoid threats to that identity. Breakwell (1986) and Jaspal (2014, 2015) postulate that the self-identity consists of a "unique constellation of self-aspects or socio-cognitive categories derived from social experience" (Jaspal, 2014, p.129). These self-aspects are similar to the SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1981) and include group membership, personality characteristics and physical characteristics.

According to IPT sociologists, the engagement of two universal psychological processes, namely assimilation-accommodation and evaluation, guide identity construction and modification. Firstly, the assimilation-accommodation process occurs when new information about the self is absorbed into the current identity structure. Amendments to the identity are made to accommodate the new assimilations, continuously modifying the identity. Breakwell (1986) uses the term assimilation-accommodation as proposed by Piaget (1971) in his cognitive theory. Piaget states that these two critical processes construct and reconstruct what is perceived and observed, thus promoting intelligent behaviour and equilibrium (Piaget, 1971).

The second universal psychological process is evaluation, where meaning and value are assigned to the contents of the old and new identity (Breakwell, 1986; Breakwell, 2020). As the identity constructs change, the meaning and values may change. For example, a Black school going TRA child might have considered his or her hair texture as being unfavourable within the family environment,

since his or her White parents cannot style it like their own. With the visual exposure and growing awareness of other Black children and their intricate hairstyles, the TRA child will assimilate and accommodate the possibilities, subsequently re-evaluating his or her hair and finding it favourable. In this way, self-esteem is promoted and enhanced.

Assimilation-accommodation and evaluation are guided by four principles. These are identified by Breakwell (1986) as *continuity*, *distinctiveness*, *self-efficacy* and *self-esteem*. Vignoles *et al.* (2008) redefined these as discrete identity motivators, and Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010) contributed two more principles, *belonging* and *meaning*, to ensure and enhance the likelihood of *psychological coherence* (Table 3.4). It is important to note that these principles are dynamic and determined by the social context. For instance, a TRA child may experience elevated self-esteem and a sense of belonging when in a familiar home environment, while having a low self-esteem and lack of continuity at school when group interaction is required.

**Table 3.4**

*Motivators and Their Role in Identity*

*Note.* Adapted from Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010, 2012; Vignoles *et al.*, 2008

Discrete identity motivators/principles	Rationale/role
<b>Continuity</b>	To experience identity stability across time and situation despite significant life changes
<b>Distinctiveness/uniqueness</b>	To feel as if he or she can be distinguished from others
<b>Self-efficacy</b>	To experience feeling of being in control and capable of influencing the social, physical and psychological environment
<b>Self-esteem</b>	To see himself or herself in a positive light and experience feelings of self and social worth
<b>Belonging</b>	To feel included and accepted within their social circles
<b>Purpose</b>	To feel that his or her life has meaning and purpose

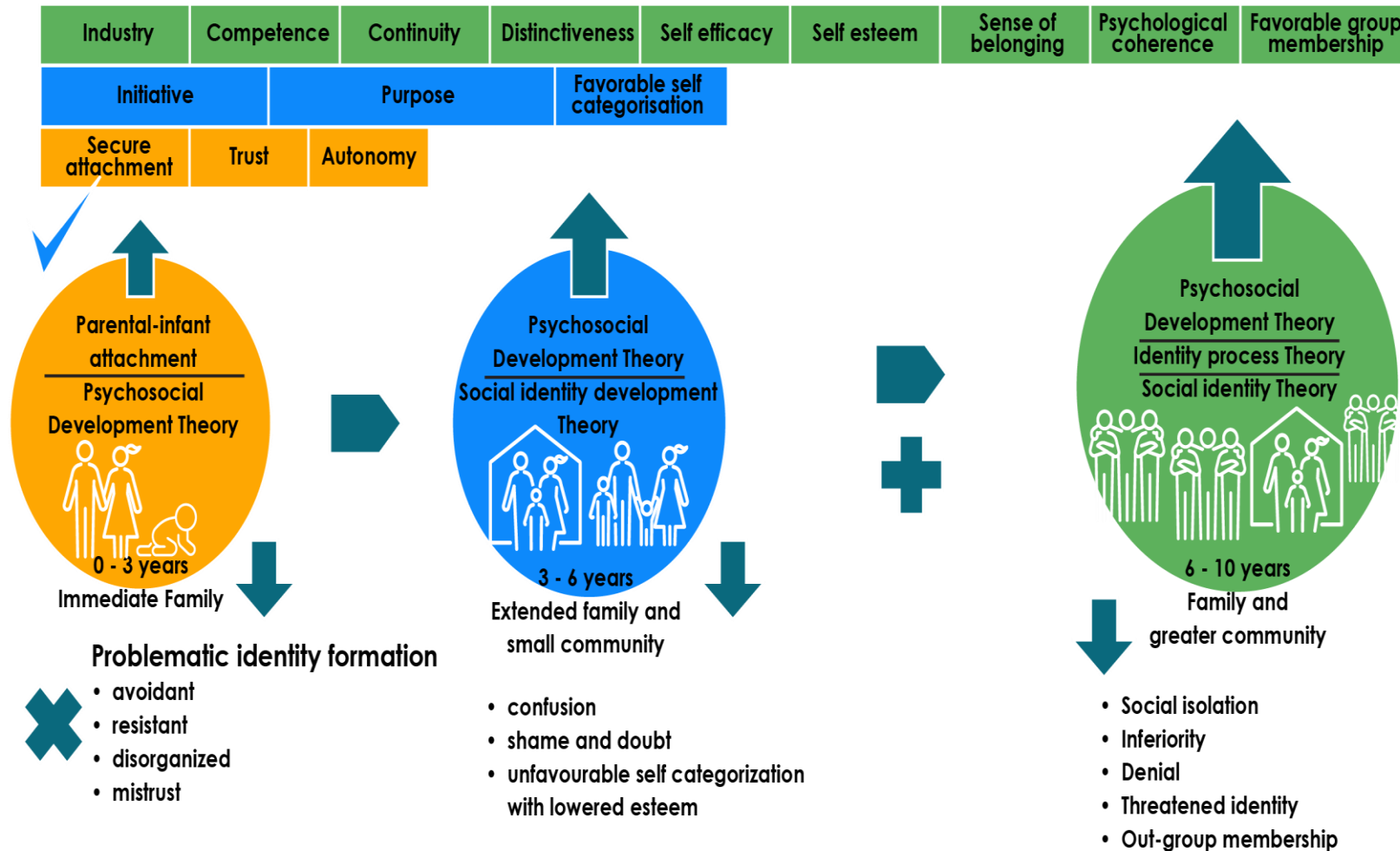
Breakwell (1986), Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010, 2012) and Jaspal (2014) theorise that motivators *positively* influencing the identity, such as a sense of continuity and increased self-esteem, and become more central to the identity construct. This ensures group membership and social categorisation favourable to the wellbeing of the self-identity. However, when the processes of assimilation-accommodation and evaluation *do not* promote psychological coherence, the identity is threatened on an intrapsychic, interpersonal and intergroup level (Breakwell, 1986; 2020; Jaspal, 2014).

Several coping strategies for a threatened identity are identified by Breakwell (1986; 2020) and Jaspal (2014, 2015). On an *intrapsychic* level, the person or child may resort to denial or re-conceptualisation of the element that causes non-compliance or disrupts one of the six motivators. On an *interpersonal* level, a child or person experiencing a threatened identity may prefer social isolation

or exhibit opposition to the authority of others. These people or children are often viewed as being oppositional or disruptive, and punishing them creates a greater threat to the identity (Breakwell, 1986).

Group membership may be contrived, or a less favourable group may be selected to alleviate uncertainty (Breakwell, 2020; 1986). A group may also be selected that poses the least threat to an identity on an *intergroup level*. These group selections limit the positive affirmation derived from being in the ingroup (Nesdale *et al.*, 2005, 2010). Recognising these coping strategies as exhibited behaviour will contribute to a better understanding of the TRA child within a social setting, with more appropriate and timely interventions.

## Healthy identity formation



**Figure 3.1**

*Schematic Representation of Conceptual Framework – Identity Development Theories*

*Note.* Adapted from Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1979; Erikson, 1963, 1968; Nesdale *et al.*, 2004, 2005, 2014; Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010, 2012)

### 3.6. Healthy Self-Identity Formation – A Conceptual Framework Integration

The schematic diagram (Figure 3.1) represents the integration of the individual and social identity development theories. Initially, while the infant and/or small child (0-3 years) is still physically and emotionally dependent and lives mostly within the presence of the primary caregivers, the individual identity building blocks of secure attachment, trust and tentative autonomy are created and moulded. Here the primary caregivers, usually the parents, serve as the source of early identity formation (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1979; Erikson, 1963, 1968).

Between 3-6 years, the child develops greater independence and improved motor skills and refines his or her autonomy, and the social and physical world widens. There is more contact with other people, usually from the extended family and within a contained and immediate, small community, such as church and nursery school. Here the second tier of positive identity building blocks forms, including the experience of initiative and purpose, favourable feedback and unthreatening self-categorisation (Erikson, 1963, 1968, Nesdale *et al.*, 2004, 2007, 2014; Shutts *et al.*, 2011, 2013; Shutts, 2015). At this stage, the individual and social identity development theories start to overlap, and the community and individual sources of identity formation begin to intersect.

The early school going child (six to ten years) finds him or herself spending more time within the larger community (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Rosnati & Ferrari, 2014). The influences and identity development contributors are racially, culturally and socially diverse (Snyder, 2017; Shutts *et al.*, 2013). The social impact of categorisation and group membership, while taking precedence and a more prominent role, still collaborates with the individual developmental tasks of industry versus inferiority (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, Tajfel, 1981; Brown, 2020; Breakwell, 1986, 2020; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010, 2012; Erikson, 1963, 1968). Identity at this developmental and social stage is largely developed and moulded by the greater society and less by the immediate caregivers.

However, the development of a healthy self-identity is sequential and dependent on the preceding well-being (Erikson, 1963; Soares *et al.*, 2017). Failure to acquire a firm *individual* basis for positive self-identity might jeopardise the more extensive and intricate processes required in building a mature *social* identity development. It stands to reason that while a sense of belonging is still being experienced, a high self-esteem, a sense of competency and continuity as well as a sense of distinctiveness are strong contributors to a healthy self-identity (Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010, 2012).

The converse is also true. Unfortunately, as autonomy and independence increase and social interaction becomes more frequent, the protective buffering and intervention of the primary caregivers



diminishes (Soares *et al.*, 2017; Snyder, 2017; Smit, 2002). The child is left to his or her own devices more frequently, required to rely on emerging and immature coping strategies and inadequate logical thinking while still possessing mainly concrete thought processes (Piaget, 1929). An inability to attain group membership of a desired group, questions of “how” and “why” that are inadequately addressed, feelings of incompetency and inferiority, as well as being the object of prejudice or stereotyping may adversely affect the developing self-identity (Shutts *et al.*, 2013; Nesdale *et al.*, 2005; 2014; Snyder, 2017, Smit, 2002; Soares *et al.*, 2017; Breakwell, 1986).

The schematic representation shows that limiters of identity-growth, both individual (such as feelings of confusion and mistrust) and social (such as isolation and failure to procure favourable group membership) have an increasingly detrimental and far-reaching effect on the self-identity (Shutts *et al.*, 2013; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012; Snyder, 2017; Nesdale *et al.*, 2014; Breakwell, 2020). Disruption of the sequential growth of the self-identity will have a profound effect on the subsequent self-identity formation of the adolescent and young adult (Erikson, 1968, 1980).

It may thus be deduced in an environment that provides for developmental task accomplishment, the establishment and continuation of positive interpersonal relationships within the family and the larger community, and achievement of desired group membership will largely contribute and ensure healthy self-identity growth.

### 3.7. Conclusion of Chapter

All children develop a self-identity through a myriad of factors (Erikson, 1963; 1968). Genetic makeup, hereditary factors and natural physical and cognitive development are their set predispositions, or, according to Grotevant *et al.*, (2017), set domains. Their personal and social identities (collectively: self-identity) are formed by the actions and reactions as well as interventions of their immediate caregivers, their families, their peer group and ultimately, the society they reside in (Bowlby, 1969; Erikson, 1963, 1968; Tajfel & Turner, 1982; Nesdale *et al.*, 2005, 2007, 2014; Breakwell, 1986; Soares *et al.*, 2017).

Firm and trustworthy attachment to significant others and subsequent caring relationships, membership of ingroups and positive self-categorisation all contribute to the formation of a healthy self-identity. Conversely, lack of trust and resulting problematic relationships, social isolation, rejection of group membership, racial confusion and failure to achieve tasks will inhibit and destabilise the growth of a healthy self-identity (Bell & Ainsworth, 1972; Bowlby, 1969; Erikson, 1963, 1968,

1980; Tajfel & Turner, 1982; Nesdale *et al.*, 2005, 2007, 2014; Breakwell, 1986; Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019).

Succinctly stated by McAdams (1995, 2001, 2013), author of the Life Story Model of Identity, founded on the psychodynamic realm of Erikson), the identity of the child takes the form of a story, complete with a theme, a setting, a scene, characters and a plot. Every child traversing his or her developmental journey will encounter obstacles and challenges to a healthy self-identity along the way (Rosnati & Ferrari, 2014; Soares, 2017, 2019). However, the early school going TRA Black child will potentially need to manage more complex demands in addition to the expected challenges (Brown, 2017; Snyder, 2017). Examples of these are hereditary and physical factors that visibly set him or her apart from the adopted family, insecure or new relationships, adverse social responses within a community and possible racial confusion and insecure group membership as his or her understanding and level of education increase (Brown, 2017; Rosnati & Ferrari, 2014; Snyder, 2017; Smit, 2002; Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019).

Coupled with these factors are the intrinsic problems associated with an adoptive identity model and adoptive loss, discussed in the preceding chapter (Grotevant *et al.*, 2011, 2014, 2017; Brodzinsky & Smith, 2018; Brodzinsky, 2011). It would seem the self-identity of the early school going Black TRA child is vulnerable to all these factors that may impact on his or her development. The extent, if any, is not clear in the existing literature, hence the primary research question: How does the self-identity of the early school going Black TRA child present itself?

The following chapter describes the research design, methods and data collections strategies employed to answer this question.

## Chapter 4 Research Design and Methodology

<b>BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONTENT-CHAPTER 4</b>	
<b>BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</b>	
<b>CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION</b>	
How does the self-identity present itself in the early, school going, transracially adopted Black child?	
<b>SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do the adoptive parents describe their engaged world as a TRA family?</li> <li>• How does the teacher of a young transracially adopted child describe the adoptee's self-identity?</li> <li>• What are the individual predictors for a healthy self-identity in the early school going transracially adopted Black child?</li> <li>• What are the systemic predictors for a healthy self-identity in the early school going transracially adopted Black child?</li> </ul>	
<b>PARADIGMATIC ASSUMPTIONS</b>	
Philosophical paradigm	• Social constructivist/interpretivist paradigm
Methodological paradigm	• Qualitative design
<b>RESEARCH DESIGN</b>	
Collective/multiple case study	• Seven purposefully selected TRA children and their families
<b>DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES/SOURCE</b>	
Demographic information and parental questionnaire	• Completed independently and collected from parents
Semi-structured and recorded interview	• Conducted with the parents
Child behaviour checklist	• Completed jointly by teacher and parents
Semi-structured and recorded interview	• Conducted with the teacher
Projective techniques – DAP, KFD and scene building test based on Von Staabs Sceno test	• Completed by the child and assessed by independent child psychologist
Researcher's diary	• Completed by researcher
<b>DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGIES</b>	
Triangulation	• Triangulation of measures, researchers and theory
Qualitative data analysis	• Thematic analysis
<b>ENSURING DATA QUALITY, VERIFICATION AND VALIDATION</b>	
Credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability/authenticity, reflexivity/data storage	

### 4.1. Background to the Research Design and Methodology

From the preceding chapters, it is clear that the development and growth of self-identity commences in early childhood (Nesdale *et al.*, 2017; Breakwell, 1986; Grotevant *et al.*, 2017; Erikson, 1963, 1968). Erikson (1963, p.249) states that “being all right and of being oneself” in adulthood is nested in the establishment of a healthy self-identity, initiated and nurtured in early and middle childhood. In the preceding chapters, several factors contributing to the formation of self-identity were acknowledged. On a personal identity level, the importance of positive attachment to significant others, usually the primary caregivers, was identified by Bell and Ainsworth (1972) and Bowlby (1969). The psychosocial development theory (Erikson, 1963, 1968) stressed the importance of successfully completing set developmental tasks in early childhood that result in the accumulation of social skills and virtues, which in turn promotes healthy self-identity and future wellbeing (Knight, 2017; Ramokgopa, 2001).

Racial awareness and its role in personal and social self-identity development presents at an early age, becoming a strong social determinant at the onset of formal schooling (Quintana & Mahgoub,

2016; Hailey & Olson, 2013 and Shutts *et al.*, 2013). Social theorists such as Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1981), Nesdale *et al.* (2007, 2014) and Olson *et al.* (2012), postulate that group membership, including racial grouping, and the development of social identity are closely linked, commencing in early childhood and gathering momentum during the early school years.

The work of Brodzinsky and various co-authors (2011, 2018) regarding self-identity, adoption, adoption loss and adoption instability has been addressed in the preceding literature overview. More recently, Brodzinsky and Smith (2018) discuss the burgeoning awareness and effect of adoption on the self-identity of the developing TRA child in the bigger community of school. Grotevant and his co-authors (2011, 2014, 2017) and Soares *et al.* (2017) describe the adoptive identity model that develops as the child's cognitive ability matures after age six, an omnipresent component of identity throughout life.

As indicated by the social developmental theories discussed in Chapter Three, early challenges of the burgeoning self-identity requiring negotiation and successful resolution have their origin in early school years (Nesdale *et al.*, 2005; Schutts, 2015). Current international literature (Giuseppina, 2017; Grotevant *et al.*, 2017; Kerr & Cossar, 2014) strongly suggests that while a vulnerable self-identity may only overtly manifest during adolescence, such vulnerability may have originated in the younger adopted child. These conclusions by various authors provided a robust theoretical rationale for the present study.

In my opinion, available literature and evaluation of TRA in other countries (Marr, 2011, 2017; Barn, 2013, 2014; Anderson *et al.*, 2015; Ramsay, 2017) should be applied to South African adoptive families and adoptees with caution. The unique legacy of apartheid, historical forced racial segregation and a prevalent inverse adoptive ratio of minority race adopting from the majority race must be borne in mind (Fourie *et al.*, 2017; Adoption Coalition, n.d.; STATSSA, 2016). Although there have been some investigations of young Black transracially adopted adolescents in South Africa (Thomson, 2005), facts pertaining to this problem area remain hard to come by (Kausi, 2014).

## **4.2. Paradigmatic Assumptions**

A research design is the framework or guide that is used for the planning and implementation of a study to test a hypothesis or adequately answer a research question that is posed for investigation (Driessnack, Sousa & Mendes, 2007). The five key features of any research design, according to Nieuwenhuis (2018), are the philosophical perspective, the methodology and methods employed,

sampling selection, data collection, and the analysis of the data, together with all the instruments and procedures to be used. The research design was structured using these features.

#### **4.2.1. Philosophical Paradigm: Interpretivism/Social Constructivism**

Sefotho (2018) states that philosophy is the driving force behind all research. The preferred philosophy determines the meta-theoretical paradigm, which in turn prescribes the process and manner of the research; research can therefore not exist in the absence of a guiding philosophy. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) reiterate Guba and Lincoln's (1985) finding that the philosophical paradigm selected reflects the researcher's worldview and contains the nature of this world, the individual's position within this world and the range of relationships possible within this world.

Maxwell in Bickman and Rog (2009) posits that a paradigm is "a set of very general philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world (ontology) and how we understand it (epistemology)" (Maxwell in Bickman & Rog, 2009, p.224). He cautions that a philosophical paradigm is not a random choice and should be compatible with the researcher's pre-existing understanding and assumptions of the world and research topic, even if these assumptions have never been consciously examined (Maxwell in Bickman & Rog, 2009). Furthermore, like other authors, such as Travers (2001), he believes a philosophical paradigm may contain components and traditions of more than one paradigm, provided that the modules are all compatible with each other (Maxwell in Bickman and Rog, 2009). To this end, a combination of *social constructivism* and *interpretivism* form the philosophical basis of this research.

##### **4.2.1.1. Social Constructivism**

Creswell (2009) postulates that the social constructivist worldview is based on three assumptions. Firstly, meaning is constructed as people interpret their engaged world (*TRA is an integral and visible part of the family in the world they live in*). Secondly, understanding and interpretation of the researched phenomenon occurs within the context or setting of the participants and the information they offer, as well as my own experience and background (*data is collected from the participants living in the world of TRA, and I have experience of TRA*). Lastly, the meanings and interpretations are social in nature since they originate in human interaction within a community of different people (*TRA is an exclusively human phenomenon*). Gaus (2017, p.101) states that within the constructivist paradigm, "truth and knowledge is not separated from human beings, rather it is integrated into the social context through which knowledge is co-constructed". She continues that the exploration of a social

phenomenon must be studied by understanding the lived experiences of people within their social world.

Denzin and Lincoln (2002, 2018) found that researchers working within constructivism are relativist, transactional and subjectivist and that objective truth is not to be found. Concurring with these findings, Sefotho (2018) states that the ontology of constructivism is relativist – that all truth is constructed by the people living within a historical moment and social context. The same data or individual experiences may therefore have multiple meanings (Sefotho, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; 2018). The constructive epistemology also creates a link between the researcher and participants, as they construct knowledge together (Sefotho, 2018). The relativist view of being in a specific historical and social context made this a suitable paradigm for the current social, political and developing climate of South Africa.

#### **4.2.1.2. Interpretivism**

Gaus (2017), referring to the earlier writings of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), states that grasping the principles underlying the phenomena being investigated is key to the interpretive school of thought. “Interpretivists view the phenomena being studied as subjective to human experience. Therefore, to come to understand human experiences, efforts are made to get inside their world and understand them from within” (Gaus, 2017, p.101). Reality is thus to be found within the subjective experiences or minds of the participants. Within the interpretivist epistemology, knowledge generated from the research questions arises from, is affected by and in turn affects all the individuals involved in the study, including the researcher (Gaus, 2017; Sefotho, 2018). Table 4.1 describes the philosophical paradigm specific to this study.

Thus, the self-identity formation of the TRA child is an ongoing process, lived in the ordinary day-to-day interactions of family and community, and is a uniquely human experience. There are continuous attempts by all role players – children, parents, teachers and community members – to *understand, construct and interpret the world of the TRA child* and the effect on the child’s developing identity. A deeper understanding of this phenomenon and its many aspects may allow for more constructive management and earlier intervention in problem areas, if indicated.

**Table 4.1**

*The Interpretivist Perspective on Qualitative Research of the Self-Identity of the Early School Going Black TRA Child*

*Note.* Adapted from Nieuwenhuis in Maree (ed.), 2014, p.59-60

Assumption of interpretivism	Qualitative application to this study
Human life can only be understood from within	To research the phenomenon (self-identity), understanding how the participants interpret and interact within their social environment was essential. The focus remained on the subjective experiences, hence the data collection strategies of semi-structured interviews and projective techniques, amongst others.
Social lives are a distinctively human product	For the participants, their perceptions and contexts are unique. Interpreting the constructed meanings within a social rather than an objective reality allowed for a greater understanding of the self-identity within both a personal and social setting.
The human mind is the purposive source or origin of meaning	A qualitative approach facilitates a rich and in-depth exploration of the self-identity and its complexity. Understanding how meanings of the participants were constructed improved comprehension of the under-researched self-identity of the TRA Black child.
Human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world	Interpretivism allows for the presence of multiple realities that change across time and space. The understanding and manifestation of the intensity of issues such as racial tension and human developmental processes change across history, time and space, thus changing the effect on the self-identity and its well-being, was accommodated within the chosen research paradigm
The social world does not exist independently of human knowledge	Researchers are influenced by their humanness, prior knowledge, exposure, values, beliefs and experience. I have been involved in TRA for more than two decades as a psychologist, parent and caregiver. The paradigms and approaches chosen allowed for the acknowledgement of this lived experience.

#### 4.2.2. Methodological Paradigm-Qualitative Approach

Nieuwenhuis, in Maree (ed) (2014) describes *qualitative research* as a methodology that focuses on the understanding of the interpersonal processes and social contexts of human interaction. The qualitative approach attempts to answer the "how" and "why" questions in the participant's natural environment without the manipulation of variables or situations (Creswell, 2009, 2012; Nieuwenhuis, 2018). Creswell (2009) defines the qualitative approach as an enquiry process to develop a complex and holistic understanding of the researched phenomena. This is achieved using the words of the participants, reporting their views in detail and conducting the study within the natural and cultural world of the participants.

In qualitative research, three basic aspects determine the process – the nature of the truth (*ontology*), getting to know the truth (*epistemology*), and designing or conceptualising a way to research that truth (Nieuwenhuis in Maree (ed) (2014, p.70). To explore the self-identity of the early school going TRA Black child, the marriage between a qualitative approach and the social

constructivism/interpretivism paradigm facilitated the answering of the “how” and “why” questions (Creswell, 2012).

**Table 4.2**

*Key Characteristics of Qualitative Research*

*Note.* Adapted from Creswell *et al.*, 2014; Mouton, 2017; Finestone, 2014; Creswell, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2018

Goal: To explore and understand a central phenomenon within a natural context.	
Characteristic	Detail and implications of characteristic
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● People are not regarded as subjects, but as active participants within the process</li> </ul>
Researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Forms part of the context</li> </ul>
Sample size is small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Usually, purposeful sampling of a limited number of participants</li> <li>● Select people who have the most experience of the studied phenomenon</li> <li>● Requires very stringent data security to ensure participant confidentiality</li> </ul>
Research questions are broad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seek the experiences and understanding of the participants</li> <li>● “Why” and “how” questions</li> <li>● Generalisability is limited</li> </ul>
Qualitative designs collect data using words and pictures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Examples of research designs: case study, grounded theory, narrative research</li> <li>● Data is collected through interviews, observations, documents, drawings, artefacts and audio-visual materials</li> </ul>
Inductive data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coding</li> <li>● Identifying themes</li> <li>● Providing rich data and description</li> <li>● Analysis within conceptual framework <i>after</i> collection</li> <li>● New concepts far as possible</li> </ul>
Report is flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Includes rich descriptions of the settings and words of participants</li> <li>● Researcher experiences, observations and notes are also included in the report</li> </ul>

Another intrinsic advantage was that it provided for an in-depth understanding, a rich description and a greater insight into the realities of the participants. These are key characteristics of qualitative data, noted in Table 4.2, according to Mouton (2017), Nieuwenhuis (2018), Finestone (2014) and Creswell, *et al.* (2014). The qualitative approach also allowed the accommodation of my humanness, where experience and exposure to the situation of transracial adoption and the developing child served as an asset rather than a hindrance. In this regard, Olivier (2018) states that empathetic identification is necessary to fully understand the complexity of human nature. Creswell (2012) posits that the researcher must position himself or herself within the study, bringing personal values and experience to bear on the studied phenomenon.

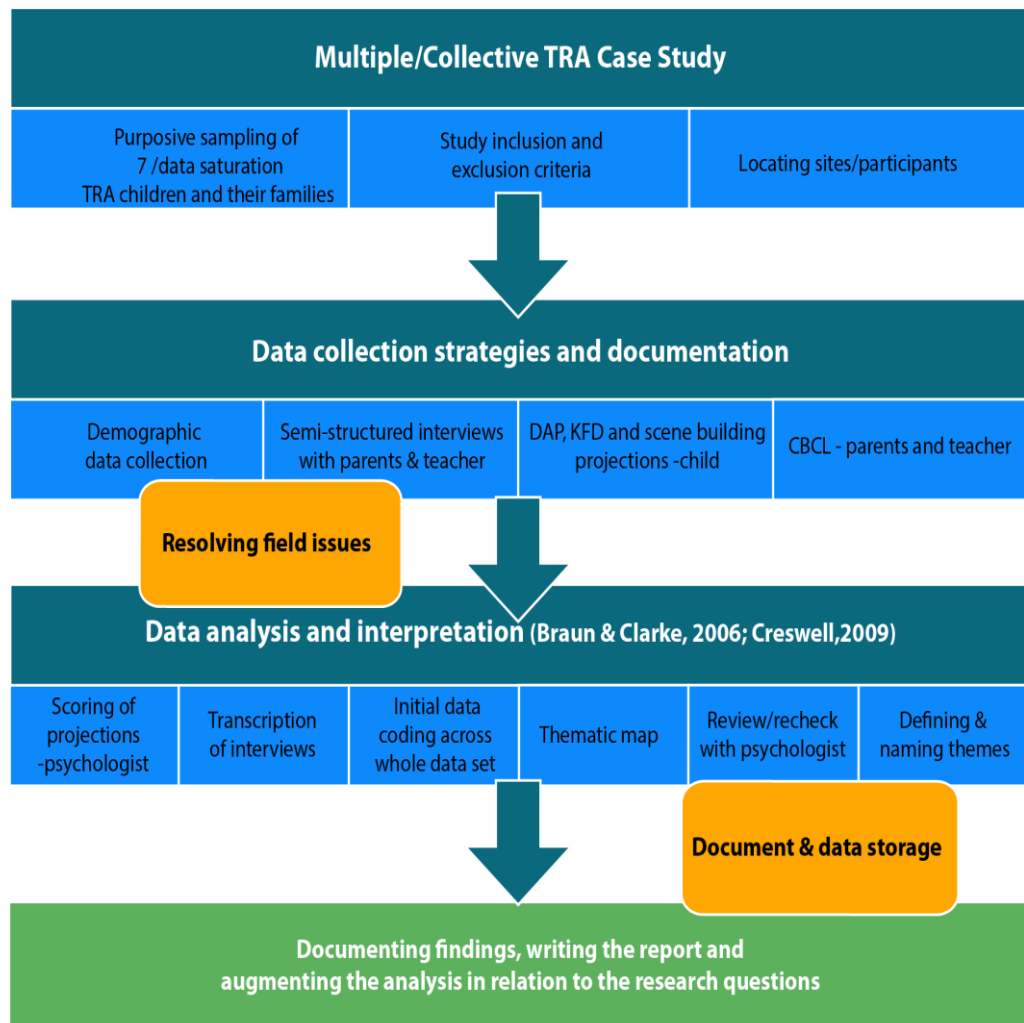
It must be conceded that a qualitative approach has distinct disadvantages, since issues such as generalisability and validity are often raised. This work has tried to limit such issues by employing



strategies to ensure data quality and facilitate data verification. Other research approaches were considered for this research. A *quantitative approach* was found unsuitable for this exploratory study for numerous reasons. According to Olivier (2018), quantitative research tests rather than generates theory. However, no theory applicable to the self-identity of the early school going TRA Black child in South Africa could be found. Secondly, the proposed sample size of a minimum of 8 TRA families was too small for significant and valid statistical analysis (Creswell, 2012). Finally, the research questions were exploratory, subjective and abstract in nature, and therefore more suited to the qualitative approach of Thematic analysis (Cronjé, 2012). A *mixed-method approach* was also considered and rejected, as a hypothesis could not be generated from the exploratory research questions and no interventions or causal relationships were to be tested (Olivier, 2018).

### 4.3. Research Design

Graziano and Raulin (2004) and Zikmund (2013) emphasise the importance of selecting the most appropriate research design to collect and analyse the required data. According to these authors, the design is the blueprint or masterplan of the research which serves to guide and direct the activities of the study by specifying the methods and detailing the procedures employed in the research (Graziano & Raulin, 2004; Zikmund, 2013). A schematic representation of the research design for this study is provided in Figure 4.1.



**Figure 4.1**  
*Schematic Representation of the Research Design*

#### 4.3.1. *The Multiple/Collective Case Study*

Creswell (2012, p.462) states that “ethnographic designs are qualitative research procedures for describing, analysing and interpreting a culture-sharing group’s shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs and language that develops over time.” An ethnographic design approach was deemed suitable for this research since the participants form part of a South African population that have TRA and familial racial differences in common. Although there is always an overlap among different types of case studies (Fouché *et al.*, 2011) the ethnographic design type considered most suited to researching this phenomenon was the case study design (Creswell, 2012).

When more than one case study is involved, Yin (2014) describes this as a multiple case study method. Stake (2006, pp.1,4-6) posits that “multicases” form a collection and are “categorically bound

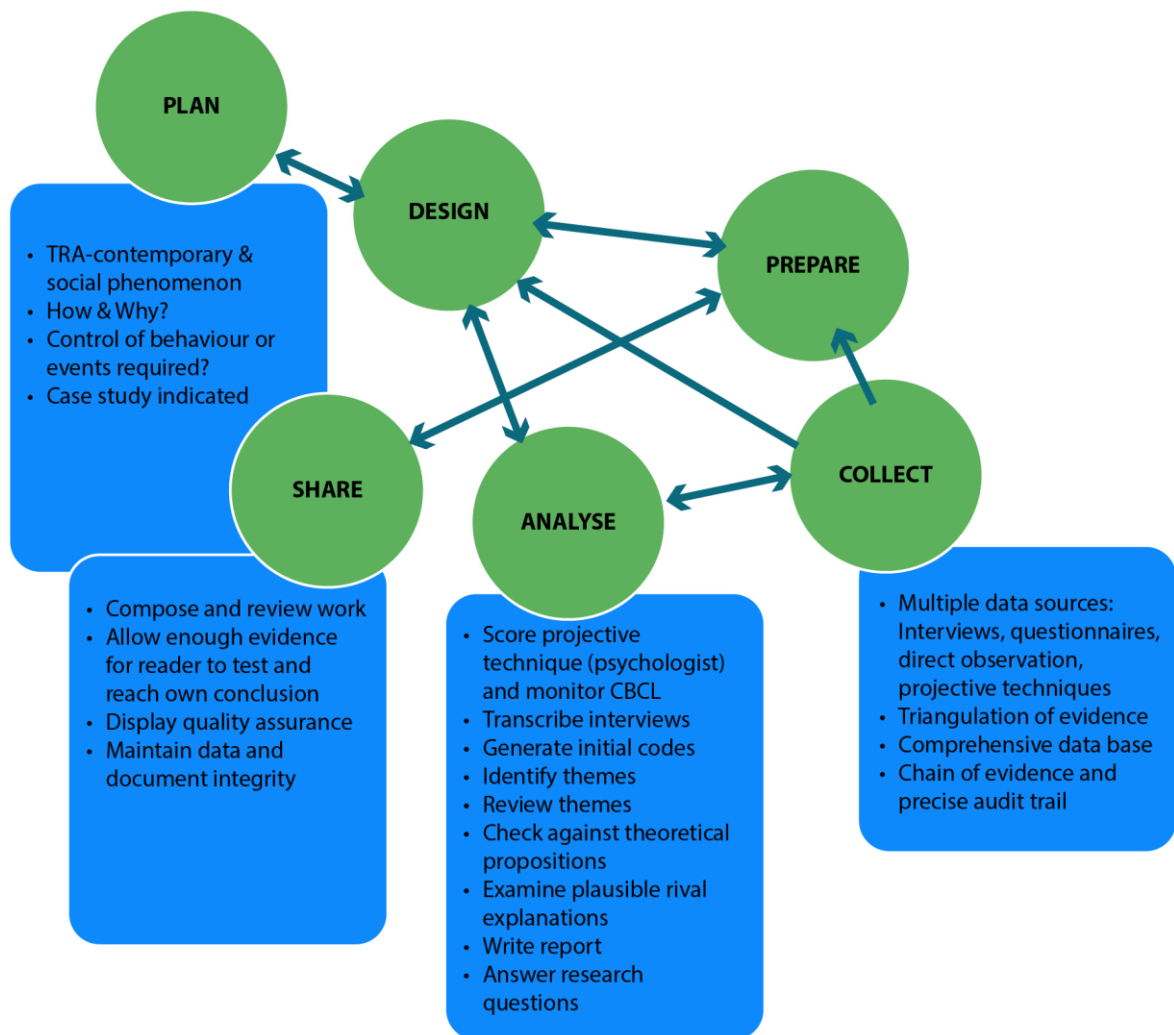
as examples of a phenomenon or quintain.” The multiple case study begins by including all aspects or participants in a case to understand the quintain (group of cases) better. In this research, the various participants formed the collective group to better understand the phenomenon, i.e., the self-identity of the TRA Black child in South Africa.

The comprehensive definition formulated by Yin (2014, p.16-17) provides a twofold explanation of case study. With reference to the scope of a case study, he says that a case study “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within a real-world context” often bound by time and space. Relating to the features of a case study, he posits that a case study deals with the “technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points “. Thus, there must be multiple sources of evidence converging in a “triangulating fashion”, and “the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” is beneficial.

The definition offered by Yin (2014) served as a guide in the study design of this research in several ways. TRA is an escalating, contemporary phenomenon within the real world of families residing in South Africa (*investigating a contemporary phenomenon*). Within this research, there were multiple sources of data, collected from the children, the parents and the teachers (*multiple sources of evidence*). A thorough understanding of the personal, cognitive and social developmental stages of the children, as well as their experience and management of race and adoption provided a comprehensive conceptual framework within which to examine the collected data (*prior development of theoretical propositions*).

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002), case studies allow new ideas and hypotheses to emerge from careful and detailed observation provided by rich ideographic information. This is a clear advantage, given the dearth of literature and research relating to the self-identity of the early school going Black transracially adopted child. Case studies may also provide data that can be re-analysed by subsequent researchers of other aspects of TRA, as there are multiple data collection strategies and multiple TRA role players. However, to promote and ensure focus, this study was limited to the self-identity of the early school going TRA Black child.

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) caution that case studies have limitations. Causal links as well as subsequent data validation may prove difficult to test, which necessitates the safe storage of data through recording, transcription and hard copies for possible secondary scrutiny a priority. Nieuwenhuis (2018) states that while some critics disparage a case study as a research method lacking in scientific rigour, the primary objective of the case study is to provide a holistic understanding and meaning of the phenomenon under study within the relationship and interaction of a specific situation, rather than being scientifically rigorous. Figure 4.2 provides a schematic representation of the multi-dimensional process of multiple case study research.



**Figure 4.2**  
*The Linear, but Iterative Process of the TRA Multiple Case Study Research*  
*Note.* Adapted from Yin, 2014; Braun & Clarke, 2006

### 4.3.2. Sample and Sampling Strategies

#### 4.3.2.1. Purposive Sampling.

There is a reluctance to use non-probability sampling in research; as participants are selected purposively, no conclusions can be drawn about the wider population. This limits the representativeness of the results and the applicability of the research (Creswell, 2012; Maree (ed)2014). Yin (2014) avoids using any sampling terminology when selecting cases for case study research to curb criticism of his research. Additionally, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) and De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2005) caution that there is a possibility of bias, since the researcher often plays a prominent role in selecting the participants. However, most authors agree that purposive

or purposeful sampling has a place in in-depth qualitative research, or when the sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind (Perera, 2018; Creswell, 2012; Maree, (ed), 2014; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). TRA children form part of a unique phenomenon in society, and the focus on the self-identity is very specific. This met the prerequisite for purposive sampling.

Parameters for purposive sampling are set using stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria. (Creswell, 2012; Silverman, 2010). These critical and rigorous selection parameters maintain the research focus and select groups or individuals where the researched phenomenon is most likely to occur (Silverman, 2010). The criteria should be nested in the theoretical apparatus used to describe this phenomenon. “(Purposive) sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical nor purely personal: it is, or should be, theoretically grounded” (Silverman, 2010, p.143). Selection of participants is done using predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria, as tabulated in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3**  
*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Participant Sampling*

<b>Selection criteria for the seven purposively selected TRA families (recruitment processed by social workers working with TRA)</b>		
<b>Inclusion criteria (Failure to answer YES to any of the criteria resulted in non-inclusion in the study).</b>		
<b>Participant</b>	<b>Criterion/criteria</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
<b>All</b>	Must be willing and able to give informed consent to participation	Inclusion is voluntary; captive audiences must be avoided (good clinical practice)
<b>Parents</b>	Parents must be heterosexual and have lived together as a couple for a period of not less than 5 years	To exclude possible confounding differences and other factors that could play a role in identity development, such as single parents and same-sex parents
<b>Parents</b>	Must be White	To exclude mixed-race couples as both parents will therefore not differ from child
<b>Parents</b>	At least one parent must be a South African citizen, and both must have permanent residence in South Africa	To prevent undue influence from parents moving between countries with different demographics and cultures
<b>Family</b>	Black child must have lived with the parents as a family unit for a period of not less than five years	To eliminate “honeymoon phase” with dismissal or negation of possible problems in the euphoria of having a new child (Scordilis, 2006).
<b>Child</b>	Between the age of six to ten years at time of consenting	As described in preceding chapters
<b>Child</b>	Must be willing and able to comply with projective techniques	Projective techniques form an integral part of essential data
<b>Child</b>	Must be attending a school away from the home	To illustrate involvement in the larger community
<b>Teacher</b>	Must be willing to comply with the required assessments	Accurate data is essential to analysis
<b>Teacher</b>	Must spend enough time during school in the company of the child to be able to complete the CBCL and make exact observations. In the foundation phase of school and early intermediate phase, relevant to children of this study, the children spend most of their day with the same teacher in the same class.	For data accuracy and precise contextual background information
<b>Exclusion criteria (Failure to answer NO resulted in non-inclusion in the study).</b>		
<b>All</b>	Unwillingness to participate or inability to understand the information leaflet	Participation must be voluntary and informed
<b>Child</b>	TRA families still bound by visitation rights with biological families	The impact of sustained contact between the young adoptee and the biological family is unknown

#### 4.3.2.2. Sampling

According to Gentles and Vilches (2017), the combination of the sampling and recruitment processes will result in a working participant sample. According to Yin (2014) and Stake (2006), fewer cases with more in-depth descriptions allow for richer data. Through discussion with the research supervisors and literature studies, the *size* of the sample was set at six to eight TRA children, or until data saturation (Yin, 2014; Maree (ed), 2014).

The size was firstly in view of the copious amount of data that would be obtained from each family and teacher and would require transcription, thorough exploration and analysis within time constraints. Secondly, in an attempt to minimise research bias and improve quality assurance through researcher triangulation (De Vos *et al.*, 2005), the psychometric testing would be administered, managed and interpreted by a psychologist in private practice, adding significant costs to this unfunded study. To allow for the comparison of typical and divergent data, strict adherence to inclusion and exclusion criteria was required (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). The TRA families and teachers all needed to comply with the selection criteria, as described above in Table 4.3, to ensure comparisons and data quality. Admittedly, the traditional family of a father and mother and adopted child is not the only family structure in South Africa. Many single parents, mixed-race as well as same-sex couples opt to adopt transracially, but within the limits of this study, the TRA child in a traditional family formed the focus to limit confounding variables, such as an absent parental gender or the additional social opinion of homosexuality, which may play a role in self-identity development (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). It is important, however, that these different and dynamic TRA family configurations also enjoy TRA research.

The lived experiences and social constructs may differ for TRA Black children living in smaller rural communities instead of cities. To make the cases more comparable, as well as due to time and cost constraints, the scope of this study was limited to children living in the urban locality of Gauteng and to areas that could be reasonably visited by car. I initially considered the presence of siblings, adopted or biological children of the parents as an exclusion parameter. However, after deliberation with my supervisors, the existence of siblings, adopted or otherwise, was noted as a finding and served as additional contextual information, without being an exclusion criterion.

The recruitment process was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. To limit researcher bias, avoid a captive audience and prevent manipulation of the study by myself, social workers involved in the process of TRA were contacted about the research, as depicted in Figure 4.3. On expressing their willingness to identify potential participants and after signing an ethical

declaration (included in the appendices), the social workers received an electronic copy of the general recruitment letter.

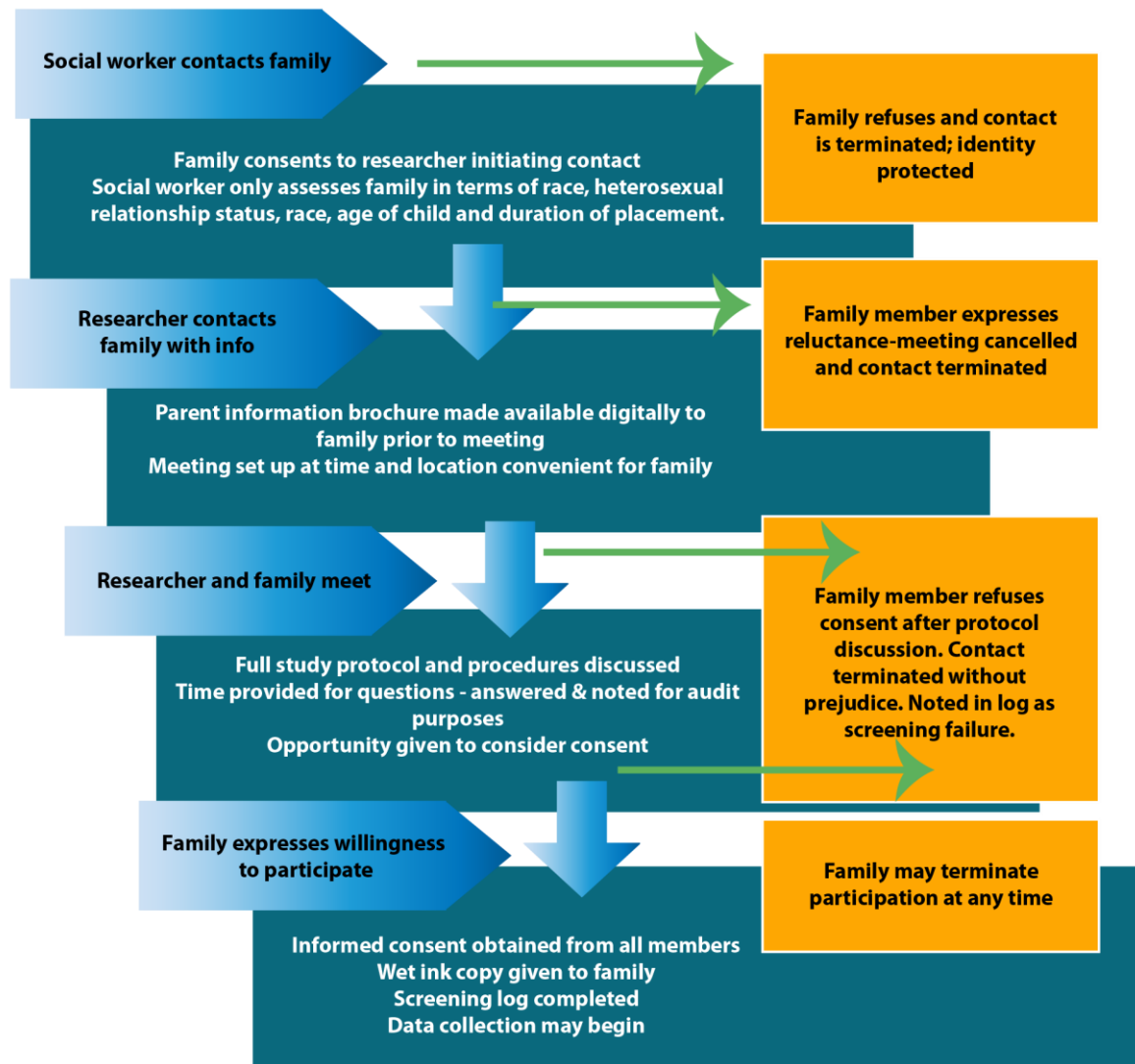
During the period of active enrolment, the social workers were to follow specific steps to maintain family confidentiality and ensure uncoerced participation, as described in Figure 4.3. They were requested to contact suitable TRA families to obtain permission for me to approach them. This was only done if the families expressed their willingness to consider participation and meet with me. The identity of the unwilling families remained protected since I had no access to any of the files.

The social workers were cautioned not to screen the participants in any way other than to identify them as TRA families, complying with the stipulated demographical requirements such as race and age and placement duration. The families expressing interest in the research were contacted via telephone by myself to initiate contact. If they expressed a sustained interest and provisional willingness to participate, a meeting was set up at which the study was explained and discussed in detail. They also received a digital version of the parent information brochure to peruse at their own leisure, with a request to contact me if there were any questions, they wished to address prior to a face-to-face meeting<sup>17</sup>. Study procedures only commenced once the willing families, identified through purposive sampling, had given informed written consent and the child(ren) had provided their assent. Figure 4.3 outlines the process of voluntary recruitment and method to ensure participant confidentiality.

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<sup>17</sup>One family that complied with all the inclusion and exclusion criteria contacted me telephonically and volunteered to be included in the research. They had heard about the research and were interested in participating. The rest of the inclusion procedures were followed as per protocol.





**Figure 4.3**  
*Recruitment Procedure of TRA Families with the Assistance of the Social Workers*

### 4.3.3. Data Collection Strategy

Succinctly put by Olivier (2018, p.84), “the data collection procedure involves a series of interrelated activities, with the purpose of gathering information to answer the research questions.” To obtain information that provides rich and detailed data that may be verified and possibly be used for future secondary analysis, a thorough process (See Table 4.4) must be followed from the onset (Creswell, 2012; Mouton, 2017; Olivier, 2018).

**Table 4.4***Considerations for Data Collection*

*Note.* Adapted from Creswell, 2012; Mouton, 2017; Olivier, 2018

Process Step In Collecting Data	Application and Implementation
<b>Selecting sites and participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locality determined by accessibility and parental choice.</li> <li>• Projective assessments to be done in the psychologist's practice, within reasonable travelling distance for parents.</li> <li>• School within travelling distance of researcher.</li> <li>• Families from Gauteng and other close regions as suggested by social workers that had met the families. Limited to urban families within an urban area, as there might be a difference between rural and urban environment and cost implications.</li> </ul>
<b>Permission required to gain access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permission granted by the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria (Ref. no. 02/02/19).</li> <li>• As indicated by the Ethics Committee of Pretoria, permission of education authorities was not required, as no school-related assessments were included.</li> <li>• Families were only contacted once the social workers had determined that they were willing to be contacted by me (exclusion of captive audiences).</li> </ul>
<b>Multiple forms of data to answer the research questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As indicated, this research approach utilised multiple sources of data (child, parent and teacher)</li> <li>• as well as multiple methods (semi-structured interviews, projective techniques and questionnaires).</li> <li>• The advantages and disadvantages of each data collection strategy were carefully considered.</li> </ul>
<b>Recording data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All data collected in this research was recorded in some form or other.</li> <li>• Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed with permission from the relevant parties.</li> <li>• The projective techniques were stored (or copied if the child was unwilling to submit the original drawing) and the built scenes were photographed. The questionnaires and CBCL formed part of the hard-copy documentation.</li> </ul>
<b>Ethical consideration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The confidentiality, safety and security of all participants protected before, during and after active participation.</li> <li>• These safety measures extended to physical, social and emotional aspects of all the participants, and</li> <li>• upheld by the prescribed Good Clinical Practices as set out by the Research Committees of South Africa.</li> <li>• The ethical considerations and principles were clearly set out and adhered to throughout the study.</li> <li>• All participation was voluntary, and participants were informed that consent could be withdrawn at any time without consequences.</li> </ul>
<b>Storage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storage of data to comply with the policies of concerned parties.</li> <li>• Both a password protected archival and access copy, with the anonymity of the participants still protected, are made available for a period of 15 years, as currently prescribed (DOH, 2019).</li> <li>• Data stored comprises the audio recordings and transcriptions of the interviews, the completed questionnaires and CBCL, as well as the DAP and KFD drawings and photographs of the scenes built.</li> <li>• All relevant good clinical practice documents such as the informed consents were included, together with a sealed copy of the participant identification log.</li> </ul>

To answer the “how” and “what” research questions that guided this study, several data gathering methods were employed, as noted in Table 4.5. These methods were carefully selected to comply with a qualitative approach and to limit disruption of the natural environment, as encouraged by the interpretivist/social constructivism paradigm (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002; Mouton, 2017; Maree (ed.), 2014).

**Table 4.5**  
*Data Collection Methods (Mouton, 2017, p.105)<sup>18</sup>*

Data Gathering Method	Specific type/Source	Participant
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researcher as non-participant perspective/passive role (Maree (ed.), 2014)</li> </ul>	Child, parents, teacher observed
Interviewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured self-administered questionnaires</li> <li>Semi-structured interviews</li> </ul>	Both parents – independent completion Parents and teachers
Psychometric evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projective techniques with the children</li> <li>Child behaviour checklist</li> </ul>	Child assessed by psychologist Teacher and/or parents (as a couple)
Research journal and field notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Field notes/note to file</li> <li>Observed interview and test behaviour</li> <li>Reflections during process</li> <li>Documentation of field issues</li> </ul>	Researcher

#### 4.3.4. Sources of Data<sup>19</sup>

As noted in Table 4.5, there were various sources of data. Firstly, any significant observations made during the interviews were recorded in field notes and used to provide context or to serve as an additional explanation. Observations made by the independent psychologist were captured in the written assessment report. Other sources of data are explained in detail in the following section.

##### 4.3.4.1. Demographic and Personal Questionnaire for Participating Parents

The self-administered questionnaire, completed independently by each parent, was constructed using the guidelines suggested by Creswell (2012) and Maree (ed.), (2014). It consisted of three sections. The first provided demographic information and a brief family composition. Secondly, an

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<sup>19</sup>All forms, questionnaires, information and interview schedules are available as appendices. Parental questionnaire noted as Addendum F and interview schedules are available as Addendum G.

“agreement” Likert scale (Maree (ed.), 2014, p.168; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002) with seven response values (the higher the value assigned, the more the person was in agreement with the statement) aimed to capture more intimate information to enhance understanding and possible corroboration of the findings of the child’s projections. The use of seven categories allowed for “subtle gradations of opinion or perception” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p.296). While the Likert Scale delivered quantifiable responses from the eight parents, the data was used to support and augment the findings in the initial coding for this research, but could be used for subsequent, more quantitative research. The third and final section of mainly open-ended questions (Creswell, 2012) focused on the adoption journey and provided further background and contextual data that could be used in the Thematic analysis, since it contained the parents own responses and perceptions. . It also offered plausible explanations and contextual background for some findings on the projective techniques of their children. The completed questionnaires were made available to the psychologist at the time of psychometric analysis if she chose to view them, but there was no interview of the parents by the psychologist. This was done to maintain consistency.

#### **4.3.4.2. Semi-Structured Interview with the Parents and Teacher**

According to Yin (2014, p.113) “interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or actions.” Creswell (2012) states that interviews and questionnaires augment each other. For the present research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the parents and nominated teachers to offer constructed realities and personal experiences, provide contextual background and corroborate data emerging from the psychometric evaluation (Maree (ed.) 2014).

Although informal and mostly flexible, with the interviewees setting the pace (Silverman, 2010), the predetermined questions served as a checklist and a guide to maintain focus and facilitate the flow of information, aimed at addressing the research questions (Nieuwenhuis in Maree (ed.) 2014). Twelve open-ended questions were developed for the interview with the parents and eleven for the interview with the teacher, using guidelines offered by Creswell (2012) and Maree (ed.) (2014)<sup>20</sup>.

Oplatka (2018) warns that the interviewer is interpreting as the interview proceeds, even without wishing to do so, and as such may direct the interview according to the interpretation. Semi-structured interviews help to keep the interview within (very flexible) boundaries.

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<sup>20</sup>Please refer to Addendum G.

In similar vein, Yin (2014) and Olivier (2018) warn that reflexivity in the subtle interaction of interviewer and interviewee may influence the responses and line of inquiry, and that the relationship is not equal, since the researcher has the balance of power and as such directs the interview.

To establish rapport and avoid distractions, interviews were conducted at a time and location set by the interviewees. As an estimation, time allocated to the semi-structured interview was 60 to 90 minutes for the parents and approximately 30 minutes for teachers. Permission to audio-record the interviews, although described in the informed consent, was reconfirmed. Non-verbal and observed behaviour, as well as reflective notes, were captured in interview notes, allowing for more accurate and thorough transcription and analysis (Nieuwenhuis in Maree (ed.), 2014). Transcription of the interviews followed as soon as possible after the interview to promote accuracy and thoroughness (Nieuwenhuis in Maree (ed.), (2014); Creswell, 2012; Olivier, 2018).

#### **4.3.4.3. Child Behaviour Checklist**

The Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL),<sup>21</sup> more recently called the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA), had its inception in 1966 (Achenbach, Becker, Dopfner, Heiervang, Roessner, Steinhausen & Rothenberger, 2008). Rescorla and Achenbach amended it to its current format in 2001, which still serves as a screening tool for emotional, behavioural and social problems in diverse settings (Achenbach *et al.*, 2008; Mazefsky, Anderson, Conner & Minshew, 2011). The four-page CBCL/ASEBA questionnaire aims to identify problems in the following eight different categories by using a scaled response: social problems, thought problems, rule-breaking behaviour, aggressive behaviour, anxiety and depression, withdrawal and depression, somatic complaints and attention problems (Mazefsky *et al.*, 2010; Van Holen, Vanschoonlandt & Vanderfaellie, 2017). This was an exploratory study, with the focus on the presentation of the self-identity of the TRA Black child. The CBCL was not scored for any other purpose than to indicate problem areas and to provide further contextual and background information that could be audited.

Conspicuously high scores in any of the above eight categories would indicate the possibility of psychopathology, in which case the participating family would be informed and offered a referral, since this lay beyond the scope of this study. Minor and persistent problems identified by the CBCL/ASEBA in any of these eight categories, while not necessarily requiring professional

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<sup>21</sup> An example of a CBCL is attached as Addendum I. Version 6-1-01 was used in this study, as a more current version is not yet freely available for use in South Africa.

intervention, needed to be considered on an interpretive level. Their presence could be influenced, and, in turn, influence the well-being of the self-identity of the TRA Black child.

There were several reasons why this specific assessment instrument was chosen for the qualitative and in-depth study. Firstly, this CBCL/ASEBA has been completed by thousands of respondents and utilised by many researchers with high scores in content validity, criterion-related validity and construct validity (Van Holen *et al.*, 2017, Achenbach *et al.*, 2008). Secondly, the questions were clear and unambiguous, and the response scale (*0 = not true; 1 = somewhat or sometimes true; 2 = very true or often true*) was easy to understand (*ibid*). Thirdly, the questionnaire could be completed by diverse respondents such as teachers, health workers, parents and social workers and did not require specific educational levels, so that the parents and/or teachers could complete it accurately (Van Holen *et al.*, 2017). Finally, the CBCL/ASEBA has been found to be multi-culturally sensitive (Achenbach *et al.*, 2008). For these four reasons, it was completed by the parents as a unit and by the nominated teacher.

#### **4.3.4.4. Projective Techniques with the TRA Child**

The Latin word “projectus” is best described as “throwing forward”. Using psychodynamics as a base, a projection may thus be considered the transfer of intrapsychic objects to other intrapsychic or external elements (Frick, Barry & Kamphaus, 2020; Mancini, 2019). Drawing is a spontaneous and culture-free activity for a child, often experienced as a fun-filled activity that allows freedom to express desires and announce fears (Vallier, 1998 in Hawkins, 2002). Hawkins (2002) agrees with Vallier (1998) that the self (identity) is the source of all artistic activity in a young school going child and is evidenced by his or her artistic self-expression. Children’s drawings and other projective techniques are therefore personal and unique, providing rich data and insight into the identity and emotions of the young child in the absence of their inadequately developed verbal skills (Steyn & Moen, 2019). At the age of six to ten years, the period covered in this study, children are still developing their vocabulary, are in their operational phase of cognitive development, and according to Piaget (1929, 1971) not yet in possession of adequate abstract reasoning skills.

Although seen as an advantage for this research, Lilienfeld (2009) advises that projective techniques must be employed respectfully, as they sidestep the conscious defences of the children and allow access to psychological information without explicit permission. These warnings were heeded and guided the behaviour, interactions and interpretations of the psychologist and me.

According to Oster and Crone (2004), a basic tenet of drawing as a projective technique is that the drawings reveal the processes of the unconscious mind, providing clues about the inner working of the personality, of which the child is unaware. They caution, however, that all inferences should be

clarified and tested against background and contextual information, as well as by obtaining a fuller description of the drawings, provided by the child (Oster & Crone, 2004). In deference to this warning, contextual background was provided to the child psychologist at the time of analysis in the form of the completed parental questionnaires.

Related to this warning, Professor Roets (in Theron, Mitchell, Smith & Stuart, 2011, p.50) warns: “Never, ever assume you know what your clients’ drawings mean...you are not the expert on their perceptions or feelings or thoughts. Your clients are the experts. So, ask!” Therefore comments, explanations and descriptions made by the child with reference to his or her drawings and other projective techniques were noted and consulted during psychometric analysis.

In order to obtain the most information from a projective psychometric assessment, more than one technique must be used, and the interpreter of these techniques must be skilled and possess extensive clinical insight (Terre Blanche, 2013). To fulfil this requirement and ensure the best possible data for analysis, the *Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD)* the *Draw a Person Test (DAP)* and the building of a scene, loosely based on the premises of the *Von Staabs Sceno Test (Sceno)*, were selected as projective tools for this study.

The administrator and interpreter of the psychometric evaluation was a registered psychologist with experience in working and assessing children with the aid of projective tests. The decision to use an independent psychologist was made to avoid any undue influence and preconceptions that could limit trustworthiness and credibility related to research expectancy effect and possible subjectivity (Mouton, 2017).

Projective techniques are not registered as psychological tests by the HPCSA (Laher & Cockcroft, 2013), but are well received by clinicians in South Africa and the rest of the world. The DAP and KFD are rated as being in the top ten to fifteen most widely used projective techniques in South Africa (Laher & Cockcroft, 2013). The selected projective techniques are standardised and adapted for South African use and are as culturally unbiased and non-threatening as possible (Ebersohn, Eloff, Finestone, Van Dullemen, Sikkema & Forsythe, 2012; Terre Blanche, 2013; Foxcroft & Roodt, 2014). Laher and Cockcroft (2013) state that although there is a dearth of controlled experimental research in South Africa regarding projective techniques and cultural sensitivity, these tests have been employed with much success by clinical practitioners. In a study comparing the drawings of children from the United Kingdom (Belfast) and South Africa, Rudenberg *et al.* (2001, in Laher & Cockcroft, 2013) found enough similarities to conclude that the projective techniques are cross-culturally an “appropriate method of evaluating children’s levels of stress and emotional adjustment” (Laher & Cockcroft, 2013, p.387).

The *Draw a Person Test (DAP)* stemmed from the 1929 Draw a Man work of Goodenough and the subsequent version by Karen Machover in 1949 (Murphy & Davidshofer, 2014). Employed by Machover as a personality test, it was reformulated as the Goodenough-Harris Drawing test in 1963 to assess intellectual abilities with the use of a scoring sheet (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2014; Murphy & Davidshofer, 2014). Over the past decades, this test has proven to have more appeal as an intuitive tool for skilled therapists. Murphy and Davidshofer (2014), while eschewing its merits as a definitive tool for personality and intellectual measurement, concede that the test may offer insight into the unconscious workings of a child's or adult's mind, projecting information regarding his or her individual perception.

The process of administering the DAP is relatively simple. The child is provided with two blank pieces of paper and a pencil or pencils. The use of an eraser and the drawing of stick figures is not encouraged. The child is first asked to draw a person. Following the completion of the first drawing, he or she is asked to draw a person of the opposite sex to the first drawing (Machover, 1949). The therapist will ask for and make notes of the child's description and comments regarding his or her drawings throughout the process, using the notes to make an accurate assessment of the child's emotional and social projections. The findings for the seven participating children of this research were captured in a clinical report, which was subsequently subjected to the complete process of Thematic analysis.

The *Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD)* places the child within his or her family and projects information regarding his or her identity within the family. Kogelschatz (1974), in her review of the then new KFD technique developed by Burns and Kaufmann in 1970 -1972, declared it to be a quick way of obtaining a "focussed perspective in understanding the child and how he perceives himself in his family" (Kogelschatz, 1974, p.439). The kinetic aspect of the instructed drawing allows for movement and the possibility of interaction, such as a family doing something or visiting somewhere. The KFD, "as a child-completed instrument" (Ebersohn *et al.*, 2012, p.345), has been used successfully in the assessment of children from all cultures and races in South Africa, providing rich descriptions of the child's perceptions and behaviour (Ebersohn *et al.*, 2012).

Although there are many detailed objective scoring schemes for KFD analysis, as with many of the projective techniques, the analysis of the drawings is usually based on the experience and clinical judgement of the psychometrist, as well as familiarity with literature on significant features found in the drawings (Madigan, Ladd and Goldberg, 2003). No set scoring sheet for the KFD was used in this qualitative research. The focus remained on the projection of emotional, interpersonal and social aspects that were subsequently analysed for emerging themes using Thematic analysis.



The *Von Staabs Sceno test (SB)* was developed in 1938 (Von Staabs, 1971) and reformulated in 1951 and again in 1964. Loosely based on Lowenfeld's 1929 World Technique (Von Staabs, 1971), it is an adjustable projective technique of expression with playful art materials, objects from daily life and miniature, poseable figures. According to the directives of Von Staabs (1971), the child builds a setting of his or her choosing within a box, using as many or as few people and props as he or she chooses. A photograph serves as a record, and the child must give a brief account of who is portrayed, what he or she has built and a brief storyline.

Von Staabs (1971) described it as a practical technique to facilitate understanding of the unconscious problems and personality structure of the young child. Hough (2001) states that the Sceno test depicts the constructs and conflicts within significant relationships as well as the conflicts in the child's inner and outer world. The original Sceno test consisted of 16 doll-like figurines with articulated joints, animals, bricks and colourful wooden blocks, dishes and food, a train, a toilet and a deckchair (Von Staabs, 1971). In 1995, Fliegner successfully advocated the review of the Sceno test material, stating that the considered replacement of certain possibly obsolete objects and more contemporary figures would add new potential and add more interpretive possibilities to the test. His suggestions included the replacement of the wooden box toilet with a porcelain-looking toilet, and the addition of modern amenities such as a miniature clock, radio, television and motorcycle. Animals such as a cat and lion, elephant and rhinoceros depicting respectively the female and male archetypes were also added. He also suggested that the original carpet beater be exchanged for a more recognizable object, such as a stick (Flieger, 1995). Ultimately, he wanted to make the figures more recognizable and accessible for the modern child. His successful campaign led to the necessary adjustments made for the purpose and appropriateness of this study in South Africa.

There are multiple advantages to the use of a scene in a box or contained area, according to Hough (2001). The box allows for portability when testing and the set structure provides a frame, much as the edges of a page. Additionally, this boundary may promote a feeling of safety in expression and provide a framework for fantasy. There is also a consistency in the materials supplied to the child, making the stimuli and findings comparable.

In keeping with the accepted recommendations of Flieger (1995), several adaptations were made for the current South African time and context making this a projective technique *loosely based* on the premises of the Von Staabs Sceno test, and not representative of the original test. There is only one Black figure in the original Sceno test, which may be seen stereotypically as the nanny (Hough, 2001). More Black figures were added to the stimulus package, with a possible father, mother and boy and girl figure. Animals common to South Africa were also added. To promote consistency and comparability, the same scene-building stimuli were used throughout the research.

As with the DAP and KFD, there are rules for scoring, but the intuitive and interpretive analysis of the skilled and experienced psychologist, using his or her theoretical knowledge of childhood development, an understanding of projective techniques and psychoanalytical skills forms the foundation for the findings of the technique (Murphy & Davidshofer, 2014). Test behaviour such as play, the attitude and presentation of the scene, the handling of the material and the attention given to the task also provides important information and must be noted and utilised in the analysis. These notes, together with the verbal account of the child and the photographs, provide the information on which the psychologist reports in the clinical report (Murphy & Davidshofer, 2014; Von Staabs, 1971).

“*Primum non nocere* (first, do no harm) is a well-accepted credo of the medical and mental health profession” (Lilienfeld, 2007, p.53). These three projective techniques were chosen with care to provide data obtained from the participating children in a non-threatening, unobtrusive and playful manner. Within the South African context, these projective techniques have proved themselves to be multiculturally accessible, age-appropriate and relatively undetermined by intellectual abilities.

#### **4.3.4.5. Field Notes and Research Diary**

All advocates of qualitative research emphasise the use of copious field notes (Mouton, 2017; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002; Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013; Nieuwenhuis in Maree (ed.), 2014). Extensive field notes place participant responses and observations within context, which is essential for the accurate reconstruction of data that is vital within this philosophical research paradigm of social constructivism and interpretivism. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) recommend keeping two sets of notes, being firstly the observations of the participants and secondly notes of the researcher’s unfolding analysis, usually in the form of analytic comments. The more descriptive entries and personal considerations arising from the research process should also be captured in the field notes or in a researcher diary (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002; Creswell, 2012; Moen, 2017; Nieuwenhuis in Maree (ed.), 2014). Extensive field notes and/or a research diary serve an additional purpose in preserving an audit trail and enabling data verification. Both observations and research diary notes were kept throughout the process<sup>22</sup>. All communication, electronic or in the form of study notes, with any person and participant regarding the research forms part of the data stored.

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<sup>22</sup>Please refer to Addendum H for an example of a note to file/field note.

### 4.3.5. *Data Analysis Strategies*

As in all research, the quality and integrity of data was fundamental in this research. According to O' Neil and Koekemoer (2016), data quality and integrity are aided by clearly defined research objectives and data collection and analysis strategies. The research questions in this work were carefully formulated and the strategies to collect data investigated and judiciously chosen to ensure the quality and integrity of the data. To this end, the method of data analysis was subjected to the same scrutiny.

#### 4.3.5.1. **Thematic analysis**

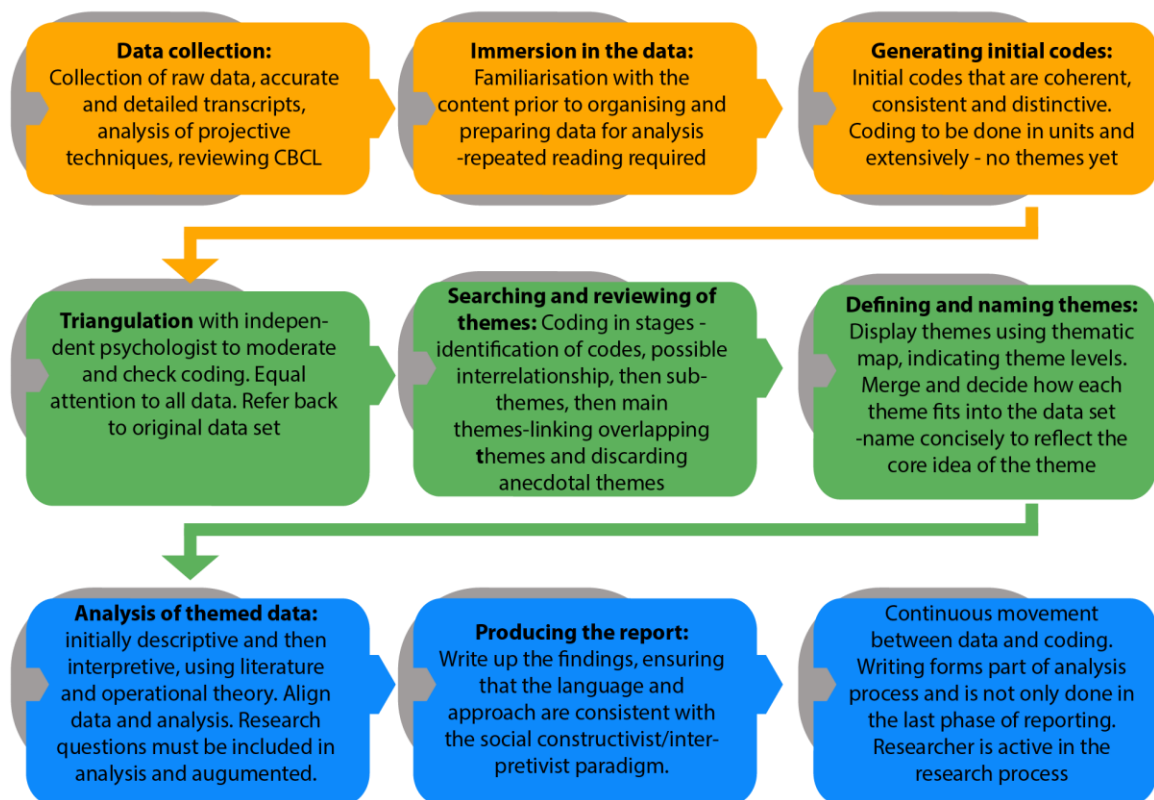
The philosophical paradigm of this study (social constructivism/interpretivism) prescribed a qualitative data analysis. In his regard, Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow and Ponterotto (2017, para 21) state: “Constructivist-interpretive researchers seek to use dialogical exchanges with participants in order to uncover meanings that are held by sets of people or systems, while exemplifying their process of analysis in order to illustrate and make transparent their interpretive processes”. They also posit that the various qualitative approaches share common attitudinal and analytical practice, including open reading, empathetic immersion, the differentiation of data units and the exploration of emerging patterns, assigning meaning within context, all the while “modifying findings in view of counter-instances, reflexivity, and the critical evaluation of limitations” (Levitt *et al.*, 2017, para 30).

In her investigation of different qualitative analytical approaches, or “sense-making”, Osbeck (2014, p.34) finds “the basic process of selection of relevant facts or meaning units, extraction of similarities, discrimination, arrangement and emphasis are common across many domains... and that they are also the basic elements of qualitative enquiry”. Succinctly put by Riger and Sigurvinsdottir (in Jason and Glenwick, 2016), Thematic analysis involves searching for recurring or common ideas, referred to in qualitative analysis as themes, within a data set. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.78-79), Thematic analysis is a “foundational method for qualitative analysis ...identifying, analysing and reporting patterns/themes within data.” This was the method of qualitative analysis selected for the research work.

It is understood that there will be commonalities with other qualitative approaches (Levitt *et al.*, 2017; Osbeck, 2014); but Thematic analysis is distinguished by distinctive procedures, with the researcher being part of the process, writing occurring throughout analysis and not only when the report is being written, and the fluidity of movement between data and theme building (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These distinctive procedures may be cautiously modified as data is analysed, since a rigid adherence to method could result in faulty assumptions (Levitt *et al.*, 2017).

Thematic analysis allowed for the flexibility (while maintaining rigour) required for this study, where the subject is under-researched and there were no predicted findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This major strength was the deciding factor in selecting this method, as well as the fact that for an inexperienced researcher, this is relatively uncomplicated and more easily accessible (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir (in Jason & Glenwick, 2016)).

The entire data set for each child was firstly used in initial coding, rather than focussing on specific data items, all the while acknowledging the guidance of the research questions. The entire data set allowed for rich, descriptive and explorative themes, in keeping with the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was intended that this analysis would go beyond the realm of description, and that latent and manifest themes could be interpreted and discussed in depth using the operational theories as well as the established literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nieuwenhuis, 2018; Creswell, 2009). For clarity, a schematic presentation of the Thematic analysis followed for this research is presented in Figure 4.4.



**Figure 4.4**

*Schematic Representation of the Thematic Analysis of TRA*

*Note.* Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Creswell, 2009; Jason & Glenwick, 2016

There were several issues to consider in this form of qualitative analysis. Firstly, according to Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) and Kiger and Varpio (2020), there are two approaches to coding. Data-driven codes emerge from the data set through induction, while theory-driven codes are guided by the research questions and are deductive by nature. With little literature pertaining to the self-identity of the TRA Black child being available, it was unclear what themes might emerge from the responses to the research questions, so themes were initially coded according to their presence and recurrence. These initial codes were then aligned with the preceding literature and conceptual framework within the boundaries of the set research questions. This deductive approach was the predominant approach employed in this study, although some inductive analysis had to occur in the absence of available predictive literature.

Secondly, it was essential to do an overall analysis of the data set and avoid presenting only brief extracts. Here Braun and Clarke (2013) also caution that failure to convince the reader of the research findings, and a possible criticism of the Thematic analysis, are a result of the analysis not being sufficiently grounded in data, selective picking of data and misinterpretation of the data. This adversely affects the validity and quality of analysis. “(Thematic analysis)...is vulnerable to the beliefs and values of those who employ it” (Jason & Glenwick, 2016, p.40). Therefore, all data was reviewed, used and made available for verification using a stringent audit trail.

Thirdly, Riger and Sigurvinsdottir (in Jason & Glenwick, 2016) consider a Thematic analysis to be weak if there is not a good fit and well-aligned analysis between the advocated literature, theoretical framework and supporting evidence. A concerted effort to address this requirement and the supporting literature was carefully upheld and every attempt was made to record the information accurately.

#### **4.3.5.2. Triangulation**

The form of triangulation utilised was based on Fiske’s recommendation of a “multi-trait, multi-method matrix” (Ngulube & Ngulube, 2015, p.4). It made divergent interpretations of similar TRA situations possible, but also provided for complementary information and indicated unique differences between families through the use of multiple sources and multiple strategies (Ngulube & Ngulube, 2015).

Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2018, 2002) caution against the use of single-method, single-observer and single-theory studies. They recommend accumulation of information from several different types of sources. De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont (2002) concur and describe several forms of triangulation in data interpretation and presentation, some of which were implemented.

Firstly, triangulation of measures was used, where data was obtained from various sources, such as the semi-structured interviews with the parents and teachers, parental questionnaires, children’s

projective techniques and standardised questionnaires (CBCL), for completion by the parents and teachers. Although some of these data collection strategies have scoring sheets (Kogelschatz, 1974), no strategies were to be quantified or numerically scored. For brevity, the Parental response scale (PRS) was shown in graph form but used qualitatively. The emphasis remained on the content, in line with the qualitative approach, guided by a social constructivist and interpretive paradigm (Ngulube & Ngulube, 2015).

Triangulation of researchers curbs single-person observation limitations, as described by De Vos *et al.* (2002). A qualified psychologist with experience in working with children and the analysis of their projective techniques for therapeutic and forensic purposes administered and assessed the projective techniques. All assessments were performed in a similar manner to ensure consistency, and the findings formed part of the data corpus. The psychologist also formed part of the two-member coding team for the psychometric assessments. Although I was tasked with identifying themes, the psychologist was consulted to confirm that they were an accurate representation of her findings. In this way, both members could ensure that all psychometric data was assessed, and no themes were overlooked (O' Neil & Koekemoer, 2016). I remained responsible for the generation of themes of the whole data set.

Lastly, the third form of triangulation in this research was the triangulation of theory, also proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (2018, 2002) and De Vos *et al.* (2002). Multiple theoretical perspectives were employed to interpret the data. "Using more than one theory may be difficult, but it will increase the chance of making a creative synthesis or developing new ideas" (De Vos *et al.*, 2002, p.342). Admittedly, the selection of theories, such as Erikson's Psychosocial identity theory, was partly due to my psychological underpinning.

Although these three strategies were a determined attempt to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, I acknowledge that it was unlikely that all bias and subjectivity would be removed. I tried to remain vigilant of undue influence that would decrease the credibility and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2009).

#### **4.3.6. Ensuring Data Quality and Data Verification**

Traditionally, research work must be characterised by reliability and validity (Creswell, 2009). In qualitative research, "the researcher is the data gathering instrument" (Creswell *et al.*, 2014, p.80), posing a challenge to prove consistency (reliability) and trueness to reality (validity). Therefore, in qualitative research the data is credible and trustworthy rather than valid and reliable. Denzin and Lincoln (2002) and Shenton (2004) prescribe the four criteria for qualitative data as *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability*, first formulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

#### **4.3.6.1. Credibility**

Credibility is akin to internal validity in quantitative research, being an accurate representation of multiple realities (Daniel, 2019; Jason & Glenwick, 2016; Creswell, 2009). Daniel (2019, para 15) posits that it is “an approximation of the truth of inference”, creating “findings that are dependable, relevant, and congruent”. Incorporating strategies that will ensure credibility is essential to qualitative research and should be present throughout the planning, implementation, analysis and reporting of the research work (Daniel, 2019).

#### **4.3.6.2. Transferability**

“Sufficient thick description of the phenomenon under investigation” (Shenton, 2004, p.70) increases understanding and allows appropriate comparisons with subsequent work. According to Daniel (2019), transferability is congruent to reliability in quantitative research, suggesting that the research findings from one study should be applicable to other similar settings or participants, but not generalised.

#### **4.3.6.3. Dependability**

Concisely stated by Jason and Glenwick (2016), dependability refers to findings that are consistent over time and investigation. Daniel (2019, para 6) refers to dependability as trustworthiness, which “underpins both rigour in the research process and the relevance of research”. High levels of trustworthiness in the research findings will promote confidence in the findings and outcome of the work.

#### **4.3.6.4. Confirmability**

More recently, confirmability has been referred to as auditability (Daniel, 2019). Understood as objectivity within the process of data collection, analysis and reporting (Jason & Glenwick, 2016), auditability enhances the quality of data and facilitates data verification. External auditability will allow for the investigation of findings or any processes within the research by the users of the research outcome. Internal auditability or confirmability is the addressing and recording of any methodological issues and alignment of the research questions, design, data and conclusions (Daniel, 2019). In short, this is the audit trail of the study (Mouton, 2017; Daniel, 2019).

Based on the work of Jason and Glenwick (2016), Noble and Smith (2015) and Daniel (2019), the strategies to ensure data quality and verification employed for this study are set out in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6***Data Quality and Verification*

*Note.* Adapted from Daniel, 2015; Noble & Smith, 2019; Jason & Glenwick, 2016

<b>ENSURING DATA QUALITY AND DATA VERIFICATION FOR THIS RESEARCH THIS RESEARCH</b>	
Strategy	Implementation in this study
<b>Credibility</b>	
<b>Accounting for personal research bias</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of independent psychologist for psychometric testing</li> <li>• Independent analysis of the assessment followed by peer scrutiny of themes</li> <li>• Engagement with other researchers to reduce research bias</li> </ul>
<b>Triangulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convergence of multiple sources of data</li> <li>• Different methods of data capturing techniques such as interviews, questionnaires, psychometrics and checklist to produce comprehensive set of findings</li> <li>• Techniques selected to encourage participant honesty</li> <li>• Achieving depth of analysis through multi-stage Thematic analysis as a method</li> </ul>
<b>Data verification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarity with data collecting methods</li> <li>• Meticulous record-keeping</li> <li>• Careful transcription of records</li> <li>• Use of verbatim quotes from the data sources</li> <li>• Member checking of responses with participants if audio was not clear</li> <li>• Keeping data interpretation consistent and transparent</li> </ul>
<b>Audit trail and research diary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper trail for auditing and possible future investigations</li> <li>• Recording thought processes and decision-making during data collection and data analysis</li> <li>• Field notes/note to file</li> </ul>
<b>Transferability</b>	
<b>Allowing for application in similar setting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adherence to strict inclusion and exclusion criteria</li> <li>• Participants are well known to the phenomenon under study-</li> <li>• Have known their children for a minimum of five years</li> </ul>
<b>Researcher's knowledge of the field of TRA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involved in TRA as counsellor</li> <li>• Registered place-of-safety parent</li> <li>• Director for Tshwane Place of Safety and</li> <li>• TRA parent for more than twenty years</li> </ul>
<b>Content of data available for future research and auditing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews are an accurate and honest reflection of the TRA parents and teachers</li> <li>• Psychometric findings have been thoroughly and independently assessed</li> <li>• Provision of details of study participants on request and within constraints of confidentiality</li> <li>• Completed worksheets and questionnaires are stored safely</li> </ul>
<b>Dependability/trustworthiness</b>	
<b>Neutrality and truth value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not possible to avoid all research bias, since this is a field known to me within a career and personal setting</li> <li>• Reflexivity was part of all the processes and circumstances; captured in the research diary and field notes</li> <li>• Findings to be reported to participating parents to see whether they enhance parents' understanding of the phenomenon</li> <li>• Accepting findings outside of personal assumption and opinion</li> </ul>



ENSURING DATA QUALITY AND DATA VERIFICATION FOR THIS RESEARCH THIS RESEARCH	
Strategy	Implementation in this study
<b>Consistency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic process to be followed through data organising and analysis-</li> <li>• Therefore, Thematic analysis was chosen as method</li> <li>• Clear and concise notes indicating decisions on code and theme management</li> <li>• Acknowledgement of prior assumptions at data interpretation level and with reference to literature; continued appraisal and peer scrutiny by my supervisors</li> </ul>
<b>Applicability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment of good clinical practice throughout and maintaining strict adherence to the data collection protocol</li> </ul>
<b>Confirmability/auditability</b>	
<b>Process of creating a working study document or protocol</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive notes and explanations</li> <li>• Careful planning and selection of methods</li> <li>• Recording of interactions verbally or in field notes/note to file</li> <li>• Complete collection of all communications with all participating parties</li> </ul>
<b>Adherence to the proposed working document</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification of any deviance within data collection or analysis, such as a timeline deviation or</li> <li>• Failure to complete assessments, or</li> <li>• Withdrawal from the study</li> <li>• Questions during the consenting process</li> </ul>
<b>Storage of documentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All field notes, memos, journals, diary entries, recordings to be stored for a period of 15 years according to my ethical authority; protection of confidentiality but access to information if participants need to be contacted or verified.</li> </ul>

#### 4.4. Ethical Considerations

*The scientist has the right to search for truth, but not at the expense of the rights of other individuals in society (Mouton, 2017, p.239).*

Irrespective of the manner or purpose of research that is done, researchers have an ethical responsibility towards their research participants. Creswell (2012) firmly instructs researchers to always protect their participants and maintain a relationship of trust with them. Researchers are responsible for the integrity and objectivity of the research and should watch against any misconduct or impropriety from the onset of the research to the publication of the findings (Olivier, 2018; Mouton, 2017).

#### 4.4.1. *Study-Specific Ethical Issues*

The ethical issues mentioned below pertain to issues that are unique to this research work.

- Using the guidelines formulated by Strydom in De Vos *et al.* (2002) and Mouton (2017), the following study-specific ethical issues were noted before the study commenced and upheld throughout:
- The welfare of the young TRA child and his or her parents remained the priority in the study. Possible ethical and potentially harmful psychological implications were considered and re-evaluated as the study evolved.
- The participating families, as well as any other sources of information, such as teachers, were kept fully informed of the research, process and progress throughout the period of active participation if they so wished.
- The process and procedures were consistently managed with sensitivity, since a young child is vulnerable and needs constant protection, both physically and emotionally.
- All participating adults were requested to sign an informed consent form allowing me to administer the procedures, such as the semi-structured interviews and using a psychologist to assess the child. Procedures were carried out only once the participants had had the opportunity to ask any questions and enough time to consider. I was also ethically bound to ensure that there were no misunderstandings.
- The child also had to agree verbally to submit drawings and build a Sceno set and sign an assent form in the presence of his or her parents.
- The right to withdraw from the study at any time without ramifications was explained prior to consent and respected before the study and throughout active participation.
- At all times, before, during and after the research, the confidentiality and anonymity of these adoptive families were protected and respected. They could also select pseudonyms, but in the interest of auditability, a record of their identifying details was kept by me with the other confidential documents. The family was informed of this participant log.
- Should there be any negative impact or heinous discovery during data collection or after the contacts with me, the child and/or parents would be assisted by reference to professional assistance or appropriately qualified support structures. These professional therapists and managers would be identified prior to the start of the study.
- Opportunity for questions and debriefing following the conclusion of the researcher-participant contact was also provided if requested by any of the participants and family members.

- This could be an emotionally charged study for the participants as well as for me, having experienced TRA personally and professionally. It is true that a researcher may appear to have the balance of power during data collection (Berger, 2014), but at no time should the participants experience a sense of coercion, and no finding was negated if it differed from my assumptions.

#### ***4.4.2. General Ethical Considerations in Doing Qualitative Research***

The ethical considerations mentioned below pertain to all research work.

- Ethical considerations should be dealt with before the onset of any research conducted. During the preparation phase, institutional and ethical approval was sought and granted by the University of Pretoria, Department of Education.
- All attempts were made to comply with ethical requirements of governing bodies with a possible interest in this study, such as HPCSA.
- The planning and initiation process of the study strove to enrol willing participants without compromising privacy, confidentiality and anonymity.
- Data was collected with respect for the participants and their routines and ensure complete data capturing with recording and audit possibilities.
- Data analysis endeavoured to be thorough and accurate.
- Data reporting was respectful of participant confidentiality, and all attempts were made to produce an unambiguous and accurate original report.
- The storage of data for secondary research, data sharing and auditing purposes followed the prescriptions of the Ethical Committee.

#### **4.5. Role of the Researcher**

Transracial adoption is a phenomenon that evokes opposing viewpoints, emotional discourses and subjective interventions in South Africa (Mosikatsana, 2003; Kausi, 2014; Romanini, 2017). Owing to my involvement, both professionally and personally, with TRA, I understood that this was a research field demanding high levels of respect, integrity, patience and honesty. Additionally, Dahlberg and McCaig (2010) caution that researching a field that the researcher has a vested interest in may easily appear biased, with diminished trustworthiness. This warning was well heeded during all my dealings with participants and during data collection and analysis.

It was clear from initial readings and earlier informal discussions that I would be confronted with opinions, interpretations and social constructions (Sefotho, 2018; Gaus, 2017) very different from mine, and that the findings would be met with either enthusiasm and acceptance or questioned or rejected. In my opinion, my first and foremost role was to conduct the research in an environment free of judgement and an acceptance of constructed worlds at odds with my own.

Secondly, I was required to give “gestalt” to this phenomenon – an experience when considered as a whole has qualities that are more than the sum of its parts (Collins, 2008). It was my role as researcher to explore TRA and collect data to provide rich and in-depth descriptions of this little-studied social phenomenon. I needed to comprehend and understand the phenomenon beyond my own experience and to analyse the data as it presented itself (Dahlberg & McCaig, 2010).

It was also implicitly understood that I would need to present the data to a diverse audience and that my findings could impact on families and children beyond the scope of the research. I remained mindful of the responsibility.

#### **4.6. Conclusion of Chapter**

While Chapter 4 sets out the research design and methodology in detail to explore the self-identity of the early school going TRA child, the following two chapters deal with the data obtained from all the participants of the research work. Two chapters have been allocated, since a distinction has been made between the families with one participating TRA child (Chapter 5) and the families with more than one participating child (Chapter 6).

## Chapter 5 Data Presentation and Initial Analysis: Single-Child TRA Families

<b>BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONTENT-CHAPTER 5</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
<b>PRESENTATION OF DATA</b>	
<b>PATIENT CONFIDENTIALITY AND DOCUMENT KEYS</b>	
<b>SINGLE TRA CHILDREN</b>	
<b>Family A</b>	Atlegang, Adam and Anna, adoptive parents of Atlegang
<b>*Atlegang</b>	
7-year-old boy	Atlegang and his story Comparison with the expected development of the middle child Atlegang's adoptive parents: Adam and Anna and PRS Atlegang's teacher Initial coding in tabulated form
<b>Family B</b>	Brenda-marie, Bryce and Blanche, adoptive parents of Brenda-marie
<b>*Brenda-marie</b>	
7-year-old girl	Brenda-marie and her story Comparison with the expected development of the middle child Brenda-marie's adoptive parents: Bryce and Blanche and PRS Brenda-marie's teacher Initial coding in tabulated form
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	

### 5.1. Introduction

Research has its own dynamics. At the onset, research questions are (usually) triggered by the scarcity of available literature and answers in that field. At the completion of data collection, the initial dearth of information had culminated into a formidable body of data (Peat, 2002; Papadopoulos, Cross & Bor, 2003) that had to be analysed systematically and presented in a coherent and logical manner, all the while supplying an auditable chain of evidence for all findings and interpretations (Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2003; Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). Furthermore, Perera (2018) cautions that ethical considerations, such as ensuring participant confidentiality, must form the architectural backbone of the analysis (Perera, 2018; Creswell *et al.*, 2014).

Protecting the identity of the participants remains one of the overriding concerns in the current study. However, biographical information such as family size, occupations and age of children may inadvertently have allowed some recognizable characteristics to slip through, since the sample size of seven children allows for some distinctiveness. Distinguishing details are limited to protect the anonymity of the participating families.

Perera (2018) notes that in analysis, data has already been inadvertently selected by employing purposive sampling; thus, TRA families experiencing problematic interpersonal relationships would be reluctant to participate. Perera (2018) also states that some data is drawn out more than other data, but that “cherry-picking” should not occur (Perera, 2018, para 13). This is a universal phenomenon,

since the qualitative researcher busies himself or herself with interpretation at the moment of data collection, according to Papadopoulos *et al.* (2003), Oplatka (2018) and Peat (2002), possibly resulting in unrealised and often negated information, with omitted coding resulting in incorrect or incomplete Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In an attempt to avoid data selection as described above, the hard copies of recorded and subsequently transcribed semi-structured interviews, “wet-ink” completed questionnaires and deliberate choice of tangible psychometric assessments in a written report served a twofold purpose. Firstly, the incidence of cherry-picking and overlooked data occurring through pre-emptive interpretation is limited by easy and repeated access to the data (Oplatka, 2018; Perera, 2018). Secondly, the hard copies made initial coding auditable, with a consistent chain of evidence in the form of an extensive paper trail<sup>23</sup> (Daniel, 2019; Mouton, 2017; Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2003).

This study is guided by the philosophical paradigms of interpretivism and social constructivism. Understanding the world of the participants, as they view it and construe it, remains paramount (Gaus, 2017). Thus, relevant quotes, as permitted by the participants in their signed consents, are provided to better reflect the understanding of their world and add depth and context to their TRA experience. These quotes may form part of the main body of work when it does not detract from the flow of information or may be put in footnotes in the case of longer quotes, with an English translation. Single graphic elements of the psychometric testing have also been included to enhance understanding of the child in his or her world.

## 5.2. Presentation of Data

Initially, I decided to describe the families as they were seen chronologically. However, true to the emergent nature of data (Creswell *et al.*, 2014), I noted that TRA families often have more than one adopted child, and such families formed part of my sample. To improve logical coherence, the two families with only one qualifying adopted child<sup>24</sup> are presented first, followed by families with two or more adopted children in the next chapter. In the latter, two or more children met the inclusion criteria and were assessed, allowing some intrafamilial comparison. The presentation of data in two chapters

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<sup>23</sup>A completed participant identification log and the transcribed data and reports are kept in storage for data verification purposes but, in the interest of confidentiality, are not included as appendices. This data should only be accessed under specific academic circumstances.

<sup>24</sup>As dictated by the inclusion and exclusion criteria

was necessitated by the large body of work generated in the case study (Yin, 2014). The information pertaining to data presentation and analysis remains pertinent to both Chapter 5 and 6.

The intention was to present the challenging amount of data in a succinct, coherent and consistent manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2003). Simultaneously, the provision of a rich and thorough description of the self-identity of the TRA child that would allow for accurate social constructivism and truthful interpretation was essential and could not be lost for the sake of brevity (Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2003; Perera, 2018; Gaus, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The five research questions (See Ch 1; Section 1.3), as well as the study-specific definition of self-identity (See Ch 1, Section 1.4.1.) served as an ongoing reference and guide during analysis to ensure focus and direction (Mouton, 2017; Nieuwenhuis, 2018).

Since the presentation of the self-identity of the young TRA child constitutes the focus of the study, the largest part of the analysis is that which pertains directly to the child. It consists of the information, corroborations and descriptions from the parents and teachers as well as the child's psychometric evaluation. Singular examples of the projections such as a KFD or DAP drawing or photo of a built scene (SB) are included, in conjunction with the test behaviour and clinical observations as noted by the psychologist.

The data assumes a narrative format, as *the story of the child* is where his self-identity is nested<sup>25</sup> (Soares *et al.*, 2017; Grotevant *et al.*, 2017; McAdams, 2013; Erikson, 1968, 1980). While the parental and teacher interviews are also treated as entities on their own, it was not plausible to exclude their descriptions of the child from the primary narrative. Referencing of these various sources was done with the aid of a key to promote the flow of information.

Using the provided data, a tabulated correlation between the TRA child and the expected development of a middle/latent child (Chapter 3.3.1. and Table 3.1) is added at the end of the narration. This is not a comparative study but serves to place the participating TRA child next to his non-adopted peers to understand his or her likeness or divergence in six indicated developmental fields. A singular example of the child's projection with a brief explanation is also provided.

A shorter synopsis of the semi-structured parental interview, questionnaires and a graphic representation of their<sup>26</sup> Likert scale/parental response scale follows the narrative. Information

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<sup>25</sup>See Chapter 2 for the adoptive identity model and Chapter 3 for the Psychosocial identity development theory.

<sup>26</sup>See parental questionnaire in Addendum F.

obtained from the adults addresses both the self-identity of the young TRA and the secondary research questions (Creswell *et al.*, 2014).

After the presentation of case study, the initial coding is generated<sup>27</sup>, using all data sources relating to that child and is noted in tabular form together with the appropriate data source and using the indicated keys (Initial coding table provided at the conclusion of each child's presentation). According to Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) and Kiger and Varpio (2020, p. 851), this step of assigning initial codes helps to organise all the data “at a granular, specific level” noting data items of potential interest, questions, connections and preliminary ideas”. It supports data comprehension and allows for clarity and accuracy in the subsequent interpretation and theme building (Clarke & Braun, 2006, 2013). The contents of the five research questions and definition of self-identity were used to guide grouping and to maintain focus and facilitate comprehension in identifying initial codes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Braun and Clarke (2006, p.82) state that “a theme is a patterned response or meaning”. Kiger and Varpio (2020, p.486) agree that themes are “actively constructed patterns or meanings, derived from a data set that answers a research question, as opposed to mere summaries or categorizations of codes”. Thus, manifest and latent themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020), guided by the research questions, are addressed in the next chapter, only after all the case studies (data set) have been presented and the themes and subthemes have been identified and reviewed, as prescribed in the processes described by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Jason and Glenwick (2016), and depicted in Chapter 4, Figure 4.4.

### 5.3. Patient Confidentiality and Document Keys

It was initially decided that the children could choose their own pseudonyms, but this became unwieldy and was done away with. The children were assigned names alphabetical in order of presentation. Their adults are referred to as (pseudonym name) parents (P), mother (M), father (F) or (pseudonym) teacher (T). In the independent analysis, a name that starts with the same letter as the child was assigned. Thus, the mother's response in the adoption journey section will be indicated as AJ-M. While this procedure might appear cumbersome, it is the most logical way to present the information and safeguard participant confidentiality (Perera, 2018).

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<sup>27</sup>See Chapter 4 on the Thematic analysis process.



Children retaining a traditional Black name<sup>28</sup> were given an alphabetically appropriate traditional Black pseudonym, since this form of naming became relevant during data collection. Again, the emergent nature of data is acknowledged (Creswell *et al.*, 2014). Many of the interviews and questionnaires were conducted and completed in Afrikaans<sup>29</sup>, necessitating accurate translation of relevant quotes. For brevity, key words were used and are presented in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1**  
*Key to Referencing Sources*

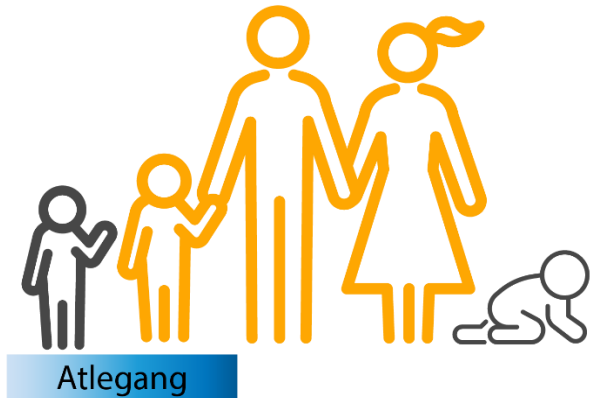
Key letter	Corresponding document or section of document
<b>BI</b>	Biographical information (section 1 of parental questionnaire)
<b>M</b>	Mother
<b>F</b>	Father
<b>PRS</b>	Parent response scale (section 2 of parental questionnaire)
<b>AJ</b>	Adoption journey (section 3 of parental questionnaire)
<b>CF</b>	Clinical findings and assessment behaviour of the child
<b>DAP</b>	Draw a Person assessment
<b>KFD</b>	Kinetic Family Drawing assessment
<b>SB</b>	Scene building
<b>AC</b>	Assessment conclusion
<b>PI</b>	Parental interview
<b>TI</b>	Teacher interview
<b>CBCL</b>	CBCL assessment
<b>FN</b>	Field notes/note to file and observations during interview

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<sup>28</sup>By law, adoptive parents are allowed to change the name of the child to a name of their own choosing at time of registration. This new name will be reflected on all identifying documents (DSD, n.d.)

<sup>29</sup>Afrikaans is one of South Africa's official languages, indigenous to South Africa. Initially spoken only by White people as "kitchen Dutch", it has become a language that is commonly and widely spoken across the country by all racial groups (Tsedu in Merrett, Gilder & Netshitenzhe (eds), 2019))

## 5.4. Family A: Atlegang



### 5.4.1. *Atlegang and His Story*

Atlegang is a Black seven-year-old boy, the middle child of a five-member Afrikaans-speaking family. He attends an Afrikaans school close to his home and is currently in grade 2. His sister, who is White and also adopted, is ten years old and in a higher grade in the same school. His baby brother (two years old), also Black and adopted, is in a pre-school close to the school, and Atlegang says: “I wish I was as cute as him because everyone ‘fafs’ (sic) about him”. (PI, p.10; BI; KFD).

The family lives in an older, wealthier suburb of a city, and they describe the racial composition of their neighbourhood as majority White (BI-F; BI-M). However, the area they live in hosts a number of large, racially mixed primary and high schools. These schools, and a university in close proximity, have given rise to many businesses and places of entertainment and socialisation that are frequented not only by the Black and White population, but also other nationalities. The parents, Adam and Anna, chose this area because of the schools and the demographic mix (PI-F:13).

Atlegang has been with his adoptive family since he was 2 months old. His biological mother was single, the biological father having abandoned her during pregnancy. She had decided at the outset to give the baby up for adoption and had chosen the adoptive parents from a profile. Atlegang’s adoptive parents describe her as a very intelligent, emotionally well-adjusted woman who, due to unfavourable socio-economic circumstances, made a difficult decision to ensure the future wellbeing of her child (PI-M:5; AJ-M). They met her only once at the adoption handover and have a single photo of her that they have kept for Atlegang, together with his adoption journey book (PI-F, p.5). Atlegang’s adoptive mother, Anna, is reluctant to show him the photo (PI-M:5). She cites his young age as a possible reason and assumes that as he gets older, he will probably ask more questions about his background, which she will address directly (PI-M:5; FN). Anna also states that many of his questions arise from his

discussions with his older sister, who is beginning to ask questions about her own adoption journey (PI-M:5,8; PI-F:6) and with whom he shares a close, sometimes dependent, bond (KFD; DAP; SB).

Physically, Atlegang is a healthy, active and athletic little boy, favourably comparable to other seven-year-old children (PI-F, p.8; PI-M:13; TI, p.6; SB; CN). He participates in a wide variety of team sports (PI-M:13; CBCL) and is well-liked within his racially mixed teams by children and coaches alike (PI-M:13-14; PI-F:14).

His scholastic performance is average to good, although he appears to have some problems with mathematics (TI p.2; CBCL). He enjoys other academic tasks and has very well-developed verbal reasoning skills (PI-F, p.7-8; PI-M: 7-8; TI:1). According to the analysis of his DAP test, Atlegang is focused on performance, and his poor success with mathematics might cause some feelings of inadequacy in his current psychosocial stage of industry versus inferiority (Erikson, 1968). His struggle with mathematics is the only thing about school he dislikes. Otherwise, he describes his teacher as being the best teacher and his school in very positive terms (DAP, CN). The teacher does mention that he is disorganised, easily distracted, sometimes impulsive and untidy in his approach to work, a characteristic also noted by his mother regarding the neatness of his room and completion of chores (TI-1, 2; CBCL).

His father, Adam, describes him as a president in the making, a very good negotiator, with his mom adding that he is a politician, since following a discussion, he always adds a “but”<sup>30</sup>. It is very important for him that his viewpoint is understood by those with whom he interacts. According to his teacher, it is evident that questions and discussions are encouraged at home, and that Atlegang is confident and well-versed in presenting verbal arguments in an assertive manner (TI-p.1, 4, 7).

Emotionally, Atlegang presents as a joyful, spontaneous, ambitious, very confident child, stable and secure in being himself (PI-M:7; PI-F:7; TI:1; CBCL; DAP; SB; CN). He is talkative, outgoing, assertive and widely popular, with a passion for life (PI-M, p.9; PI-F, p.10; TI, p.2; CBCL; DAP; CN). The analysis of the Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD) indicated a desire for recognition. He also places a high premium on physical possessions and is proud of his toys and belongings (KFD).

Adam finds his son socially astute, a characteristic conducive to his interpersonal relationships and also in the management of social situations (PI-F, p.7). According to the psychometric assessment, Atlegang’s social success and the encouragement he enjoys from his parents promote his self-

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<sup>30</sup> “Hy sien homself as die president van ons huis. Hy is ’n regte goeie negotiator” (PI-F, p.7).  
“As ons sê hy is ’n politikus het hy ’n “maar”-antwoord vir alles wat ons vir hom sê” (PI-M, p.8).

confidence, sense of competency and make him proud of his accomplishments and abilities (DAP, KFD, CN).

His teacher finds him well-mannered, enthusiastic, caring and empathetic (TI, p.2, 6, 8) and notes that he often appears to be the peacekeeper and leader of the group (TI, p.8). She does report that he can be very outspoken and challenging regarding subjects that he is passionate about, such as literature and religion, which some adults may find abrasive and rude (TI, p.7, 9).

This finding is supported by his psychometric assessment. Atlegang is aware of his forthrightness, calling himself “being cheeky sometimes”, especially when feeling misunderstood or frustrated (CN; DAP). The psychologist postulates that he might feel the need to occasionally test boundaries, not to the extent of misconduct, but rather because he learns through curiosity and inquiry (DAP).

At school and within the greater community, Atlegang is well accepted. He likes to be the centre of attraction (PI-F, p.8, 10), and has friendships that extend beyond the school context – he is often invited to birthday parties and sleepovers of both boys and girls in his peer group. These relationships have continued over the course of two grades.

In the groups, he does not appear to have any gender or race preference. His best friend is a little White girl that has shared a class with him since nursery school. He is, however, currently spending a lot of time with another Black boy, who is in the same grade, but not in the same class, who is also fluent in Afrikaans (TI, p.2; PI-M, p.11, 13, 15; PI-F, p.8, 10, 11).

Atlegang is very active in his church, which his family attends regularly. Anna and Adam host a weekly cell meeting which the children often join (TI-M, p.13). While the children and parents are happy in their church, the parents are considering involvement with a more racially diverse church, since their church has a mainly White, Afrikaans congregation (PI-M, p.13).

Atlegang has an extended adoptive family that comprises both sets of grandparents and a range of uncles and aunts and cousins. Most of the families live in close enough proximity to each other to have regular contact. Because the families are emotionally close, Atlegang’s parents discussed their decision to adopt with their families before beginning the process. They were convinced that their first child would be a Black child, but, unexpectedly, the race of the child was not the extended families’ first concern (PI-M, p.2, 3, 4, 6, 7; TI-F, p.2, 3, 4, 7; PRS-M; PRS-F). The prospective grandparents were unsure adoption *per se* since it was an unknown phenomenon for them. They did, however, admit their own heightened insecurities regarding a transracially adopted child and their ability to bond with him or her. The prospective maternal grandfather had been a military cadre during the era of apartheid (TI-M, p.2, 3, 4, 6, 7; TI-F, p.2, 3, 4, 7).

These fears proved to be unfounded; Atlegang and his siblings enjoy a strong, inclusive, positive and accepting relationship with their immediate and extended family (KFD; SB; PI-M, p.3; PI-F, p.3,

4.). They often have family get-togethers and holidays (PI-M, p.3; PI-F, p.3, 4, 7; PRS-M; PRS-F; DAP; KFD, SB). The family adults are addressed by the allocated family role names, such as Oupa and Ouma (Grandfather and Grandmother) and Oom and Tannie (Uncle and Aunt) (TI-F: 7). Atlegang seems to have a special bond with his maternal grandparents, whom he considers wise and caring (SB). There appears to be distant paternal family that severed ties with family due to the TRA, but Atlegang's parents feel that they are too emotionally distant and also physically far away to have any impact (TI-F: 3; TI-M, p.4). Anna admits that the fact that their White daughter was adopted first paved the way for the second adoption and first TRA adoption (PI-M, p.4).

When asked about his coping strategies for dealing with stressful or unhappy situations and conflicts, Atlegang is quick to forgive and move on once he has verbalised his dissent (PI-M, p.9, 10; TI, p.6). He is comfortable addressing both adults and children regarding any conflict or discomfort he has experienced. His parents also feel that his need to belong to a group and be positively involved with his family and friends promote his ease to forgive and move on from a conflict situation<sup>31</sup> (PI-M, p.7, 9; PI-F, 9, 10). All adults interviewed regard his verbal and reasoning abilities as his most valuable assets in dealing with less favourable situations (TI, p.7, 9; PI-M, p.9, 10; TI, p.6), both at home and in the greater community.

It should be noted that Atlegang sometimes experiences feelings of frustration and aggression when his need for approval and acceptance is thwarted. He then resorts to being verbally challenging and confrontational (CN; DAP; TI, p.4; PI-F, p.7). However, the converse is true when he is feeling emotional. According to his psychometric assessment, when he is very upset about an issue, he becomes less verbal and may initially withdraw from the triggering situation before vocalising his feelings (KFD). This may be due to insecurities regarding his own management of emotions as well as to his lack of abstract and emotional reasoning due to his age, and also because he might fear rejection (DAP; KFD).

When probed about Atlegang's recognition of his visible physical family differences, both his parents and teacher state that he embraces it. He will draw himself in the colour brown while depicting his family in accurate colour representations<sup>32</sup>. He also discusses his family freely with his classmates (PI-M, p.6, 10, 11; PI-F, p.8, 10, 11; TI, p.3, 4, 6; PRS-F; PRS-M). He describes his family proudly<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>“...Maar (Atlegang) wil verhoudings reg hê. Ek dink dit is ‘n goeie eienskap van hom, hy kom vinnig oor goeters. Hy neem nie dinge persoonlik op nie” (PI-M,p.9) (But Atlegang wants his relationships to be right. I think that is a good trait, he gets over things quickly. He doesn't take things personally.)

<sup>32</sup> “Hy is gemaklik in sy eie vel” (PI-M, p.8) (He is comfortable in his own skin)

“Hy is happy, hy is regtig tevrede in sy lyfie” (TI, p.7) (He is happy, he is really satisfied in his body)

<sup>33</sup>“Ja, en so, my ma is wit, my pa is wit, so” (TI, p.6) (Yes, and so, my mother is White, my father is White, so?)

and was the first to notice that his baby brother had a lighter complexion than he did. The family now use descriptive terms such as chocolate, vanilla and caramel and promote the value of variety and physical differences (PI-F, p.8; PI-M, p.8; PRS-M; PRS-F).

Atlegang shares his real name with a very well-known and extremely popular South African sportsman. This coincidence has brought him much joy and popularity, and his parents report that many people, White and Black, will remark on this favourably (PI-M, p.11; PI-F, p.11). He uses this sportsman as a role model and makes positive social inferences from him, such as that marriage can occur across racial lines, since the sport star is married to a White woman (PI-M, p.12; PI-F, p.12).

Atlegang has recently become more interested in Black role models, a development the family are actively promoting (PI-F, p.12). They address what they perceive as being lacking, such as significant social contact with other Black families (PI-F:12, 13; PI-M, p.12). They are also working on their familiarity with traditionally Black cultural features, such as music and language (PI-M, p.11, 12), but do not feel that they are exposing Atlegang sufficiently to prominent Black role models and Black people in leadership positions.

In summary, Atlegang appears to be a well-adjusted little boy, with few or no manifestations of problems regarding his adoptive or transracial status. His KFD (Figure 5.2) shows secure and confident interaction with his family. He has emotional and social coping skills that are appropriate for his age, and his personality traits make him a popular and well-accepted child across generations, within his family and larger community. He is comfortable with both genders, all races and ages, and does not use any of these criteria to determine his group membership. Language is not a barrier, since most of the children and adults that he interacts with speak English and Afrikaans, languages in which he is fluent. However, he does not speak a Black language (BI-M). (Table 5.2 provides a comparison of Atlegang with the expected development of a child in the latent phase).

**Table 5.2**  
*Comparison with Expected Development of Middle/latent child –Atlegang*

Developmental area	Expected development				Comment
	Below average	Average	Above average	Unknown	
Physical			X		Very athletic
Cognitive		X			Considered intelligent
Linguistic			X		Very strong – loves to question and reason
Emotional		X			Sometimes withdraws if overwhelmed emotionally
Ethical and spiritual			X		Enjoys an active religious affiliation
Psychosocial			X		Extremely social

#### 5.4.2. *Atlegang's Adoptive Parents, Adam and Anna*

Atlegang's parents, Anna and Adam, have been married for almost 17 years and are both in their early forties (BI-M; BI-F). They are Afrikaans speaking but speak English fluently. They do not know a Black language (BI-M; BI-F). Both parents have university degrees that have required at least seven years of study (BI-M; BI-F) and are verbal about their affinity to family, work and church (PRS-F; PRS-M; PI-F, p.2, 13; PI-M: 13). They also enjoy active community outreach participation in traditional Black areas (PI-F, p.13).

Adam and Anna were unable to have their own biological children, and after five years of marriage and infertility treatment decided to start adoption proceedings (PI-M, p.1). They were completely open to adopting a child of another race, since they felt that Black babies were most vulnerable, and that was where the social and adoptive need lay in South Africa. They discussed it at length with their respective families (PI-F, p.1, 2, 3; PRS-F; PI-M, p.1, 2, 3; PRS-M). Their motivation to adopt transracially came from both a need to be parents<sup>34</sup> and a calling to assist vulnerable children<sup>35</sup> (PI-M, p.2; PI-M, p.2). It was coincidental that their first adopted child was an open, same-race adoption, negotiated by distant family and acquaintances (PI-F, p.1). They both knew, however, that they would adopt a TRA child, and then probably a third and TRA child, so as not to have only one child of colour in the family (PI-M, p.1, 3, 6).

Anna and Adam relate that their adoption journey was mostly positive (PRS-M; PRS-F; PI-M, p.2, 15; PI-F, p.2; AJ-M; AJ-F), except for the bureaucracy and tardiness of the placement and name change of the child (AJ-F; AJ-M; PI-M, p.15). They report that Atlegang has brought about changes in many families' lives with his positivity and the fact that he is usually the first little Black boy that has visited their homes (PI-M, p.15). Adam admits to being ignorant about racially charged situations and that he has had to come to grips with his own racial preconceptions (PI-F, p.14, 15). For him it has also been a personal journey of growth (PI-F, p.14, 15). Similarly, Anna was not aware that there were differently shaded Black complexions until she received her second TRA baby, who was lighter than his older adopted brother (PI-M, p.8). She adds that this instilled a greater appreciation of her children's

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<sup>34</sup>“En ja, toe het ons besef dat babas kom in huise deur normale geboorte of deur 'n keiser of deur aanneming en ek dink ons het ook besef dat – wil ons ouers wees – of wil ons ons eie biologiese DNA sien voortleef?” (PI-F, p.2) (And then we realised that babies come into homes through normal birth or Caesarean or through adoption, and I think then we also realised – do we want to be parents, or do we want to see our own biological DNA survive?)

<sup>35</sup> “So ons glo die Here het ons groep daartoe om te sorg vir die weeskinders. Dis wat Hy in Sy Woord sê, en in Suid-Afrika dink ek is dit duidelik genoeg dis waarop die nood lê is (sic) -by die swart kinders”. (PI-M, p.2). (So, we believe that God has called us to take care of orphans. It is what He says in his Word, and in South Africa I think it is clear that there is where the need lies – with the Black children).

diversity (PI-M, p.8). Both parents embrace their children's physical diversity and are open to discussing TRA in all its aspects within the family (PRS-M; PRS-F; PI-M, p.7, 8; PI-F, p.7).

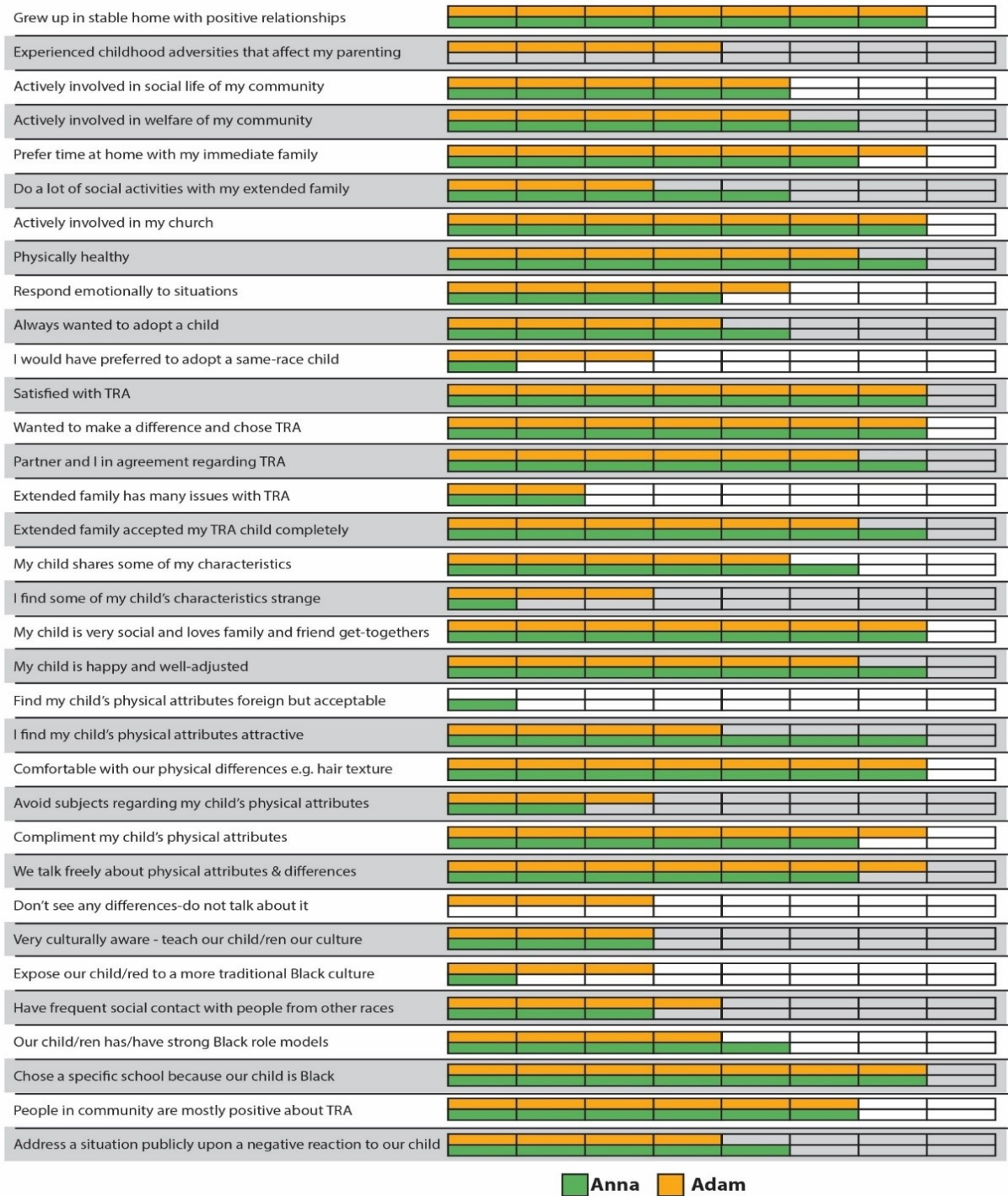
The family have not made major adjustments to their lives and future plans since becoming TRA parents. They have, however, made certain deliberate decisions, such as choosing a residential suburb and a demographically and socio-economically mixed school (PI-F, p.13; BI-M; BI-F). They are intentional in trying to expose the children to more racial diversity and Black role models that serve as good examples by inviting Black families to visit, attending a more racially mixed church and giving the children access to positive Black social media and entertainment ((PI-F, p.11, 12; PI-M, p.11, 12, 13).

Anna and Adam appear to love their children very much. There are a number of photographs of family gatherings on the walls, and signs of children's activities and artworks throughout the house (FN). They speak proudly and knowledgeably about their children and seem to be very involved in their daily lives, able to name the school friends and describe school events and current childhood preoccupations (FN; TI, p.4). They acknowledge the aspects they see as shortcomings, such as a lack of significant interaction with other Black people and are actively addressing them (FN).

Adam and Anna are in agreement about their TRA experience, throughout the journey, although Adam admits being less adamant about a transracial adoption than Anna. They are both very positive about Atlegang and his place in his immediate family, his extended family and the community. Figure 5.1 is a graphic representation of their parental response scale scores.



**Parental Response Scale  
Atlegang**



**Figure 5.1**

*Parental Response Scale – Atlegang*

**Note.** This is a 7-point Likert scale (1-7) and the higher the value assigned by the parent, the more he or she agrees with the statement noted on the left of the graph.

**Note.** Anna scored 0 for childhood adversities and stated that she does not see any physical differences, although she does give a high rating for talking about physical differences and attributes. Adam scored 0 for the statement about finding his child's physical attributes strange. It would be insightful to explore such discrepancies in future research.

### 5.4.3. *Atlegang's Teacher (Grade 1:2020)*

Atlegang's teacher is a young, White, married woman. Her relationship with Atlegang is positive and she speaks freely about their interactions (TI, p.1, 2: FN). While all the children at the school receive tuition in Afrikaans, she has had a number of Black children in her class who were not necessarily fluent in Afrikaans at the outset. This does not appear to be a deterrent to friendships or group membership, and by the end of the year, all the children are conversant in Afrikaans.<sup>36</sup> She describes the children as all being close friends, irrespective of language or racial differences (TI, p.4).

Atlegang's teacher states that the children are not sensitive about their fellow learner's skin colour (TI, p.3, 4, 5, 8, 9) and will refer to it without rancour. They do, however, prefer to describe them as Brown, rather than Black (TI, p.3, 4). Initially, the children asked why Atlegang was Brown and his mom White. He replied that his real mom could not care for him, and now his other mom is White (TI, p.3, 4). She remarks on the ease with which Atlegang draws and describes his colourful family (TI, p.3, 4). The kids seem more interested in the visual differences in the family, and the reasons for them, rather than the fact that he is of the Black race<sup>37</sup>. According to her, burgeoning racial awareness and perceptions amongst the children should be attributed to the parents rather than seen as a spontaneous development (TI, p.4).

Having a TRA child has made her more sensitive to not offending anyone by celebrating the diversity of people, the school being both racially and socio-economically mixed, within a Biblical approach (TI, p.4, 5). Atlegang's teacher notes that neither she, nor the other teachers in the school, had been aware of the fact that his older sister was adopted. It was a coincidental discovery (TI, p.6), and she describes the little girl as being reticent and reluctant to talk about it, in contrast to Atlegang, who loves to describe his diverse family (TI, p.6, 7). This emphasises the impact of the visibility of TRA (FN). To paraphrase the teacher: Atlegang is who he is, and is totally happy with it (TI, p.9, 10).

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<sup>36</sup> "...ons werk baie hard om hulle reg te kry in Afrikaans, hulle ouers koop in, in Afrikaans, en teen die einde van die jaar hopelik het hulle die taal baas geraak...maar laas jaar se maatjies was maar baie Engelse maatjies gewees, maar hulle moes maar die Afrikaans baas raak..." (TI, p.3). (We work hard to get them "ok" with Afrikaans, their teachers are supportive, and by the end of the year they would have mastered the language - but last year's friends were very English - but they had to master the language)

<sup>37</sup> "Hulle sien daai maatjie as bruin, so what? Maak nie saak watse kleur sy vel kleur is nie..." (TI, p.4) (They see that friend as Brown, so what? Doesn't matter what his skin colour is...).



**Figure 5.2**

*Atlegang's KFD.*

*Note.* He is at the back, irritating his sister with his smelly feet. His mom and dad are standing together, while his dad is rubbing his baby brother's hair.

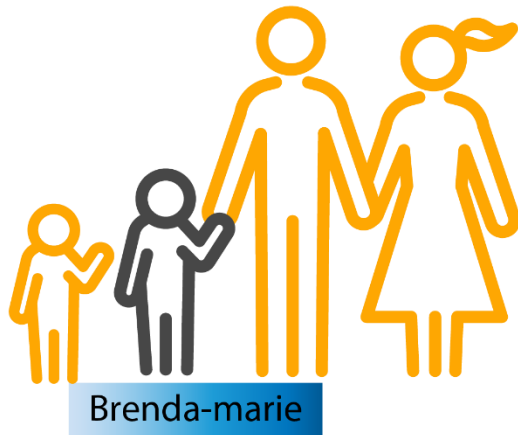
**Table 5.3<sup>38</sup>***Initial Coding Generated – Atlegang**Note.* All data sources used

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
<b>Personal component/characteristic of identity</b>		
Joyful, spontaneous, talkative, confident	PI-M:7; PI-F:7; TI:1, CBCLA; KFD; DAP	Outgoing personality Good communicative skill
Caring and empathetic, aware of privileges in his life	TI:2, 6, 8, DAP	Aware of others and their needs Socially astute – can utilise personality traits appropriately
Disorganised and inclined to be untidy and impulsive	TI:1-2; CBCLA	Still developing organisational skills
Strong leadership skills	TI:8; CBCLA	Enjoys respect and following of his peer group-social identity
Average to higher academic abilities	TI:1-2; PI-F:8; CBCLA; CN; DAP	Possesses ability to cultivate meaningful coping strategies and interpret a situation accurately
Struggles with mathematics and might experience feelings of inadequacy and inferiority	DAP; KFD, CN; CBCLA	Desires feelings of success and positive acknowledgement – on par with Erikson’s identity model (see Chapter 3)
High premium on physical possessions	KFD; CN; SB	Confirms sense of belonging and proof of existence
<b>Social component/characteristics of identity</b>		
Comfortable in the centre of attention and actively seeks it	PI-F:8, 10; TI:4, 8	Strong social affinity
Converses easily with children and adults and enjoys large gatherings with extended family and friends	PI-F; p.3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 13; TI: 1, 2, 8; CN; TI, p.1-2; PRS; PI-M, p.3, 4, 7	Comfortable with variously aged members of society and able to make necessary behavioural adjustments
Appropriate management strategies in dealing with a socially charged situation	TI: 1, 4, 7, 9; PI-F, 7-8, 9, 13; DAP; KFD	Socially astute
Does not speak a Black language	BI-F; BI-M; TI, p.2	Possible communication barrier between him and the family of other Black children, who intuitively speak to them in a Black language
<b>Regarding the group membership/peer relationships of the child</b>		
Loves team sports	PI-M:13, CBCLA; TI: 2.	Enjoys group membership and chooses common interest as group motivator
Popular during breaks and other group-orientated school activities, and out of school context – “sleepovers”	PI-F:10; TI:2; CBCLA F:14; KFD; DAP.	Positive group membership – not limited to gender or race
No current gender, racial or language preference in group selection	PI-M: 11, 13, 15; PI-F: 8, 10, 11; TI: 2, 4; PRS	Enjoys group membership and social categorisation without prejudice
Need to belong to group makes for quick forgiveness and “moving on”	PI-M: 9, 10; TI: 1, 6	Social interaction in group setting more important than emotional discomfort

<sup>38</sup> It is acknowledged that the initial coding tables for each child is very long and should be viewed as a reference

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
<b>Regarding the coping strategies of the child</b>		
Enjoys verbal discussions and debates and is assertive in voicing own thoughts and challenging others' opinions	TI: 1, 4, 7, 9; DAP; KFD, SB; CN; PI-F, p.7-8	Likes the social interaction and is confident in verbal ability
Socially intelligent	PI-F:7	Able to adjust to varying social demands
Aware of his adoptive status and proud of his mixed family	PI-M: 6, 10, 11; PI-F: 8, 10, 11; TI: 3, 4, 6	Does not currently appear to have conflict regarding adoption
Less vocal about emotional issues	KFD; DAP	Not yet comfortable about expressing feelings – might fear possible rejection
<b>Significant findings within the family</b>		
Parents wanted biological children – adoption after failed IVF	AJ-M; AJ-F; PRS-M; PRS-F: PI-F, p.2	Adoption not primary option – had to consider and spend thought on it
Both parents highly qualified	BI-F; BI-M	Probably has cognitive and thorough approach to important processes, such as TRA and also probably places a value on academic performance
Middle child of three adopted children	PI-M, 2-5; PI-F: 3-5; BI-M; BI-F	All three children adopted, oldest girl White, younger boy also Black
Parents had opportunity to bond with him prior to bringing him home	PI-M: 1, 2, 4, 5; PI-F:5	Initial bonding prior to joining family made process easier
Joined the family as an infant of 2 months	BI, PI-M: 2-4	Very small, needed caring and protection and an opportunity to develop trust
Close relationship with siblings and parents and extended family	PI-M: 7, 8, 10; DAP; KFD	Good interfamily relationships with both generations and good support structure
Family embraces the adoption journey and has open discussions regarding subject. also created tangible reminders such as a book with photos and memorabilia for him to keep and study	PI-F: 5; PI-M: 6	Allows group discussion and expression of varying opinions across age and race: makes adoptive status a familiar and understandable concept
Aware of their perceived shortcomings such as inadequate exposure to successful Black people and absence of traditionally Black cultural practices	PI-F: 11, 12; PI-M: 11-13	Active understanding and management of possible shortcoming in child-rearing
<b>Significant findings within the larger community</b>		
Area he lives in and school he attends are racially mixed	PI-F: 13; BI-M; BI-F	Exposure to wider demographic
School he attends has only Afrikaans as an academic medium	BI-F; BI-M; TI, p.2	Limits learning a Black language
Active church life but not racially mixed – also comfortable in White-only setting	PI-M:13; PI-F: 13	Not easily discomforted by a group that does not closely resemble him physically.
Aware of financial inequalities determined by race – comments on squatter camps and Black people's dependence on public transport or walking	PI-F: 12; PI-M: 12; DAP	Aware of social differences, but not emotionally committed to choosing a side: no clear identification with Black race
Mostly positive experiences regarding TRA for the whole family	PI-F: 14-15; PI-M: 14-15	Family experience

## 5.5. Family B: Brenda-marie



### 5.5.1. *Brenda-marie and Her Story*

The chubby, seven-year-old little girl that greets me at the gate is in the presence of her younger, White four-year-old sister, Betty, and the au-pair. She sports bright red lipstick because she has been expecting this visit. It is clear that her parents have informed her thoroughly of the purpose of the interview and my research, and she says that she is proud to be part of the work as she signs the informed assent after a family discussion (FN). The happy relationship and sense of belonging she enjoys with her family is observable, as they interact throughout the interview, and this is later confirmed by the psychometric assessment (KFD; SB; CN; FN).

Brenda-marie's double-barrelled pseudonym is similar to her real name and is derived from the two maternal family names. In keeping with Afrikaans family tradition, her parents, Bryce and Blanche, wanted to give their adopted child a family name. While the grandparents accepted the adoption, albeit reluctant about the transracial aspect, they refused the awarding of family names, creating intra-familial tension (PI-F, p.8; PI-M, p.8). The baby, when she was placed, was given a name that combined the names of the two grandmothers. This was intentional, as Blanche wanted to dispel concerns that Brenda-marie might raise in the future about not being named after Ouma, like the other cousins<sup>39</sup>. (PI-M, p.8).

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<sup>39</sup> "Dis'n Afrikaanse kultuur,-die familiename thing (sic). Ek wil nie hê sy moet sestien, sewentien jaar oud wees en vir my vra hoekom het ek nie familie name nie, maar my boetie of het familiename" (PI-M, p.8). (It's an Afrikaans culture, this family name. I don't want her at sixteen or seventeen to ask why I didn't get a family name, but my brother or... got family names).

Blanche fell pregnant unexpectedly two years after Brenda-marie's placement and gave birth to their second daughter. This baby also did not get a family name, in fairness to Brenda-marie, in spite of the extended family's encouragement to do so with the new-born little girl (PI-M:8). The initial reluctance displayed by the grandparents seems indicative of limited acceptance and a desire for some level of differentiation and element of separation from the biological extended family (FN).

The couple decided to adopt following seven failed in vitro fertilisation attempts (AJ-M). They made tentative enquiries about adopting a same-race child and were warned that owing to the scarcity of adoptable White babies the chance of such an adoption was very slim (AJ-M; PI-M, p1, 2; PI-F, p.1, 2). They approached a private social worker and informed her that they were comfortable adopting a child of any race and any gender<sup>40</sup>(PI-M, p.1, 2; PI-F, p.1,2). Their only stipulation was that they did not want a terminally ill child (PI-M, p.1, 2; PI-F, p.2).

Blanche and Bryce were matched with a baby within three months of applying, when the expectant Black mother chose their profile (AJ-M; AJ-F). They met their six-week-old little girl at the place of safety where she had been since birth, and, following a prescribed coaching and bonding period of six weeks, they brought their healthy three-month-old infant home (PI-M, p.3, 4, 10, 11; PI-F, p.3, 4, 10). Blanche states that for her it was instant bonding "That was it. Ek was totally verlief" (PI-M, p.4). (I was totally in love).

The only tangible memento the family has of Brenda-marie's biological mother is a letter written to her daughter. Brenda-marie has two half-brothers and had been placed for adoption due to socio-economic constraints. There is no mention of the biological father (PI-M, p.10). Blanche has kept this letter for her oldest daughter, alongside a collection of baby photos taken at her place of safety and will give it to her when she is old enough. Brenda-marie does have access to these keepsakes and occasionally asks to see them (PI-M, p.10; AJ-M; AJ-F; FN).

Although it is her legal right to request annual updates on her child, the biological mother has never made any further contact following the finalisation of the adoption proceedings (PI-M, p.10, 11; PI-F, p.11). When Brenda-marie asks infrequent questions about her background, Bryce and Blanche answer with brevity and honesty. Both deny feeling threatened and are comfortable addressing any questions (AJ-M; AJ-F; PRS-M; PRS-F).

In light of the families' initial verbalised reluctance to consider TRA, Bryce and Blanche invited the family over to meet Brenda-marie a few days after bringing her home. They had confronted their

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<sup>40</sup>"So, ons het privaat gegaan, want ek voel 'n veer of dit nou pienk, pers, geel, groen, seuntjie, dogtertjie... ons het basically gesê, we don't care, we really don't care" (PI-M, p.2). (We went the private route, because... I didn't care if it was pink, purple, yellow, green, boy, girl, we basically said, we don't care, we really don't care).

parents about the TRA dissention and warned them that the choice lay between gaining a grandchild or losing their son and daughter (PI-M, p.3; PI-F, p.3). Unexpectedly, the visit was very positive. Blanche comments that the grandparents were surprised at their own reactions, stating “Dis dan net ‘n ou babatjie, daar is niks anders aan die baba nie, dis net ‘n baba” (PI-M, p.5). (It’s only a baby, there’s nothing different about this baby, it is just a baby). Bryce states that was the turning point, and since then, the grandchildren have all been treated equally (PI-M, p.3, 5, 7; PI-F, p.5, 7).

Blanche’s brother is vehemently opposed to TRA and continues to avoid the TRA family. However, his children share visits with their TRA cousin at the grandparents’ home (PI-M:3,7). One of his children, similar in age to Brenda-marie, refers to her as “daai ander kind”, (that other child), possibly reflecting the attitude of her father (PI-F, p.8). Brenda-marie does not appear to be perturbed by this child’s insensitive address and enjoys the interaction with all her cousins, as well as the sleepovers with her grandparents (PI-F, p.9). In her psychometric assessment, she refers to her grandparents positively and includes them in her family gathering (SB).

Brenda-marie and her family live in an established suburb of a city which has predominantly White residents (BI-F). She attends a Christian school close to home. Prior to that, she attended a nursery school affiliated with her mom’s work (PI-M, p.11, 12).

It was at this former nursery school that Brenda-marie, then three, was first confronted with her visible adoptive status. A little boy told her that her father could not be her real father, since he was a White man, and she was Black. Although her parents tried to explain the situation to her, they remember it as a difficult time for her. She experienced anxiety and would wake at night, crying, demanding their assurances that her dad was indeed her dad (PI-M, p.11, 12; PI-F, p.11, 12). The difference in skin colour was not what upset her initially, but rather the possibility of loss of her parent. It took a couple of weeks for the anxiety to abate (PI-M, p.11, 12).

At four years she began to question her skin colour similarity with that of her nanny and her colour difference from her parents (PI-M, p.8, 9). The family explained the differences by using the vanilla, caramel and chocolate colour analogy, noting that they “didn’t want to make it a big issue” (PI-M, p.9). Brenda-marie’s nanny told her she was created according to God’s plan, an explanation that she accepted happily (PI-M, p.9, 10). Both Bryce and Blanche prefer to concentrate on similarities rather than the differences<sup>41</sup> (PI-M, p.14, 15; PI-F, p.14). They do, however, like to celebrate the undeniable

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<sup>41</sup>“Frankly, ons is almal die same (sic), ons het net different wrapping papers” (PI-M, p.14)(.we are all the same, we just have different wrapping papers).



differences, such as the fact that Brenda-marie's dark skin is a "super-power" in the sun, while her sister easily gets sunburn (PI-M, p.14).

Brenda-marie's teacher remembers that at the beginning of the school year she coloured herself a peach colour, and said she was using "mens kleur" (human colour) and she was a person like her friends and family (TI, p.3). Blanche recalls a similar event where a younger cousin asked why Brenda-marie did not have a "mens kleur". She explained that Brenda-marie just had a darker skin colour, but still had a "mens kleur" (PI-M, p.9). In her DAP she chose to draw the White psychologist and secondly, her father, but did not colour in figures of her family in the KFD (DAP; KFD). It is notable that Brenda-marie drew a complimentary picture of the psychologist, possibly demonstrating her need for approval (FN; CN).

Blanche and Bryce moved their daughters to the school of their choice when they relocated. Brenda-marie, four years old at the time, was, and still is, the only Black child in her Afrikaans class (PI-F, p.12; TI, p.1). Although she commented on the fact that there were no other Black children in her class, unlike her previous nursery school, Brenda-marie settled in well and quickly made new friends (PI-F, p.12).

However, at the end of the year the school concert once again exposed the physical differences between the four-year-old little girls. The class teacher wanted all the girls to wear their hair in big curls for concert night, which was not possible for Brenda-marie and her tightly coiled hair. She was distraught because she was different and could not comply with the concert requisites (PI-M, p.12, 13). To placate her and improve her self-esteem, her parents took her to a Black hair salon, where she was allowed to choose any hairstyle. She chose shocking pink braids, which made a statement at the school concert and made her the envy of all the other little girls. No similar episode has occurred, and it has been a learning experience for all parties involved. (PI-M, p.12, 13; PI-F, p.13; FN).

The school that Brenda-marie's parents selected, and where the hair incident occurred, is a Christian school with fairly small classes and a very racially mixed population, particularly in the English classes (TI, p.1, 9). The inclusive school accommodates hearing-impaired children in mainstream surroundings, and the parents consider this environment of acceptance to be good for a diverse family such as theirs, where differences are celebrated<sup>42</sup> (PI-M, p.27, 28). The teacher concurs with this statement and adds that most of the children in Brenda-marie's class have been with her since

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<sup>42</sup>"Dis vir my belangrik vir die kinders om te weet dat even (sic) as jy anderste is, is dit ok, en jy kan nog steeds normal (sic) wees al is jy different....en ek het gevoel as jy die dowe kinders kan behandel as normal (sic), kan jy die swart dogtertjie behandel as normal en hulle is almal still different but still normal" (PI-M, p.27, 28). (It's important for me that the children should know that even if you are different, it is okay, and you can still be different... and I felt that if deaf children were treated as normal, then the little Black girl will also be treated as normal – still different, but still normal).

Grade 00, so her unique family is familiar to the class and no longer elicits comments (TI, p.6, 8, 9; PI-M, p.15).

Brenda-marie accepts the only deaf child in the class but does not yet show any heightened level of empathy for her (TI, p.9). She also does not yet appear to have cultivated any social and economic awareness of poverty and differing social status, even when her parents point out the discrepancies between their residential areas and the squatter camps (PI-M, p.26; PI-F, p.26). In her scene building, Brenda-marie displayed a strong moral consciousness. The current social indifference may change once she develops more abstract and elaborate reasoning abilities in keeping with her cognitive development (SB; CN).

Brenda-marie joins her White classmates amicably in play, often competing for a leadership position, but will also frequently join the more English learners, where there are many White, Black, Asian and Chinese children. Brenda-marie is fluent in English and Afrikaans. Her criteria for preferred group membership are not yet defined, but she seems more comfortable with the girls than the boys. She exhibits no race or language preference (CBCL; TI, p.1, 2, 4, 5; PI-M, p.15). At yet, Brenda-marie has not forged a close friendship with a single friend, preferring group interactions (TI, p.5). Out of school, she makes incidental friends limited to a social situation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1981), such as playmates on the beach, and usually under the tutelage of her younger sister (PI-M, p.15; PI-F, p.15).

An auditory processing dysfunction was diagnosed at a routine school readiness assessment, necessitating occupational therapy (PI-M, p.23; CBCL). Although academically on par with the rest of the class, with a few mathematics and reading difficulties, Brenda-marie's parents are actively addressing this issue with several recommended after-school activities such as art, netball and swimming (PI-M, p.23, 24; CBCL; TI, p3, 4). The au-pair is in full-time employment and helps her with her occupational and school homework (PI-M, p.23, 24).

The teacher states that while she is not concerned about Brenda-marie's scholastic performance, the little girl is easily distracted and does not always complete her homework timeously. She is not enthusiastic about academic tasks, but enjoys the social aspects of school (TI, p.3, 4). She does not excel at sports, but again enjoys the social aspects of the team (CBCL).

It is possible that Brenda-marie's learning difficulties have impacted negatively on her developing self-identity. While she is confident, boisterous and loud on the playground, she is inclined to be quiet and reluctant to ask questions in class (TI, p.4). She will not seek guidance and often approaches her work impulsively and without any planning (TI, p.4; CBCL).

However, in her psychometric assessment, Brenda-marie projects intellectual aspirations and wants to perform well, seeking acknowledgement and approval (DAP). Her parents confirm that she is aware of her struggle with mathematics, and that her younger sister grasps numerical concepts faster

than she does, sometimes resulting in her withdrawal or a squabble between the sisters. Blanche and Bryce attribute these unsatisfactory coping mechanisms to possible feelings of inadequacy in academic performance (PI-M, p.24; CBCL). Her reticence, dubiousness and jealousy when anxious or unsure of herself are also apparent in her psychometric assessment (DP; SB).

Brenda-marie is described as a talkative and happy little girl in familiar and secure surroundings, even a little bit of a “drama diva” (TI, p.5), but inclined to be withdrawn and shy in an unfamiliar situation or with strangers (TI, p.4; PI-M, p.17, 18; CBCL; DAP; SB; CN). While she shows leadership abilities in social groups at school (TI, p.1, 5) and is inclined to set the pace of play at home (CBCL), she follows her younger sister’s lead in approaching new friends and meeting people in public places (PI-M, p.15, 18; TI, p.1; CBCL). Blanche adds that in an unfamiliar situation, she is inclined to “attach” (PI-M, p.21) herself to someone she knows or admires and then imitate them until she feels more secure (PI-M, p.20, 21).

Brenda-marie’s parents consider her to be more emotionally sensitive and expressive than her sister, possibly harbouring a fear of rejection (PI-M, p.19, 20; FN; SB; DAP). Together with the described anxiety in unfamiliar situations, she is more easily upset when admonished or perceives her parents as being angry with her. The DAP states that she seems hypersensitive to criticism and the opinion of others, especially her father (DAP). This is in contrast to the teacher’s observation that Brenda-marie is emotionally exceptionally stable for her age (TI, p.7, 8)).

The psychologist notes that the fluctuation of her emotional stability is in keeping with the expected emotional development according to age and not clinically significant (SB). Blanche and Bryce agree that praising her good behaviour has a better outcome than punishing unwanted behaviour, saying that she is very observant of other people’s reaction and responds well to positive feedback – she “explodes” (PI-M, p.18). Her psychometric assessment confirms a desire for recognition (DAP; SB; CN; CBCL).

Although the two sisters have a good, positive relationship, sibling rivalry is evident (PI-F, p.17, 18; PI-M, p.17, 18; CN). Bryce admits that she avoids situations that might trigger sibling jealousy, such as parental attention, and explains that as he is often the single parent at home due to Blanche’s work commitments, he finds withdrawing or ignoring the jealous behaviour an easier management strategy (PI-F, p.18). If the squabble escalates to mutual screaming, Bryce tries to defuse the situation and teach them better communication and reasoning skills – with varying levels of success (PI-F, p.19). When Brenda-marie experiences a serious bout of jealousy or sibling rivalry, she is inclined to become very angry, even aggressive (SB). She will express her unhappiness verbally and reject any conciliatory advances, with Blanche noting that she is inclined to bear a grudge for a few days (PI-M, p.17, 18, 19; PI-F, p.19; DAP).

While these reactions may reflect feelings of insecurity, both parents admit that this is the manner in which Bryce addresses conflict within the family, and that Brenda-marie may simply be mimicking her father (PI-M, p.19; PI-F, p.19; DAP; FN). According to her psychometric evaluation, Brenda-marie seeks special attention and acceptance from her father, whose time and attention she views as special (DAP; CN). Brenda-marie is fiercely independent and reflects exploration readiness (DAP). In spite of being reserved in strange situations, she has well developed self-confidence and likes to be left to her own devices and to make her own decisions (DAP; PI-M, p.19). She does not always consider consequences and inherent dangers, however, such as trying to cross a busy street on her own (PI-M, p.19, 20).

Worldly possessions are very important to Brenda-marie (CBCL). She takes good care of her belongings and becomes upset if someone tampers with them or removes them without permission. She is very resistant to the practice of sharing (CBCL; PI-M, p.21). Her parents find that withholding a possession as a form of punishment, such as disallowing her access to her girly make-up, is very difficult for her to deal with<sup>43</sup> (PI-M, p.21; PI-F, p.21).

Interaction between the children and their parents appears comfortable and easy (FN). While Bryce is more taciturn, Blanche is outspoken and direct (FN). She is a health professional, working abroad for several months at a time. Last year, owing to the Covid pandemic, she was not home for a period of six months (FN). The couple feel that the au-pair has brought stability and routine to the children (PI-M, p.22; PI-F, p.18, 19, 22). They remember that initially, when Blanche left home, the girls would be very “clingy” (PI-F, p.22) upon her return and largely ignored Bryce. Now it seems as if the children have adjusted to the rotational system of having their mother absent for long periods of time, and although they enjoy having her at home, they are no longer distraught at her absences (PI-M, p.22).

Brenda-marie’s teacher describes her as an ordinary little girl that in no way differs from her classmates<sup>44</sup>. Blanche and Bryce feel that concentration on the familial similarities and celebrating the differences makes it possible for Brenda-marie to be proud of her own verbalised status as the little Black girl in surroundings populated by White people (PI-M, p.28; PI-F, p.28). She is proud to be the pioneer of the family – the first Black girl, the first adopted child, the first in Grade 1, the oldest sister

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<sup>43</sup>“Sy is verskriklik erg oor haar goed, oor haar stuff (sic) (PI-M, p.21). My kas...myne” (PI-F, p.21). She’s very particular about her things, about her stuff. My cupboard...mine.

<sup>44</sup>“Sy pas presies in saam met almal en daar is niks wat haar laat uitstaan as ’n swart kind tussen al hierdie wit maatjies nie...sy is soos enige Graad 1 kind” (TI, p.1) (She fits in exactly with everyone, and there is nothing that distinguishes her as a Black child amongst all these White friends. She is just like any Grade 1).

(PI-M, p.27,28,29; PI-F, p.28). (Table 5.4 provides a comparison of Brenda-marie with the expected development of a child in the latent phase).

**Table 5.4**

*Comparison with Expected Development of Middle/latent child: Brenda-marie*

Developmental area	Expected development				Comment
	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Unknown	
<b>Physical</b>		X			Not athletic, but desires better physical strength and prowess.
<b>Cognitive</b>		X			Auditory processing problems.
<b>Linguistic</b>			X		Strong verbal skills – can reason convincingly in social situation – totally bilingual.
<b>Emotional</b>		X			Described by teacher as stable and by parents as sensitive.
<b>Ethical and Spiritual</b>	X				Aware of religious practices through Christian school, but not practised at home.
<b>Psychosocial</b>		X			Comfortable with children and familiar adults – shy with strangers.

### 5.5.2. *Brenda-marie's Adoptive Parents, Bryce and Blanche*

Blanche is the more verbal of the two parents (FN). It is important to her that her girls understand that women are strong and independent, can be breadwinners, can be highly qualified and can excel in a “man’s world”. She then laughingly admits that she is a staunch feminist, and endeavours to set an example for them through her actions (BI-M; PI-M, p.27; FN). Blanche focuses on the strengths of her daughters and tries to expose them to strong and dynamic female role models, rather than concentrating on Black role models as such. Coincidentally, many of these forceful women happen to be Black (PI-M, p.27).

She considers being different and doing things in an atypical way, such as the mother being the primary breadwinner or being a unique TRA family, to be good and beneficial, and hopes that this will make the girls proud of their differences and embrace who they are (PI-M, p.27). Bryce is comfortable with this arrangement and fulfils the more traditional “homebody role”, although he has a full-time administrative post at a private hospital (BI-F).

The Afrikaans couple, both in their late 30s, have been together for 13 years and jointly decided to adopt following several failed IVF treatments and a miscarriage (BI-F; BI-M). Although she was happy

to adopt, Blanche admits to initially feeling obligated to bear a son to carry on the family name, since Bryce is the only boy (PI-M, p.1, 2). It would appear that while Blanche now presents an outspoken indifference to traditional family ways, she formerly tried to uphold certain practices, like having a first-born son and also naming the children after the previous generation (PI-M, p.1, 2; FN).

Blanche's subsequent unplanned pregnancy came concurrently with their consideration to adopt another TRA child. They had initially planned on three children, and during the interview there was banter about whether they should adopt the third child. They are undecided about the possible family addition, but would definitely consider TRA as the way forward, in spite of the slow-moving bureaucracy (PI-M, p.6; PI-F, p.6; PRS-F).

Their childhood years, characterised by Afrikaans traditions, values and cultures, were unremarkable (BI-M; BI-F; PRS-M, PRS-F). Their respective families' initial reluctance to accept TRA caused interpersonal problems, and although the families have come to accept Brenda-marie, the couple have maintained some emotional distance (PI-M, p.2, 3, 4; PI-F, p.2, 3, 4; PRS-M; PRS-F).

Bryce and Blanche have largely tried to move away from the stalwart Afrikaans cultural practices and strive to give their daughters a "worldview" (PI-M, p.5, 15; PI-F, p.15, 16). They travel widely in South Africa and abroad and introduce the children to different foreign music and foods. They often discuss other countries and their traditions with the children. Bryce says that it is important for them to realise that the world is bigger than their house and their country (PI-F, p.16).

Brenda-marie's teacher describes the family as being fairly consistent in their involvement in school outings (TI, p.1, 3, 5); however, the couple admit that they are more content to spend time at home (PRS-M; PRS-F). They do not have many friends with whom they interact, and the few friends that they do see socially are White parents of the same school. They do infrequently visit another couple who have transracially adopted two children, and Bryce is friendly with some of his Black work colleagues (PI-M, p.16; PI-F, p.16; PRS-F; PRS-M). They mostly decline invitations to neighbourhood activities, since there are only White families living on their street. They are not active churchgoers either and are not involved in any other social groups. They eschew the idea of joining one of the numerous adoption groups in the city. Blanche says that even prior to her working abroad, she worked seven-day weeks, so their free time is limited, and therefore they prefer to spend it in the company of their children (PI-M, p.27, 28; PI-F, p.27; PRS-F; PRS-M).

Having a TRA child has made them more racially aware (PI-M, p.25; PRS-M; PRS-F; PI-F, p.25). Blanche and Bryce note that they were oblivious to the level of racism until they became parents of a Black child. They have both experienced negative racial responses. Bryce emotionally recounts a

specific altercation with a Black work colleague, who accused him of adopting a Black child as a pet<sup>45</sup> (FN; PI-F, p.25). Blanche became more aware of derogatory terms used within the community when referring to other races (PI-M, p.26), but notes that there are many incidents where Black and White people have commented favourably on their unique family (PI-M, p.26).

Equality and fairness between the sisters are pivotal for Blanche, noting the derivation of her oldest daughter's name and her subsequent refusal to name their biological daughter after a grandmother (PI-M, p.8; FN). She did not breastfeed her younger daughter, since she could not breastfeed her TRA child (PI-M, p.13). She reiterates: "There is no difference, I don't want that... Ek wil nie hê dat daar vrae moet kom – hoekom het my sussie hierdie gekry en ek nie? I don't want that, sorry" (PI-M, p.13, 14) (I don't want questions to arise, why did my sister get that, and I didn't).

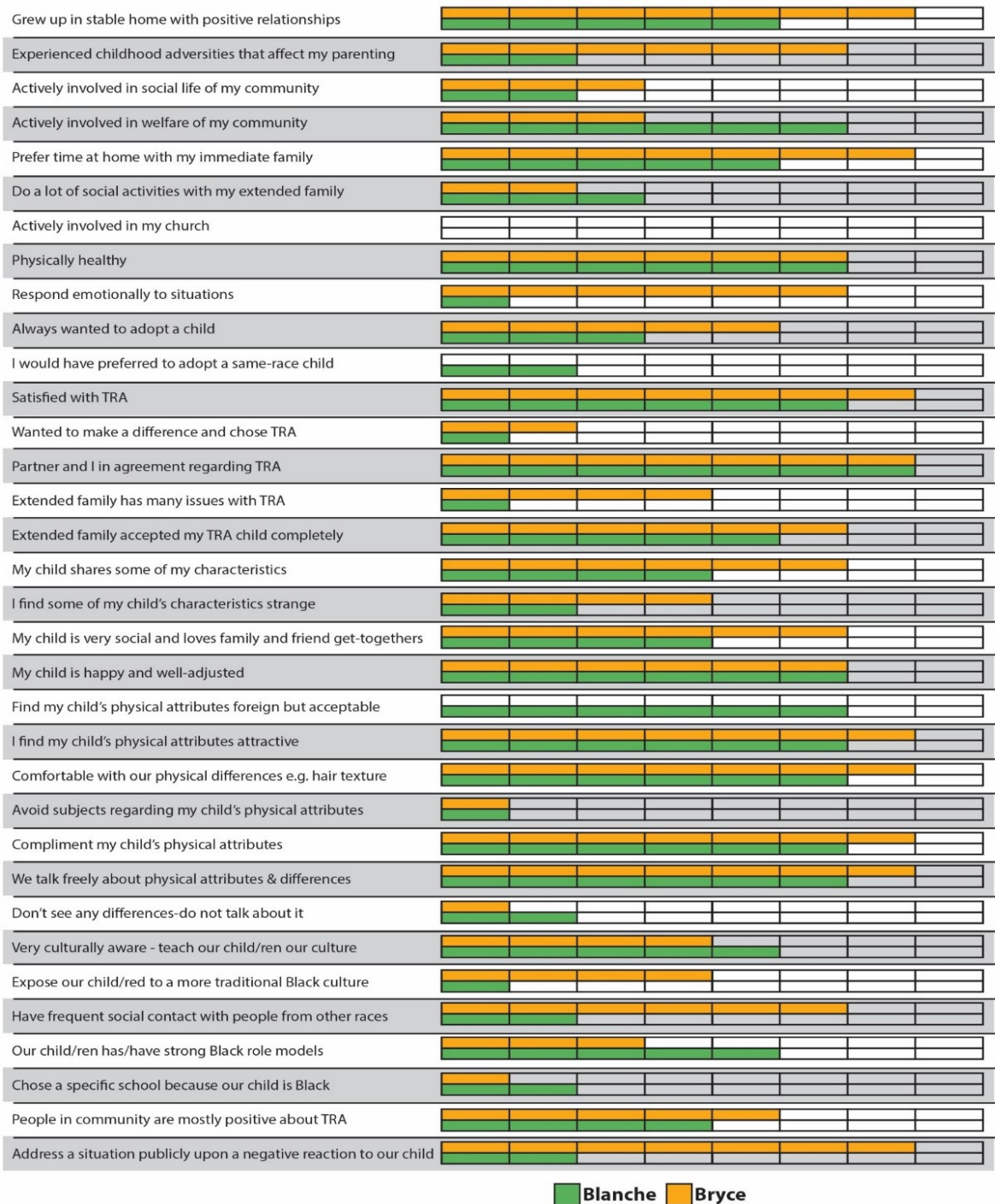
The parents deny making specific adjustments to their lives besides becoming more socially and racially sensitive (PI-M, p.25; PI-F, p.25, 26). The children's current school was chosen for its policy of inclusivity and potential to cultivate empathy for differences, such as deafness, and not because of the TRA (PI-M, p.27, 28).

There was no sign of the described anxiety that Brenda-marie usually experiences with strangers when she interacted with me, possibly since she is in familiar surroundings (FN). Evidence of the children's activities and possessions lie around the lounge, and it is clear that this house belongs to the children and parents alike (FN). Paraphrasing the words of Blanche, Brenda-marie is her miracle baby, her oldest daughter. Her younger sister is her "add-on" (PI-M, p.7); Brenda-marie will always be her first child, the child that made her a mother (PI-M, p.7). The parental response scale (Figure 5.3) confirms much of what the parents volunteered during the interview, and they appear to agree on most aspects of TRA, while the quick rapport established with the assessing psychologist is evident in her choice of her DAP figure (Figure 5.4).

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<sup>45</sup> "...en dis Swart mense wat vir my so gese het, want volgens daai persoon, dis hoekom Wit mense Swart kinders aanneem omdat hulle wil pets (sic) hê, dink dis soos 'n troeteldier, dan sê ek hoe de f\*\* dink jy so?" (PI-F, p.25). (and it's Black people that said so... because according to that person, White people adopt Black children because they want pets – think it's like having a pet, then I said, how the f\*\*do you think that?)

**Parental Response Scale  
Brenda-marie**



**Figure 5.3**

*Parental Response Scale – Brenda-marie*

**Note.** This is a 7-point Likert scale (1-7) and the higher the value assigned by the parent, the more he or she agrees with the statement noted on the left of the graph

**Note.** Parents do not attend church and allocated 0 as a response to statement regarding church activity. Bryce also disagreed with the statement that his daughter’s physical attributes were foreign but acceptable, allocating a 0. (Similar to Adam’s response- possibly an aspect to be explored in future research)



### 5.5.3. *Brenda-marie's Teacher: (Grade 1:2021)*

The consistent thread running through the interview with Brenda-marie's teacher is that she is a well-adjusted little girl who in no way differs from her 25 classmates (TI, p.1, 3, 5, 10). She has known Brenda-marie for a number of years, since her daughter and Brenda-marie have been in class together since pre-primary school (TI, p.5, 6, 7). Besides attending the same class, they have also on several occasions been at the same birthday parties and school socials. For her, the only difference is that Brenda-marie is worldly in her choice of words and topics, and clearly spends a lot of time in the company of adults (TI, p.7).

The teacher is very positive about the school. The emphasis is on Christian-based education. There is a milieu of acceptance and tolerance for differences, and the underlying message is kindness and tolerance (TI, p.7, 8, 10). During the psychometric assessment, Brenda-marie mentions missing the hugs from her teacher during social distancing (CN).

Although Covid restrictions have severely impacted on the school curriculum, the children still do some group activities to promote social interaction and acceptance. The teacher tries to be sensitive to any latent insult, microaggression or offensive remarks during such group activities, but has not noticed any such incident involving Brenda-marie. She feels that since the school's approach is Christian, it is not necessary to adjust any school content to avoid offence. She adds that should there be some upsetting content, she would address it with Brenda-marie, as she would do with any offended child (TI, p.10, 11).

In conclusion, her overriding perception is that the school is ideal for Brenda-marie and her TRA status. She notes that a singular and exclusive culture in a school would be less inclined to accommodate differences such as TRA. Brenda-marie is well-known and accepted in her own right, and her TRA status is no longer of interest to anyone (TI, p.10).



**Figure 5.4**

*Brenda-marie's DAP*

**Note.** *Drawing is of the Psychologist*

**Table 5.5***Initial Coding Generated: Brenda-marie**Note.* All data sources used

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
<b>Personal component/characteristic of identity</b>		
Spontaneous, talkative, happy, likes interaction with others, likes oral and drama presentations	PI-M: 17, 18; PI-F: 17; TI: 5, CBCL; DAP; KFD; SB	Social personality in familiar surroundings Good verbal skills Enjoys life
Strong moral consciousness	CN; SB	Ability to empathise and sensitivity to others not yet developed
Trusting relationships with significant others	FN; CBCL; DAP; SB; KFD	Successful bonding and establishment of trust
Inclination towards disorganisation and impulsivity	TI: 4; CBCL	Still developing organisational skills
Leadership skills at school amongst fellow learners	TI: 1, 2, 4;	Social astuteness and appropriate and accepted social interventions
Average academic abilities	TI: 1, 4; PI-M: 24	Ability to cultivate meaningful coping strategies and understand a situation accurately
Struggles with mathematics and has an auditory processing disturbance – possible feelings of inadequacy and inferiority	PI-M, p.23, 24; TI, p.4; CBCL; DAP; SB	Desires feelings of success and strives for positive acknowledgement – possible fear of rejection
Places high value on physical possessions	CBCL; PI-M, p.21	Sense of belonging and concrete evidence of my existence
<b>Social component/characteristics of identity</b>		
Anxious in unfamiliar surroundings	PI-M, p.15, 18, 21	Level of social confidence dependent on familiarity of people or situation; parents not very social – little outside contact
Inclined to become anxious and withdraw in social setting-	TI, p.4; PI-M, p.15, 21 ; DAP:	No effective social coping strategies yet
Enjoys family gatherings and school outings	TI, p.1, 5, 6, 8; PRS; PI-M: 3, 7	Comfortable with all generations in family– socially astute and fluid and adaptable communication skills
Understands social settings and exhibits appropriate behaviour in different environments	TI p.1, 8; CBCL	Can understand the context and respond to social demands
Does not speak a Black language	BI-F; BI-M;	All children in her school speak either English or Afrikaans, and she is fluent in both
<b>Regarding the group membership/peer relationships of the child</b>		
Enjoys social interactions, school activities and outings	PI-M: 15, CBCL; TI: 1.	Enjoys group membership and chooses common interest or play as group motivator
No current racial or language preference in group selection; seems to prefer girls	PRS-M; PRS-F; CBCL; TI, p.1, 2, 4; PI-F, p.15	Enjoys group membership and social categorisation without prejudice
Need to belong to group makes for quick forgiveness and “moving on” with peers, but not with family	TI, p.1, 2, 4; PI- M, p.19; PI-F, p.19	Social interaction in group setting more important than emotional discomfort – different at home, where she will harbour a grudge
<b>Regarding the coping strategies of the child</b>		

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Strong verbal skills	PI-M: 27, 28; TI: 1; CN; FN	Able to voice opinions and phrase questions when necessary – able to communicate well
Enjoys attention and likes to be a “diva”	PI-M, p.19; PI-F, p.19; TI: 5; CN	Likes the social interaction and is confident in familiar surroundings
Not threatened by racially insensitive remarks	PI-M, p.7, 8	Secure in herself, her race and status in the family – appropriate coping response
Aware of her adoptive status and proud of her mixed family and her race; sees herself as a pioneer	PI-M, p.7, TI, 10; KFD; DAP	Does not appear to have conflict currently regarding adoption
Less vocal about emotional issues at school. Teacher finds her emotionally stable	TI, p.1, 5 ; DAP; SB; CN	Not yet comfortable about expressing feelings – might fear possible rejection – also still developing skills
<b>Significant findings within the family</b>		
Parents wanted biological children – adoption after failed IVF	BI-M ; BI-F; PI-M, p.1, 2	Adoption not initial option – had to consider it. Husband ready before wife to consider it
Parents well educated	BI-F; BI-M	TRA considered through cognitive approach – well researched prior to journey
Oldest child; younger sister biological	BI-M; BI-F	Unique TRA family
Parents had opportunity to bond with her prior to bringing him home-	BI-F; BI-M; PI-M, p.4	Initial bonding prior to joining family – mother states instant bonding
Joined the family as an infant of 3 months after six weeks of visits at the place of safety	BI-M; BI-F	Very small, needed caring and protection – opportunity to develop trust with significant others
Close relationship with siblings and parents and extended family	PRS-M; PRS-F	Good interfamily relationships with both generations
Family positive about their adoption journey – have kept tangible reminders such as a letter and photos as a reminder to the start of her life	AJ-F; AJ-M; PI-M:10	Answer questions raised about adoption and race but avoid emphasis on race
Family actively trying to expose children to strong and dynamic female figures – emphasis on gender rather than race	PI, p.27	Active understanding and management of childrearing interventions
<b>Significant findings within the larger community</b>		
Area she lives in is mainly White and parents choose not to interact	BI-M ; BI-F; PI-M, p.27, 28; PI-F, p.28	No exposure to racially mixed residential area – friends limited
School she attends is racially mixed, but her classmates are White, and she is the only Black child	TI, p.1, 2 ; PI-F, p.12; BI-M; BI-F	Exposure to wider demographic at school during play time and other activities
First experience of visible racial awareness and difference at age three to four	PI-M, p.11, 12; PI-F, p.11, 12	Racial awareness at a young age
Not yet cognisant of status or social inequalities	PI-M, p.26, 27; PI-F, p.26, 27; SB	Developing awareness-already strong moral consciousness in psychometric assessment

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Parents' heightened awareness of racism and racial tension from all races	PRS-M; PRS-F; PI-M, p.25; PI-F, p.25	Personal growth with regard to racial awareness

## 5.6. Conclusion of Chapter

Atlegang and Brenda-marie are growing up in separate households. Various aspects of their lives and development show marked differences as well as prominent similarities with each other. The aim of the narratives of these families is to accurately reflect the social environment and constructs that they experience in their day-to-day living and with sufficient richness and depth of description to allow for true and correct interpretation.

The following chapter concerns the five TRA children who share parents and a home with each other. While providing a description of the children and their self-identities, the multiple TRA children families may allow for intra- and interfamily inferences.

## Chapter 6 Data Presentation and Initial Analysis: Multiple TRA Children and their Families

<b>BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONTENT-CHAPTER 6</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
<b>MULTIPLE TRA CHILDREN</b>	
<b>Family C</b>	•Corina and Conrad, adoptive parents of Chad, Cassidy and Carlo
<b>*Chad</b> 9-year-old boy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Chad and his story</li> <li>•Comparison with the expected development of the middle child</li> <li>•Parental response scale of Chad</li> <li>•Initial coding in tabulated form</li> </ul>
<b>*Cassidy</b> 8-year-old girl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Cassidy and her story</li> <li>•Comparison with the expected development of the middle child</li> <li>•Parental response scale of Cassidy</li> <li>•Initial coding in tabulated form</li> </ul>
<b>*Carlo</b> 8-year-old boy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Carlo and his story</li> <li>•Comparison with the expected development of the middle child</li> <li>•Parental response scale of Carlo</li> <li>•Initial coding in tabulated form</li> <li>•The teachers of Chad, Cassidy and Carlo</li> </ul>
<b>Family D</b>	•Dirk and Denise, adoptive parents of Diana and David
<b>*Diana</b> 9-year-old girl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Diana and her story</li> <li>•Comparison with the expected development of the middle child</li> <li>•Parental response scale of Diana</li> <li>•Diana's teacher</li> <li>•Initial coding in tabulated form</li> </ul>
<b>*David</b> 7-year-old boy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•David and his story</li> <li>•Comparison with the expected development of the middle child</li> <li>•Parental response scale of David</li> <li>•David's teacher</li> <li>•Initial coding in tabulated form</li> </ul>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	

### 6.1. Introduction

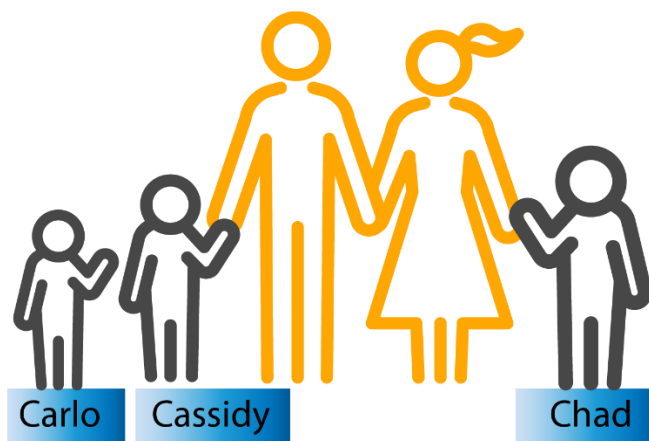
In this chapter, children whose families contain more than one eligible TRA child included in this study, are presented in a manner similar to those with single TRA children, with a few technical differences to enhance understanding and informational flow. The following criteria was used to organise the information:

- Information coming from the parental interview that is pertinent to a specific child is addressed in that child's story. Some of the information may be applicable to more than one child and is then repeated for the other child or children where indicated for coding purposes.
- Other information from the parents dealing with TRA as a more general entity, their personal and social approach and experiences as well as other noteworthy findings of TRA and the relevant

parenting is discussed under a single parental interview to limit repetition. This is done prior to the individual stories of the children to set the multiple family context.

- The personal response scales of the parents are presented and discussed succinctly on a per child basis so as to provide for the possibility of slight differences to accommodate varying perceptions of their children.
- The coding generated from the body of work of each child is treated on an individual basis, as for the children in the preceding chapter. This may lead to similar codes occurring in the case of two or more children.

## 6.2. Family C: Chad, Cassidy and Carlo



Chad (9), Cassidy (8) and Carlo (8) live with their Dutch parents, Conrad and Corina, in a comfortable family home chosen for its close proximity to Conrad's place of work. The house is filled with children's artwork, photos of the children and evidence of frequent family interactions such as incomplete puzzles and children's woodworking and handcraft projects (FN). While Chad prefers his own room, Cassidy and Carlo share a room, as Carlo is afraid of the dark and Cassidy is the "brave one", although she has started asking for her own room and more privacy (PI-M, p.14, 19).

The population of the suburb the family live in is mostly White, as is the church where Conrad serves as a minister (BI-F; BI-M). The school all three children attend is an extension of the church, is very small and close to home, so that most of the family's social encounters occur within the same suburb.

### 6.2.1. *Conrad and Corina, Chad, Cassidy and Carlo's Adoptive Parents*

Conrad and Corina are in their fifties and of Dutch descent. Conrad has been in South Africa for two decades, while Corina joined him here 14 years ago (BI-M; BI-F; PI-F, p.23). Both are in possession of a master's degree. Conrad is actively employed as a minister and Corina is a "stay at home mom" (BI-M) doing official translations on an ad hoc basis. Both parents speak Dutch, English and Afrikaans. Conrad is also fluent in North Sotho (BI-F). The home language of choice for the five family members is Dutch, while the school uses Afrikaans as the medium of instruction (BI-M; BI-F).

Conrad and Corina wanted to adopt immediately after finding out that they were unable to conceive their own children, but South African legislation prohibits non-SA citizens from adopting. They opted to become place-of-safety parents<sup>46</sup> in the hope that they would someday be allowed to adopt the child(ren) in their care. "We decided to go for place-of-safety parents, with the request to place children with us who likely could be adopted" (AJ-M). They understood that there was an intrinsic risk, as place-of-safety parents do not have long-term judicial rights. The child may be removed at any time if his or her statutory position should change. It took the couple several years to be approved as adoptive parents, and all three children, albeit in their care since infancy, have only recently been formally adopted (AJ-M; AJ-F).

During the interview it was clear that Conrad, whose childhood was marred by undisclosed trauma (PRS-F) enjoys simply fulfilling the role of father to three children (PI-F, p.1, 2, 24)<sup>47</sup>. Corina, however, is acutely aware of the racial differences between their children and the community in which they are rooted. She actively searches for ways in which to involve the children in a more diverse culture and encourages interactions with Black people (PI-M, p.22, 23; PI p.22; FN).

Conrad, who ministered to an exclusively Black congregation for more than a decade, is much more complacent in his approach to TRA. He describes the Black congregation as easy-going, fun and very accepting of TRA. He hastens to add that his current White-only congregation, while not being as boisterous and vocal, is also accepting of his children, with a few exceptions (PI-F, p.1, 4, 5, 6). Those opposed, he states, do not display their dissent to his family, but he has been made aware of it through third parties. He chooses to see it as a discomfort to their otherness ("heeltemaal anderste") as

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<sup>46</sup>Parents who are fit and proper, older than 18 years and willing to take care of a baby or child declared a "child in need" can as an emergency and/or interim measure become place-of-safety parents following careful screening and approval (<https://www.westerncape.gov.za/general-publication/become-safety-parent>).

<sup>47</sup>"Ja, as ek aan ons gesin dink, dan word ek vrolik, ja, dan smile ek". (PI-F, p.1) (Yes, when I think about our family, I get happy, and then I smile).



a family (PI-F, p1,22). Significantly, on his personal response scale he is less optimistic about the public's reaction to TRA (PRS-F; FN).

Conrad reiterates that South Africa is burdened by too much racial emphasis, and that we are all equal in the eyes of God (PI-F, p.5, 6). He prefers not to focus on the racial differences within his family and larger community or implement any interventions specific to the TRA, such as eagerly seeking Black friends for the children (PI-F, p.6, 22, 23). For Conrad, the distinctiveness of his family is a very positive attribute (PI-F, p.1). He considers the visibility of the uniqueness a good/beautiful thing for South Africa<sup>48</sup>.

Corina disagrees and states that by not addressing the differences, an issue is created, since the children are aware of their race being dissimilar from the larger community (PI-M, p.6). In support of her argument, she notes that Chad and Cassidy often want to know what the person looks like when they are going to meet someone for the first time. She feels this is the way children express their awareness of race and colour and would like to have more age-appropriate discussions regarding race within the family (PI-M, p.6; PRS-M). Both parents agree that they are open to discussions and are willing to answer the children's questions regarding their biological family, adoption or the fact that they are transracially adopted (PI-M, p.6; PRS-M; PRS-F; AJ-M; AJ-F). Thus far, only Chad and Cassidy, the older siblings, have asked questions about TRA. Carlo asks no questions and has only once referred to his biological mother (AJ-M; AJ-F; PI-M, p.4; PI-F, p.4). They add that because there are three siblings through adoption, similar in age and sharing a close community, it might make them feel less socially conspicuous regarding their TRA<sup>49</sup> and thus limit their need to ask questions.

To overcome the scarcity of Black influence, Corina encourages visits with Black families from their previous congregation. She also takes her youngest son, Carlo, who suffers from ADHD and possibly from mild autism (PI-M, p. 9, 10; PI-F, p.9, 10) to music classes with a Black teacher and another fellow Black student. She deliberately chose the musical instrument (African drums) and a Black teacher to encourage Carlo's Black awareness and interaction with other Black people (PI-M: 5, 22, 23)<sup>50</sup>. She does, however, acknowledge that this actively managed interaction with other Black

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<sup>48</sup> "Ek sien dit self as 'n positiewe ding, dis nie dat dit my pla of so nie – juis nie. En dit is juis uniek en dit is mooi in Suid Afrika van 'n ander punt" (PI-F,p.1).

<sup>49</sup> "As jy nou net bloot die feit vat dat al drie (TRA) aangeneem is, ek dink dan is dit ook vir hulle positief dat hulle al drie in die besonderse posisie is en dat een nie 'n uitsondering van die ander een is nie" (PI-F, p.11). (If you consider the fact that all three are transracially adopted, then it is positive that all three are in a unique position and that not one is an exception to the others).

<sup>50</sup> "Ek dink dit is mooi dat hy ook saam met 'n ander Swart persoon drums (sic) speel" (PI-M, p.5) (I think it is good that he plays drums with another Black person).

people appears to meet her own need, since the children do not consider the race of their playmates when invitations are extended (PI-M, p.3, 23).

The parents agree that the children must be made aware of Black people who are achievers, who are dynamic role models and who occupy positions of authority (PI-F, p.3; PI-M, p.3, 6, 7). There are no Black teachers at the school the children attend. People that traditionally have a higher social standing, such as doctors, local business owners and ministers, are all White in their community. Conrad and Corina are afraid that the children will have the misconception that Black people may only occupy less prestigious jobs such as cleaning and gardening, since that is their current frame of reference (PI-M, p.3; PI-F, p.3). Corina feels that encouraging more interaction with Black people will address this misperception (PI-M, p.3, 8). The children show no definite preference to a gender or race-based group membership when they have their weekly playdates, although they tend to choose friends mostly from their age group (PI-M, p.8, 20; PI-F, p.8).

The children are reluctant to attend their father's sermons when he is a guest minister at his former church (PI-M, p.4). They prefer to go to their own, familiar and predominantly White church. Conrad posits that their reluctance is rooted in the fact that they don't understand the language rather than the fact that they don't want to attend a "Black" church, a statement with which Corina disagrees (PI-F, p.4; PI-M, p.4). It appears that there is a discrepancy in how the couple view dealing with the transracial aspect of their children (PRS-M; PRS-F; FN).

I asked whether they would like the children to master a Black language (BI-F). Both parents feel that the children already communicate in three languages, and therefore they have deliberately not introduced another language to avoid language confusion (PI-F, p.5, 6; PI-M, p.5). They also reason that since all three children have different ethnic backgrounds<sup>51</sup>, choosing one specific Black language would be difficult, since the language choice could coincide with only one child's ethnicity. Corina adds that Chad's mother was adamant that he should be raised to be proficient in Afrikaans, since she had spoken to him in Afrikaans (PI-M, p.5).

Culture and its implementation in the family appears to be a subject that the parents view differently; but they agree that the visibility of TRA makes future discussions regarding culture and heritage inevitable (PI-F, p.4, 5, 7; PI-M, p.4; PRS-M; PRS-F). The children have not expressed much interest in their specific ethnic background and culture, with the exception of Cassidy, who is more racially and culturally aware than her brothers (PI-M, p.6, 14, 20; PI-F, p.6). Conrad and Corina concur

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<sup>51</sup>Sotho, Tsonga and Shangaan, three ethnic groups with their own languages (there are 11 official languages in South Africa).

that it would be prudent in a diverse country such as South Africa to choose to follow their own family-directed practices rather than cultures dictated by race (PI-M, p.5; PI-F, p.5), all the while being open and accepting of other community members' cultural practices.

At the same time, they recognise that race, current social and economic inequalities and the history of racial segregation and apartheid in South Africa may evoke an emotional response in their children as their academic knowledge and cognitive and social awareness grows. They have proactively extended an invitation to the children to discuss any prejudice, discrimination or microaggression they might experience as a result of their race or adoptive status in a bid to manage it and limit any possible repercussions (PI-M, p.7,8)<sup>52</sup>.

Covid and the international ban on travel have limited the children's contact with their extended families, who live in Holland. Both parents come from large families (PI-M, p.10; PI-F, p.10). Conrad has eight siblings and Corina has four siblings, and all take turns to visit South Africa, mostly annually (BI-M; BI-F; PRS-M; PRS-F). The children love their grandparents and other extended family, who welcomed them into the family from the outset (PI-M, p.10; PRS-M; PRS-F). However, the absence of visits and physical contact has created an emotional and physical distance that the parents think will abate once the families are reunited. Because the children were in places of safety care rather than adopted, they could not obtain passports and travel abroad (PI-F, p.10).

To a large extent, the church and church community have served as a substitute extended family. Chad, Cassidy, Carlo and their parents are part of a very close-knit religious community. The congregation is Dutch, and the children attend the same Christian school, their parents often having been scholars at the same primary and high school that their children now attend (TI, p.17, 18, 19). Social activities are largely arranged around the church and friendships are formed within the church community. All families know each other well and the children attend the same school, the same church and Sunday school as well as mostly the same social get-togethers, such as birthday parties and weddings (PI-M, p.9; TI, p.18, 19). All three teachers that I met had attended the same primary school and were active members of the church (FN).

The church members are very supportive of each other and have a long history of interaction. Conrad and Corina therefore did not choose a specific school or residential area because of TRA but

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<sup>52</sup> “En ons moet nie vergeet nie, want regtig, in die toekoms, kan hulle – sou hulle slagoffers wees van rassisme en hulle moet voorbereid wees daarop... ons het bietjie met hom (Chad) gesels daaroor, en ook met Cassidy. Hierdie land, julle velkleur kan 'n probleem wees vir mense, maar as jy so iets sien, sê asseblief vir Mamma, want dan is ek saam met jou hartseer en dan kan ons saam iets daaromtrent doen of daaroor praat”. (And we mustn't forget, because really-in the future they could – would they be victims of racism... and they must be prepared for it... we spoke to Chad and also to Cassidy about it. This country... your skin colour could be a problem for people, so if you see something like that, please tell Mama, because then I will be sad with you and then together we can do something about it or talk about it).

followed the prescripts of the church. They were and remain happy to place the children in the church's school, although they consider it to be small and too White (PI-M, p.9; PRS-F; PRS-M). As a result of this very cohesive community, the children have never had to explain their family composition within this community, since it is an accepted fact (PI-F, p.1, 4, 5, 6).

There is one other TRA family in the school and one same-race adoptive family in the school (PI-M, p.7, 9, 10; TI, p.18, 19). The children have made no mention of the differences in their adoptions from the other TRA or same race adoption, a fact that Corina finds strange (PI-M, p.7).

Conrad prefers interaction with Black people. He states that he intentionally went through a process to understand their ways and practices, whereas he has an intuitive understanding of the White ways through a shared race (PI-M, p.23). Respect and equality are very important issues for him. Corina often serves as a social bridge between Black and White people at social gatherings (PI-M, p.23, 24).

They deny that they felt compelled to adopt across colour lines for any other reason than to have children. Conrad states that "when we adopted, we did not do it to make a statement, but because we loved them and wanted to give them a home" (AJ-F). Corina states that her need to have children was so great "dat ek sou tot groen kinders wou hê" (PI-M, p.3). (I would even have accepted green children).

When asked about adopting three children, she added that one child would never have been enough, and that there is companionship and a sense of belonging because there are more children (PI-M, p.11). Each child now has a specific position in the family, which Conrad considers positive for their self-esteem and the wellbeing of their interpersonal relationships (PI-F, p.11, 12).

The children are very supportive of each other and often make comments about their physical attributes. They align the family's skin colours with vanilla, caramel and chocolate. They also like to compare distinctive racial attributes such as the shape of their noses, but these comparisons are devoid of malice and are often accompanied with laughter and humour (PI-M, p.7, PI-F, p.7; PRS-F; PRS-M).

The TRA journey as a family has been positive (PRS-M; PRS-F; AJ-M; AJ-F). They are reminded of their visibility as a mixed family when they are in a social setting such as shopping in a mall, since Black people will address the children in a Black language that the children do not understand, creating momentary confusion. The couple are also reluctant to discipline the children publicly, since the public might assume they are admonishing a stranger's child (PI-M, p.2, 3; PI-F, p.2, 3).

Their only regret in the TRA journey is that they are older parents and sometimes lack the necessary energy to address the many needs of young children. They note that they find it difficult to focus on their own relationship due to the high demands of school, activities and other developmental

needs (PI-M, p.22, 23; PI-F, p.22, 23). About the demands of childrearing and possible negative reactions in the future, Corina says: “Jy is so lief vir jou kinders, jy kan enige iets handle” (PI-M, p.25). (You love your kids so much; you can handle anything).

### 6.2.2. *Chad and His Story*

Chad, nine years old and in Grade 4, is in a predominantly White class (PI-M: 3, 8). He is light skinned, the family’s “vanilla and caramel” child (PI-M, p.7), fluent in three languages (PI-M, p.5, 6) and the oldest sibling (AJ-M; AJ-F). Chad likes to express himself through art and creative writing, spending a lot of time alone in his room drawing pictures and colouring in sketches (PI-M, p.15; TI, p.3; DAP; KFD). He is proud of his family and his unique physical attributes, and his family drawings are true to colour (PI-M, p.7; PRS-M; PRS-F; TI, p.3, 5). He is inordinately proud of his art supplies and his ability to be creative (DAP; KFD; CN) and becomes angry when his brothers and sisters touch his things (PI-M, p.15; DAP). His room and his art supplies are his prized possessions (PI-M, p.15; DAP).

His parents and teachers<sup>53</sup> describe him as a stereotypical older brother: quiet, obedient, socially alert, thoughtful, emotionally stable and responsible (PI-M, p.15, 16, 17; PI-F, p.15; TI, p.2; CBCL). They remark on his honesty, empathy and insistence on fairness as well as his sense of humour and easy laugh (TI, p.2, 3; PI-M, p.17, 20; PI-F, p.17). His sense of humour was also apparent during his psychometric assessment (CN, DAP). He is very compliant in carrying out his chores and enjoys positive feedback (CBCL; CN).

According to his parents, the characteristics that make him most vulnerable are his emotional sensitivity and inherent empathy (PI-M, p.20; CBCL). The psychologist also noted his sensitivity towards criticism from others (DAP). Carlo, his younger brother, sometimes exhibits disruptive behaviour that is inclined to escalate into a physical altercation with a fellow classmate. Chad will support him by removing him from the fray whenever possible but will not join in the fight or any argument to protect him, preferring to alert a teacher (TI, p.3). He is often embarrassed and upset by these incidents for a significant period of time (PI-M, p.17; KFD; DAP). His mother reports that physical fights between the two brothers are infrequent (PI-M, p.17).

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<sup>53</sup>Because the school is so small, all the teachers are involved with all the children in various capacities. In the light of this, three teachers were included in the interview of the children, all having something to contribute, hence the reference to “teachers”. They are only referred to individually if their observation differs from the others’ observations.

Chad has a very easy-going, protective and mutually respectful relationship with his younger sister, Cassidy (TI, p.3; KFD; SB) and considers his father to be reserved and steady (KFD). He appears to have a deep respect for his grandparents, although they are currently absent due to Covid travel restrictions (SB; FN). By his own admission, there was no aspect of his family that he would want to change (KFD). His scene building also depicted healthy and safe communication between family members and the community (SB).

Although he is popular in class, he shies away from boys who exhibit overbearing behaviour, preferring boys and girls who interact in smaller and less boisterous groups (TI, p.3,4). He is in a class of 16 children with only one other Black boy. Chad has a good relationship with all of the children and does not currently exhibit a specific gender or race preference (TI, p.4). During his DAP assessment, he expressed his enjoyment of good friends of his own age (DAP). Although he is always welcomed into a group and plays with children of all ages, he appears most comfortable with children of his own age (TI, p.4; PRS-F; PRS-M). He is described as a very agreeable child, well-liked by children, teachers and other parents (TI, p.2) and was quick to establish rapport with his psychologist (CN).

Chad is a physically active little boy who likes to play soccer and ride his bicycle, well within the normative and expected developmental milestones for his age. He enjoys his soccer team but does not compete for a leadership position or any other dominant role within the team (CBCL; KFD).

Chad is an independent learner with above-average academic abilities. His DAP indicated that he has a creative and clever manner of dealing with problems. He has very well-honed verbal skills and is capable of expressing his emotions accurately. He is comfortable asking questions in class if he is unsure about the task or subject (CBCL; TI, p.2, 3, 4). He is not impulsive at all and will consider an academic or social situation carefully before voicing his opinion or starting a task (TI, p.2, 3, 4, 13,14; PI-M, p.17, 18). His psychometric assessment projected a need for academic excellence and a high regard for intelligence (DAP).

Chad joined Conrad and Corina as a baby of 18 weeks (AJ-M). He is the fifth child of his biological mother, but the siblings do not share the same biological father. Chad's biological father was absent throughout the pregnancy and his biological family shared a small flat with an aunt and her children in the city centre. Conditions were not ideal, and the aunt asked the mother and children to leave.

Four-month-old Chad was subsequently declared a baby in need, and Conrad and Corina were approached to take care of him. His mother declined to release him for adoption, and it has taken

several years as a place-of-safety/foster child for the court to change his status to abandoned<sup>54</sup> and thus adoptable. He has since been formally adopted by Conrad and Corina, who had attained permanent residence in South Africa (AJ-F; AJ-M).

The parents describe Chad's placement as a "joyful path" (AJ-F). They admit that the knowledge that he could be removed if his mother could prove her ability to provide for her child created uncertainty, but after two years they were convinced that he would stay (AJ-F; AJ-M).

Prior to finally being formally adopted, Chad, who was six years old at the time, was told that he could choose his name. He opted for his given name and requested to keep his biological mom's surname as a second name. He explained that he wanted an acknowledgement of his biological background and is registered according to his wishes (AJ-M; AJ-F; TI, p.14).

Corina states that her bonding with Chad was immediate (PI-M, p.12). Their close relationship is also evident in his psychometric assessment, as he considers his mom to be enduring, firm and understanding (KFD; SB). Corina remembers him as an easy infant who settled in quickly. Chad had been breastfed by his biological mother, an aspect Corina shared with him, and of which he remains very proud. He perceives this maternal action as confirmation that she loved him (PI-M, p.16)<sup>55</sup>. He refers to his biological mother in very positive terms and will often refer to his strengths, like being a fast runner, as skills inherited from his biological mother (PI-M, p.12, 15, 16).

Corina, who has kept a photo of his mother for Chad, adds that on birthdays she assures him that his biological mom is thinking of him on his special day. The biological mother has made no contact following a single visit to Chad at 18 months. This visit resulted in her being very angry with the toddler for not remembering her and not wishing to go to her. She left without saying goodbye to him (PI-M, p.16; PI-F, p.16).

While the family accept Chad's positive image of his biological mother, they are concerned that it is unrealistic and that he will be disappointed if he meets her again (PI-M, p.16; PI-F, p.16). Corina admits that it is sometimes hurtful to hear Chad's comments regarding his biological mother, but that he often hugs her and spontaneously assures her of his love for her (PI-M, p.16; 17).

In keeping with Chad's continued attachment to his biological mother, he experienced and verbalised a profound sense of loss on his formal adoption day (PI-M, p.15, 16; PI-F, p.15, 16). The family celebrated the official adoption placement by hosting a small party with his classmates and

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<sup>54</sup>His biological mother contacted the place-of-safety social worker and Chad only once after placing him in safety care/foster care when he was 18 months

<sup>55</sup>Mamma \* is baie lief vir my, nê Mamma... dan sê ek ja, hoekom? Want sy het my met die borsgevoed. Ja, sy is baie lief vir jou (PI-M, p16). (Mommy\* loves me a lot, hey Mom? Then I say yes and ask: why? Because she breastfed me. And I say yes, she loves you a lot).

friends (TI, p.14; PI-M, p.15). Just before bedtime that day, Chad admitted that while he was happy, the process of adoption had saddened him, because it had irrevocably separated him from his biological mother. She was grateful that he could share his sadness and so enhance her understanding and support of him (PI-M, p.15)<sup>56</sup>.

Since Chad is in a very cohesive and familiar community, there has been no need for him to explain his adoptive status. However, it would appear from his infrequent verbalisations that he has more concerns surrounding the loss of his biological mother than the fact that he is transracially adopted (TI, p.1, 2, 14; PI-M, p.14, 15).

Briefly, Chad appears to be an articulate, quiet and considerate little boy, with personality traits that speak of responsibility, empathy and a mature social understanding. He is well accepted in his family and the community in which he lives. His relationships with his parents and sister are mutually good, although his mother has a special place as his confidante. He is easily afforded membership to groups to which he aspires. These groups are not dictated by race or age or gender, but rather by the current situation, such as a team sport or a school task or birthday party. He is self-confident and places a high premium on academic performance as well as his physical possessions and private space. His enjoyment of social situations within his family is clearly depicted in his KFD (Figure 6.2). Table 6.1 provides a comparison of Chad with the expected development of a child in the latent phase.

Although Chad does not seem to have issues regarding his race in his TRA status, he has verbalised his sense of loss of his biological mother, whom he regards very fondly. His adoptive parents have tried to address this loss, together with any other questions surrounding his adoption journey as the circumstances arise and will continue to do so.

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<sup>56</sup> “Die dag van sy aaneming was almal bly heeldag, maar saans (sic) dan kyk ek na hom, Dan kom hy na my toe en begin huil, en ek vra hom: “Wat is dit?”. Hy sê: “Mamma, almal voel so bly vandag, maar ek voel so hartseer. Ek was so bly gewees, -hy het vir my gesê, want dit moes vir hom baie moeilik gewees het want ons het dit gevier, maar hy het gedink: Wat nou, gaan ek dan nooit weer my biologiese ma sien nie, wat van haar?” (PI-M, p.15) (The day of his adoption, everyone was happy the whole day, but that evening I looked at him. He came to me and started to cry. I asked: What is it? He replied: Mamma, everyone is so happy, but I feel so sad? I was happy that he told me..because it must have been very difficult for him, because we celebrated it, while he thought: What now, will I never see my biological mother, what about her?).



**Table 6.1**

*Comparison with Expected Development of Middle/latent child – Chad*

Developmental Area	Expected development				Comment
	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Unknown	
<b>Physical</b>			X		Very athletic and loves sport
<b>Cognitive</b>			X		Independent learner, is considered intelligent
<b>Linguistic</b>			X		Very strong-strong reasoning abilities in three languages
<b>Emotional</b>		X			Considered and thoughtful emotional responses
<b>Ethical and Spiritual</b>			X		Enjoys an active religious affiliation
<b>Psychosocial</b>		X			Enjoys friends, but prefers solitary activities, such as drawing

According to the PRS submitted for Chad, Corina and Conrad agree on their adoptive journey and the acceptance of the extended family of their children. They are both equally committed to addressing any aspects of TRA troubling their children. However, Conrad appears to view the experience of the community' response to TRA significantly less favourably than Corina, despite being more complacent in his approach to TRA. The couple's disagreement about the need to expose the children to dynamic and strong Black role models and traditional Black practices is also reflected on their parental response scale (Figure 6.1).

**Parental Response Scale  
Chad**



**Figure 6.1**

*Parental Response Scale – Chad*

**Note.** This is a 7-point Likert scale (1-7) and the higher the value assigned by the parent, the more he or she agrees with the statement noted on the left of the graph.

**Note.** Extended family reside overseas and are not able to travel internationally due to current pandemic, thus the parents could not respond accurately to the statement. Significant differences between parents regarding certain aspects such as Chad's sociability, their social contact with people of other races and the community's reaction to TRA. Noted in narrative.



**Figure 6.2**

*Chad and his KFD*

*Note. His dad is playing with the dog whilst his mother cooks for them. His brother is very active, and his sister is drawing a picture whilst he reads his favourite comic book.*

**Table 6.2***Initial Coding Generated – Chad**Note.* All data sources used

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
<b>Personal component/characteristic of identity</b>		
Quiet, thoughtful, sense of fairness, confident, sense of humour and easy laugh	PI-M, p.15; PI-F, p. 15, 17; TI, 2, 3 CBCL; DAP; CN	Considered outlook on life Spends time on introspection Confident and happy
Strong verbal skills and enjoys verbal exchanges with adults and children	TI, p.1, 2, 3; PI, p.15; CN	Likes social interaction and is confident in his place in society and in his verbal ability
Evolved and mature sense of responsibility and obedience	TI, p.1, 2, 3; PI-M, p.17; CBCL	Socially intelligent and accountable for his actions
Enjoys solitary activities and is comfortable on his own	PI-M, p.15, TI, p.3	Not dependent on others for validation Self-reliant
Caring and empathetic – sensitive to needs of others	PI-M, p.20; TI, p.1, 2, 3; CBCL; DAP	Aware of others and their needs Socially astute and sensitive to social environment
Likes his unique physical attributes; his drawings are accurate reflections of himself	PI-M, p.7; TI, p.3, 5; PRS-M; PRS-F	Proud of himself and has a healthy developing self-identity
Quiet leadership skills	TI:3; CBCL	Enjoys the respect and following of his peer group, but does not actively seek attention
Above-average academic abilities	TI, p.2, 3, 4; CBCL; CN	Possesses ability to cultivate appropriate coping strategies and understand situation accurately
Likes the academic performance and positive feedback	CBCL; CN	Desires feelings of success and positive acknowledgement
High regard for his physical possessions, art supplies and privacy	PI-M, p.15; SB	Confirms proof of his importance and existence
<b>Social component/characteristics of identity</b>		
Verbalises sense of loss of biological mother through adoption	PI-M, p.15; PI-F, p.15, 16	Persistent sense of loss of biological family
Appropriate management strategies for dealing with a socially charged situation	TI, p.3; PI-M, p.20; CN; DAP	Socially astute and good reaction to social setting Trusts the adults in his life
Understands social settings and exhibits appropriate behaviour – comfortable with all ages	TI, p.3; PI-M, p.20; CBCL; SB	Can understand the context and respond to social demands across generations and social situations – socially intelligent
Fluent in three languages	PI-M, p.5, 6	Able to converse easily and has strong verbal skills

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Does not speak a Black language in spite of father being fluent in Black language	BI-F; BI-M; PI-M, p.5, 6	Communication barrier between himself and the family of other Black children who intuitively speak to him in a Black language
<b>Regarding the group membership/peer relationships of the child</b>		
Enjoys team sports, but does not actively seek leadership position	CBCL, TI, p.3, 4	Enjoys group membership and chooses common interest as reason for joining – social categorisation Positive group membership
No current gender, racial or language preference in group selection, but prefers own age group	TI, p.4; CBCL	Enjoys group membership and social categorisation without prejudice
Enjoys visits with friends and has regular interactions at home	CBCL; TI, p.3, 4, 5; CN; SB	Positive group membership – not limited to gender or race, but prefers own age group
<b>Regarding the coping strategies of the child</b>		
Strong verbal skills, enjoys verbal discussions and exchanges and able to express himself well	PI-M: 15, 16; TI: 1, 2, 3; CN	Likes social interaction and is confident in his place in society Confident in his verbal ability
Aware of his adoptive status and proud of his mixed family	CBCL; TI: 2, 5,7; PI-M, p.15	Does not appear to have conflict currently regarding adoption, but does verbalise feelings of loss
Comfortable in expressing his positive feelings regarding his biological mother	PI-M, p.15	Trusts his adopted parents to understand his feelings of loss
<b>Significant findings within the family</b>		
Oldest child of three adopted children	PIBI-M; BI-F	He is the oldest boy, with all three children from different ethnic groups
Placed as child in need at 18 weeks –bonding was very quick	BI-M; BI-F; AJ-M; AJ-F	Easy bonding and successful relation of trust established – needed caring and protection=attachment
Close relationship with his sister and parents and extended family. Closest bond with his mother	CBCL; PI-M, p.17; TI, p.2, 3; KFD; SB	Good interfamily relationships across generations – extensive support system
Ambivalent relationship with younger brother (who has ADHD and is mildly autistic)	PI-M, p.17; TI, p.2, 3; KFD	Cares for him, but acting out behaviour frustrates and embarrasses him
Long and protracted adoption journey due to bureaucracy, but described as joyous	BI-M; BI-F;	Not threatened by adoptive status – views it as a familiar and understandable concept

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Parents aware of possible shortcomings, such as inadequate exposure to successful Black people and absence of traditional Black cultural practices	PRS-M; PRS-F; PI-M, p.6	Active understanding and management of possible shortcomings in child-rearing – cognitive approach to child rearing
Do not practice specific ethnic and cultural traditions – do things as “customary in their family”	CBCL; PRS-M; PRS-F; PI-F, p.4, 5, 6	Cultural practices not dictated by race, but by family traditions and religion
<b>Significant findings within the larger community</b>		
Residential area and school are predominantly White	BI-M; BI-F; FN	Exposure to other ethnic groups limited
School he attends has only Afrikaans as medium of instruction	BI-F; BI-M; TI, p.2	Limits learning a Black language – limits interaction with Black people not fluent in English or Afrikaans
Very active, but not racially mixed church life – comfortable in White-only setting	PI-M; p.4; PI-F, p.4	Prefers the familiar church and does not join his father as guest preacher in the Black community
Aware of socio-economic discrepancies through outreach programmes, but does not enjoy mixing with only Black people	PI-M, p.4; PI-F, p.4	Aware of social differences, but not emotionally committed to choosing a side
Mostly positive experiences regarding TRA, with few exceptions within their own spiritual community	PRS-M; PRS-F; PI-M, p.3	Family experience

### 6.2.3. *Cassidy and Her Story*

Conrad and Corina consider Chad to be a conventional older brother. Similarly, they describe Cassidy, who is eight years old and in Grade three, a typical “middle child” (PI-F, p.12; PI-M, p.13, 14). She is unassuming in voicing her preferences, interests, needs and choices (PI-M, p.13). She is not as forthcoming as Chad or as impulsive and challenging as Carlo, and her acquiescence and agreeable personality make it easy for her to be overlooked in a group, despite being the only girl in the family. “Sy dreig bietjie om die gryns muis in die middel te wees” PI-F, p.12). (She tends to be the grey mouse in the middle). The psychologist describes her as a delightful young girl who feels loved

and cared for in her family, but who may at times experience feelings of inadequacy and helplessness, especially in moments of conflict (PI-M, p.13; PI-F:12, 13, 14; CN; KFD).

Cassidy joined her Dutch family as a place-of-safety infant of 4 weeks. She was born to an illegal immigrant Black mother who lived with her other daughter in a squatter camp. No mention is made of the biological father. Days after Cassidy's birth, the mother handed her over to a social worker, saying she could not keep the child due to socio-economic challenges. She undertook to return to sign the necessary adoption release papers, but failed to do so, and her whereabouts remain unknown (AJ-M; TI, p.6).

Cassidy was placed in a communal baby haven until she was awarded her clean bill of health and allocated a vulnerable baby status, whereafter Conrad and Corina could take her home (AJ-F; AJ-M). No other biographical details were ever provided, and background knowledge is scant. Corina regrets that there is no tangible evidence of Cassidy's mother such as a photograph or letter (AJ-M; AJ-F; PI-M, p.11).

Corina admits that bonding with Cassidy took a significant time, in spite of her young age. She spent many hours feeding and caring for the little girl but had to cognitively commit to establish a bond (PI-M: 12). While they now have a strong bond (TI, p.6, 8, 14, 17), Corina sometimes struggles to understand Cassidy's needs and wishes (PI-M, p.12, 13, 14). In her KFD and SB, however, Cassidy depicts her mother as a loving, primary caregiver and the authoritative leader of their family.

Corina concedes that their fields of interest do not overlap, and whereas she would like to teach Cassidy traditionally "girl" skills like knitting and sewing, Cassidy much prefers the outdoors and more adventurous, physical pastimes (PI-M, p.12, 13; PI-F: 13, 14; PRS-M). Corina is aware of these differences and initiates activities to maintain proximity in their relationship, such as going to the library together<sup>57</sup> (PI-M, p.14, 15). It seems that Corina is unsure of the stability of her bonding with Cassidy, but according to the psychometric assessment, Cassidy values and enjoys her interactions with her mom (KFD; SB; FN; CN).

While the teachers note that Cassidy and Chad enjoy an amicable sibling relationship (TI: p.3), her parents state she and Carlo spend more time together, always "close" (PI-M, p.13). Her psychometric assessment depicts her admiration for Chad and presents him as an important role model (DAP). The three children are very close in age, so they enjoy similar activities when they play, which are often accompanied by much laughter and teasing (PI-F, p.14). Occasionally, Chad will excuse

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<sup>57</sup> "Ek is nie regtig 'n klimpersoon of 'n sokkerpersoon nie, maar ek is elke dag bietjie meer bewus daarvan, dat ek iets met Cassidy of vir Cassidy wil doen om haar bietjie naby te hou" (PI-M,p.13) (I am not really a climber or soccer player, but I am aware daily that I must do something with or for Cassidy to keep her close.)

himself to go and draw while Cassidy and Carlo continue to play together (PI-M, p.7, 13; PI-F, p.10, 11).

Cassidy experiences feelings of ambivalence towards her younger brother, Carlo, when he exhibits acting-out behaviour. While they are mostly comfortable with each other, they also fight, sometimes physically. Recently, Cassidy has taken to withdrawing from a conflict situation with Carlo (CN; DAP; KFD; PI-M:11, 18, 19, 20; PI-F, p.19).

Cassidy experiences frustration and distress when Carlo has a tantrum or gets into a fight at school. Aside from the embarrassment, she dislikes the prolonged disruptions at home as the parents deal with his anger<sup>58</sup>. She then withdraws from the family since she finds the situation stressful, only resuming interaction with them once Carlo has settled down (TI: 6, 7; PI-M: 14, 19; DAP; KFD). The teachers remark that with his outbursts, Carlo often gets all the attention and that the other two siblings may feel overlooked (TI, p.7).

Scholastically Cassidy is described as being a stable, ambitious and consistent learner (CBCL; TI: 4, 6, 14, 17; PI-M, p.3, 20; PI-F, p.20; DAP). She enjoys the academic subjects, and her parents are actively involved in her schooling. She will often bring extra books or articles of interest addressing the current content of the subjects. Her teachers describe her as an avid reader and good speaker, with excellent verbal skills. She also displayed these skills during her psychometric assessment (CBCL; TI: 4, 6, 14, 17; PI-M, p.3, 20; PI-F, p.20; CN).

Cassidy is a happy, talkative, gentle and contented child with a good self-image (CN; KFD; TI, p.4,16; PRS-F; PRS-M). She is not easily upset about things (except by Carlo's behaviour) and is not prone to emotional outbursts. She does sometimes appear guarded and shy in her interactions with adults, unless it is someone she admires, whose approval she will then actively seek (CBCL; TI, p.4, 16; PI-M, p.13; PI-F, p.13).

Cassidy is seldom involved in quarrels with her fellow schoolmates, but if there is a brief squabble, she is quick to forgive and move on to a new activity (CBCL; TI, p.4, 6). She acknowledges adult authority and follows instructions and orders well (CN; TI, p.4, 6).

However, in spite of her seemingly docile manner, Cassidy harbours an adventurous side. Corina and Conrad note that she is their child who will most easily respond to a social or physical challenge in a less familiar social setting. They call her their "dapper" (brave) girl, since she will often encourage

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<sup>58</sup> "...dan sê sy (Cassidy) ag nou gaan dit weer die heeldag om Carlo, dit ontstel haar wel baie, want nou gaan Carlo weer in die kar baklei en dan gaan Carlo weer met ons by die huis baklei, so syweet as dit hier by die skool so gaan, gaan dit tot die aand deur. So ja, dit vreet haar wel op" (TI, p.6,7)..(And then she (Cassidy) says, now it's all about Carlo again – it really upsets her – because now Carlo will fight with us in the car and then at home – she knows that if it starts at school like that it continues throughout the day until evening. So yes, it definitely upsets her.)



her brothers to attempt something new, like singing in front of a crowd or trying a very high slide in a fun park (PI-M, p.14; CBCL; CN).

Cassidy is a very energetic child who likes to play sport and interact physically, especially with the boys (CBCL; PI-M, p.12, 13; PI-F, p.12, 13; KFD). She is tall for her age, but of slim build (FN). Although she does not excel in athletics, she enjoys being part of the team, relishing the participation rather than the competition as well as the confirmation of her physical capabilities (CBCL; PI-M, p.14; TI: p.7; KFD).

Cassidy loves playtime with friends and enjoys the role of hosting their customary Friday afternoon playdates. She exhibits no gender, race or age preference, and is happy to invite any friend over or to join her brothers and their friends in play. At school she also plays with any group that is involved in an energetic activity, preferring activity over conversation (TI, p.7, 8; PI-F, p.13; PI-M, p.13, 14, 21; CBCL; PRS-F; PRS-M). While she is well liked and often invited to social events, she does not have a specific close friend and prefers to move between groups rather than interact with a single child (TI, p.8).

The extended family, who live in Holland, visited annually until Covid travel restrictions were implemented. These visits were always full of positive personal interactions (PRS-F; PRS-M; AJ-M;). Cassidy seemingly misses these visits from her maternal grandparents more intensely than her siblings. Corina recalls how vocal and physically demonstrative she is with her grandparents, personality traits she does not often exhibit with other adults outside of the family (TI, p.4; PI-M, p.13, 14). Her scene Building test confirms her heightened affinity for her grandparents, as she includes them in a happy family scene in spite of their current and prolonged absence (SB).

The parents and teachers agree that Cassidy is very aware of her transracial adoptive status (TI, p.5; PI-M, p.6; PI-F, p.6). Unlike her brothers, she is not comfortable depicting her family in drawings or art projects. Earlier this year, she coloured herself (but not her brothers) with the same light colour that she chose for her parents (TI, p.5; PI-M, p.6; PI-F, p.6). Further questioning indicates that Cassidy's parents do not think that it is her race she has a problem with, but rather the fact that she aspires to look like her adoptive mother<sup>59</sup> (PI-M, p.6). They comment that the children readily compare their physical attributes, such as nose shape and size, hair texture and skin colour. Chad is

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<sup>59</sup>“Cassidy is die een wat die meeste, nou nie meer nie maar toe sy bietjie jonger was, het sy vir my gesê: 'Mamma, ek wil jou kleur hê', en wat sê ek dan? ...Ek het gesê, maar... (PI-M,p.6)...'jy het gesê, jy is mooi soos wat jy is' (PI-F,p.6). 'Maar ek (Cassidy) wil dieselfde wees as jy'...want sy sien die ander mammas is dieselfde, Ek dink nie dit gaan oor die kleur nie...ek dink dit gaan oor ...enersheid” (PI-M,p.6). ("Cassidy is the one, not so much now, but when she was younger, she said: 'Mamma, I want to be your colour'– and what do I say then? I said....'You said she is beautiful just the way she is' (Father)...'But I (Cassidy) want to be the same as you' because she sees the other mothers look the same – I don't think it's about colour, I think it's about ...being the same").

vanilla/caramel, Cassidy is caramel/chocolate and Carlo is the dark chocolate. These comparisons are made without malice or rancour<sup>60</sup> (TI-M, p.7; TI-F, p.7).

In her psychometric assessment for this current work, she drew a family involved in a game, and her colour representation of race was true (KFD). It is possible that there has been a cognitive, developmental and emotional shift, making Cassidy less threatened by the visible difference from her parents and more comfortable in her own skin (FN).

Cassidy is in a class with eight other learners, two of which are transracially adopted Black brothers. While these boys appear comfortable with their TRA status, Cassidy does not easily take part in class discussions about race or adoption (TI, p.4, 5, 6; PI-M, p.6, 7).

In Cassidy's first year of school, a little White girl called Cassidy "dirty" owing to the colour of her skin and told her that she was not welcome in the class or in the playgroup. This episode had a profound effect on Cassidy, who tearfully reported it to a teacher. The matter was dealt with swiftly in a meeting attended by the teachers, children and parents, and the children resumed their friendship within days, although they remain acquaintances rather than friends. No such incident has recurred since, as far as any involved adults are aware (PI-M: 7; TI, p.5, 6, 7).

One of the teachers adds that in this same first school year, Cassidy seemed unhappy about her TRA status, that she struggled to "connect" with other people, children and adults, despite being well accepted in groups (TI, p.7) and that she was aware of how different she was from the other girls in the class and school for a number of reasons. Firstly, while there is another adopted girl in her class, she is a same-race adoptee. Secondly, Cassidy was and remains the only Black girl in the school (TI, p.4, 5, 6, 7). Finally, her preference for physical activities and energetic games also sets her apart from the girls, who generally prefer more sedate activities (TI, p.7). Cassidy seemed to experience an inner struggle<sup>61</sup> that has abated over time. The teachers concur that Cassidy still has some discomfort regarding her unique family composition, as evident from her reluctance to enter into race or adoption discussions even though the family enjoys visibly strong and reciprocal relationships (TI, p.6).

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<sup>60</sup> "...en Carlo is die donkerste en alles, dan sê hulle ook Carlo se neus is die breedste (PI-M,p.7)...en nooit op 'n negatiewe manier nie, hulle beskryf net die verskille. Daar is geen orde van jy is beter of hoër nie (PI-F,p.7)...en dan lag hulle ook bietjie daaroor" (PI-M, p.7). ("And Carlo is the darkest, and they also say Carlo has the broadest nose...And it is never in a negative manner – they are just describing the differences. There is no order of one is better or higher...And then they laugh a little about it".)

<sup>61</sup> "Sy het vir my baie ongelukkig voorgekom omdat sy is wat sy is (TRA), maar dit het met die tyd vir my beter geword, oor die tyd van die jaar. Dis nie dat dit haar nie meer gepla het nie, sy het minder daarop gefokus....maar as jy van buite kyk...sy het 'n worsteling op 'n manier, bietjie van binne" (TI, p.6). ("She appeared very unhappy because she was what she was (TRA), but with time it got better, over a year. It's not as if it didn't worry her, she focusses on it less...but if you observe her from outside...she has a struggle, in a way, somewhat on the inside.")

Cassidy is described by her parents as behaving like a “middle child”. The teachers consider her charming and pleasant, an eager-to-please little girl. Although she has concerns regarding her younger brother’s outbursts and the amount of attention spent on him and his negative behaviour, she makes few demands of her own. While she is not considered a leader by her parents or teachers, Cassidy is independent and enjoys new challenges. She chooses group membership according to the activity on hand, rather than age, race or gender and does not conform to peer pressure. She is content to sit by herself reading if a group is not involved in a task or game that appeals to her. Participation in an activity is more important to her than the competitive element.

Of the three siblings, Cassidy is considered by her parents and her teachers as being the most cognisant of her TRA status. She is more racially aware than her brothers and will ask more questions regarding adoption and race than her brothers. She is the only Black girl in her school and is the only one of the siblings that has experienced a blatant racial incident, albeit two years ago and apparently successfully resolved. It is possible that there are juxtapositions and uncertainties in Cassidy’s identity that are overlooked in the presence of her easy-going and eager-to-please nature (FN). Whilst not a comparative study, Table 6.3 provides a comparison of Cassidy with the expected development of a child in the latent phase. Figure 6.3 displays the response scale scores marked by her parents in their questionnaires, showing the differences in perception of TRA discussed earlier. Her KFD (Figure 6.4 confirms the comment made during the interview that while they spend a lot of time together, they, the parents, sometimes find themselves too busy or too old to interact physically with the children.

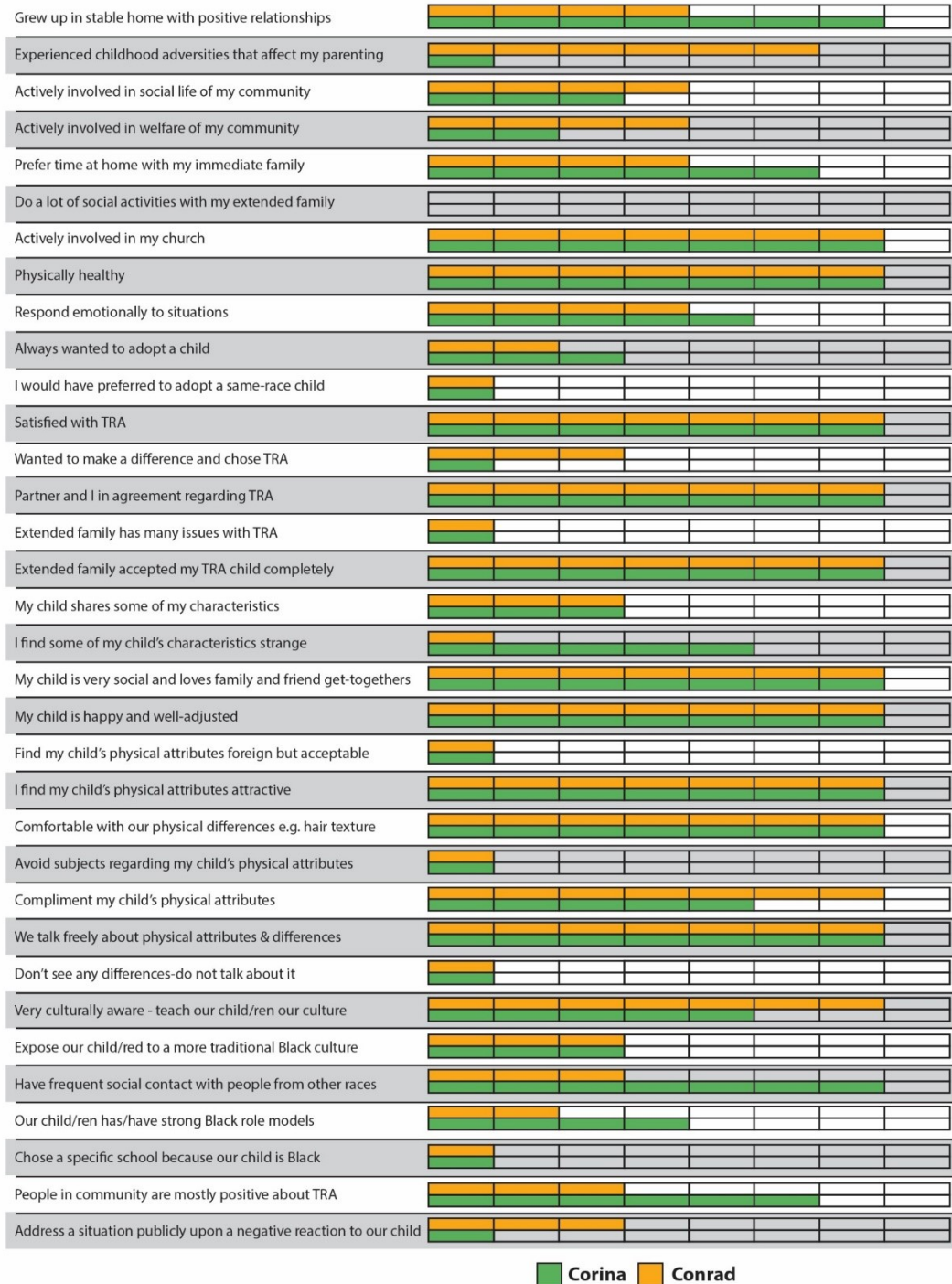
**Table 6.3**

*Comparison with Expected Development of Middle/latent child – Cassidy*

Developmental area	Expected development				Comment
	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Unknown	
<b>Physical</b>			X		Loves sport and enjoys being part of a team
<b>Cognitive</b>			X		Independent and consistent learner
<b>Linguistic</b>			X		Very strong – good reasoning abilities in three languages
<b>Emotional</b>		X			Not forthcoming with emotion and experiences; considered emotionally stable
<b>Ethical and Spiritual</b>			X		Enjoys an active religious affiliation and a clear love of nature (SB)

Psychosocial		X			Likes to interact with other children, but enjoys solitary activities such as reading
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**Parental Response Scale  
Cassidy**



**Figure 6.3**

*Parental Response Scale –Cassidy*

**Note.** This is a 7-point Likert scale (1-7) and the higher the value assigned by the parent, the more he or she agrees with the statement noted on the left of the graph

*Note.* Extended family reside overseas and are not able to travel internationally due to current pandemic, thus the parents could not respond accurately to the statement.



**Figure 6.4**

*Cassidy and her KFD.*

*Note.* She is swinging, and her brothers are playing soccer. Her dad is preparing his sermon while her mother is reading on her tablet

**Table 6.4**

*Initial Coding Generated – Cassidy*

*Note.* All sources of data used

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
<b>Personal component/characteristic of identity</b>		
Amicable and acquiescent Good self-image Happy and easy-going Talkative in familiar surroundings	CBCL; PI-F, p.12; PI-M, p.13, 14; TI, p.3; CN; KFD	Eager to please Confident in social setting Positive outlook on life
Excellent verbal skills and good orator	TI: p.4, 6, 14, 17; PI-M, p.3, 20; PI-F, p.20; CBCL; CN	Able to express herself well
Organised and task orientated – follows instructions clearly	CBCL; TI, p.4, 6, 14, 17; CN	Can approach a situation systematically
Likes a physical and social challenge	CBCL; PI-M	Confident in abilities

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Average to higher academic abilities	TI, p.3, 4,14; CBCL	Possesses ability to cultivate appropriate coping strategies and understand situations accurately
Shares a room but has started seeking privacy and her own space	CBCL; PI-M, p.14	Wants to confirm her space and gain sense of permanence
More vocal and questioning about TRA and adoption than other siblings in family	TI, p.4, 5, 6; PI-M, p.6, 7	Some insecurities regarding her TRA status
<b>Social component/characteristics of identity</b>		
Enjoys social gatherings and likes to host friends – enjoys their approval – likes to please	CBCL; PRS-M; PRS-F; DAP; SB	Strong social affinity
Enjoys large gatherings and gets along with children and adults alike – family and church and other community members with whom she is familiar	PRS-F; PRS-M; TI, p.4, 16; CBCL	Comfortable with different members and generations of society Socially astute Fluid social skills
Appropriate management strategies for dealing with a socially charged situation	PI-M, p.7, 14; TI, p.6,7; CBCL	Can understand social context Good reaction in social setting Accurate interpretation of a situation
Fluent in three languages	PI-M, p.5	Able to converse with many people – strong verbal skills
Does not speak a Black language	BI-M; BI-F;CBCL	Communication barrier between Cassidy and other Black people who intuitively speak to her in a Black language
<b>Regarding the group membership/peer relationships of the child</b>		
Enjoys taking part in team sports and taking on a physical challenge	PI-M, p.12, 13; PI-F, p.13, 14; CBCL; TI:2, 3, 4; KFD: SB	Enjoys group membership and chooses common interest as reason for group membership
Well accepted in group activities, but does not seek a dominant role	PI-M, p.12, 13; PI-F, p.13, 14; TI: 2, 3, 4	Enjoys the sense of belonging
No current gender, racial or language preference in group selection	CBCL; TI, p.7; PI-M, p.14	Enjoys group membership and social categorisation without prejudice
Does not easily get involved in a quarrel, but quick to forgive and move on to a new activity	PI-M: 13; TI: 4, 6; CBCL	Does not focus on emotional conflict
<b>Regarding the coping strategies of the child</b>		
Very strong verbal skills	TI, p.4, 6, 14, 17; PI-M, p.3, 20; PI-F, p.20; CBCL	Able to verbalise dissent and explain emotions
Emotionally stable, but inclined to be guarded when expressing emotions in unfamiliar situations	CBCL; TI, p.4, 16; PI-F, p.13	Not comfortable in sharing opinions and feelings in larger community – possible fear of rejection
Inclined to withdraw and experiences feelings of helplessness when confronted with unfamiliar situation or conflict	CN; KFD	Secondary coping strategy if verbalisation doesn't manage situation

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Aware of her adoptive status and initially unhappy with visible skin colour difference from mother	PI-M, p.5, 6; PI-F, p.6, TI: 5	Less comfortable with racial difference than her siblings – wants to look like her adoptive mother
<b>Significant findings within the family</b>		
Middle child of three adopted children	BI-M; BI-F	Described as “typical middle child”
Joined the family as an infant of 1 months	BI, AJ-M; AJ-F	Very small, needed caring and protection – opportunity to develop trust
Not immediate bonding with adoptive mother – had to actively cultivate attachment	PI-M, p.12	Took several months of first year to cultivate reciprocal trust relationship
Close relationship with older brother and parents and values time spent together, especially with mother – authoritative figure	CBCL; TI, p.6, 8,14, 17; PI-M, p.12, 13, 14; CN; DAP; KFD; SB	Happy within family – established bond
Ambivalent relationship with younger brother, who has DHD and is mildly autistic	PI-M, p.17; TI, p.2, 3; CN; DAP; KFD	Cares for him and enjoys his company, but acting-out behaviour frustrates and embarrasses her
Well-developed and verbalised ties with extended family – special bond with maternal grandparents	PRS-M; PRS-F; SB	Wide support system and positive interactive experiences with large variety of people
Scant knowledge of Cassidy’s biological family– no tangible memento	AJ-M; AJ-F; PI-M, p.11	Perceived as a loss – asks more questions regarding TRA than her brothers
Family members aware of their perceived shortcomings, such as inadequate exposure to successful Black people and absence of traditional Black cultural practices	PRS-M; PRS-F; PI-M, p.6	Active understanding and management of possible shortcomings in child-rearing
They do not practise specific ethnic and cultural traditions – do things as “customary in their family”	CBCL; PRS; PI-F, p.4, 5, 6	Cultural practices not dictated by race, but by family traditions and religion
<b>Significant findings within the larger community</b>		
Residential area and school predominantly White	BI-M; BI-F	Limited exposure to wider demographic
School uses only Afrikaans as medium of instruction	BI-F; BI-M; TI, p.2	Limits learning a Black language and makes interaction with Black people not fluent in English or Afrikaans difficult
Active church life, but not racially mixed – also comfortable in only White setting	PI-M: 4; PI-F: 14; CN	Prefers familiar church and chooses not to join father when he preaches in Black community as guest
Aware of financial inequalities determined by race through outreach programmes, but does not enjoy mixing with Black people	PI-F: 4; PI-M: 4	Aware of social differences, but not emotionally committed to choosing a side
Mostly positive experiences regarding TRA, but Cassidy has been victim of racial slurring	PI-M:3; PRS-F	Family experience mostly positive

#### 6.2.4. *Carlo and His Story*

Stocky, eight years old and dark “chocolate coloured” (PI-M, p.7; FN), prone to tantrums and physical outbursts (PI-M, p.2, 9, 11, 12, 18, 19; PI-F, 2, 3, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19; CBCL; TI, p.2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; CN), Carlo appears by all accounts to be a challenging, but lovable little boy. Several specialists have diagnosed ADHD and possible mild autism (PI-M, p.9, 10; PI-F, p, 9, 10), for which he receives medication with reasonable efficacy (PI-M, p.18; PI-F, p.18). His main social deficits are not taking accountability for socially unacceptable behaviour, frequent testing of boundaries, episodes of anxiety and not curbing his emotional and physical outbursts, which include biting and hitting (PI-M, p.12, 18; PI-F, p.12, 17, 18, 19; TI, p.8, 9, 10, 11, 12; CBCL). His psychometric assessments show a high level of self-consciousness and feelings of inadequacy, with a persistent need for security, recognition and approval (CN; DAP; SB).

Although the youngest sibling in Corina and Conrad’s family, Carlo was the oldest infant when placed with the family at almost 8 months. He was born to an unmarried mother who put him up for adoption a few days after his birth, as she had other children and did not want yet another child. There is no identifiable biological father. The mother signed the adoption papers and never returned or requested any feedback from the social workers. Only her name and ethnicity are known to the family, and they have no further background information (AJ-M; AJ-F).

Carlo was placed in a Baby Haven, where, after waiting for the obligatory 60 days after signature of the release for adoption, he was registered unsuccessfully on RACAP. Following failure to be matched with suitable adoptive parents on three occasions, the Dutch family were contacted for long-term fostering. Although he was legally adoptable, the Dutch couple had to foster Carlo first due to their non-residential status and ensuing legal limitations. “His adoption was certain; the only hindrance was that we needed to get permanent residence first. This took a few years. He was adopted five years after his placement in our care. A long wait, but not a complex process” (AJ-F). At the time of adoption, Carlo’s social and behavioural challenges were already apparent, having been observed since toddlerhood (AJ-M; CBCL), but the family were never in doubt that they would adopt him (FN, AJ-M; AJ-F).

The Baby Haven had six abandoned children under the care of various volunteers. Conrad and Corina say that although the psychologists and paediatricians deny the possibility that such a large number of different caregivers could contribute to his current behaviour and diagnosis, they are not convinced he did not suffer initial bonding disruptions either (PI-M, p.12; PI-F, p.12). Conrad shares common interests with Carlo, such as woodworking and building things, and notes that his bond with his youngest child is probably stronger than with the other children due to their shared hobbies (PRS-



F; PI-F, p.12). Corina states that Carlo has always demanded excessive attention and that her bonding with Carlo was faster and easier than with Cassidy, although slower than with Chad (PI-M, p.12, 13).

Carlo attends the same small Christian school as his siblings. He is in Grade 2 with 13 other children. His teachers note that his progress at school is less than satisfactory and that he might have to repeat Grade 2. In spite of his medication, he struggles to concentrate and is currently failing mathematics, although his verbal skills and language are exceptionally well developed (CBCL; TI, p.9, 12; CN). Carlo has concerns regarding his academic performance and is inclined to withdraw from scholastic challenges that evoke stress (DAP; KFD).

The classes stay consistent in the small school, with the same children usually progressing to the next class. Carlo has been with the same children since Grade R. In spite of his disruptive behaviour, Carlo appears well-liked, especially by the girls in his class (PI-F, p.19, 21; TI, p.8, 9, 11, 12). They are aware of his impulsive behaviour and outbursts and have learned to give him a wide berth at such times. He is, however, still welcome at their birthday parties, and the children are very supportive of him at his soccer matches (CBCL). The teacher notes that this is an advantage of having Carlo in such a small and close-knit school, since the families share the community, the church and the school, making his inclusion in social events customary (TI, p.7, 11, 12).

This acceptance was not always the case. In the beginning of Grade 1, where the stricter school structure emphasised Carlo's disruptive behaviour, several parents approached the teacher about their children's discomfort with his aggression and behaviour in class. The school was forced to host an intervention with all the class parents, their children and Carlo and his parents. The meeting was amicable, and all the parents were very supportive once they were informed of his diagnosis. The Dutch family reported being relieved, since they felt that they were addressing the problem but were nonetheless being inundated with criticism. His challenges have subsequently been managed with more understanding and tolerance by the bigger school community (TI, p.10, 11, 12, 13).

Carlo's behaviour has improved somewhat, and the learners mostly understand his need for unique forms of punishment. Not all his misbehaviour is addressed, since he would always be in trouble – “jy moet jou battles pick” - “you must pick your battles” (with him) (TI, p.12). The parents share this approach in managing Carlo and try to persuade the siblings to ignore a lot of his more irritating behaviour, sometimes to their distress and frustration (PI-M, p.11, 17; PI-F, p.12, 14, 17).

Carlo was devastated when his favourite teacher left the school, since he was fiercely loyal to her and still expresses his liking for her (TI, p.10; CN). Following her departure, his misconduct escalated, and he became more aggressive. This behavioural surge has abated, and Carlo is slowly dealing with the fact that she is no longer his Grade 2 teacher. It is possible that his loyalty leaves him feeling vulnerable and that he experiences intense rejection at the loss of someone he holds dear (TI, p.8, 9,

10, 18, 19; FN). In incidents that leave him feeling vulnerable, rejected or conflicted, he may resort to hostility and rigidity or withdrawal (DAP; KFD).

Although he is popular with the girls, Carlo tends to provoke the older boys. He does not regularly spend time with younger children and prefers to join the older boys in sports activities. Often the competitive element in the game becomes a source of frustration for him, leading to an argument (TI, p.9, 10, 11; PI-M, p.9, 10; PI-F, p.9; DAP). These incidents distress Cassidy and Chad, since it is usually their friends and fellow classmates that come under attack. They also understand that these incidents demand the attention of the parents, leaving them to their own devices (PI-M, 12, 14; PI-F, p.15; TI, p.2, 4).

Carlo appears indifferent to general community opinion, but will actively seek approval from those he holds in high esteem (DAP; KFD; SB). The teachers and his parents say that he chooses people whom he respects and will attempt to follow their directives (TI, p.10; DAP; KFD; SB). If a person with whom he hasn't established an attachment tries to instruct him, he will be very challenging or ignore that person. This has been the case when student teachers have attempted to teach in his class (TI, p.10, 13; PI-M, 9, 10, 18, 19). This behaviour confirms the psychometric findings of withdrawal, rigidity and hostility in the presence of emotionally stressful situations (KFD; DAP; SB).

Before forming a strong and positive attachment, Carlo will be extremely challenging, as if testing the limits of acceptance and trying to provoke rejection. The older and very experienced teacher considers this to be partially due to his diagnosis, but also due to a feeling of inferiority to other children and being unsure of himself. This feeling of inadequacy is not related to his race or adoptive status, but his lack of academic performance and poor impulse control (TI, p.10). Carlo anticipates rejection and disapproval, since he often receives negative feedback due to his behaviour (TI, p.10; PI-M, p.9,10; KFD, DAP).

While the parents and teachers concur that the family is very close and that the siblings spend a lot of time together, it seems as if Carlo elicits ambivalent feelings from his brother and sister. Chad is very proud of his possessions, and Carlo has on occasion broken some of his things, causing a serious fight between the brothers. Carlo also places a high premium on possessions and takes good care of the objects he creates with his dad (DAP; SB; CN). Cassidy is more tolerant of Carlo but will also find him irritating and persistent at times, with little regard for her wishes or privacy (TI, p.3, 7, 11, 14, 17; PI-M, p.17, 18; PI-F, p.17, 18). Carlo loves his family unconditionally, and the relationships bring him much "joy" (KFD). He has a special bond with his father and is dependent on him for recognition, as they spend a lot of time together (DAP; CN).

Most of the content of Carlo's interview centres around his ADHD and mild autism. However, when prompted, the adults remain very positive about him. The teachers describe him as very lovable

to those people that have met with his approval. He is fiercely loyal to some of his teachers and to all his family (CBCL; PI-M, p.9, 15; PI-F, p.10; TI, p.8, 9, 10; CN). Significantly, the psychologist makes no mention of any acting-out behaviour during the session, but rather his wish to please and be cooperative (CN).

Carlo is creative and full of entrepreneurial ideas, such as baking cupcakes and selling them by the roadside, an endeavour he conceived and executed by himself. He likes to help people with small tasks and is consistent with his household chores (CBCL). He enjoys tinkering with his father in the woodwork shop. When occupied with hands-on activities, his concentration is much improved (PI-F, p.18, 19; PI-M, p.18, 19; CBCL).

At the insistence of his mother, he has taken up playing African drums with an older Black boy, under the tutelage of a Black musician. He loves the instrument and has shown some aptitude for it. His prowess has also gained him unexpected approval and positive attention at school when he plays for the children, which in turn has had a positive impact on his self-worth because he gains the recognition he desires (TI, p.15; PI-M, p.5, 22, 23; PI-F, p.5; DAP; CN).

Carlo likes to make physical contact when he is happy and is boisterous in his manner of play (KFD; DAP; CN). He does not respond well to competition, becoming easily frustrated, and is very impulsive, often acting out his frustration. He is afraid of certain things, such as the dark, and becomes apprehensive in unknown settings. This anxiety he camouflages by becoming very loud and animated. He sometimes struggles to explain the source of frustration or reason for his misbehaviour but is otherwise very competent verbally (PI-M, p.19; PI-F, p.19; TI, p.2, 8, 10). It is noteworthy that Conrad is more verbal about Carlo than the other children. He appears to be very protective of his youngest child (FN).

Carlo is happy to engage with his brother and sister regarding his physical attributes. He has the darkest skin colour of the three siblings and presents with the most traditionally South African Black features, such as tight hair curls and a broad and flattened nose bridge. He considers himself the winner in these spontaneous family competitions (PI-M, p.7; PI-F, p.7, 9). He is proud of his physical characteristics and never makes any reference to race. His parents feel he is emotionally oblivious to the visible differences between the family members (PI-F, p.9; PI-M, p.10). This lack of concern may be attributable to his lack of social awareness. The schoolteachers also deny any incident with Carlo that was related to race (TI, p.13, 14, 15).

Whereas his older siblings ask questions about their backgrounds or biological parents, Carlo has never made any reference to adoption or asked any questions about his background (PI-M, p.10; AJ-M). He has only once, in an argument with Corina, threatened to phone his biological mom to come and fetch him, if he could just get hold of her number (PI-M, p.10).

In summary, all the adults interviewed consider Carlo, although challenging, to be a happy, garrulous and contented little boy when he is not emotionally thwarted. This is also the finding of the psychologist (CN; KFD, SB). His DAP is shown in Figure 6.6. He does not have adequate, appropriate management strategies in place to deal with social situations that frustrate him or frighten him. His outbursts result in negative feedback that is detrimental to his self-esteem and consequently to his self-identity. Corina and Conrad, as well as the three interviewed teachers, concur that his emotional instability and outbursts are related to his ADHD and possible mild autism and have no bearing on his TRA status (FN). (Table 6.5 also provides a comparison of Carlo with the expected development of a child in the latent phase, depicting his social and emotional struggle when compared with his peer group).

**Table 6.5**

*Comparison with Expected Development of Middle/latent child – Carlo*

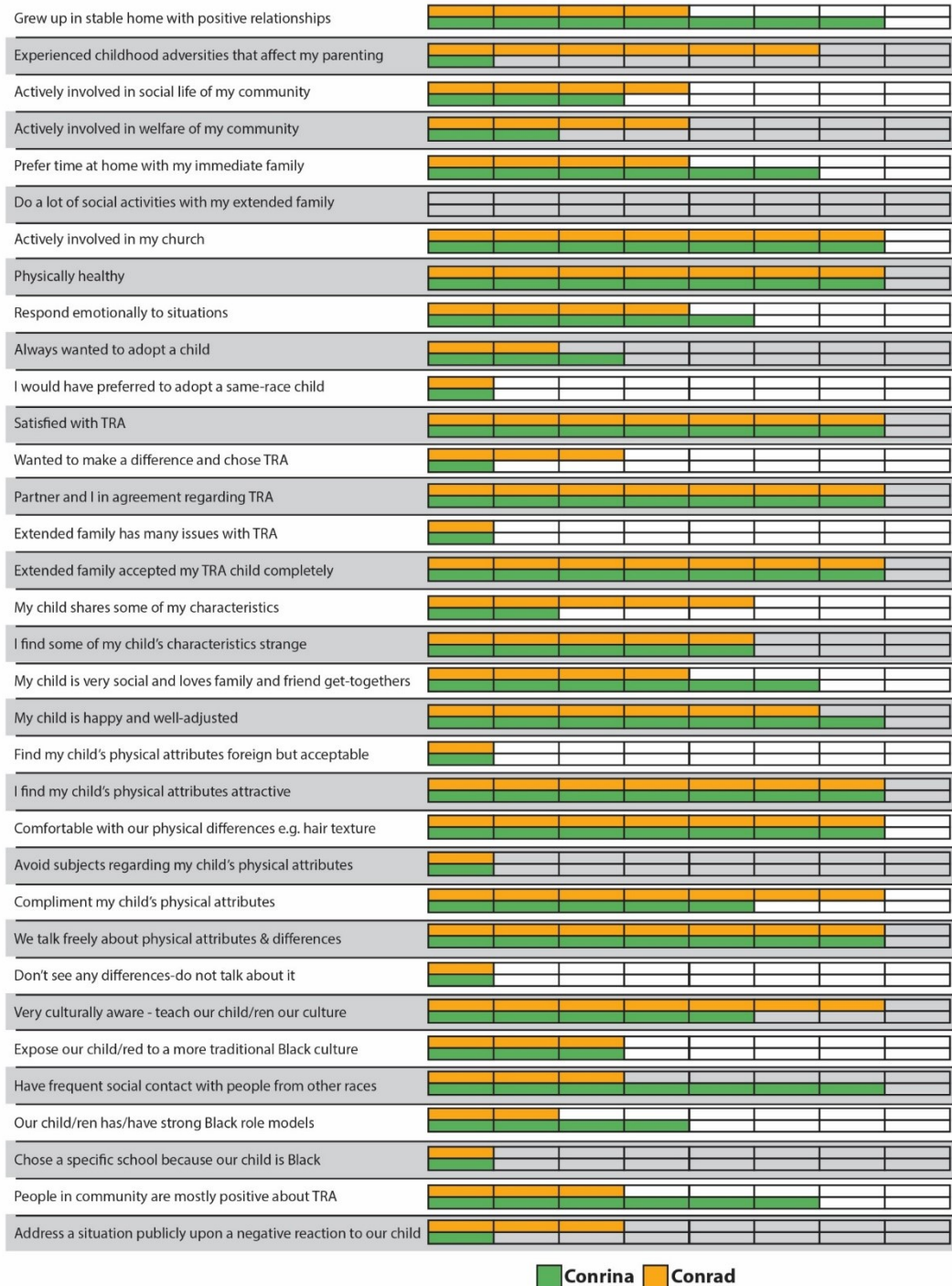
Developmental area	Expected development				Comment
	Below average	Average	Above average	Unknown	
Physical			X		Loves to play sport and able to hold his own among bigger boys
Cognitive	X				ADHD and possible mild autism – on pharmaceutical intervention
Linguistic		X			Capable of holding his own in conversation –garrulous
Emotional	X				Very impulsive and prone to emotional outbursts
Ethical and Spiritual			X		Enjoys an active religious affiliation – avid churchgoer. Loves his faith. Not always sound in his ethical judgement
Psychosocial	X				Not always able to follow social cues and sustain long-term friendships

On the parental response scale (Figure 6.5), Conrad and Corina are mostly in agreement about Carlo, with a few exceptions. Conrad shares more character traits with Carlo than Corina does and enjoys the hands-on hobbies he shares with his youngest son. Although they consider some of Carlo's characteristics strange, and despite the history of misconduct and poor impulse control, both parents consider Carlo well adjusted. Again, the mutual positivity towards their child's physical appearance

and the ease of discussing TRA and its ramifications is apparent. However, the differences in approach to TRA and the necessity of strong Black role models and exposure to Black culture remain present.

**Parental Response Scale**

**Carlo**



**Figure 6.5**

*Parental Response Scale – Carlo*

**Note.** This is a 7-point Likert scale (1-7) and the higher the value assigned by the parent, the more he or she agrees with the statement noted on the left of the graph.

*Note.* Extended family reside overseas and are not able to travel internationally due to current pandemic, thus the parents could not respond accurately to the statement.



**Figure 6.6**  
*Carlo's First DAP*

**Table 6.6**  
*Initially Coding Generated – Carlo*  
*Note.* All data sources used

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
<b>Personal component/characteristic of identity</b>		
Lovable, but challenging Talkative in familiar surroundings Helpful with set tasks and completes chores Likes to make physical contact	PI-M, p.2, 9, 11, 12; 18, 19; PI-F, 2, 3, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19; TI, p.2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; CN; DAP.	Able to demonstrate affection and interact with those he has formed an attachment with, in spite of social developmental challenges
Inclined to anxiety and frustrations when unsure or in unfamiliar situation – exacerbated by negative feedback concerning his misbehaviour	PI-M, p.12, 18; PI-F, p.1, 2, 17, 18, 19; CBCL; TI, p.8, 9, 10, 11, 12; DAP; SB	Lacking confidence in social abilities and coping strategies

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Shows entrepreneurial skills and confidence in learnt abilities/skills	PI-M, p.18, 19; PI-F, p.12, 18, 19	Shows confidence in achieved skills, e.g., woodworking, and then able to complete task when invested in the job at hand
Good verbal skills and enjoys verbal interactions with peers	TI, p.9, 12; CBCL; CN	Able to express himself well, but resorts to aggression when frustrated and anxious
Very impulsive, with disregard of consequences	CBCL	Related to ADHD
Average academic abilities, but fails mathematics and might have to repeat year – feelings of inadequacy regarding performance	TI, p.9, 12; CBCL; DAP; CN	Possesses cognitive ability to cultivate appropriate coping strategies, but thwarted by mild autism and ADHD
Childhood fears: afraid of the dark, trusts others to help him cope with these anxiety-provoking situations	CBCL; PI-M, p.14, 17; PI-F, p.17, 18	Has established trust relationships with his significant others
Not able to accept responsibility and apologise for misbehaviour	PI-M, p.2, 9, 11, 12; 18, 19; PI-F, 2, 3, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19	Aspires to positive relationships, but does not understand intrinsic accountability
Fiercely loyal to those he holds in high regard and will respect their wishes	TI, p.10	Able to behave in acceptable manner when he respects the instructor
Seeks approval from others with whom he has a positive relationship	TI, p.10; PI-F, p.18, 19; CBCL; DAP; KFD; SB	Fear of rejection and needs validation
Harbours fear of rejection by those with whom he has positive relationships	TI, p.10; CBCL; CN; KFD	Fear of loss of significant relationships
Will sometimes steal objects at home and places high premium on possessions	CBCL; SB	Possession of tangible objects important for self-worth and validation
Proud of his physical attributes	PI-M, p.7; PI-F, p.7, 9; PRS	Likes the physical aspect of his identity
<b>Social component/characteristics of identity</b>		
Enjoys social gatherings, but prefers older children; easily irritated by younger children	CBCL; PRS-M; PRS-F; PR-M, p.9, 10, 11	Strong social affinity, but insufficient coping strategies to deal with social irritations
Enjoys physical interaction with other children, but not able to deal with competitive aspect appropriately	CBCL; TI, p.2,7, 9, 10, 11; PI-M, p.9; PI-F, p.9, 10	Lacking in appropriate coping strategies due to social developmental challenge
Enjoys large gatherings and is conversant with children and adults alike; church member, in spite of social interaction challenges	PRS-F; PRS-M; TI, p.4, 16; CBCL; SB	Comfortable with different members and generations of society
Fluent in three languages	PI-M, p.5	Able to converse with many people – strong verbal skills
Does not speak a Black language	BI-M; BI-F; CBCL	Communication barrier between himself and the family of other Black children, who intuitively speak to him in a Black language
<b>Regarding the group membership/peer relationships of the child</b>		

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Enjoys participation in team sports, especially with older boys, but unable to deal with competitive element	CBCL; TI, p.2, 7, 9, 10, 11; PI-M, p.9; PI-F, p.9, 10	Easily provoked and responds in inappropriate manner, but still accepted by the group
Accepted in group activities, but does not seek a dominant role	CBCL; TI, p.2, 7, 9, 10, 11; PI-M, p.9; PI-F, p.9, 10	Enjoys the sense of belonging, but not always able to maintain group membership
No current gender, racial or language preference in group selection, but more easily accepted by girls	CBCL; TI, p.8, 9, 11, 12; PI-F, p.19, 21	Enjoys group membership and social categorisation without prejudice
Same-aged girls will actively seek his company	PI-F, p.19, 21; CBCL	More comfortable in a less threatening group environment
Not able to identify social triggers and will stay upset for a protracted period after outburst	PI-M, p.12, 13	Not able to understand trigger and make appropriate timeous social changes, but becoming more capable of moderating behaviour
<b>Regarding the coping strategies of the child</b>		
Strong verbal skills	CBCL; TI, p.10, 11, 12; CN	Able to discuss emotions but not able to identify social triggers
Current coping strategies are immature and impulsive – refuses to be held accountable	CBCL; PI-M, p.12, 18; TI, p.8, 9, 10; PI-F p.12, 17, 18; KFD; DAP; SB	Can understand social context, but not always able to respond appropriately – less impulsive and explosive on medication
<b>Significant findings within the family</b>		
Youngest son of three adopted children	BI-M; BI-F	Has a specific place in the family
Joined the family as an infant of 8 months	BI, AJ-M; AJ-F	Needed caring and protection; had many prior caregivers, but possibly no significant trust relationship
Good bonding with his family, especially with father and sister	PI-M, p.12, 18, 19; PI-F, p.18, 19; KFD; SB	Can provoke ambivalent feelings due to emotional and physical outbursts
Well-developed and verbalised ties with extended family	PRS-M; PRS-F	Wide support system and positive interactive experiences with large variety of people
Family adopted him in spite of apparent developmental challenges	AJ-F; AJ-M	Loved and accepted for who he is
Not interested in his TRA status and does not ask any questions	AJ-M; AJ-F; PI-M, p.10, 11	Has no apparent impact on his development
Parents aware of their perceived shortcomings, such as inadequate exposure to successful Black people and absence of traditionally Black cultural practices	PRS-M; PRS-F; PI-M, p.5, 22	Active understanding and management of possible shortcoming in child-rearing; has started mixing socially with more Black people in extramural activity (drumming)
Family does not practice specific ethnic and cultural traditions; they do things as “customary in their family”	CBCL; PRS; PI-F, p.5	Cultural practices not dictated by race, but by family traditions and religion
<b>Significant findings within the larger community</b>		
Residential area and school predominantly White	BI-M; BI-F	Limited exposure to wider demographics



FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
School: only Afrikaans as medium of instruction	BI-F; BI-M; TI, p.2	This limits learning a Black language and makes interaction with Black people who are not fluent in English or Afrikaans difficult
Active church life, but not racially mixed – also comfortable in White-only setting	PI-M: 4; PI-F: 14	Prefers familiar church and chooses not to join father when delivering guest sermons in Black community
No observed awareness of inequality or differing social awareness; does not enjoy mixing with only Black people	PI-F: 4; PI-M: 4	Social awareness hampered by developmental challenges
Mostly positive experiences regarding TRA and no experience of racial attacks	PI-M: 3; PRS-F	Family experience mostly positive

### 6.2.5. *The Teachers of Chad, Cassidy and Carlo*

The school the three children attend is an extension of the church. There are 100 primary-school children, with only seven of the learners being Black. The rest are White. Since the school is so small, all teachers are actively involved in educating the children. Three teachers most frequently involved with Chad, Cassidy and Carlo attended a single interview (FN; TI-p.1, 2, 3) and shared their teaching experiences of the three children<sup>62</sup>.

The oldest teacher taught all three children for a number of years and also interacts with them out of school, as she accompanies them on mountain bike trails (TI, p.11, 12). Additionally, the Dutch family and the teachers attend the same church services over weekends, and religious celebrations and social gatherings are jointly attended for the most part (TI, p.18, 19). While all three women display sound knowledge and a positive understanding of the children, their statements reveal that the oldest teacher, who recently left the school, continues to have a special and compassionate bond with Carlo (TI, p.8, 9, 10, 11, 18, 19; FN).

They agree that the school creates a safe space for all children in which to grow and nurture their own identities (TI, p.18). Christian principles and Biblical guidelines are used to teach and guide the children, and therefore inclusiveness, tolerance and acceptance are traits held in high regard (TI, p.16, 18, 19). In the teachers' view, TRA should not affect group membership or social status, since all children are equal as children of God<sup>63</sup> (TI, p.18).

<sup>62</sup> Although noted in the transcription of the interview, to promote simplicity and enhance reading flow, individual teachers are not indicated by name in the key referencing.

<sup>63</sup> “Jy is ‘n kind van die Here, en dis dit” (TI, p.18). (You are a child of God, and that’s that).

However, they watch out for microaggression and the unique, sometimes unexpected, perceptions and reactions of children (TI, p.15). They consider it their responsibility to establish relationships and create an environment where children are free to talk about emotional distress, upsetting school subject content or hostile social interactions occurring at school or within the larger community (TI, p.15, 16). The teachers concur that the visibility of TRA prevents the child from choosing not to disclose his or her adoptive status. However, since all the families know each other very well, the TRA status is not a secret that warrants attention in the school, but this may differ in a larger and more unfamiliar community (TI, p.15, 16, 18, 19). Their aim at all times is to increase the child's belief and validation<sup>64</sup> of himself or herself (TI, p.15, 16).

This school is a primary school, and I asked the teachers about their thoughts regarding the TRA children moving from such a safe and cossetted environment to high school. In their view, the church community and the families provide sufficient and ongoing stability to deal with challenges in a high school. Significantly, all these teachers attended primary school at this same school, and two of them attended the same public high school, albeit not at the same time (TI, p.17, 18). They found the adjustment to a large public school difficult but remained committed to their families and communities and were provided with sufficient constancy to manage the transition. They opine that the three TRA children would experience similar stability and will have formed appropriate coping strategies to negotiate the bigger secondary public school (TI, p.17, 18).

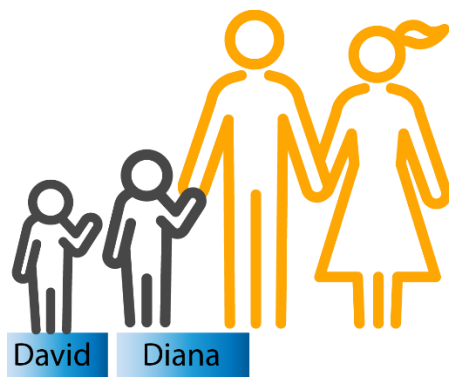
The school follows a mainstream South African school curriculum. The current social science teacher reportedly strives to make history, culture and geography relatable to the children. She brings artefacts to school and sometimes encourages the children to dress up in traditional clothing or stage a re-enactment of a historical incident. This is her way of positively introducing other cultures to the learners, and Chad, Carlo and Cassidy are enthusiastic contributors to and participants in these lessons. They have come to school on different occasions proudly wearing traditional Black costumes and, on another occasion, Dutch costumes (TI, p.5, 15).

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<sup>64</sup>“Dit is visueel, en ek dink die kind word daarmee gekonfronteer in sy daaglikse lewe elke dag en hulle het 'n proses wat hulle moet deurwerk wat ons nie verstaan altyd nie. Ons weet nie hoe hulle voel nie, ons weet nie waarmee hulle moet deal nie...dat jy nog steeds 'n omgewing skep waar die kind besef...jy weet hy is aangeneem, maar jy moet as onderwyser...een op een...met (sic) daardie kind kan sê, 'n verhouding te kan hê van...ek weet waar jy vandaan kom en ek weet dat dit misken soms vir jou moeilik is en dat jy met my daaroor kan praat...dat as daar situasies in die klas is wat jou ongemaklik laat voel...” (TI,p.15,16). “...Ek sien jou raak”. (TI, p.16). (It is visual, and I think that the child is confronted with it in his daily life, every day, and that they have a process that they must go through that we do not always understand. We do not know how they feel, we do not know what they have to deal with and that you must create an environment where the child realises...you know that he is adopted, but that, as a teacher...one on one, have a relationship where...(you say) I know where you come from and if it gets difficult for you sometimes, then you can come and speak to me...if there are situations in the class that make you feel uncomfortable...I see you).

It would seem that the teachers are very involved in their learners' lives and are aware of the possible social and emotional ramifications of TRA. They endeavour to be sensitive to possible situations that might arise from TRA but consider the school to be a safe place that mostly precludes the occurrence of such incidents. They do, however, acknowledge that it is not possible for them to anticipate the experiences of TRA children and that they must create a milieu where the children may share TRA issues (or any other issues) with them.

### 6.3. Family D: Diana and David



David and his older sister, Diana, share their home in a quiet, middle to high-class suburb of a big city with their adoptive parents, Dirk and Denise, the family domestic worker and two friendly dogs. Both parents describe the area as racially mixed, with a significant number of primary and secondary English and Afrikaans schools in the immediate area (BI-M; BI-F). There is a two-year age difference between brother and sister. Diana is nine years old, while David is a seven-year-old little boy. Although not biologically related, they are siblings by way of TRA, and are the only children of Dirk and Denise.

#### 6.3.1. *Diana and David's Adoptive Parents, Dirk and Denise*

Dirk and Denise, who are in their forties, grew up in Afrikaans-speaking Christian homes and have been together for 15 years. They both have tertiary educations and are employed in the performing arts field as producers. Although fluent in English and Afrikaans, neither of them speaks an African language (BI-M; BI-F).

They were not able to conceive a child. Denise states that she wanted to adopt two years before Dirk agreed, and “had to wait for him to have a change of heart” (AJ-M). Dirk states that divine intervention opened the possibility of adoption to him, and “it’s been the best thing that has happened to us as a family” (AJ-F).

Following the decision to adopt, the process went very quickly, and they were matched with a baby girl within two months (AJ-M; AJ-F). The parents had no prescriptions regarding the race or gender of the child but did not want an HIV+ child. They also asked for the baby to be as young as possible at time of placement<sup>65</sup> (AJ-M).

Shortly after the adoption of Diana, the parents applied for their second adoption. They were informed that there would be an obligatory waiting period of two years. In this application, they specifically asked for a TRA<sup>66</sup> (AJ-M; AJ-F: PI-M, p.1,2). Dirk admits to wanting a little boy the second time (AJ-F).

Dirk and Denise report that their extended families were more concerned about the interference in God's plan for them by actively seeking adoption in the light of their infertility than by the idea of TRA (PI-M, p.3: PRS-M; PRS-F). However, once they had accepted adoption as a possible solution, both families welcomed first Diana and then David as their own (PI-F: 3, 4, 5, 6, 15; PI-M: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

The adoption of the children has been a mostly positive experience within the community (PI-M, p.1, 21; PI-F, p.1, 2, 21). Dirk recalls two separate incidents, first with a White and then with a Black lady, who criticised them for adopting from different races. Although these incidents angered him at the time, he insists that the positive response and acceptance within the community are overwhelming (PI-F, p.2, 4).

Despite their positive experience, they are mindful of the possible prejudicial ramifications of TRA. Denise and Dirk actively seek out activities and places to attend, such as restaurants and play groups, where the children will not be in the racial minority. They also intentionally chose a demographically mixed, private Christian school to encourage acceptance and nurturing after concluding that a single-race school was not desirable (PI-M; p.8, 9; PI-F, p.8, 9). These considerations shaped their intentional accommodation of the TRA. Mostly, the children are raised as they would have raised their own biological children (PI-F, p.1, 4; PI-M, p.4). They limit the time that children spend away from home, allowing birthday party attendance and visits, but do not permit sleepovers (PI-M, p.14) – not because of their TRA status, but rather because of their youth.

While the children move in socially very diverse settings, from conservative Afrikaans people to the more ostentatious theatre actors and entertainers of all races, the parents also ensure contact with

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<sup>65</sup>“Because we didn't have any biological children, we had the option to adopt from the same race but chose to adopt transracially. We didn't choose this because we wanted to make a difference, but because we felt transracial adoption was a privilege and somehow our destiny as a family” (AJ-M).

<sup>66</sup>“In David's case, we specifically chose to adopt transracially. Again, not because we wanted to make a difference or give an unwanted child an opportunity, but because we wanted Diana to have a sibling” (AJ-M).

Black people within their immediate community. David and Diana visit their Black domestic worker's home (PI-M, p.17) and Dirk jokingly refers to the occasions he has had to sit in a Black hair salon as the only White male while his little girl's hair is being braided (PI-F, p.19). The parents also expect the children to be involved in the outreach programmes of the church, where they encounter children of different races and socio-economic standing (PI-M, p.19). At the same time, the only cultural environment they want their children to adhere to is that of being South African<sup>67</sup> (PI-M, p.21).

Dirk and Denise address any questions that the children might have regarding their adoptive status. They are comfortable doing so, but do not raise any possible issues and questions themselves. Both agree that Diana asks more questions than her younger brother regarding her family and history (PRS-M; PRS-F; AJ-M: AJ-F).

The couple have maintained contact with the social worker who placed the children with them and on occasion speak to prospective TRA parents concerning the process. Dirk states that he often forgets that the children are adopted, or that the family is visibly different (PI-F, p.1) but is reminded when Black adults initially address the children in a Black language, or White people are surprised at the Afrikaans fluency that the children exhibit. For him language is a more persuasive factor in determining the ease of acceptance than the colour of the child's skin (PI-F, p.4).

Both parents are very positive about their TRA journey. Dirk appears to be devoted to his family, using expressive words and gestures (FN; PI-F; AJ-F). He concludes the interaction with his standard response to people that commend him for TRA:

“This is not my social program – these are my children, so thank you for your thoughts on this, but you are wrong – this is my family. I'm doing these kids no favour and don't give them a better opportunity in life. I'm not helping them in life – I give these children myself every day, I'm their daddy...we are privileged to have children. Ons kinders het ons kom red van 'n kinderlose lewe (Our children saved us from a childless life). I am not saving them from anything” (PI-F, p.20).

### 6.3.2. *Diana and Her Story*

Diana was a full-term baby born in a state-run hospital in the city, where she was subsequently abandoned. Admission information proved insufficient to trace the biological mother, according to the police. The nursing sisters in the maternity ward took care of her until she was put in a place of safety

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<sup>67</sup>“Ons probeer ons kinders grootmaak met 'n baie sterk family (sic) identity en 'n baie sterk faith (sic) identity and to give them an international worldview...we want them to have a worldview” (PI-M, p.21). (We try to raise our children with a very strong family identity and a very strong faith identity).

pending further statutory investigations (PI-M: 1, 2, 12; PI-F: 12). Here the little girl spent most of her first four months of life with her place of safety mother, a middle-aged White woman, with whom she seemed to have forged a strong attachment.

Dirk and Denise were contacted to come and fetch their new baby (BI-M; PI-M: 12) only two months after they had been approved as prospective adoptive parents. According to Denise, Diana found the transition difficult and spent two weeks crying unconsolably (PI-M: 1, 12). Her adoptive parents state that while this was a time of celebration and “rejoicing” as a new family with family and friends, (PI-F:2; PRS-M; PRS-F), their young infant found the move traumatic (PI-M, p.1, 2, 12; PI-F: 2).

With concerns about possible rejection issues in the future (PI-M: 2; PI-F: 2), Dirk and Denise created an adoption journal and kept all the congratulatory cards, visitor logs and a gift register from family and friends. They thought this would allow Diana to have tangible evidence of how welcome she was in the family, in spite of the twofold loss of a mother figure in her four months of life<sup>68</sup> (PI-M: 2; PI-F, p.2). She now has free access to this journal and enjoys paging through it frequently (PI-F, p.2).

Diana seemed to settle down after her initial emotional distress. She achieved her milestones timeously and began to form a strong bond with her adoptive parents. At eight months, she once again experienced attachment anguish in the form of separation anxiety from her adoptive mother (PI-M: 12). The reasons were unclear, but separation anxiety between the ages of six to eight months is often seen as a normal social developmental milestone.<sup>69</sup> Denise reports trying to alleviate her baby’s distress by holding her for long periods of time and having frequent face-to-face interactions (PI-M: 12). The anxiety subsided after a number of weeks (PI-M: 12), and Diana went on to enjoy a happy toddlerhood (PI-M: 8, 9; PI-F: 8, 9). Her current psychometric assessment projects her as a happy and contented child, only slightly anxious when she is shy in a strange situation or struggling with an academic task (KFD; DAP).

From the onset Dirk and Denise decided to adopt another child of colour, to “share the experience...I wanted to give them a buffer and someone who can really, really relate to their

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<sup>68</sup> “I wanted to confirm their value and I wanted to give them something stronger as a source of love. Kan ek dit so stel? (Could I put it this way?) (PI-M, p.2) ...a record of celebration that we celebrate their birth, we celebrate... (PI-F, p.2) ...you are becoming part of our family” (PI-M, p.2).

<sup>69</sup> According to Compton, Villabo and Kristensen (2019), separation anxiety is normally seen from the age of 6 to 8 months, peaking at 15 to 18 months, and abating by 2 to 4 years. According to these authors, this is a defence mechanism to ensure infant safety by keeping him or her close to the primary caregiver.

experience” (PI-M: 1). Two-year old Diana did not seem to have any immediate untoward experiences when David joined the family as a three-month-old baby boy.

However, as she approached her fourth birthday and then her fifth year, she began to question her visible differences from her parents “Daddy, will I become the same colour as you? Why am I a different colour?” (PI-M, p.12, 13; PI-F, p.13). She also began to fabricate stories regarding her biological mother, sometimes imagining that they went places together and other times telling her teachers and classmates that she was an orphan, and that her biological mother was dead (PI-M: 13).

Simultaneously, the parents noticed that her group membership and social identification with the children in her nursery school, which had only Black children, became stronger. She was rebelling against her nuclear family by fabricating stories of her biological mother and withdrawing from her parents, dismissing their authority and presence. (PI-F, p.8). Denise ascribes this to the many Black friends that Diana had at school, and the visible and cultural differences between their family and the families of Diana’s friends. She wanted to be less visibly different from others (PI-M, p.8, 9).

The parents tried some attachment-enhancing techniques (PI-M, p.8; PI-F, p.9). They stopped all playdates to re-establish contact with the family, Denise took in less work to be more available to her children, and ultimately, they kept Diana home from nursery school for a month. They addressed her fears regarding her colour, they explained how different people (themselves) had once been strangers and now formed one family, just as Diana had been separate and was now part of their family (PI-F, p.9; PI-M, p.13). They explained her name change and how her name and surname irrevocably linked her to their family, and again shared her adoption journal (PI-F: 2). They tried to establish things that only their family does – “tangible goed (things) – this is unique to us, only us (sic) gets to do it, wat baie gehelp het (that helped a lot)” (PI-F: 13), such as a very specific procedural family hug (PI-M, p.13). Finally, they made a decision to change schools to a more racially mixed and Christian school, since the nursery school had only Black children. All these interventions appear to have worked well, since Denise now describes Diana as being very well bonded with the family<sup>70</sup> (PI-M, p.9; PRS). Her scene building and KFD show a child who perceives her family as a close unit, and that she is well-adjusted to family and home life (KFD; SB). Significantly, the psychologist noted that Diana’s family plays an important role in her self-identification, as she elaborated on her family drawing (KFD; CN).

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<sup>70</sup>“...en ons het verskriklik baie moeite gedoen, intensioneel om daai attachment met haar te consolidate en dit het ons parenting style verander, dit het ons hele gesin se outlook verander en wat nou so amazing is – sy is so settled” (PI-M, p.9). (And we went to a lot of trouble, intentionally, to consolidate that attachment, and it changed our parenting style, it changed the whole family’s outlook, and what is now so amazing – she is so settled.)

Although Diana and David were ultimately happily received into the circle of family and friends, the initial introduction of adoption as a possibility was not immediately acceptable to all family members. Their complete inclusion into the extended family occurred over time. The siblings of Dirk and Denise agreed with the grandparents; their main concern and objection being that adoption could be counteracting the plan of God rather than the transracial aspect (PI-F, p.3).

As a result of divorce and remarriage, there are three sets of grandparents, who are all involved with their TRA grandchildren to varying degrees (PI-M: 4; PI-F: 4). The grandparents are addressed using familial terms such as “Oupa” and “Ouma” and display the photographs of the children together with all their other grandchildren. Both Denise and Dirk report that all the grandparents and aunts and uncles appreciate the children’s manners and ways of social interaction and treat all their grandchildren similarly. Diana and David enjoy the company of their cousins and are well accepted within the circle of nieces and nephews (PI-F: 3, 4, 5, 6, 15; PI-M: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

The paternal grandparents live in a small village in a rural area that is culturally and traditionally very Afrikaans. Both Diana and David, who are fully bilingual in English and Afrikaans, have become firm favourites at the few shops, run mainly by old White farmers and their wives, as they converse confidently with both the Black and White patrons (PI-F: 3, 4).

The children do not, however, speak a Black language. Denise says that when Diana was brought home, they requested their domestic worker to speak to her in a Black language. The domestic worker refused, citing that Diana should speak the language of her parents and marry within her parental culture (PI-M: 4). The school that Diana attends offers a Black language as a school subject, and the children have a rudimentary understanding of the colloquial Black slang often used in day-to-day interactions and conversations with their friends (PI-M: 4, 17; PI-F: 4, 17).

Dirk observed that while Afrikaans as Diana’s home language has broken down perceived barriers within the White community, the converse seems true of the Black community (PI-F: 4). Her inability to speak a Black language creates a social distance between the parents and the adults accompanying other Black children during incidental interaction, such as in a restaurant<sup>71</sup>. When Diana does not understand a Black language, her acceptance by the adult Black community is diminished, although

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<sup>71</sup> “En die teoorgestelde is wanneer jy in Suid Afrika se melting pot of culture is – die Spur, en jou kinders speel met ander maatjies en gaan saam hulle na hulle ouers se tafel toe en die ouers praat met hulle in enige Afrika taal en jou kinders is responding dan sien jy die muur kom so bietjie op en ek het gesien dat taal is sterker as kleur...Ek het gesien dis ‘n confusion van why do you only speak to me in English?”(PI-F, p. 3, 4) (And the opposite is when you are in South Africa’s melting pot of culture – the Spur, and your children play with friends and go to their parents’ tables and the parents speak to them in any African language and your children respond, then you see a wall comes up and I saw that language is stronger than colour- I saw the confusion of why do you only speak to me in English?)



the language impediment does not appear to extend to her interaction with children of other races (PI-F: 4).

Diana and David seem to be very close, although she may at times feel that he receives more attention from the rest of the family than she does (DAP; KFD; CN; SB). Diana assumes an observable older sister role (FN; PI-M, p.11, 15) and likes to take care of David.<sup>72</sup> According to her parents, Diana's inherent social intelligence, popularity and independence allows David to meet other people with whom he would not normally interact (PI-M, p.9). They are very proud of her social and physical self-sufficiency and actively try and foster this trait (PI-M, p.15; KFD).

Diana is in the English Grade 3 class in a private, dual-medium Christian school (TI, p.6). Her class is racially and culturally mixed, with children from all over the world, including countries such as Russia, France and Korea (TI: p.2,3,5). Most of the 26 children have been together since Grade 1 and know each other very well (TI: p.6; PI-M: p.10). For this reason, the children are aware of Diana's family composition and no longer have any questions, although some infrequent comments have been made about her "real" parents (TI: -p. 3). On one occasion, when a young learner questioned how the "peach-coloured" man could be her father, Diana shouted back: "Because he chose me!" (PI-F, p.21)

Since there are only ten girls in the class, they tend to form a cohesive group that manages school tasks and activities and spends break times together. Diana is well accepted in this group, and also in her church group, and is often considered the leader of the group, in keeping with her self-allocated responsibility as older sister (PI-F: p.9, 11; PI-M: 9, 15; TI: p.2; PRS-M; PRS-F). She is socially astute and secure (TI: p.1; KFD; SB), compassionate, generous and caring (TI: p.1; DAP), assertive within the group (TI: 2; CBCL) and able to speak her mind. However, when she feels unable to manage a situation, both socially and academically, she will resort to social withdrawal and become self-conscious (DAP; KFD, CBCL), appeal to an adult for assistance or assume the role of the victim (TI: p.4: PI-M: 9; CBCL; DAP). Throughout her assessments, Diana projected a need for social approval and acceptance as well as a desire for closer interpersonal relationships (DAP; KFD; CN).

She much prefers the company of the girls and appears to be becoming conscious of her body and her general appearance, in keeping with her physical development (TI: p.5). She is able to interact with children of all ages with ease (PI-F: p.11) and is well liked by learners, teachers and other adults alike (PI-F: 11; CBCL).

The social presentation of Diana's identity differs significantly from her scholastic identity. She is shy and timid in academic situations and has just begun pharmaceutical treatment for poor

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<sup>72</sup>During the parental interview I observed Diana making David some food and gently teaching him the steps to fry an egg.

concentration. The medication has had a significant positive effect on her scholastic performance (TI: p.1, 2). Her lack of confidence in academic tasks is persistently reflected in her projective assessment, showing a longing to achieve better, be smarter, indicating her intellectual aspirations (DAP; KFD).

Until recently, Diana was afraid to attempt more challenging academic tasks and required much guidance (TI: p.1, 2; CBCL). Her teacher reports that she experiences profound feelings of shame when she makes a mistake or cannot answer a question (TI: p.1). She does not like to display her work and withdraws from the inherent competition that the classmates exhibit (TI: p.1, 2, 3). However, she does enjoy the creative subjects and is comfortable showing off her artistic skills. In this way, she resembles her adoptive dad, Dirk “carbon copies of each other, dreamers, very creative” (TI: p.1). In the creative subjects she displays a sense of confidence absent in the more academically challenging subjects (TI: p.2).

The family are very involved in church and outreach programmes. Diana has made firm friends at the church they attend, which coincidentally hosts several TRA families (PI-M, p.15; PI-F, p.15; PRS-M; PRS-F). The congregation is also very racially and culturally mixed, which is one of the reasons the parents chose the church.

During the outreach activities (PRS-M), Diana has noticed the economic differences between people and has made reference to not wanting to live in a “squatter camp” (PI-M, p.17) or “dirty house” (PI-F, p.17). Both her father and her teacher state that Diana, and most of her class and church mates, are much more sensitive to class and status than to colour (TI-p.5; PI-F, p.17; 19; PI-M, p.19). Succinctly stated by the teacher, “...they are all the same, get the same things, they wear the same clothes, no one points anything out...they all have the same social status” (TI-p. 5)

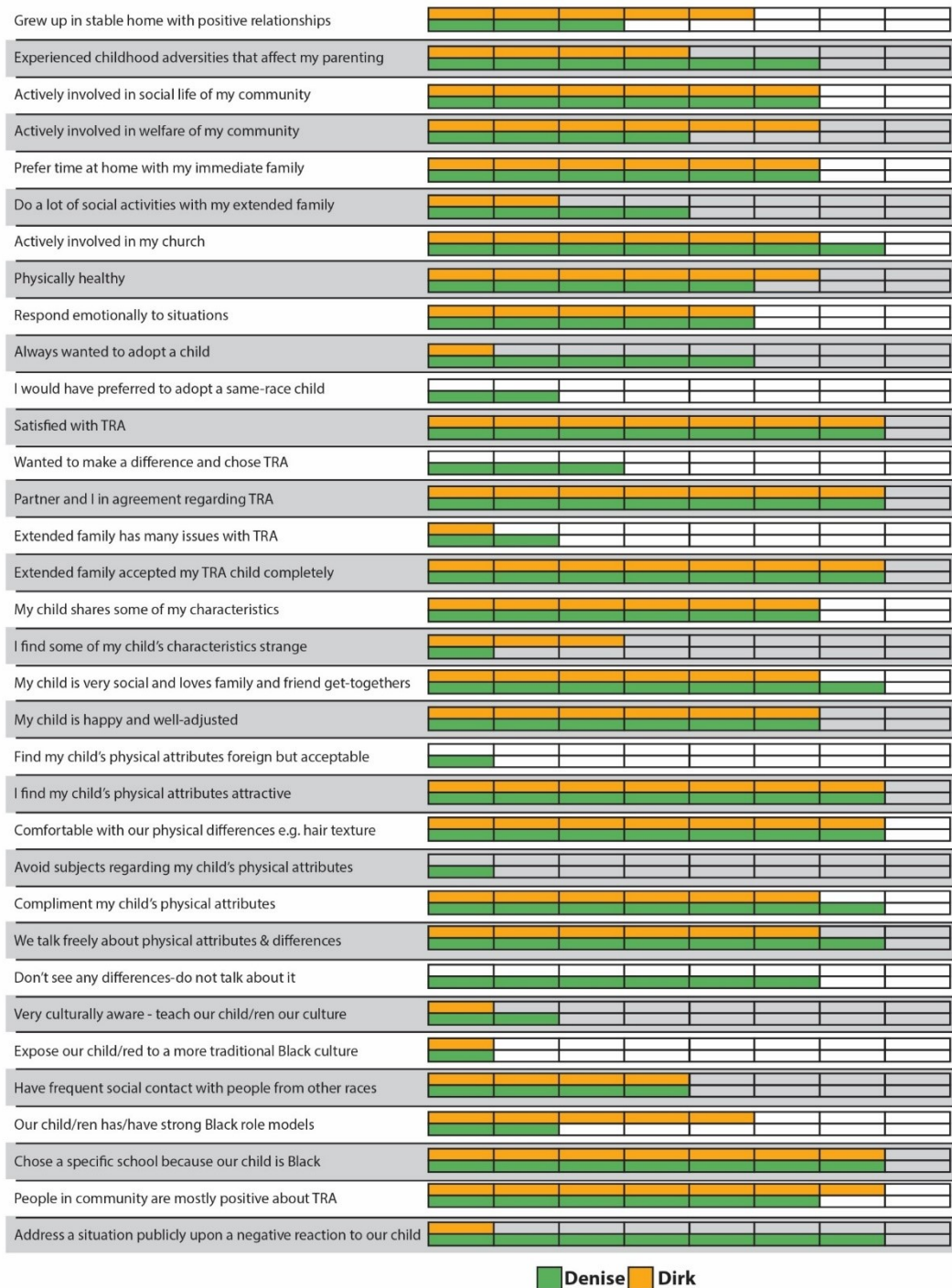
Table 6.7 depicts Diana’s favourable comparison with other children in the latent development phase of childhood while Figure 6.7 supports the information provided by her parents during their interview of their perceptions and experience of TRA. Diana’s KFD (Figure 6.8) confirms the ease and spontaneity of physical interaction observed during the initial interview.

**Table 6.7**

*Comparison with Expected Development of Middle/latent child – Diana*

Developmental area	Expected development				Comment
	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Unknown	
<b>Physical</b>		X			
<b>Cognitive</b>		X			History of attention deficiency
<b>Linguistic</b>			X		Strong verbal skills – can reason convincingly in social situations
<b>Emotional</b>		X			Mostly well developed, with previous attachment issues
<b>Ethical and Spiritual</b>			X		Enjoys an active religious affiliation with multiple outreach programmes
<b>Psychosocial</b>		X			Comfortable with children and adults alike

**Parental Response Scale**  
**Diana**



**Figure 6.7**  
*Parental Response Scale – Diana*

**Note.** This is a 7-point Likert scale (1-7) and the higher the value assigned by the parent, the more he or she agrees with the statement noted on the left of the graph.

**Note.** Denise wanted to adopt a TRA child from the outset. Following Diana’s adoption, they both chose a second TRA child (David) as a suitable sibling for her. Significant difference in parents regarding their reaction to a negative response to TRA, despite having similar view regarding the general positivity towards TRA within the community.

### 6.3.3. *Diana's Teacher (Grade 3:2019)*

Diana's teacher describes her school, and her Grade 3 class, as a "forgiving" setting (TI, p.8) where cultural differences and racial differences abound, making Diana's visible TRA status an insignificant fact<sup>73</sup>. The young, unmarried White teacher has been teaching Grade 3s for eight years (TI, p.3) and considers Grade 3 to be the year of identity establishment – "they realize who they are and are not afraid to say it" (TI, p.3).

While she describes the discernible differences between Diana's social and academic presentation of herself, she also acknowledges that Diana has gained a significant amount of self-confidence in the course of the year. She attributes this to normative development, the establishment of identity and the improvement in academic achievement that the medication has brought about (TI: 1, 2, 3, 6; CBCL).

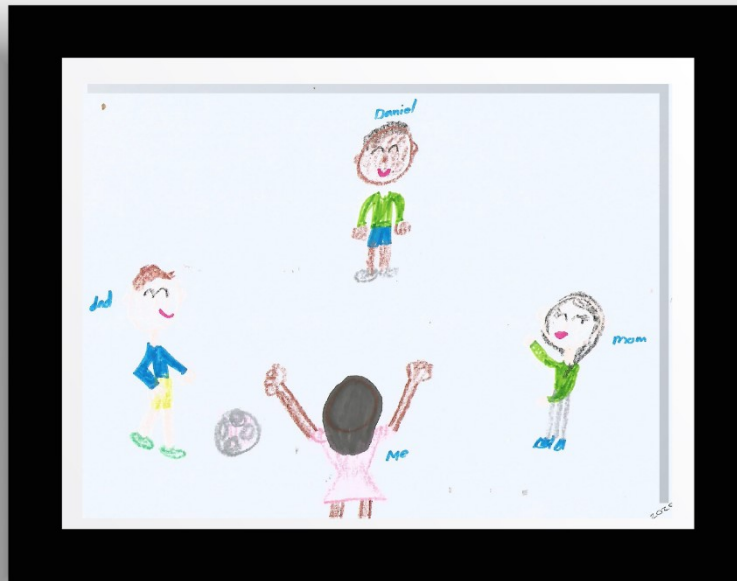
Diana's teacher does not consider her transracial or adoptive status as having any significant impact on Diana and her development. She describes the family as providing a safe environment in which to develop (TI, p.1) and does not see a need for specific coping skills to deal with TRA in the school environment (TI, p.4). Although she admits that Diana is aware of the differences within her family, its "just how the family rolls" (TI, p.4).

As confirmation, the teacher describes the "school storybook", a journal kept at school by the teachers, to note any emotional or social concerns throughout the time of the child's attendance at the school (TI, p.7). In the three years that Diana has been a pupil at the school, no notes have been made about distress pertinent to her adoptive or transracial status, and very few emotional reports have in fact been captured. The teacher insists that Diana is a well-adjusted nine-year-old, favourably comparable to all the other children in her class (TI: 7, 8), with no unique differences or requirements.

The teacher says she emphasises the concept of being "chosen" rather than just being born when topics that might evoke adoption sensitivity come up, and that she tries on an ongoing basis to instil a sense of being "good enough" in all the learners in her class (TI, p.4). Diana's teacher does not feel the need to change any of her teaching or disciplinary strategies owing to the presence of a TRA child in her class. She feels that the inherent cultural diversity and religious guidelines prescribed by the school create a safe and accepting environment for all the children, eliminating the need for specific interventions (TI, p.4, 6, 7).

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<sup>73</sup> "I think maybe the setting also allows itself to be more forgiving, if I can use that word, because of the wide, two culture, three cultures, three, four, five skin colours that we have as opposed to being a Black child adopted into a White family going to a school that (has) predominantly White children...in (the) class situation her skin is Black, but so is the friend next door, so there is acceptance in the class" (TI, p.8).



**Figure 6.8**

*Diana's KFD*

*Note. Playing soccer in the back garden*

**Table 6.8**

*Initial Coding Generated – Diana*

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
<b>Personal component/characteristic of identity</b>		
Spontaneous, outgoing, confident in familiar social situations Well-developed verbal skills Assertive and able to express herself	PI-M: 9, 15; PI-F: 9, 11; TI: 2, CBCL; PRS-M; PRS-F; DAP	Independent personality in social setting, but not in new or academic setting Good communication tools
High appreciation of responsibility and empathy	TI: 2; PRS-M; PRS-F, PI-M, p.9, 11, 15; PI-F, p.9, 11: DAP; CN	Aware of others and their needs and likes to assist and take action
First indication of racial awareness and visible difference from parents at age four	PI-M, p.12, 13; PI-F, p.12, 13	Discussed the difference and explained using terms such as vanilla, caramel and chocolate; actively try to celebrate differences
Strong leadership skills and socially assertive	PI-F, p.9, 11; PI-M, p.9, 15 TI: 2; PRS-M; PRS-F; CBCL	Enjoys the respect and following of her peer group across all ages

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Poor academic performance due to attention deficit resulting in low scholastic esteem	TI: 1-2; CBCL; DAP; KFD	Observable difference in social and scholastic self-esteem; now on treatment, with improved results
Two episodes of separation anxiety: as an infant and then as a four-five-year-old	PI-M, p.1, 2, 8, 9, 12	Both times parents dealt with it actively; no current emotional distress
<b>Social component/characteristics of identity</b>		
Comfortable as a dominant group member and actively seeks it	PI-M: 9, 15; PI-F:9, 11; TI: 2, CBCL; PRS-M; PRS-F	Strong social affinity and understanding of social requirements
Enjoys large gatherings of both family and other social interactions	TI1-2; PRS-M; PRS-FKFD; SB	Comfortable with different generations and races
Appropriate management strategies in dealing with a socially charged situation	TI: 1, 4; PI-M, p.9	Comfortable in social setting and able to adjust
Equally comfortable with children and adults in a group setting	TI, p.1, 2, 8PI-F, p.10, 13	Can understand the context and respond to social demands Fluid and adaptable social skills across age span-Confident in communicative ability
Does not speak a Black language	BI-F; BI-M	Creates social barrier between herself and the families of her Black friends
<b>Regarding the group membership/peer relationships of the child</b>		
Definite gender preference, but age and race are not significant	PI-M: 8, 9, 15; TI: 4; PI-F: 11; CBCL	Enjoys same gender group membership and social categorisation without prejudice
Easily gains group membership	PI-M: 8, 9, 15; TI:4; PI-F: 11; CBCL	Understands social rules of belonging Group membership seen as positive
As younger child, identified strongly with Black girls, now comfortable in racially mixed girl group	PI-M: 8, 9, 15; TI: 4; PI-F: 11; CBCL	Easy social interaction in group setting – chooses membership on ground of gender rather than race
Parents allow social activities such as birthday parties, but do not encourage protracted absence from home	PI-M, p.14, 15	Limited social contact with school friends after school
<b>Regarding the coping strategies of the child</b>		
Assertive in voicing own thoughts and challenging other's opinions, but enjoys social approval	PI-F, p. 9, 11; PI-M, p.9, 15 TI: 2; PRS-M; PRS-F; CBCL; DAP; KFD; SB	Confident in her verbal ability
Aware of her adoptive status and proud of her TRA family	TI, p.7, 8: PI-F, p.21; KFD; SB	Does not appear to have conflict currently regarding adoption – did experience conflict at earlier age
Will challenge group for leadership position	PI-F, p.9, 11; PI-M, p.9, 14, 15; TI: 2; PRS-M; PRS-F; CBCL	Confidence in her social identity
When she experiences feelings of inadequacy, she will present herself as the victim and show signs of anxiety	CBCL; DAP; KFD	May experience occasional feelings of vulnerability, with inadequate coping strategy
<b>Significant findings within the family</b>		

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Oldest and only daughter – one other sibling adopted two years later	BI-M; BI-F	Parents wanted another TRA child to offer sibling support
Inclusion in family very traumatic; appeared to suffer loss from place-of-safety mother	PI-M: 1, 2, 12; PI-F, p.2	Initial bonding problematic; no prior bonding
Joined the family as an infant of 4 months	BI, PI-M: 1, 2	Very small, needed caring and protection and a sense of trust
Currently, close relationship with brother and parents and other extended family	PI-M: 8, 9, 11, 15, 12; FN; DAP; KFD; SB	Good interfamily relationships – extensive support system
Family embraces the adoption journey and will answer questions raised in this regard. Have created an adoption journal with cards/memorabilia for her to keep and use as a reminder that she was and is welcome	PI-F: 2; PI-M: 2; PRS-F; PRS-M	Family makes adoptive status a familiar and understandable concept, with tangible and positive reminders; also creates a milieu favourable for asking and answering questions
Parents do not promote any race-based cultural activities in their house – want the children to identify only as South African	PI-M: 21; PRS-M; PRS-F	Neither parent culturally sensitive; both accept differences
<b>Significant findings within the larger community</b>		
Area and school are racially mixed	BI-M; BI-F; PI-F, p.13	Exposure to wider racial population
Active church life and involved in outreach programmes	PI-M: 15; PI-F: 15	Acceptance of spiritual guidance and aware of social responsibilities
Aware of financial inequalities determined by race – comments on squatter camps and “dirty houses” (shacks).	PI-F: 17; PI-M: 17	Alert to social differences, but not emotionally moved – aware of status differences
More aware of status than race	TI: p.5; PI-F, p.17, 19; PI-M, p.19	Group membership dictated by status rather than race
Mostly positive experiences regarding TRA for the whole family; only one negative experience	PI-F: 1, 2, 21; PI-M: 1, 2, 21; AJ-F	Family experience
Parents actively seek areas that are racially mixed to avoid the children feeling exposed	PI-M, p.8, 9, 17; PI-F, p.8, 9, 19	Promote physical proximity to ensure interaction with all racial groups

#### 6.3.4. *David's Story*

The seven-year-old, stocky little boy that meets me at the gate is garrulous and expressive. He gesticulates with enthusiasm and is proud to introduce me to his parents, sister and dogs (FN). His sister is in the English class, David is in the Afrikaans Grade 1 class in the same school his sister attends. As noted, both are fluent in English and Afrikaans (FN, BI-M; BI-F; PI-M, p.10). The reasons



for the choice of classes are logistical and financial,<sup>74</sup> but the family speak both languages interchangeably at home (BI-M; BI-F; FN).

David was adopted by Dirk and Denise as a three-month-old baby (AJ-M). Prior to handover and in the presence of the social worker, the adoptive parents met the very young biological mother. She was not in a position to provide for him socially or economically and did not have any relationship with the biological father (AJ-M; PI-M, p.13, 14). Denise felt at the time of the meeting that the young girl wanted absolution, that she wanted confirmation from the adoptive parents that she was doing the right thing and not being a bad mother. Denise describes it as a positive encounter (PI-M, p.14). The biological mother did not, however, exercise her right to request updates on her child, and there has never been any subsequent contact (PI-M, p.14).

Dirk and Denise state that the second adoption process was easier, both with their extended family and the bureaucracy (AJ-M; AJ-F). They had made the decision to adopt another transracial child as soon as Diana had been placed with them<sup>75</sup> but had to wait for the obligatory two-year period between adoptions (AJ-M; PI-M, p.1).

While David did not appear to have separation anxiety, both Dirk and Denise feel that he was an angry baby (PI-M, p.13; TI-F, p.13). The DAP confirms that he still experiences intermittent bouts of aggression, sometimes manifested as withdrawal and sometimes as rigid behaviour (DAP). They do not elaborate further than to say that they felt he was angry at being abandoned. However, he is described by the teacher and his parents and in the psychometric assessment as being very secure within the family (TI:1; AJ-M; TI-F, p.17; PRS-M; PRS-F; KFD; SB).

David has a strong and very positive relationship with his grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. He is well liked, and the extended family see each other fairly often, within geographical reason (TI-M, p.4; TI-F, p.4). As in the case of Diana, the fact that David speaks the family's home language makes communication easy and positive in their community, according to the parents<sup>76</sup> (PI-F, p.4).

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<sup>74</sup>Bursaries available for Afrikaans students as Afrikaans classes have not reached maximum capacity (TI, p.1).

<sup>75</sup> "Ek het geweet ons gaan nog 'n kind aanneem want ek wou spesifiek hê dat in hulle identiteit en in hulle aanneem – want jy weet nie hoe hulle later dit gaan proses nie – dat hulle ten minste nog iemand het wat daai spesifieke ondervinding met hulle deel" (TI-M, p.1) (I knew that we would adopt another child because I specifically wanted them to be able to share in their identity and adoption – you don't know how they are going to process it in later times – at least to have someone with that specific experience to share it with).

<sup>76</sup>"Taal is sterker as kleur of my kinders aanvaar word of nie aanvaar word nie. Ek het gesien dat racist mense (Wit) smelt as my (kind) mooi met hulle in Afrikaans hallo sê, hallo oom en dit wegsmelt. Ek het gesien dis 'n confusion (Swart mense) van why do you only speak to me in English?" (PI-F, p.4). (Language is stronger than colour when it comes to accepting or not accepting my children. I have seen racist people (White) melt when my child speaks to them in Afrikaans... hallo Uncle. I have seen the confusion (Black people) of why you only speak to me in English?)

Diana and David care deeply for each other (PI-M, p.11; KFD). Although they squabble at home, they enjoy each other's reciprocal caring and protection when in the community and school (PI-M, p.11; SB). I observed through a window during the parental interview that while Diana was making a snack for David, they were fully engaged in a light-hearted conversation (FN). The family refers to their differing skin colour as a "vanilla, caramel and chocolate family" (PI-M, p.14) and take trouble to explain why each colour is desirable, and why the differences are celebrated (PI-F, p.14).

David loves to dance and does ballet as an extramural activity (PI-F: 16; CBCL; TI, p.1, 2). Dirk notes that his pronounced affinity for a stereotypically girlish activity creates more social acceptance issues than does his transracial and/or adoption status<sup>77</sup> (PI-F: 16; CBCL). David's DAP is that of a very stereotypical showgirl. He describes her as a 16-year-old dancer. Additionally, his psychometric assessment projects feelings of being overly cautious in new social relationships, with associated feelings of helplessness and inadequacy, which are probably related to his outspoken affinity for the girlish activities (DAP; KFD). Once a relationship has been established and he has been accepted in the relationship, he is more confident and spontaneous within the relationship (KFD; DAP; PI-M: 9, 15; PI-F: 9, 11; TI: 2, CBCL; PRS-M; PRS-F).

In light of this, Denise agrees that there are many challenges ahead for David, whom she describes as a "sensitive, creative, brilliant dancing boy," more than a "Coloured boy in a White family" (PI-M, p.16). She comments that it might have been harder for him to grow up in the area where he was born, with his evident affinity to dancing and drama and creativity (PI-M, p.17).

David's teacher also makes numerous comments about his love for drama and dancing, describing him as a "flamboyant little boy" (TI, p.1) that will spontaneously dance in class or during breaks, much to the enjoyment of the girls in his class (TI, p.1, 2, 3, 4, 5). She adds that the Christian school nurtures a community of grace and love which makes his visible difference of being the only Black child in the class and his ostentatious behaviour more easily accepted, although there are boys that will comment on his behaviour. She has not noted any comments regarding his race (TI, p.2).

Dirk says that they are grateful to have David in their family, where his dancing ability is celebrated and encouraged, and where his creative advantage can be channelled to help him in the future (PI-F, p.17). According to him, David is a "very special boy. His love for theatre and performing

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<sup>77</sup>“Wat snaaks is, David ballet net – so hy het baie meer uitdagings vir sosiale aanvaarding deur die maatjies op skool oor sy ballet (as) oor sy kleur...ons moes actually met die onderwysers daaroor praat” (PI\_F, p.16). (What is peculiar is that David only does ballet – he has many more social challenges due to his ballet than about his colour – we actually had to see the teachers about it).

arts is significant, as we are a theatre family” (AJ-F). During the psychometric assessment, David’s desire to have a closer relationship with his father was apparent (KFD; DAP).

Both parents work in the entertainment industry and are not at all concerned or uncomfortable about David’s liking of glamour and dressing up, acting and dancing. They say that he is often in the backstage company of extravagant actors who wear costumes and makeup (PI-F, p.16).

Dirk states that he has had occasion to speak to adults and children about the stereotypical discriminations and microaggressions provoked by David’s ostentatious behaviour (PI-F, p.16; TI: p.2). He also adds that he and David have taken to wrestling to promote David’s muscularity and confirm his male sexuality, as well as limit the anxiety arising from the social comments (PI-F: 16; PI-M, p.16; DAP; KFD).

Denise regards the perseverance and determination exhibited in his dancing interest as strong character traits that will make for good coping strategies as he matures (PI-M, p.16, 17; PI-F, p.16, 17; DAP; KFD). She also points out that David seems very secure in the family unit, a point supported in his psychometric assessment (DAP; KFD; AJ-M; PRS-M: PRS-F). The teacher confirms the caring, interest and support of the family at school and after-school interactions (TI, p.1, 2, 4) that allow David to develop within his own identity. His DAP indicates that he is developing an appropriate emotional maturity, although exploration reluctance as noted in the Adoption Identity model (See Ch 2, section 2.6.) might be present.

David is teased and gets into arguments at school about his extramural activities (CBCL; PI-F, p.16; PI-M, p.16; TI, p.2, 4), and is also struggling academically. He is comfortable with languages and creative subjects but has needed remedial intervention with mathematics (CBCL; PI-M, p.10; TI, p.2). His psychometric assessment confirms the presence of scattered thoughts, and the psychologist notes that he might have a hastened work pace in a scholastic environment (CN; DAP; KFD). The failure to perform adequately may contribute to his low esteem and self-consciousness within an academic setting (DAP; KFD; CN).

This struggle is limited to his academic prowess and has not dampened his social spirit. Both his teacher and parents describe him as being extremely social and loving (PI-M, p.14, 15; PI-F, p.15; TI, p.1, 4; CBCL; KFD; SB). Denise says that he has a number of social skills that make life easier for him, such as being polite, socially appropriate and determined (PI-M, p.14, 16). His teacher comments on his easy-going, expressive behaviour of giving hugs and his general spontaneity (TI, p.1, 3). She also acknowledges that he is able to admit mistakes and accept the consequences of his actions (TI, p.3,4). Significantly, both his parents and teacher emphasise his comfort with himself and the manner in which he expresses himself (TI, p.4; PI-F, p.14; 15; PI-M, p.16).

He is often invited to birthday parties and included in Sunday school outings (PI-M, p.14, 15; PI-F, p.15). The parents acknowledge that Diana, with her popularity, creates a space for him to be social across the different ages (PI-F, p.11).

Although David appears to be more comfortable in the company of girls (TI, p.3), his close friend is a fellow classmate who is a year older than he is. The teacher describes the boy as an assertive, extrovert child who is protective of David and will defend his atypical choices, such as the dancing and ballet (TI, p.3). During class activities David is well accepted by boys and girls alike, although he will battle for the leadership position (TI, p.3), which sometimes results in quarrels. Out of school, David has a close relationship with a Black boy from church, slightly older, whom he refers to as his “brother” (PF-F, p.17). They speak English with each other.

The teacher also says that he has a tendency to instigate conflict amongst fellow learners and then withdraw from the argument. She is not sure of the reasoning behind this, but states it might be a normative developmental process, as she has other children that do the same, or to deflect attention from his differences or academic inadequacy. Sporadic outbursts of aggression alternating with periods of withdrawal in times of emotional discomfort are also noted in the psychometric assessment (TI, p.1, 3; DAP). She says that the deflection and testing of boundaries has more to do with his behavioural differences, academic struggles and social interests than his racial or adoptive status<sup>78</sup> (TI, p.4). The tendency to arouse discord amongst fellow students may also have some roots in the aggression and anxiety displayed in the psychometric assessment (DAP; KFD).

Table 6.9 depicts his favourable comparison with other children of his age while Figure 6.9 provides the parental response scales as assigned by David’s parents. It would appear that they are mainly in agreement with their perceptions and experiences of TRA. Much has been made of David’s perchance for ballet and his spontaneous and public expression of his love for dance and ballet. This is evident from his choice of first figure in the DAP (Figure 6.10).

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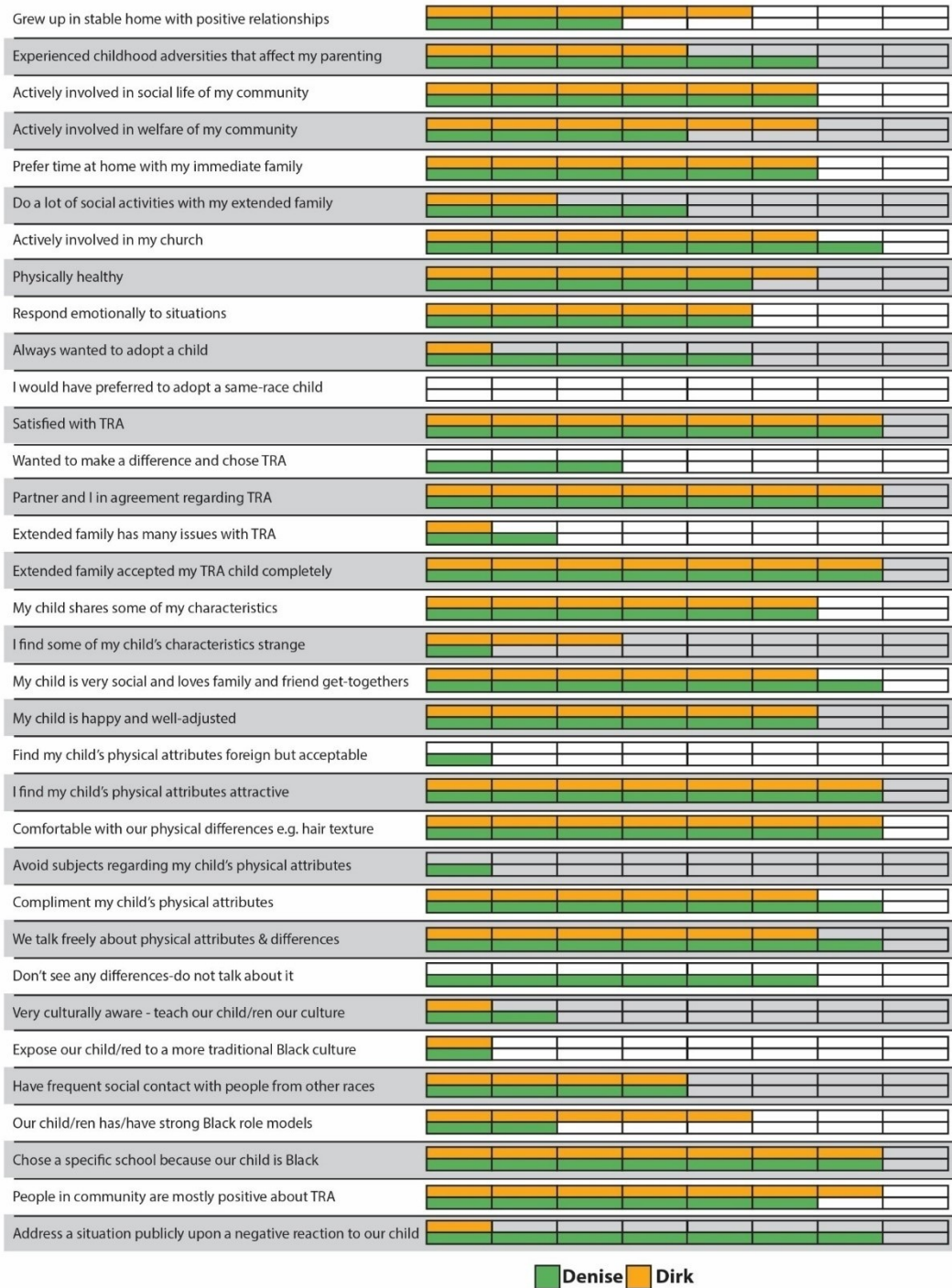
<sup>78</sup>“Hy sal – ek dink dit is ook maar ’n manier van cope om aandag van hom te deflect op iemand anders...ek kan nie vir jou sê dat dit die oorsaak is nie (TRA?). Hy is nie my enigste kind wat so is nie, jy kry ander kindertjies wat ook maar skoor soek”. (TI, p.4). (He will – I think it is a way of coping, to deflect the attention to someone else – I can't say that (TRA) is the reason. He is not my only child who is like that, there are other children that also look for trouble).

**Table 6.9**

*Comparison with Expected Development of Middle/latent child – David*

Developmental area	Expected development				Comment
	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Unknown	
Physical			X		Very well co-ordinated – exceptional dancer
Cognitive		X			Requires remedial mathematics intervention
Linguistic			X		Strong verbal skills – enjoys talking
Emotional			X		Emotionally expressive and able to deal with criticism
Ethical and Spiritual			X		Enjoys an active religious affiliation with multiple outreach programmes
Psychosocial			X		Comfortable with children and adults alike –follows older sister's lead

**Parental Response Scale**  
**David**



**Figure 6.9**

*Parental Response Scale – David*

**Note.** This is a 7-point Likert scale (1-7) and the higher the value assigned by the parent, the more he or she agrees with the statement noted on the left of the graph

**Note.** In this instance, the parents deliberately opted for a TRA child, since their older daughter was a TRA child, and they wanted a sibling who could relate to her experiences

### 6.3.5. *David's Teacher (Grade 1: 2019)*

David's teacher is a married, Afrikaans-speaking White woman with young primary school children of her own in the school. She has been teaching for more than a decade and enjoys the early grades the most. Her classroom, although colourful, is well ordered and very neat (FN), and she admits to being quite a strict Grade 1 teacher (TI: p.4).

She discusses David openly and appears to have good insight into the social interactions of her learners (FN). Like Diana's teacher, she describes the private school as a Christian-centred school with principles of love and grace guiding teaching, interaction and discipline (TI, p.2). She states that the school community is very family orientated and encourages family inclusion, confirming David's family as being very involved and approachable (TI, p.1, 2, 4). From her comments it would appear that the children's father is present at school more often, as the mother travels a lot for work (TI, p.1).

David's teacher is of the opinion that the school nurtures all children, and that the TRA children are shielded in their school because of the milieu of grace (TI, p.2, 6). At the same time, she notes that there are other unconventional family compositions, such as same-sex parents, present in the school, and that they are similarly sheltered. Isolated social issues surrounding the differing circumstances of the children are treated on an individual basis as the needs arise (TI, p.6). She reiterates that there are no issues at school regarding David's TRA status or that he is the only child of colour in his class, but that he encounters definite social problems with regard to his dancing and flamboyant, expressive style (TI, p.1, 2, 3, 4, 6).

The experienced teacher does not feel the need to change her approach to any subject owing to TRA. She denies that racial or adoption matters arises in class and feels the school's principle of love and grace, as well as the younger generation's acceptance of race, makes David's race and adoptive status a non-issue (TI, p.2). She adds that if a teacher has an open relationship with her class, she should be able to manage any such or similar situation occurring in her class as it happens and then in a contained, private environment (TI, p.6).

In summary, she finds that what sets David apart from his fellow classmates, if at all, is his ostentatious manner, and not his transracial or adoptive status (TI, p.6).



**Figure 6.10**

*David's DAP*

*Note.* A 16-year-old show dancer/ballet dancer

**Table 6.10**

*Initial Coding Generated -David*

*Note.* Using all sources of data

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
<b>Personal component/characteristic of identity</b>		
Talkative, outgoing, spontaneous, mostly confident in familiar social situations	FN, PI-M: p. 14, 15; PI-F, p.15; TI: 1, 4, CBCL; PRS-M; PRS-F; KFD; DAP	Comfortable in social setting
Some feelings of anxiety related to inadequacy—coping strategy of withdrawal or aggressive outbursts	DAP; KFD	Ineffective/immature coping strategies that may impact negatively on interpersonal relationships
Fiercely determined, goal orientated and comfortable with his dancing interest despite being teased	PI-M: p.16; TI: p.4; PI-F: p.14, 15; DAP	Does not feel the need to conform to group expectations or pressure
First indication of racial awareness and visible difference at between 4 and 5 years. Saw he had a lighter skin tone than his sister. No questions regarding the difference from his parents	PI-M: p.12, 13; PI-F: p.12, 13; PRS-M; PRS-F; KFD	Differences explained using terms such as vanilla, caramel and chocolate – active attempt to celebrate differences



FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Likes to dominate a group, but not always successful in achieving leadership position	TI: 3; CBCL	Not yet able to assert himself in a position of authority – unsure of social cues
Poor academic performance with remedial intervention for mathematics required; possible concentration problems	TI: 2; CBCL; PI-M: 10; KFD	Low self-esteem possibly related to poor academic performance as well as behavioural differences
Secure in relationships and enjoys physical contact such as hugging	AJ-F; AJ-M; PRS-F; PRS-M; TI, p.1, 2	Comfortable and trusting in family and extended relationships
<b>Social component/characteristics of identity</b>		
Enjoys large gatherings	TI 1-2; PI-M, p.14, 15; PI-F, p.15; PRS-M; PRS-F	Comfortable with different generations, genders and races
Sometimes instigates conflict in class group situations, but unable to deal effectively with the conflict	TI, p.1, 3, 4	Teacher feels it is a coping strategy to deflect attention from his behavioural differences and academic struggle
Does not speak a Black language, but speaks English and Afrikaans	BI-F; BI-M; PI-M, p.10; FN	Creates social barrier between himself and the families of his Black friends, but has easy and free-flowing conversations with other White people
<b>Regarding the group/peer membership of the child</b>		
Definite gender preference; age and race are not significant	PI-M: 8, 9, 15; TI: 4; PI-F: 11; CBCL	Enjoys the company of girls more but is comfortable with same-gender interaction in small groups. Flamboyant personality and more acceptable to girls
When in the company of boys, prefers older boys	TI: 3; PI-F, p. 17	Possible prejudice from peer boys due to social presentation
Equally comfortable with children and adults in a familiar group setting	TI, p.1, 2, 3, 4; PI-F, p.14,15; PI-F, p.14,15; DAP; KFD	Fluid social skills across age span – confident in communicative ability
Difficulty with entry into groups – more to do with his dancing exhibitions and ostentatious gestures than with TRA	TI, p.1, 2, 3; PI-F, p.16, 17; PI-M: 16	TRA not significant to group membership, but absence of stereotypical “boy” behaviour important
Parents allow social activities such as birthday parties, but do not encourage prolonged absence from home	PI-M, p.14, 15	Limited social contact with school friends after school
<b>Regarding the coping strategies of the child</b>		
Assertive in voicing own thoughts, choices and challenging others' opinions in familiar setting	FN; PI-F, p.16; PI-M, p.14, 16; TI: 2, 4; PRS-M; PRS-F; CBCL	Confident in verbal ability and able to express himself adequately
Aware of his adoptive status and secure in his TRA family – tangible mementos	TI: 1; AJ-M; TI-F, p.17; PRS-M; PRS-F	Does not appear to have conflict currently regarding adoption or TRA status
Will challenge group for leadership position, but not always successfully	TI, p.3; CBCL	Confident of social identity – not yet socially astute to read cues
Both teacher and parents indicate perseverance and determination as positive coping strategies	PI-M, p. 16; PI-F, p.16, 17; TI: 1, 3, 4	Goal directed and not susceptible to peer pressure or teasing
<b>Significant findings within the family</b>		
Youngest brother with one older TRA sister	BI-M; BI-F	Parents wanted two TRA children to serve as sibling support system

FINDING	SOURCE	CODING/SIGNIFICANCE
Inclusion in family was easy – family met his biological mother and there appeared to be no trauma	AJ-M; AJ-F	No prior bonding with him before placement, but no bonding issues detected
Joined the family as an infant of 3 months	BI, PI-M :1, 2; AJ-F; AJ-M	Very small, needed caring and protection – needed to establish sense of trust
Currently, close relationship with sister and parents	PI-M:8, 9, 11, 15, 12; PI-F, p.17; FN	Good interfamily relationships across generations
Well-developed ties with extended family; all grandchildren are treated in same manner with no preferential treatment of biological grandchildren	PI-M, p.3, 4, 5, 6, 7; PI-F:3, 4,5, 6, 15; PRS-M; PRS-F	Wide support system and positive interactive experiences with large variety of people
Family embraces the adoption journey and will answer questions raised regarding subject – have also created an adoption journal with cards and memorabilia for David to keep and use as a reminder that he was and is welcome	PI-F: 2; PI-M: 2; PRS-F; PRS-M; AJ-F; AJ-M	Family makes adoptive status a familiar and understandable concept with tangible and positive reminders – also a milieu to ask and answer questions
Parents do not promote any cultural activities in their house; want the children to identify only as South African	PI-M: 21; PRS-M; PRS-F	Neither parent culturally sensitive, but both accept differences
<b>Significant findings within the larger community</b>		
Area he lives in is racially mixed	BI-M; BI-F	Exposure to wider racial population
School he attends is racially mixed	PI-F: 13; BI-M; BI-F	Exposure to wider demographics
Active church life and involved in outreach programmes	PI-M: 15; PI-F: 15	Accept spiritual guidance and aware of social responsibilities
Does not make any comments on observed racial disparities	PI-F: 17; PI-M: 17	Only speaks of skin colour and race within his family circle
Mostly positive experiences regarding TRA for the whole family; few negative experiences	PI-F: 1, 2, 21; PI-M: 1,2, 21; AJ-F	Family experience
Parents actively seek areas that are racially mixed to avoid the children feeling exposed as TRA children	PI-M, p.8, 9, 17; PI-F, p.8, 9, 19	Promote physical proximity to ensure interaction with all racial groups

## 6.4. Conclusion of Chapter

The seven young children discussed in this, and the preceding chapter share an easily discernible commonality. They are all young, transracially adopted Black children of South African families who live their lives with the pervasive and visible public status of being a family by law and not by nature. Whether TRA plays a role in the development of their self-identity can best be determined by documenting incidences of consistent and distinctive findings (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

The findings from the semi-structured parental and teacher interviews, the parental response scale, the parental biographical and adoption journey questionnaire, the CBCL and the seven children's psychometric assessment formed the extensive body of data. The comprehensive narrative for each

child was intended to describe the experience of the TRA child as it is lived and construed within his or her family and community.

Utilising self-identity as it is defined in the current work,<sup>79</sup> provisional categories of

- stable personality characteristics,
- coping strategies,
- social relationships and
- group membership of the child provided the starting point for initial coding.

Recurring findings, together with the data from the parents and teachers, generated emerging subthemes which, when grouped together, produced several main themes addressing the research questions. The main and contributory subthemes are presented in the following chapter.

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<sup>79</sup> The self-identity reflects the stable and committed characteristic traits, values, goals and beliefs, social relationships, as well as the membership to groups that the child finds emotionally and socially satisfying. As awareness develops and relationships evolve, the self-identity may be sustained, developed, changed, or transformed to achieve future success.

## Chapter 7 Data Interpretation and Discussion

<b>BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONTENT-CHAPTER 7</b>	
<b>DATA INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION</b>	
Introduction	
Presentation of findings	
<b>THEMES IDENTIFIED PERTAINING TO THE TRA CHILD</b>	
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>
<b>Theme 1</b> Superior verbal skills	Subtheme 1.1 Verbal prowess <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Above-average academic performance in language</li> <li>• Bi-/multilingualism</li> <li>• Collaborative conversations with adults</li> <li>• Verbal fluidity and adaptability across generations and genders</li> <li>• Emotional expression</li> </ul> Subtheme 1.2 Language as a bridge or barrier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bridge</li> <li>• A barrier</li> </ul> Conclusion
<b>Theme 2</b> Adapted approach to group membership	Subtheme 2.1 Flexible inclusion and exclusion criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting aside traditional inclusion and exclusion criteria</li> <li>• Homogeneity</li> </ul> Subtheme 2.2 Group membership and a sense of belonging Conclusion
<b>Theme 3</b> The importance of place and belongings	Subtheme 3.1 Growing roots in my own place Subtheme 3.2 Feeling at home in my own space Conclusion
<b>Theme 4</b> Pursuing acceptance and the innate fear of rejection	Subtheme 4.1 Securing acceptance beyond the immediate family Subtheme 4.2 An innate fear of rejection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry vs inferiority – Am I good enough to keep?</li> <li>• Utilising my adoptive narrative</li> </ul> Subtheme 4.3 Loss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of a real family</li> <li>• Loss of adoptive status privacy</li> <li>• An absent theme: Loss of culture and ethnicity</li> </ul> Conclusion
<b>THEME IDENTIFIED PERTAINING TO THE ADOPTIVE PARENTS</b>	
<b>Theme 5</b> Intention	Subtheme 5.1 A cognitive approach to parenting Subtheme 5.2 Parental ideology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belief system</li> <li>• Altruism</li> </ul> Subtheme 5.3 Heightened racial and social awareness Conclusion
<b>TEACHING A TRA CHILD-TOLERANCE AND SENSITIVITY IN A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT</b>	
<b>CHAPTER CONCLUSION: INTERPRETING AND DESCRIBING THE WORLD OF THE TRA CHILD TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HIS SELF-IDENTITY</b>	

### 7.1. Introduction

*“Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them” (Lev S. Vygotsky: Speech and Thought)*

The six- to ten-year-old child is not a static entity, but a developing and complex being moving towards adolescence. This child’s construction and interpretation of the lived world is dynamic and fluid, subject to a burgeoning cognitive, social, cultural and racial awareness, acquired physical

strength and independence, all within an emotional environment where depth and variance supersede happy and sad (Skuse *et al.*, 2017; Voigt *et al.*, 2018). In this vibrant phase, the self-identity continues to mature in preparation for the challenges of adulthood (Erikson, 1968). Although this developmental stage is largely unobserved (hence the reference to a “latent” phase), early indications of the strengths and weaknesses of the self-identity begin to manifest and allude to the future well-being of the child and adult (Voigt *et al.*, 2018).

It is from this viewpoint that I discuss the findings of the current work, noting that the self-identity of the latent TRA child is not yet complete and further development and growth *will* occur. However, within the epigenetic principles and hierarchical systems inherent to the conceptual framework of this work, as well as the structure provided by the literature review, each developmental phase requires the underpinning of the preceding healthy self-identity to –

- negotiate the new conflicting forces of each phase and acquire new personal and social skills, values and beliefs, inherent to identity formation (See Ch 3, section 3.4.3.) (Erikson, 1963, 1968),
- accurately implement self- and other social categorisation for appropriate and identity-enhancing group membership (See Ch 3, section 3.5.1.) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1981), and
- to assimilate and accommodate social experiences to ensure discrete identity motivators and promote psychological coherence (See Ch 3, section 3.5.2.) (Breakwell, 1986).

In the context of TRA, the maturing self-identity of the latent child has a bidirectional relationship with the hierarchical understanding of race and adoption. If the TRA child experiences progressive and harmonious understanding of race (See Ch 2, section 2.4.2.) (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016), then the negative implications of being visibly distinct from his or her family and significant others are limited. Likewise, if the exploration of the child’s adoptive identity occurs within the presence of a healthy self-identity, the understanding and acceptance of race and adoption is likely to be more positive (See Ch 2, section 5.4.) (Grotevant *et al.*, 2017).

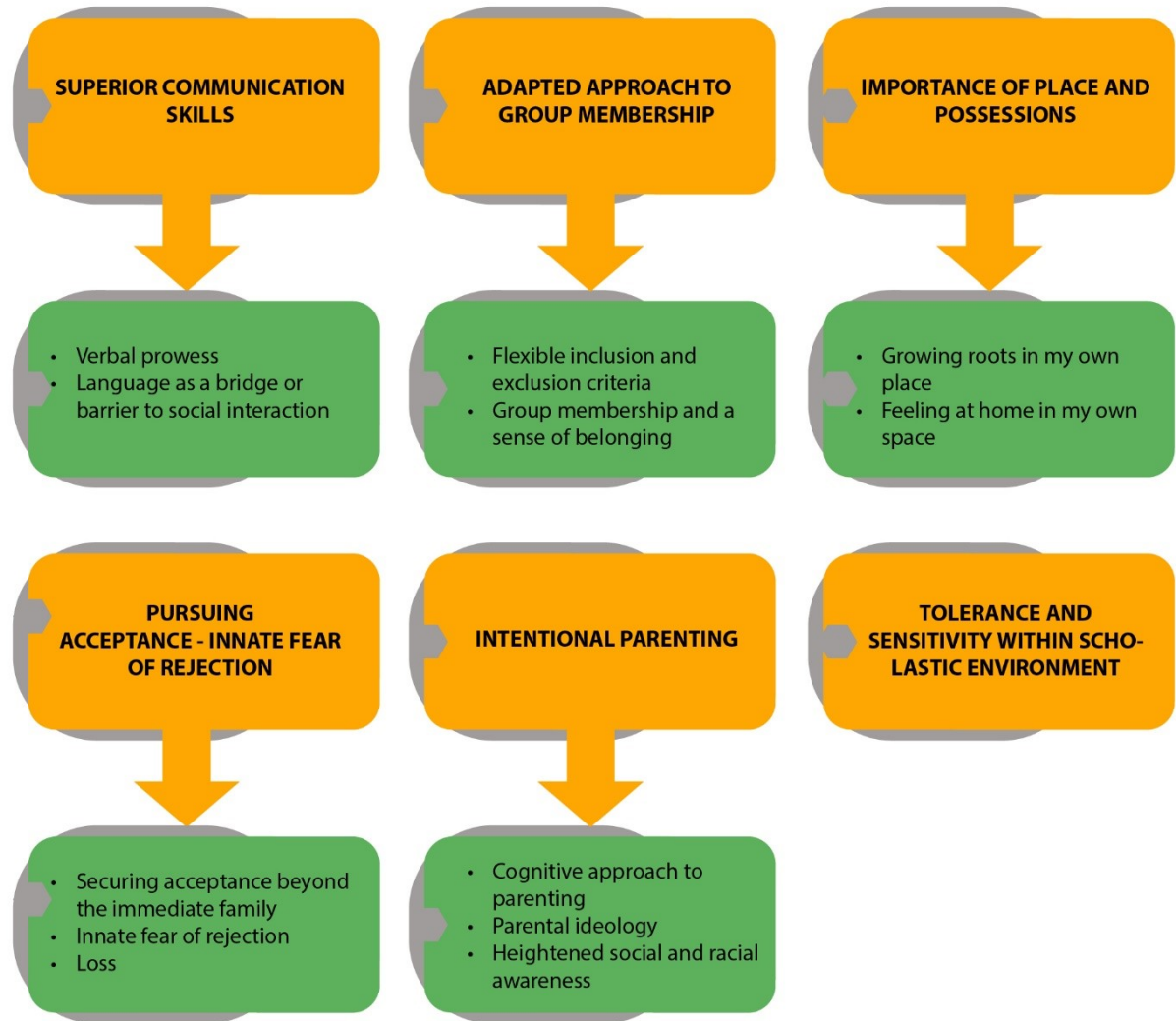
## 7.2. Presentation of Findings

During the generation of initial codes as proposed by Kiger and Varpio (2020), as well as and Clarke and Braun (2006, 2013), repeating patterns as well as possible interrelationships were noted and tabulated for each child and his or her family across the whole data set. Subthemes emerged after linking overlapping codes and discarding incidental findings (those not present in most families). Subthemes sharing a foundational or core category, such as language, were grouped together under a higher-level main theme/core category. The independent and significant findings of each subtheme are

discussed individually before being integrated within the main theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Levitt *et al.*, 2017). The themes are discussed in this chapter, with relevant and brief references to the conceptual framework and preceding literature described in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Figure 7.1 gives a schematic presentation of the themes and their subthemes for clarity, as they emerged from Thematic analysis, while Table 7.1 notes their frequency of occurrence within the participants.

Focused literature searches were undertaken to address any emergent shortfalls in the current literature study, and my findings are compared with published findings. Similarities and differences are noted and possible explanations for differences offered.

The seven case studies are not a statistical study, but a presentation of the self-identity of the TRA taking shape within the constructed and interpreted world of the TRA child and his or her family as it is lived (Gaus, 2017). Where it is plausible, a specific comment or example has been inserted for richer descriptions, but these examples are limited in the interest of brevity and are not a comprehensive reflection of all the similar findings in the analysis. Where the length of the appropriate comment may impair the flow of the narrative, it has been added as a footnote.



**Figure 7.1**  
*Main Themes and Associated Subthemes Noted in this Study*

**Table 7.1**

*Occurrence of Themes Per Individual Child and Family as Noted in Coding Process*

**Note.**<sub>XI</sub> indicates that the child is still predominantly nonselective, but showing gradual preference for same-age girls

THEMES	Atlegang	Brenda-marie	Chad	Cassidy	Carlo	Diana	David	Parents Atlegang	Parents Brenda-marie	Parents Chad, Cassidy And Carlo	Parents Diana And David
<b>Superior communication skills</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
• Verbal prowess	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
• Language as bridge or barrier	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
<b>Adapted approach to group membership</b>	X	X <sub>I</sub>	X	X	X	X	X				
• Flexible inclusion and exclusion	X	X	X	X		X	X				
• Group membership and a sense of belonging/primary motivator	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
<b>Perceived permanence through place and possessions</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
• Need for own place	X	X	X	X		X					
• Need for own space	X	X	X	X		X					
<b>Focussed pursuit of acceptance and fear of rejection</b>	X	X	X	X		X					
• Acceptance outside of family	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
• Innate fear of rejection	X	X	X	X		X	X				
• Universal experience of loss		X	X	X		X	X				
<b>Intentional parenting</b>								X	X	X	X
• Cognitive approach								X	X	X	X
• Ideological guidelines								X	X	X	X
• Heightened social and racial awareness								X	X	X	X
<b>Tolerance and sensitivity within scholastic environment-teachers</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				



### 7.3. Theme 1: Superior Communication Skills

Fox, Corretjer and Webb (2019) describe superior communication abilities, and language prowess in particular, as being associated with improved social, emotional and behaviour skills and therefore conducive to the formation of a healthy self-identity. Furthermore, Sun, Yussof, Mohamed, Rahim, Bull, Cheung and Cheong (2021) posit that language competence is a good predictor of emotional and social competence. These competences are exhibited by healthy peer relationships and successful group membership, emotional and psychological well-being and the establishment of appropriate coping strategies, all of which are indicators of a healthy self-identity (Oyserman *et al.*, 2009, 2017; Leary & Tangney, 2011; Brown, 2017; Corenblum, 2014; Waterman, 1988; Erikson, 1963, 1968; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1981; Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010, 2012).

The seven children (including Carlo, despite his reported ADHD and possible mild autism (PI-Carlo)), are described as expressive, talkative, good orators and able to communicate competently across genders and generations (Chapters 5 and 6). Their superior verbal skills are also evidenced by their bilingualism and, in some cases, multilingualism (Fox *et al.*, 2019; Peukert & Gogolin, 2017). Atlegang has a family nickname, “the president” (Atlegang-PI-F, p.7) because of his verbal negotiating abilities.

Children in the latent developmental stage (six to ten years) theoretically exhibit concrete operational thinking (Piaget, 1929; Corenblum, 2014). Despite a good vocabulary, they find it difficult to verbalise their emotions, concerns and questions adequately, as they are hindered by their concrete cognition, limited reasoning ability and inability to fully grasp abstract concepts (Voigt *et al.*, 2018; Carr in Skuse *et al.*, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2019; Finestone, 2014; Zembar and Blume, 2009). Unlike the expected language development of the latent middle childhood group, the TRA children in this study displayed none of the above limitations; all are considered to have very good communication skills, including verbal prowess and emotional expression. Figure 7.2 graphically displays the first theme and emergent subthemes., together with the relevant findings, discussed in detail in the following section.

Explaining my place and position within my family		
SUPERIOR COMMUNICATION SKILLS	Verbal prowess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• above average academic performance and assessment in languages,</li> <li>• bilingualism or multilingualism,</li> <li>• collaborative conversations with adults,</li> <li>• verbal competence across generations and genders,</li> <li>• ability to express their emotions and concerns appropriately.</li> </ul>
	Language as a bridge or barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bridge in social interaction</li> <li>• A barrier to social interaction</li> </ul>

**Figure 7.2**

*Theme 1: Children’s Superior Communication Skills with Subthemes, and Relevant Findings*

### 7.3.1. Sub-theme 1.1: Verbal Prowess

Brenda-marie was not yet four years old when she had to explain the visible difference between her and her father to a fellow pre-schooler, while Diana had to defend the White man who collected her from her Grade 1 class as her “real” father and assertively shouted “He’s my real dad, he chose me!” (Diana-PI-F: 21). Each one of the seven teachers interviewed during this research spontaneously noted the remarkable verbal ability that the seven children displayed, even in the presence of learning impediments such as attention deficits (Carlo, Diana, David), auditory processing deficits (Brenda-marie) and a developmental disorder (Carlo).

Their observable adoptive status may force TRA children, despite their pre-concrete and concrete cognitive age-related limitations, to expedite and exceed their expected linguistic skills and understanding of more abstract concepts such as adoption and race to better manage the TRA-related, invasive questions and microaggressions (Jackson, 2018; Piaget, 1929; Corenblum, 2014; Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019). Piaget (1929) already noted that constant dialogue and forced discussion between children often leads to escalated cognitive development. This may provide a further reason for these TRA-children’s superior verbal abilities.

These superior verbal skills, described in the subsections below, are indicated by: above-average academic performance and language proficiency assessments,

- bilingualism or multilingualism,
- collaborative conversations with adults,

- verbal competence across generations and genders, and
- the ability to express their emotions and concerns appropriately.

### 7.3.1.1. Above-Average Academic Performance in Language Related Tasks

The parents and teachers, as well as the clinical findings of the psychometric assessments, reported the presence of superior verbal skills exhibited by the seven TRA children. Chad is an entertaining speaker and loves writing stories “jy kan (dit) optel, hy is baie oulik met sy skryf” (Chad, TI, p.3) (You can see it, he is very good at writing stories). Brenda-marie is able to convey her thoughts and opinions with confidence and likes to add a dramatic flair to her stories (TI, p.5). The psychologist found David and Diana to be very well-spoken and able to voice their experiences and understandings freely and without any prompting (David-CN; Diana-CN).

Language abilities are formally assessed at school, and good academic results confirm the parental and possibly subjective observations of well-honed verbal skills. Although Atlegang, Brenda-marie, Carlo, Diana and David struggle with mathematics at school and receive some form of remedial mathematics intervention, all seven children perform very well in the language subjects. Kory-Westlund and Breazeal (2019) offer a possible explanation for this subject discrepancy. They found that two of the most significant factors contributing to escalated childhood language development are firstly, taxing interaction with peers and secondly, rapport with significant others.

Consistent and challenging verbal interaction with same-age children provide “opportunity for openness, exploration and discovery” (Kory-Westlund & Breazeal, 2019; p.81). This correlates with the findings of Soares *et al.* (2017, 2019) that TRA children who feel socially obligated to disclose their adoptive status and are able to accurately describe their adoptive family composition are often more emotionally stable and inclined to explore their adoptive identity (See Ch 2, section 2.5.3.).

For Grotevant *et al.* (2017) establishing an integrated and healthy adoptive identity requires the child to seek and discover all relevant information, explore all significant aspects of his or her life and then create an adoptive narrative that holds meaning for him or her. The assigned meaning allows for the successful assimilation of his or her adoptive status into the developing self-identity. Language superiority aids the vital dimensions of exploration and discovery in this process (Kory-Westlund & Breazeal, 2019; Soares *et al.*, 2019), as the TRA children are able –

- to seek accurate information by asking pertinent and focused questions,
- express their concerns and emotions accurately, which enhances comprehension,
- examine the concrete and abstract information reasonably, and then,

- by using their superior language skills, create an adoptive narrative that they can understand, accept and integrate into their self-identity.

With the exception of Cassidy, who was reportedly reluctant to participate in discussions regarding her adoptive status or the unique composition of her family, the TRA children were described as comfortable discussing their families and their adoptive status (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). Notably, Cassidy was the only child that had been deliberately and aggressively accosted about being Black and “dirty” (PI-M: 7; TI, p.5, 6, 7), an incident that she experienced as profoundly traumatic. She was, however, inclined to ask a lot of questions pertaining to the significant adults in her adoption history, thereby continuing the exploration of her adoption.

Secondly, established rapport with significant others leads to finely-honed linguistic skills that promote accurate emotional expression, heightened acceptance by others and emulation, where the child will mimic the language of those with whom he or she has the greatest rapport (Kory-Westlund & Breazeal, 2019). It was evident from the parental and teacher interviews, as well as the PRS and children’s psychometric assessments, that all seven children had established a strong sense of rapport with the significant adults in their lives. Carlo, who may have a mild form of autism, also established rapport and formed a respectful and loyal bond with chosen people in his life (TI, p.10).

TRA children have reason to question their place in and acceptance by their adoptive families and the loss of their rightful place in their biological family (See Ch 2, section 2.5.3.) (Gupta & Featherstone, 2020; Harlow, 2019; Soares *et al.*, 2017; Brodzinsky, 2011; Hall & Steinberg, 2013; Smit, 2002). These concerns of physical and psychological place and acceptance are usually irrelevant to children growing up within their biological families. Kory-Westlund and Breazeal (2019) propose that well-developed verbal skills allow for accurate emotional reporting, increased acceptance by others and emulation. It is thus possible that for these children, verbal prowess is a social intervention (accurate emotional reporting) which ensures that people respond to their emotional and social needs, accept them and thus increase their sense of belonging (increased acceptance by others) and confirm their right to belong: “I sound like you, therefore I am part of you” (mimicry).

### **7.3.1.2. Bilingualism or Multilingualism**

Atlegang, Brenda-marie, Diana and David are all fully bilingual, speaking English and Afrikaans fluently. Chad, Cassidy and Carlo are fluent in English, Afrikaans and Dutch. Atlegang, Chad, Cassidy and Carlo are in single-medium Afrikaans schools, while Brenda-marie, David and Diana attend dual-medium schools. Their language prowess is evidenced by the facility with which they conduct conversations in both English and Afrikaans, as was attested to by the parents and teachers, with Chad, Cassidy and Carlo also speaking Dutch at home.

Sun *et al.* (2021) and Fox *et al.* (2019) conducted and reviewed international studies on bilingualism. Firstly, they found that a thorough grasp of a second and third language promotes social and behavioural skills. Secondly, understanding the subtle and crucial messages often conveyed in language and responding accurately and appropriately increases the connectedness with family and friends, since linguistic nuances are not lost in translation. Finally, there is a positive relationship with peers and increased group membership through a mutual language.

Peukert and Gogolin (2017), referring to bilingual and multilingual “home literacy” (p. 51), state that children who frequently engage in play and verbal interaction with their primary caregivers at home are more inclined to achieve bilingualism and multilingualism. The parents of the children often teach them linguistic skills intentionally through focused activities such as rhyming games and story reading (Peukert & Gogolin, 2017). Corina, the Dutch mother, reportedly takes her three children to the library weekly to choose books in the language of their choice. They then have family reading time together to promote their language skills. This is an example of an intentional intervention (PI-M, p.14).

It is thus possible that while multiple language skills enhance social interaction, the ability to speak more than one language is also, in turn, evidence of frequent and positive interaction with primary caregivers. The likelihood is that TRA children enjoy sustained and focused oral activities with the parents that provide them with communication skills to assist them in negotiating the social challenges of a visible adoptive status while simultaneously increasing rapport, which further enhances language skills (Kory-Westlund & Breazeal, 2019).

When children are fluent in the languages prevalent on the playground or social setting, their connectedness is accelerated and easier, since there is a mutual and intuitive understanding (Sun *et al.*, 2021). It would appear that by being fluent in more than one language, the TRA children have gained access to a wider group membership, again increasing their chances of acceptance and belonging. However, the inability of the participating children to speak a Black language does have inhibitive social repercussions, discussed at length in this chapter, section 7.3.2.2.

### **7.3.1.3. Collaborative Conversations with Adults**

When young children have well-developed or superior verbal skills, their verbal interaction with adults becomes more complex, intentional and reciprocal (Sun *et al.*, 2021; Piaget, 1929). They are able to make focused inquiries, question specific aspects and enter into meaningful discussions. Their goal is to bridge their knowledge gap by entering into a collaborative conversation with the significant adults in their lives (Sun *et al.*, 2021).

According to the parental interviews and PRS, the eight parents participating in the current research were equable about discussing all aspects of TRA and other sensitive matters with their children.

Atlegang and Brenda-marie were described by their teachers as being well versed in adult topics, such as religion and race (Atlegang, TI, p.7, 8; Brenda-marie, TI, p.7). Brenda-marie's parents routinely engaged in conversations with her that promoted her understanding of social classes and cultural differences to provide her with a "worldview": "die wêreld is groter as jou huis en jou land" (Brenda-marie, PI-F, p.15, 16) (the world is bigger than your house and your country). Cassidy and Chad were very specific in their enquiries regarding their background and ethnicity (PI-M, p.12, 15, 16, 17). When five-year-old Diana was not yet able to write her own name, she had memorable and meaningful discussions about the colour discrepancies between her and her parents and the implications thereof. She also wanted assurance that there would be substitute parents in the case of Dirk and Denise's death, a discussion the family dealt with on an abstract, practical and spiritual level (PI-F, p.7; PI-M, p.7, 8). David was capable, at seven years of age, to accurately voice his objections to the verbal microaggressions by the other schoolboys which he experienced because of his love for ballet and his flamboyant presentation (TI, p.1; PI-M, p.16, 17).

Morgan and Langrehr (2019) and Anderson *et al.* (2015) applaud the frank discussion of emotive and challenging subjects of race and adoption within a TRA family setting (see Ch 2, section 2.4.7.). These discussions have a three-fold advantage. Firstly, the intra-familial dialogues lead to enhanced family cohesion and an ensuing sense of belonging, which create a positive self-awareness. Secondly, regular conversations about race and adoption promote the establishment of appropriate defences against discrimination and decrease adoption stigma within a non-threatening environment (Chang, *et al.*, 2017; Anderson *et al.*, 2015). Finally, Sun *et al.* (2021) posits that collaborative conversation with significant adults also brings about augmented problem-solving skills and leads to knowledge-building processes in the young child. These skills allow for the successful management of challenging personal and social situations such as being visibly different from your family.

#### **7.3.1.4. Verbal Competence Across Genders and Generations**

The seven TRA children's ability to engage in conversation across social demarcations of age and gender has been addressed in the preceding subsections. They undertake collaborative conversations with adults (Sun *et al.*, 2021) and their ability to speak more than one language and their non-selective inclusion criteria allow them access to a wider group membership (Fox *et al.*, 2019; Peukert & Gogolin, 2017).

There is an added benefit to healthy self-identity development due to successful verbal interaction across genders and age. The psychosocial development challenge of the middle child is industry versus

inferiority to acquire co-operative skills and achieve the virtue of competence (Erikson, 1963, 1968). Children in this phase effectively need to feel in control of the demands they face, whether these are scholastic, emotional or social, to avoid feelings of inferiority, which are detrimental to healthy self-identity development. Children with advanced verbal skills are able to better comprehend the task at hand but are also able to deal directly with the child or adult setting the challenge. In so doing, they increase their individual performance and enhance their feelings of independence, both of which are beneficial to self-identity (Forrester & Albrecht, 2017).

Brenda-marie, while reportedly garrulous on the school grounds, was reticent in class and hesitant to ask questions (TI, p.1, 2, 4). Diana gained academic confidence since starting medication for ADHD and asked questions as the need arose (TI, p.1,2). The other five children asked questions and guidance as required, with Carlo doing this intermittently and with teachers and adults he trusted (Carlo, TI, p.8, 9, 10, 18, 19; FN).

Thus, a TRA child confronted with a sensitive topic such as race and poverty may address his or her concerns directly and independently with the teacher to gain clarity, rather than seeking clarification from a parent after the fact and out of context. Likewise, a disagreement on the playground with a classmate of the opposite sex may be resolved quickly without adult intervention, since the TRA child is linguistically fluent and practised in talking to the opposite gender through inclusive group membership. Through the ability to address different generations and genders appropriately, a sense of accomplishment is achieved, thereby aiding the acquisition of competence as a skill and promoting healthy self-identity development (Forrester & Albrecht, 2017; Erikson, 1963, 1968).

#### **7.3.1.5. Ability to Express Emotions and Concerns Appropriately**

Much of how the TRA child presents himself or herself has to do with verbally explaining and understanding his or her position in and right to belong in the family and community. Forrester and Albrecht (2017, p.212) state that children who are linguistically proficient make use of three levels of language development to communicate. Firstly, receptive language enables them to understand the content of what is being said, even when they do not use the words themselves. Secondly, expressive language allows the children to call on a wide array of emotions to accurately reflect what they think and feel. Finally, they use pragmatic language and know what and when to say something appropriately to achieve the desired outcome.

Chad was only six when he was formally adopted (Chad-PI-M, p.15). While he joined in the festivities of the celebratory day, he had a poignant conversation with his adoptive mother later in evening, the content of which exceeded his expected cognitive and verbal understanding of the adoptive process. Although he had a good grasp of the adoption procedure and legal and social

ramifications (receptive language) and understood the joy experienced by his significant others, he expressed his emotional ambivalence. He was happy to be legally included in his family but was distressed at severing the ties with his biological family (expressive language). At six years old, he managed to convey these thoughts and feelings to his adoptive mother at an appropriate time and in an appropriate manner, so that she could understand and address his fears and sadness accordingly (pragmatic language).

There is a mutually beneficial relationship between verbal prowess and a healthy self-identity, as discussed in the preceding sections. Social and personal identity-forming factors that contribute to superior verbal skills and the reciprocal and cyclic effects of such verbal skills on positive social interaction and the achievement of personal virtues for self-identity well-being are evident.

### 7.3.2. *Subtheme 1.2: Language as a Bridge or a Barrier in Social Interaction*

*“Every social interaction is mediated by language- whether spoken or written, verbal or non-verbal” (Ahearn, 2016, p.3).*

#### 7.3.2.1. **Language as a Bridge in Social Interaction**

Language is a cultural tool used by people during the course of their daily lives. According to Ahearn (2016, p.32), “language, culture and social relations are so closely intertwined” that they should always be addressed together. Similarly, Klu (2017), Forrester and Albrecht (2017), Issac-Martins (2015) and Moran and Aerila (2019) state that spoken language contains a shared understanding of a common culture. Although it carries information and process explanation, language also allows immediate affective access, memories and an understanding of the broader social context, history and culture embedded in the words.

Dirk, father of Diana and David, spoke about language during his interview. He described how the older White generation, having lived in apartheid, “melt” (PI-F, p.3, 4) when a little Black child converses with them in fluent Afrikaans. He also acknowledged the reverse, describing the immediate social withdrawal when Black adults realised that the little Black child in front of them did not understand the language that, *judging by the colour of her skin*, she should be able to speak. He considered language more powerful than race<sup>80</sup>. The parents and teachers of Atlegang and Brenda-

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<sup>80</sup>“So, die blanke shop owner sien hierdie swart kind, dan stop sy en kyk en se *Hallo Oom*, en dan sal hy melt (sic)-*My kind, wie is jy? Waar is jou ma en pa?* Complete change-...En dan, ...Jou kinders speel met ander maatjies en gaan saam met hulle na hulle ouers se tafel toe en die ouers praat met hulle in enige Afrikaatal en jou kind respond (sic) in Afrikaans,



marie concurred, remarking on the instantaneous social accessibility and acceptance achieved with White adults and children when the TRA children were articulate in English and Afrikaans: “Ouer mense hou ook van hom... hy vang hulle so half onkant met dié wat hy so lekker kan gesels in Afrikaans... dis definitief dit wat vir hom gaan help in die lewe” (Atlegang-PI-F, p.10) (Older people also like him- he catches them unawares with how well he speaks Afrikaans...it is definitely the thing that will help him in life). Chad, Cassidy and Carlo's fluency in Dutch allowed them immediate social and emotional access to their extended family from Holland (see Chapter 6).

Ahearn (2016, p.236) notes, with reference to race and ethnicity, that “language is central to the way in which these forms of social differentiation are conceptualized and actually experienced”. Thus, when the language is shared and acknowledged as one's own, race and ethnicity become less important (Ahearn, 2016; Forrester & Albrecht, 2017). The way in which the language is spoken brings about a sense of “us and them” that surpasses racial and ethnic differentiation. Language spoken in a manner and accent similar to one's own also instinctively evokes a higher level of tolerance of the speaker (Webb, 2002). These findings, reported by the parents and teachers, may account for the immediate accessibility the TRA children experienced in social groups that differed from them racially and ethnically. In summary, “if you sound like me, you must be like me, and you can be with me”.

### 7.3.2.2. Language as a Barrier in Social Interaction

On 16 June 1976, South African Black and Coloured learners took to the streets in protest against Afrikaans as their medium of instruction. The violent protest has been marked as one of the most significant socio-linguistic and political events in South African history and is commemorated on Youth Day each year (Dalmage, 2018; Seedat, 2015; Rudolph, Sriprakash & Gerrard, 2018; Webb, 2002). This uprising, together with the fact that there are now 11 official languages, reflects the significance of language and its implied culture for South Africans (Klu, 2017; Merrett, Gilder & Netshitenzhe, 2019).

If a TRA child is bilingual and speaks Afrikaans and English, but not a Black language, there are a number of barriers that might prevent inclusion in social groups that attract mainly Black membership:

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dan sien jy die muur kom so bietjie op en ek het gesien dat taal is sterker as kleur” (Dirk-Diana and David's father PI-F, p.3,4).

(The White owner sees this Black child and she stops and says *Hallo Uncle*, and he melts – my *child, who are you, where is your mom and dad?* Complete change- And then...your children are playing with other friends and go to their parents' table and the parents speak to them in a Black language and your child responds in Afrikaans, then you see the wall come up a bit and I saw that language is stronger than colour).

- Afrikaans is considered by many Black people in South Africa as “the White man’s language” (Webb, 2002, p.30). For Black people, it is a symbol of oppression and may trigger intolerance and conflict. English is often equated with power and success, but also deemed the language of colonialists who thwarted Black progress (Webb, 2002). Thus, Black people who are racially aware may find an inability to speak a Black language offensive and racially exclusive, prompting withdrawal and anger (See Ch 2, section 2.3.4.).
- Nesdale *et al.* (2005, 2007, 2014) posit that children's group membership may be as incidental and temporary as attending the same birthday party – a brief, shared social categorisation. As children get older, their inclusion criteria become more stringent. Very young children (up to four years old) engaged in parallel and associative play do not require language skills to play together. However, the more complex activities of co-operative and competitive play, characteristic of older children, require elements of verbal interactions and instruction sharing (Piaget, 1929; Kaplan *et al.*, 1994). Somogyi, Tran, Guellai, Kiraly and Esseily (2020) found that children of five years and older used language for knowledge sharing and as a cue to group affiliation, as well as a means to guide prosocial behaviour during play and social interaction. While none of the seven TRA children in this research study exhibited rigorous group inclusion and exclusion criteria, including language, it must be remembered that they were in schools where English and/or Afrikaans was the academic and social language. Chad, Cassidy and Carlo declined to attend the groups at their father’s church, where the language is North Sotho. Their father thought their reluctance to attend the groups was attributable to the language barrier, where they were excluded because they did not understand the language. “Hulle verstaan nie die taal nie. Wie wil saam met Pappa gaan? Nee, ek wil met my maatjies speel hier by ons kerk” (PI-F: 4; PI-M, p.4,5) (They do not understand the language. Who wants to go with Dad? No, I want to stay here and play with my friends at our church).
- While there has been a perceptual shift towards increased TRA acceptance in Black cultures (Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Kausi, 2014), there are still a lot of concerns regarding the TRA child’s severance of spiritual ties with his or her ancestors (Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015; Rochat *et al.*, 2016; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012; Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Mosikatsana, 2003). Since language is an integral part of communication and the establishment and maintenance of relationships (Ahearn, 2016; Moran & Aerila, 2019), traditional Black adults fear that the inability of the child to speak a Black language may further estrange him or her from the guidance and direction of the forefathers and ancestors (Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015; Mosikatsana, 2003).
- Language is a cultural resource (Ahearn, 2016) and reflects the ethnicity of the speaker (Issac-Martins, 2015). Those opposed to TRA (Mosikatsana, 2003, 1997) posit that TRA exposes the child

to racial prejudice and ownership of the adoptive parents. The White parents may therefore decide to exclude a Black language as a means of communicating with other Black people. According to Mosikatsana (2003), the child is then ethnically and racially estranged, which results in a damaged self-concept and an ensuing identity crisis.

### **7.3.3. Theme 1: Conclusion: Superior Communication Skills**

In conclusion, language contains more elements than just words. It provides history and sub-context and reflects affect and culture beyond the sharing of information. It can create a social sense of belonging that transcends observable differences such as race and ethnicity. Conversely, when language is absent or not shared, it can alienate people even though they look the same. This is the world of the TRA child and his or her family.

Although language has been addressed in Chapter 2 as a component of ethnicity, and therefore also of race, the extent of language as a social tool, a social bridge between two different races and a social barrier within the same race, was unexpected. It would appear as if the young TRA had honed his or her language skills to establish interpersonal relationships, create access to a wide spectrum of social groups and promote a sense of belonging.

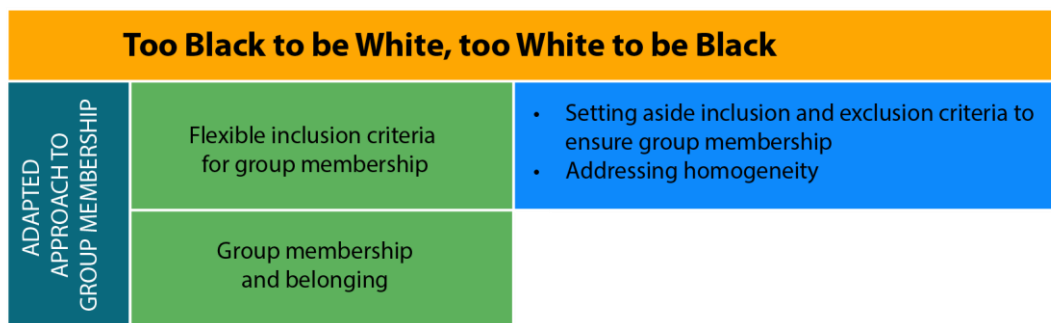
However, the current research has indicated that the TRA child possesses more than just a unique set of language skills. An adapted approach to group membership appears to be such an element.

## **7.4. Theme 2 – An Adapted Approach to Group Membership**

Positive group membership is greatly valued. It gives meaning to children's social communication and emotional understanding and provides healthy self-identity development through successful relationships and positive self-esteem (Mangum & Block, 2018; Nesdale *et al.*, 2014; Olson *et al.*, 2012; Hailey & Olson, 2013) (See Ch 2, section 2.4.5 & 2.4.6.) It also instils a sense of social belonging and membership to an ingroup and awards an elevated social status (Rutland *et al.*, 2017).

Weyns, Colpin, De Laet, Engels and Verschueren (2018) and Rutland *et al.* (2017) posit that high levels of peer acceptance into a desired ingroup are associated with meaningful interactions and improved access to peer activities and other peer groups. Easier admittance to other groups heightens the sense of belonging, enhances social engagement through conversation and collaboration and creates social astuteness. Knowledge of relationships is also augmented and practised within these groups.

The reverse holds true for children struggling to obtain acceptance into an “ingroup”, the absence of which has a debilitating effect on their developing self-identity. A low incidence of acceptance results in fewer social engagements, with limited opportunities to be accepted, and therefore even less chance of becoming a member of a group. With decreased exposure, there is less opportunity to develop social awareness and the knowledge to establish and maintain positive interactive relationships (Weyns *et al.*, 2018). Figure 7.3 displays the second theme and the two subthemes that emerged from the data analysis.



**Figure 7.3**

*Theme 2: Adapted Approach to Group Membership with Subthemes, and Relevant Findings*

**7.4.1. Subtheme 2.1. Flexible Inclusion Criteria for Group Membership**

The Social identity development theory (Nesdale, 1999; Nesdale *et al.*, 2004, 2005, 2014; Rutland *et al.*, 2017) uses many of the premises of the Social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner (1979; 1981) and is described in Chapters 2 and 3 with special reference to race in group processes. Briefly, young children form groups based on similarity. Initially, the most visible similarities are gender, followed by race and ethnicity. Quintana and Mahgoub (2016), Rutland *et al.* (2017) and Hailey and Olson (2013) determined that preschool and early school going children have a robust favouritism for membership of the same gender and mostly same race when initiating groups. According to Olson *et al.* (2012), this explicit exhibition of racial and gender bias in groups only dissipates when children reach puberty and common interests, such as sport, take precedence over group affiliation. Nesdale *et al.* (2014) link the same-gender, same-race preference to an inherent fear of the unknown.

Dirk, when asked about his daughter’s group membership, described Diana (nine years) as “the honey pot and the rest of the class is Winnie the Pooh – they all want more of her” (Diana-PI-F: 9). Denise added that Diana could “read a group” (PI-M, p.9) and that there was a time she actively sought

membership of a group of children who always had money for sweets. This “tuckshop” group had no clear gender or race or age demarcation but appeared to enjoy a high financial status. Diana’s DAP and KFD also reflected her need to receive acceptance and approval within group settings.

Diana’s little brother David (seven years) loved to dance and used flamboyant gestures and verbal expressions, often mimicking the actors and actresses with whom his parents work (PI-F, p.7; TI, p.1; AJ-F). His teacher suggested these characteristics as an explanation why he regularly spent time with girls rather than boys. “Hy het seuntjies maatjies, en hy speel met seuntjies... hy is net liever gewees om saam met dogtertjies te speel... hy doen meer waarvan hulle hou... sy groter vriendekring is maar net meer dogtertjies as seuntjies” (TI, p.3) (He has boys as friends, and plays with them, he just loved to play with girls more... he does more what they like to do... his greater friendship circle just has more girls than boys).

Furthermore, David was more attracted to the group activity than to the gender (and possibly to the age and race of the group). He played with the girls if he found their activity enjoyable but would easily join a group of boys only challenging each other with Lego (TI, p.3). His best friend was an extroverted little White boy who is one year older than him (TI, p.3).

Their three children were allowed to invite a group of friends over every Friday, Conrad stated as he described their group membership. “Ek sien geen verskil daarin nie... geen onderskeid... ek kies hierdie maatjie of hierdie maatjie” (Chad, Cassidy, Carlo PI-F:8). (I see no difference in it... no distinction... I choose this friend or this friend). Corina (PI-M, p.8) added that there was one constant group member in Chad’s (eight years) Friday group, a little White girl: “ons is beste maatjies” (we are best friends). Cassidy (seven years) selected her group members by the activity she had planned for the afternoon. Boisterous physical activities would ensure that boys were invited rather than the more sedate girls (PI-M, p.13). While her parents denied that she liked to take the lead, her DAP projected that she enjoyed the group gatherings and the prominent role of hostess (Cassidy-DAP). Carlo was inclined to invite friends over and then joined any of the other groups that seemed more interesting to him (PI-M, p.13).

“Hy lag lekker en engage (sic) gemaklik met maatjies. Hy het nie voorkeure nie, hy sal met enige maatjie speel ” (Atlegang, PI-F, p.10). (He laughs easily and engages comfortably with friends. He has no preferences and will play with anybody). Atlegang’s (seven years) teacher confirmed his readiness to join any group, and his parents described his long-standing friendship with a little White girl who was always included in his group, whether social or academic (PI-M, p.10). He also consistently included a newcomer to the school, a little Black boy, who was one year older than him (PI-M, p.10, 11). The effortless acceptance into groups was confirmed by Atlegang’s psychometric assessment,

which reflected his secure interpersonal relationships (DAP) as did as his father's comment: "hy word gou die middel punt van attraction (sic)" (PI-F, p.10). (He quickly becomes the centre of attraction).

While it was noted that Brenda-marie was more cautious in establishing contact with strangers, often waiting for her younger sister to take the lead (Brenda-marie, TI, p.4; PI-M, p.17), she did not exhibit any stringent group inclusion criteria for joining a group. "...Brenda-marie...het nie 'n probleem want...(hulle) sal speel met enige maatjie, swart, wit, seuntjie, dogtertjie, maak nie saak nie, ...Afrikaans of Engels. Ek hou daarvan" (PI-M, p.15). (Brenda-marie doesn't have a problem because... (they) will play with any friend, Black, White, boy, girl, doesn't matter... Afrikaans or English... I like that). Her teacher noted that her interaction with the boys in her class was easy and comfortable, but that she preferred discussing subjects with her fellow girl learners (TI, p.1, 8).

All seven participating TRA children appeared to reject the idea of choosing group membership according to gender or race, which is expected in middle childhood (Quintana, 1998; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016; Hailey & Olson, 2013; Nesdale *et al.*, 2004, 2005, 2014; Rutland *et al.*, 2017; Soares *et al.*, 2017). It seems that the reason for choosing the group or temporary social category, such as a common social event (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1981), took precedence over the visible inclusion and exclusion group criteria. This alludes to the next development level of group processes in the Social identity development theory, namely a common goal or interest determining the need to establish a group (Rutland *et al.*, 2017; Nesdale, 1999; Nesdale *et al.*, 2004, 2005; Shutts, 2015; Olson *et al.*, 2012).

There may be a number of reasons why TRA children do not apply the expected group membership criteria of gender and race, as discussed in the following sections.

#### **7.4.2. *Setting Aside Inclusion and Exclusion to Ensure Group Membership***

According to Nesdale (in Rutland *et al.*, 2017), the emergence and consolidation of intra and intergroup processes take place during middle childhood. However, it would appear as if these processes were accelerated and possibly adjusted in the TRA child to allow for more flexible group access.

Gender and race, like adoption, are domains over which a person has no control, yet serve as immediate group allocation, such as being female or Black (Grotevant, 1998; Grotevant *et al.*, 2011, 2014, 2017; Beaupre *et al.*, 2015). The TRA child challenges this basis for group affiliation.

In the Black TRA child, the seemingly clear demarcation of belonging to a specific racial group becomes imprecise. Although the children visibly belong to a Black race, they do not possess any other racial or ethnic attributes. They do not have a known Black family history or take part in exclusively

Black cultural practices, and in the case of the seven research participants, they do not even understand or speak a Black language.

However, while they do not have the visible physical attributes of their White families, they know the language and practise the culture of their parents daily. Thus, these children are potentially entitled to membership of both the Black and the White group. Conversely, they may potentially be rejected by both groups for not possessing all the attributes required for racial group membership.

It is therefore possible that the TRA children have purposively discarded the expected group criteria for themselves, and for other children, to allow for group membership across various domains, including race and gender (See 3.3.5 and the presentations in Chapter 5 and 6). This has to be done to facilitate and ensure group membership, since group membership is highly valued and promotes personal and social self-identity development in middle childhood (Mangum & Block, 2018; Weyns *et al.*, 2018).

#### **7.4.2.1. Addressing Homogeneity**

*“Too White for the Black group, too Black for the White group” (TRA adult Mari Molefe van Heerden, 2021)*

Once children have gained access to their preferred ingroup, they begin to consider others in the outgroups as being different from them, although there is not yet an inclination to actively dislike them or nurture any bias towards them (Ch 2, section 2.4.5. & 2.4.6.) (Nesdale, 2014; Shutts *et al.*, 2011, 2013; Shutts, 2015). They view the members of the outgroup as remarkably similar to each other and progressively dissimilar from themselves and their fellow ingroup members. This is known as outgroup homogeneity, and the differences between the ingroup and outgroup as the homogeneity gap (Rutland *et al.*, 2017).

Herein lies the conundrum for the TRA child in middle childhood. In the concrete phase, he or she does not yet possess adequate abstract reasoning skills (Piaget, 1929) required to successfully negate what is visibly similar to himself or herself in the outgroup. This is in spite of his or her observed accelerated communication skills discussed in the preceding section. A possible solution when selecting a group may be to set aside the visible and genetic differences such as race and gender and instead focus on shared attributes, such as common interests or games with set rules and outcomes. This tendency has been noted in all seven participating children.

Social acumen increases towards puberty as the child forms a better understanding and acceptance of behaviour and expression of attitude specific to person, place and time. This social insight allows the child to activate extended relationships and group memberships outside the physical domains of

race and gender (Rutland *et al.*, 2017). As evidenced by their exhibited communication skills, the participating TRA children's social intelligence is accelerated. It is possible that they achieve significant social acumen earlier than their non-adopted peers and develop an intuitive knowledge of how the social system works. This will affect their attitudes and beliefs and increase their tolerance of differences and simultaneously decrease outgroup homogeneity, making them less rigid as regards group membership and group assessment.

#### **7.4.3. Subtheme 2.2. Group Membership and a Sense of Belonging**

Atlegang was described as being quick to forgive his peers when they offended or hurt him in any manner (Atlegang, PI-M, p.9, 10; TI, p.1). His mother ascribed this to having a need to belong that superseded his need for justice. Similarly, Brenda-marie, who was inclined to bear a grudge when she had been slighted or reprimanded by her parents, would easily move on after a squabble or altercation with her peers (Brenda-marie, PI-M, p.19; PI-F, p.19; TI, p.1, 2, 4). Her parents also posited that it was her need to be included in a group that motivated this quick forgiveness. Cassidy was seldom involved in any altercation with her peers but would also excuse any slight directed towards her and move on to the next activity with her friends (Cassidy, PI-M, p.13; TI, p.4). The highly emotional racial encounter with a fellow classmate in her first school year appears to have been an exception to this easy exoneration (See Ch 6, section 6.2.3.) (PI-M: 7; TI: p.5, 6, 7).

This trend of easily pardoning their friends was discernible in six of the seven TRA children, the exception being Carlo, who was inclined to miss social cues, possibly related to his developmental disorder (Carlo, PI-M, p.2, 9, 18; PI-F, p.2, 3, 9; TI, p.1, 2, 9, 12).

Adults routinely allocate children to groups, e.g., gender and racial groups. Parents and teachers assign them to groups such as a specific class or a particular religion and congregation (Rutland *et al.*, 2017).

Friendship groups, task and sport groups and memberships of groups they perceive as being favourable are the first groups where (TRA) children may exercise choice. These are also the groups that progress beyond social categorisation and move toward social identification and comparison, which are characterised, firstly, by intragroup cohesion the internalisation of norms and expectations and then comparison of the ingroups and outgroups (See Ch 3, Section 3.5.1.) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1981).

Achieving a sense of belonging is the primary motivator of group membership and social identification (Nesdale *et al.*, 2005, 2014; Rutland *et al.*, 2017). To maintain membership of a chosen ingroup and retain the positive effect on the self-identity, a child in middle childhood will behave in a



way that will continue the status of the group (Nesdale *et al.*, 2004, 2005; Rutland *et al.*, 2017; Brown, 2017).

Managing the status of the group with which the child has socially identified comprises two aspects. Firstly, the norms and expectations of the group take precedence over individual norms and needs (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1981). Thus, the TRA child will not endanger his or her group membership by creating dissent within the group; hence his or her reported quick forgiveness and continued support of fellow group members. Secondly, children who strongly identify with a group harbour a persistent fear of rejection and eviction from that group. Nonconformance with the ingroup may result in being perceived as being more similar to the outgroup and lead to dismissal from the ingroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1981; Rutland *et al.*, 2017). TRA children, with their visible differences from the ingroup, may feel that they are more easily perceived as being different from their favoured group. Dismissal is an outcome that the TRA child, who is intentional in his or her facilitation of belonging, will find very undesirable, resulting in a stricter adherence to the values and norms of that group.

#### **7.4.4. Theme 2. Conclusion: An Adapted Approach to Group Membership**

While membership of a favoured or ingroup is desired by all children, the selection of a group in middle childhood may be more complicated for TRA children. Possessing the physical and observable attributes of one group (a significant criterion for group membership in middle childhood, according to existing literature (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016; Shutts, 2015; Soares *et al.*, 2017)) but knowing the culture, language and world of another group (a more subtle, but vital inclusion criterion (Ahearn, 2016)) makes the selection less clearly demarcated and more intricate to negotiate. In a racially aware country like South Africa (Shutts *et al.*, 2011, Hailey & Olson, 2013; Shutts, 2015), where race often determines group membership and emotional affiliation, irrespective of cultural knowledge or language, the Black TRA child will need to make adjustments to expected inclusion and exclusion criteria to facilitate membership of a favoured group.

Existing literature pertaining to group membership in middle childhood repeatedly posits that gender and race are primary group formulators (Nesdale *et al.*, 2004, 2005; 2014; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016; Shutts, 2015; Snyder, 2017; Soares *et al.*, 2017). It would appear that the TRA children in this study have managed firstly to amend the expected group criteria of race and gender and secondly to close the homogeneity gap so as to ensure group membership.

Their approach to group membership and the criteria for group membership appear more complex. Atlegang, Chad, Cassidy, Carlo and David (Chapters 5 and 6) all chose group affiliation according to

the activity at hand, irrespective of gender or race – a more mature and later approach to group membership (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016; Soares *et al.*, 2017). Diana and Brenda-marie, while being comfortable with boys, enjoy the company of girls more (Chapter 5 and 6). This may be due to the fact that they are both 9 years old and on the cusp of puberty. Diana’s teacher commented that girls of this age “are very aware of their bodies, and you know, how they look and (are) starting to speak about him liking her or whatever, but generally...it’s always about the girls, never about the colour” (Diana – TI, p.5).

Group membership is about belonging (Mangum & Block, 2018; Nesdale *et al.*, 2014; Olson *et al.*, 2012; Hailey & Olson, 2013; Rutland *et al.*, 2017; Weyns *et al.*, 2018). When a child belongs to a favoured group, his or her ability to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships is enhanced, his or her self-worth is increased, coping skills are finely honed and an overall sense of belonging is experienced. These consequences are all favourable to the development of a healthy self-identity, so the TRA child will endeavour to achieve group membership to achieve these outcomes.

### **7.5. Theme 3. The Importance of Place and Belongings**

Despite an intensive literature search, very little information could be found about the meaning of personal belongings to young school going children. There was a similar dearth of literature regarding the value of having a private space or room to an early school going child. However, personal belongings and own space appear to have marked significance for the TRA children in the current work, as the parents and the psychometric assessments spontaneously revealed their pronounced attachment to possessions and a private space.

In spite of being disorganised, Atlegang placed a high premium on his “things” (CBCL; CN; DAP; KFD). Brenda-marie’s parents reported that confiscating her personal belongings was a devastating form of punishment for her. She also had a hard time sharing something that she had been given or perceived as her own (PI-M, p.21; CBCL). Cassidy, although described as usually excessively accommodating, wanted her own room and tried to create a private space away from her younger brother, with whom she shared a room (PI-M, p.14; CBCL). Chad cherished his belongings, especially his art supplies, and touching his things was one of the few triggers that elicited a verbal emotional response from a usually taciturn little boy. He also valued the time he spent alone in his room and would excuse himself from company to be in his room (PI-M, p.15). Although Diana was not overtly possessive about her belongings, she kept her mementos and photographs in a safe space and accessed them frequently, according to her parents (PI-F, p.2). David had free access to his adoption journal,

and his parents reported that he often browsed through it, and together with a few other objects prized but not related to his adoption, took very good care of it (PI-F, p.2; CBCL; CN). His excessive use of household objects in his scene building reflected his affinity for material objects to demarcate his space (SB). While Carlo was known for his physical outbursts and uninhibited behaviour, he never destroyed any of his own belongings (CBCL). He also took extraordinary care of the objects he created with his father, often placing them in a prominent space for display (FN; PI-F, p.12).

Whether the scarcity of literature regarding the importance of physical belongings in middle childhood indicates its irrelevance in this developmental phase, or is merely an omission, it is a significant observation found in the participating TRA children

Similarly, very little information regarding adoption or foster care and personal belongings could be found, although a poignant statement, retrieved from [www.boysandgirlsaid.org/stories/lookingbeyonddlabels](http://www.boysandgirlsaid.org/stories/lookingbeyonddlabels) reflects the world of the child in care: “... (they) often arrive with few possessions. Most of their personal items can usually fit into a single black garbage bag. For many this is the result of having to move around too often to have roots in a single place.” Although the TRA children of this study moved only between hospital, place of safety and ultimately their adoptive home, they did not enter their adoptive home from their respective places of care with any personal objects or articles of clothing that had been bought specifically for them. The only tangible objects that accompanied five of them were the photographs and a letter from their biological mother. Thus, the first clothes and belongings acquired specifically with them in mind was in their adoptive home.

In the world of the South African TRA child, and clearly observed in the seven participating children, personal belongings and a space of their own appear significant. It may be that having personal belongings and a place to keep them safely provides an opportunity to “have roots in a single place”.

### **7.5.1. Subtheme 3.1. Growing Roots in My own Place**

Falk, Wijk, Persson and Falk (2013) and Van Hoof, Janssen, Heesakkers, Van Kersbergen, Severijns, Willems, Marston, Janssen and Nieboer (2016) distinguish between a *space*, being a physical structure like a bedroom, and a *place* which is recognisable and familiar. To establish this recognition and feeling of familiarity, the place must be filled with personal belongings, such as photos, furniture and trinkets that have meaning to the occupants (Falk *et al.*, 2013). Duyvendak (2009) in Van Hoof *et al.* (2016) notes that once such a place has evoked a feeling of familiarity and recognition, “being at home as it were” (p.35), it brings about two situations, the “haven and the heaven” (p.35).

Firstly, the *haven* is that which is secure, comfortable and predictable, a place where a person can be at ease, revisit his or her experiences, express emotions and examine relationships without fear of retribution. Secondly, a *heaven* is a place shared with like-minded people with whom a connection or long-term relationship has been established, like being part of a family in a family home.

Thus, a TRA child growing up in a place filled with tangible and familiar objects that bring about feelings of security, consistency and permanency will place a high premium on the place and the objects, since it is a means of establishing roots in the family. Brenda-marie, Atlegang, Chad and Carlo took great care of their possessions, despite being reportedly disorganised in other aspects (Chapters 5 and 6).

While the importance of the objects may not be clear to the adults, the value lies in the meaning that the objects hold for the children. Brenda-marie's make-up allows her to achieve a look she desires (PI-M, p.21), and Carlo's objects confirm that he is capable of creating things, in spite of his destructive impulses (PI-F, p.12, 18, 19). Although not investigated further (as it was only reported in the CBCL after the interview), Carlo's mother noted that he had sometimes "stolen" objects at home for which he had no need. He simply kept them in his room.

Furthermore, for a TRA child photographs, letters and mementos depicting his or her journey from his or family of origin to his or her adoptive family may bring a sense of continuity and affirmation and confirm his or her position in the family as well as validate his or her first family. While it is probable that all children enjoy their photographs displayed as a record of their development, TRA children do not usually have moment-of-birth photographs and other distinctive family photos that mark the beginning of their lives. They often do not have any information regarding their birth family, even something as basic as the family surname (in the case of abandoned babies). They usually do not possess any family heirlooms or any belongings from their birth families that have significance.

Recording their adoptive journey with concrete evidence, such as photos and letters, contributes to their adoptive narrative, a story essential to integrate their adoptive status into their self-identity. The safe keeping of objects and mementos that fill in the gaps of their narrative and prove their current and ongoing narrative would remain a high priority.

Carlo and Cassidy had no such mementos or photos, since they were both abandoned without any verified identification or formal adoption orders (Carlo-AJ-M; Cassidy-AJ-M; AJ-F). Significantly, it was Cassidy who asked the most questions about her background, possibly because she had no tangible evidence to go on (TI, p.5; PI-M, p.6; PI-F, p.6). Diana and David had journals, letters and photographs their adoptive mother had kept for them. They also had the cards and good wishes that welcomed them into their adoptive family. Both Dirk and Denise reported the enjoyment the children gained from browsing through their adoption mementos and letters from their parents (see Chapter 6). Atlegang

had a letter from his mother that Anna kept for him (PI-F, p.5), as did Brenda-marie, who occasionally referred to it (Brenda-marie-PI-M, p.10). Chad knew several details about his biological mother that brought him joy, and he often raised the topic of his biological mother (AJ-F; PI-M, p.16).

### **7.5.2. Subtheme 3.2. *Feeling at Home in My Own Space***

Information regarding the importance on the self-identity and a designated personal space was obtained from an unlikely literature source. Architects of repurposed homes for the elderly and other care facilities, Van Steenwinkel, Baumers and Heylighen (2012), emphasise that a private and dedicated space, like an own room, allows for a sense of belonging and being at home. Within this familiar and personal space, a sense of dignity, security, independence and self-worth is experienced – all feelings conducive to the maintenance of the self-identity.

Only Carlo and his older sister Cassidy shared a bedroom, since Carlo was afraid of the dark (Cassidy, PI-M, p.14). The other five children participating in this study had their own room. While Cassidy was unusually accepting, she had tried to create her own space within the shared bedroom.

While wanting an own bedroom or space is probably not unique to a TRA child, the importance of having such a space filled with personal belongings that confirm that he or she is “at home” in “my place” is distinctive (Duyvendak, 2009 in Van Hoof *et al.*, 2016). Again, a dedicated space and a personal place bring about a sense of permanence in a child whose developing intellectual functions understand concrete concepts (Piaget, 1929). A biological child understands that it is his or her birth right to belong to the family he was born into, whereas the TRA child has already experienced the loss of that family. Being given an own space and objects that keep him or her in the family make his place and position within that family observable and quantifiable. It tells the child that a space has been made in the house and in the family.

### **7.5.3. Theme 3. Conclusion: *The Importance of Place and Belongings***

Winnicott and his object relations theory (Levinge, 2015; Oliviera-Dias, 2016) are beyond the scope of this research, but his reference to transitional objects and attachment has bearing. The first object that the young infant attaches a value to, such as a cherished blanket, is considered a “not me” possession/transitional object, and often serves as a symbolic substitute for the mother figure (Levinge, 2015). Subsequently, the collection of “not-me” possessions will increase and serve as tools to learn to think creatively, establish substitution and symbolisation as coping strategies and promote empathy as an important characteristic trait (Oliveira-Dias, 2016).

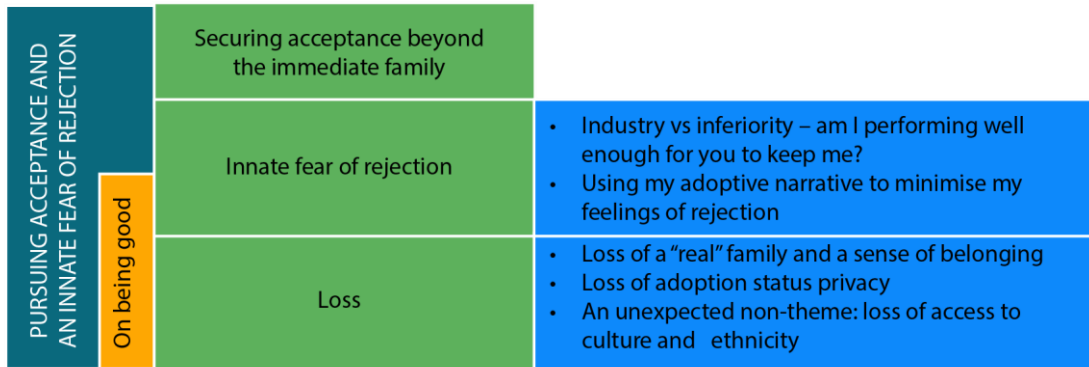
Although the value and meaning of a treasured object is not always clear to the observer, it has special significance to the infant and young child. Winnicott (1971) in Levinge (2015) describes such a “not me” possession as an object from the child’s external reality that is used in the nurturing of the child’s internal or personal reality and ultimately his or her self-identity. Succinctly phrased, “(transitional objects) ...are the bits and pieces of his life that go to make him human (Levinge, 2015, p.92).

The seven children need their space and place, according to their parents. Their possessions marked their journey from birth to their adoptive home and added value and a sense of belonging to their position in their family. They were also tangible evidence of their life story, their narrative and their existence. A private and dedicated space or bedroom lends a sense of permanence and security, a place to set down roots and reinforced their self-worth, dignity and belonging.

While this was an unexpected finding in the current research, and not supported by a wealth of literature, it lends credibility to the themes gathered in this study.

## **7.6. Theme 4-Pursuing Acceptance and the Innate Fear of Rejection**

The omnipresent need to belong and the employment of distinctive strategies to promote acceptance and prevent rejection form a recurring pattern in all seven participating TRA children. The need for acceptance is a high priority for all adoptive children (Brodzinsky, 2011; Brodzinsky & Smith, 2018), but perhaps more so in children who are visibly and publicly different from their parents, as adoption gains more significance when observed by society. Soares *et al* (2017, 2019) and Rosnati and Ferreira (2014) note that TRA children encounter more complex challenges than other adopted children to confirm their position in society and garner acceptance in school and the larger community as they leave the relative security of their families (See Ch 3, section 3.6.3.7). As most adopted children, TRA children are subjected to loss in many forms, as noted in Figure 7.4, but their loss is compounded by their public visibility as being different.



**Figure 7.4**

*Theme 4: Pursuing Acceptance and Innate Fear of Rejection with Subthemes, and Relevant Findings*

### 7.6.1. Subtheme 4.1. Securing Acceptance Beyond the Immediate Family

For most early and middle schoolchildren, school is an exciting new milieu that demands burgeoning cognitive skills, social acuity to negotiate a more diverse community and sufficient conducive personal attributes to ensure desired ingroup membership. Failure to negotiate these challenges successfully results in a feeling of inferiority and loss of social competency, according to Erikson (See Ch 3, section 3.4.3.) (1963, 1968; Knight, 2017).

Unlike biological children, adopted and TRA children are not assured of social acceptance within the larger community. Their adoptive status and unrelated racial worlds become socially significant once they move beyond the familiarity and relative safety of their immediate family borders (Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010; Rosnati & Ferreira, 2014; Soares *et al.*, 2019; Zhang & Lee, 2011).

TRA children in South Africa have additional challenges to manage (See Ch 2, section 2.3.3.):

- Firstly, they enter into a larger community of people that closely resembles them physically, but who speak languages that are often foreign to their ears, have cultural practices that are dissimilar to their practices at home and who question their adopted position and their belonging in their White families. David and Diana could not explain their family status to the Black parents of their incidental friends at a restaurant, when they were addressed in a Black language. On this occasion, their parents were there to act as intercessors (David PI-F, p.3, 4). A similar situation without the presence of parents would have forced the children to rely on their communication skills as discussed in Theme 1.

Secondly, the TRA children may encounter Black and White adults that harbour residual and historical resentment (See Ch 2, section 2.3.4.) towards each other and have corresponding reservations

or negative attitudes about TRA (Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Kausi, 2014; Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012). This places the young TRA child in an untenable situation, since they share both the Black and White racial world and have no knowledge of the historical causes of the racial prejudices. This confusion and ambivalence may also occur as the South African TRA child studies potentially emotive school subjects such as Life Orientation and History, where perceptions are coloured by race, as well as in day-to-day interactions on the sports fields and playground (See Ch 3, section 3.4.3.2.) (Mayeza & Vincent, 2019; Morgan & Langrehr, 2019; Syed & McClean, 2017). Although Bryce's Black work colleague directed her derogatory comment at him (that he had adopted across the racial line because he wanted a pet (Brenda-marie, PI-F, p.25)), overhearing such a comment would have had a profoundly destabilising effect on Brenda-marie's developing self-identity. Atlegang's maternal grandfather, a high-ranking officer in the South African Defence Force during the apartheid regime and subsequent political uprisings, was afraid that his perceptions and stereotypical understanding of Black people would negatively impact on his relationship with his adopted grandson (Atlegang-TI-M, p.2, 3, 4, 6, 7).

- Thirdly, early school years are also the time when their racially aware peers (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016) probe the visible discrepancies within their TRA families. These questions sometimes unwittingly assume the form of microaggressions towards the TRA child when there are references to, for example, “real families”, visible racial differences and comments about their physical attributes, such as their tightly coiled hair. These confrontational probes may be detrimental to the development of the self-identity (See Ch 2, section 2.4.7.) Microaggressions assume many forms. Atlegang had to explain how his “real (White) mom” *is* his “real mom” because his “first real mom” couldn't take care of him (Atlegang-PI-M, p.6). Diana outwitted her probing classmate by saying that Dirk is her “real dad” because he chose her (Diana-PI-F:21), while Brenda-marie was distraught when a little boy noted that Bryce couldn't be her “real dad” because he was White (Brenda-marie, PI-M, p.11, 12; PI-F, p.11, 12). She was also acutely embarrassed when she couldn't have the required hairstyle for a school concert due to the texture and coil of her hair (Brenda-marie, PI-M, p.12, 13). Cassidy was accused of being “dirty” because she was darker than her schoolmates and family members, an insult that had a devastating effect on her (Cassidy-PI-M: 7; TI, p.5. 6, 7).
- Fourthly, belonging to a favoured or ingroup becomes very important for both social identity development and social status and acceptance during middle childhood (Nesdale *et al.*, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2014; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016; Shutts *et al.*, 2011; Hailey & Olson, 2013 and Shutts, 2015). South African TRA children are forced to amend group membership strategies, since they potentially belong and simultaneously do *not* belong to more than one racial group. They appear



physically similar, but do not possess the intuitive and required cultural and ethnic knowledge to fully belong to a Black racial group. The contrary is also true: while appearing physically dissimilar to the White race, the TRA child possesses the experience and familiarity of language and culture to understand and completely belong (Ahearn, 2016). The necessary adjustments to the expected norms of middle childhood group formation have been discussed as Theme 2 in this section.

In summary, ensuring social acceptance within the larger community demands sustained purposeful commitment and activity from the TRA children. All seven participants in this study exhibited substantial social acumen to secure acceptance and achieve a sense of belonging, which appear to be the primary motivators for their social pursuit. The appropriate and successful social acuity is indicated in the parental response scales<sup>81</sup>, teachers' interviews and all seven psychometric assessments. The acuity was largely brought about by the interventions and skills the children had acquired, such as the advanced communication skills and adjusted group membership practices, discussed comprehensively in the preceding sections of this chapter.

Additionally, the TRA children of this research recreated their adoptive narratives with the aid of tangible objects, photos and mementos and open discussions with adults in their lives, parents, extended family and teachers, so that their adoption narrative was largely incorporated in their self-identity. This allowed them to share their narratives easily, without threatening their self-identity, an important developmental achievement proposed by Grotevant *et al.* (2017) and Soares *et al.* (2017, 2019).

Evidence of the adoptive identity integration with the self-identity can be found in the reported ease of the children's frank discussions with parents, teachers and other children alike, as well as the pride they took in depicting their family's diversity in their artwork and the ease with which they engaged in social settings and at family gatherings (see Chapters 5 and 6).

The exceptions are Cassidy, who preferred to not enter into any discussions with teachers and children and did not initially apply colour to her family drawings<sup>82</sup> (PI-M, p.5, 6; PI-F, p.6, TI: 5) and Carlo, who seldom took part in prolonged, emotive conversations, possibly because of his ADHD and mild autism (PI-M, p.9, 10; PI-F, p.9, 10). Significantly, these two children were the adoptees with very little background information and no mementos to augment their adoptive narratives (See Ch 6, section 6. 2.3. &6.2.4.).

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<sup>81</sup>Whilst the PRS delivered significant data pertaining to TRA, the information used remained focussed on the self-identity of the TRA child. Information gained from the PRS should be used to further explore other TRA dimensions in further research.

<sup>82</sup>The KFD that Cassidy did for the assessment does depict true colour and may be evidence of her increasing acceptance of her adoptive and racial status within the family. The drawing is included in Chapter 6.

If ensuring acceptance and instilling a sense of belonging serve as primary motivators in social interaction, then the avoidance of rejection must be found on the flip side of the social interaction coin.

### **7.6.2. Subtheme 4.2. An Innate Fear of Rejection**

Children growing up in their biological families seldom have occasion to question their acceptance and permanence within the family. As pre-school adopted children progress cognitively into middle childhood, their understanding of adoption matures and becomes more complicated (Brodzinsky, 2011; 2018; Grotevant, 1997; Grotevant *et al.*, 2017; Neil, 2012). They encounter ambivalence and begin to realise that in order to gain a family, they had to lose a family. They strove to embrace and incorporate their differences with their adoptive family, and they began to explore the meaning of their disrupted relationships with their biological family. Brodzinsky (2011) describes the process of making sense of their own history as painful. Adoptive authors such as Brodzinsky (2011), Grotevant (1997) and Neil (2012) concur that sadness, anxiety, anger and rejection are intrinsic to the exploratory process, but that the process is vital to the successful integration of the adoptive identity into the self-identity.

#### **7.6.2.1. Industry Versus Inferiority: Am I Performing Well Enough for You to Keep Me?**

Grotevant (1997) and Grotevant *et al.* (2017) caution that in each psychosocial developmental stage (Erikson, 1968), there are new challenges to the self-identity of the adopted child. It is possible, for example, that a TRA adolescent who wants to establish a romantic relationship with a partner of a race dissimilar to his or her own will have occasion to re-examine his or her self-identity.

Pertinent to the current research, the movement from home into school brings about a daunting developmental challenge for any middle childhood adoptee striving for fulfilling relationships, a mutual feeling of belonging and acceptance and a sense of permanence (Brodzinsky, 2011; Rosnati & Ferrari, 2014; Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019). Erikson's (1963, 1968, 1980) psychosocial developmental stage of industry versus inferiority/inadequacy is founded on the basis that work/tasks must be "good enough" (Gupta & Featherstone, 2018, p.167) to acquire competence. Thus, a child producing work that is not pleasing may consider his or her work, and by association, himself or herself, inferior and therefore susceptible to rejection.

Atlegang, Brenda-marie, Diana, Carlo and David were all experiencing significant difficulties with mathematics at school. All five were receiving some form of remedial intervention. The teachers of Brenda-marie, Diana, David and Atlegang reported that their lack of performance in this academic

area had a more severe impact on their self-worth and esteem than would be expected from learners of their developmental age.

The need for accomplishment in academic tasks is also a persistent finding in the children's psychometric assessment: Diana's teacher noted during the interview about mathematics that Diana was "academically shy, timid, not willing to make mistakes...even if she got it right, she'd be very shy, you know, to show you her work" (Diana-TI, p.1). Similarly, her DAP found that "...she might have a longing to be smarter, or to have the ability to achieve better, indicating intellectual aspirations" (Diana-DAP, p.2). Brenda-marie's DAP assessment stated that she had noteworthy intellectual aspirations (Brenda-marie-DAP). Chad's DAP projected a yearning to succeed with difficult tasks and an admiration of intelligence (Chad-DAP). "It is important for Atlegang to experience success regarding his schoolwork...the outcome of success promotes his self-confidence; sense of competency as well (as) provides him with a sense of pride in his accomplishments and abilities. Atlegang may experience feelings of inferiority when he experiences (academic) failure" (Atlegang-DAP, p.2).

According to David's DAP "... (he) may be experiencing feelings of anxiety as well as (...) withdrawal, in the form of not listening, might be a way of dealing..." (David-DAP, p.2). Carlo was found to be "dissatisfied with his educational situation, leading him to be worried and stressed concerning his performance" (Carlo-DAP, p.2). While Cassidy, who is performing well at school, did not portray any specific academic aspirations during her psychometric assessment, she had great admiration for her older brother, Chad, whom she considered to be very clever (Cassidy-DAP).

It would appear that the TRA participants saw school and its academic challenges as a tangible opportunity to confirm their personal and intellectual adequacy and desirability, thereby minimising the possibility of familial and social rejection. Failure to perform successfully and exhibit competence elicited a loss of self-worth and confidence that appeared to be disproportionate to the expected norm of this school going age. Again, the persistent pattern "of belonging to the family into which the (transracial) child has been adopted" is identifiable, as in all preceding subthemes and themes (Grotevant, 1997; p.3).

It would, however, be prudent to note that for this research, all the parents have tertiary qualifications and are gainfully employed. The possibility exists that in TRA families where the parents have not received tertiary education and have less prestigious careers, the children may have lessened concerns about academic performance and fears of rejection. This possibility could only be investigated with further research.

### 7.6.2.2. Using My Adoptive Narrative to Minimise my Feelings of Rejection

Only Cassidy and Carlo had no or very limited stories to tell about their family of birth. Atlegang, Diana, David, Chad and Brenda-marie had more comprehensive background information with which to augment their adoption narrative, together with objects, photos and mementos of their birth and foster care family and their welcoming to their new family (Chapters 5 and 6).

An adoptive narrative “includes, explains, accounts for and/or justifies” the child’s adoptive status (Grotevant, 1997, p.11). Failure to create a meaningful adoptive narrative limits successful adoptive and self-identity integration, detracting from healthy self-identity development (Grotevant *et al.*, 2017; Brodzinsky, 2011).

As the developing cognitive ability of middle childhood enables children to engage in more rational and deductive reasoning, they begin to fully comprehend the implication of losing one family to be included into another family. It is at this time, according to Brodzinsky (2011), Grotevant (1997), Grotevant *et al.* (2017) and Soares *et al.* (2017, 2019) that an adopted child begins to lose self-worth and experiences feelings of rejection by the birth family.

Neil (2012), in an assessment of 43 middle childhood adoptees, not exclusively TRA children, found that feelings of rejection may be mitigated by employing a more novel approach to explain the process of care placement. By emphasising the active, authoritative and judiciary role of social and legal child services, a substantial component of choice and blame is removed from the birth parents. This lessens the child’s sense of biological family abandonment, since the reasoning at this vulnerable age may be that he or she was not *given* away, but rather *taken* away.

Diana was abandoned in a hospital but formed a firm and happy bond with her place-of-safety mother (Diana-PI-M, p.12). She had an adoption journal with photos and memories that she could refer to at any time to piece together her adoption journey. David’s mother wanted to meet the family at his handover. Denise recalled that the young mother sought reassurance “that she is not bad because she is giving up her child... and what was amazing was that we can share out (sic) of his family history... (David-PI-M, p.14). Brenda-marie’s adoptive parents continued to describe her biological mother in positive terms and had a letter from her in safe keeping. When she explained her family, Brenda-marie spontaneously included her biological family, stating that she had two dads, two mummies and two “secret boeties” (brothers) and a sister she lives with (Brenda-marie-PI-M, 10). Atlegang’s adoptive parents found his biological mother to be intelligent and emotionally well-adjusted when they met her at his handover. They described her as such to Atlegang and emphasised the difficult choice she made to offer him a better life in the absence of his biological father (Atlegang-PI-M, p.5). Chad adored his biological mother, and Conrad and Corina supported him in this positive perception, although they feared he might experience severe feelings of rejection as he got older. He believed, too, that she

surrendered him into care so that he could be afforded a better life, and that she loved him beyond measure (Chad-PI-M, p.15; PI-F, p.15, 16). While he harboured no feelings of abandonment, he expressed a sense of loss through his placement in care. There were no mementos for Cassidy and Carlo, since both children were handed over to social services at a very young age, their mothers citing socio-economic constraints (Cassidy-AJ; Carlo-AJ). For logistical reasons, both Cassidy and Carlo were not placed with individual families, but in baby care centres, where they had numerous carers instead of a single and significant caregiver. Cassidy was there for only a few weeks, while Carlo spent almost seven months in a baby haven (Cassidy-AJ; Carlo-AJ). Of the seven participants, Cassidy exhibited the greatest concern regarding her TRA status (Cassidy-PI-M, p.5, 6; PI-F, p.6, TI: 5). Carlo was the only child presenting with significant behavioural and relationship problems, although he seemed unperturbed about his TRA status (Carlo-PI-M, p.2, 9, 11-12, 18-19; PI-F, 2-3, 11-12, 17-19; TI, p.2, 7-12; CN; DAP).

Feelings of rejection are not exclusive to TRA children, and like loss and sadness, can be expected following adoptive exploration (Grotevant *et al.*, 2017; Brodzinsky, 2011; Neil, 2012; Gupta & Featherstone, 2018). Minimising feelings of rejection does, however, allow the self-identity of the adoptee to develop without the additional hindrance of lowered self-worth.

### **7.6.3. Subtheme 4.3. Loss**

Loss as a phenomenon is a common thread in all forms of adoption and an experience that may have a profound effect on the developing self-identity (See Ch 2, section 2.5.3.) (Gupta & Featherstone, 2020; Soares *et al.*, 2017; 2019; Brodzinsky, 2011; Grotevant, 1997; Grotevant *et al.*, 2011, 2017). All adopted children experience the loss of their biological/ “real” family and their natural right to belong (Gupta & Featherstone, 2020; Harlow, 2019; Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019). However, owing to their visible racial difference TRA children also cannot keep their adoptive status private, and they also lose access to their cultural and ethnic roots (Smit, 2002; Rosnati & Ferrari, 2014; Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019). In South Africa, where traditional Black cultures and practices differ vastly from the more contemporary Western White culture, this may create a difficult distinction to negotiate (Mosikatsana, 1997, 2003; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012; Rochat *et al.*, 2016; Tanga & Nyasha, 2017).

#### **7.6.3.1. Loss of “Real” Family and Sense of Belonging**

Chad was very expressive about the loss of his “real” family when his adoption was finalised. He was emotionally distressed at the legal severance from his family (See Ch 6, section 6.2.2.). Diana exhibited behaviour reminiscent of loss and separation anxiety when she was removed from her place

of safety (PI-M:1, 12). David is best described as being “angry” (PI-M, p.13; TI-F, p.13; DAP) about his adoptive status and removal from his place of safety. While the other children did not show any explicit reaction at losing their “real” or place-of-safety families, they continued to seek and benefit from information and tokens from their “real” families and first place-of-safety families.

An adopted child’s natural right to belong to a family is placed under threat, and in the case of TRA children in South Africa, group membership and belonging are also placed under scrutiny. The TRA children in this research addressed this intrinsic loss of belonging by using various coping strategies, such as adapting their approach to group membership and instilling a sense of permanence within their families (See Ch 7, Section 7.4 &7.5). Atlegang, Chad, Cassidy, Carlo and David ignored the age-expected group demarcations of gender and race, rather entering a group in accordance with the more developed criteria based on a shared group activity (see Chapters 5 and 6). They prioritised the needs of the group above their own and were quick to forgive intragroup slights so as to retain the relationships and continue group membership, as verbalised by Atlegang’s mother) and Cassidy’s mother, who described one of Cassidy’s best attributes as “loves company, good host of her playmates and easy to forgive others” (CBCL).

As noted, the loss of a biological family and the right to belong are universal adoption themes. However, loss of adoptive privacy and the loss of ethnic and cultural roots are unique to TRA children and bear more exploration in this research.

### **7.6.3.2. Loss Of Adoptive Status Privacy**

In the first theme discussed, pertaining to advanced communication skills (See Ch 7, section 7.3) I posited that the absence of privacy regarding a latent phase TRA child’s adoptive status results in the development of superior communication skills. The child is forced to explain and/or defend his or her position within the family, as the family relationship is not obvious. While these advanced skills appear to be a positive outcome, the lack of privacy and possibility of confrontational questions and microaggressions may lead to initial guarded interactions and emotional distress.

Both Diana and Brenda-marie had to defend their relationships with their fathers (Diana-PI-F, p.21, Brenda-marie-PI-M, p.11-12; PI-F, p.11-12). Atlegang asked his mother why she had a “verkeerde kleur” (wrong colour) to be his mother when a fellow four-year-old asked why his mother was so White (Atlegang-PI-M, p.6). A younger Cassidy wanted to circumvent this lack of adoptive privacy by aspiring to look like her mother, because she saw that all mothers and daughters looked alike (Cassidy-PI-M, p.6). Chad was verbal about his adoptive status in loyalty to his biological mother. David and Carlo were the only two children where a spontaneous reference to their desire for adoptive privacy could not be found.

According to Soares *et al.* (2017, 2019), TRA children benefit from disclosing their adoptive status if they have the acquired communicative tools. They present with more self-worth, feel less confused, have decreased feelings of sadness and anger and are more open to positive adoption exploration (Grotevant, 1997; Grotevant *et al.*, 2017).

Secondly, Morgan and Langrehr (2019) and Gupta and Featherstone (2020) also note the importance of open and frank discussions between TRA children and their parents in dealing with the intrusive and confrontational questions regarding their adoptive status. Morgan and Langrehr (2019) posit that when children and parents are racially aware and examine and address the racial component within these questions and microaggressions, the negative impact on the developing self-identity of the adoptee is mitigated. It is possible that, since all the parental participants in this study confirmed their willingness to discuss TRA in all its dimensions (see PRS), the children were less keenly aware of their loss of privacy regarding their adoptive status.

Thirdly, it is significant that all seven children had been placed in schools where the classes remained relatively stable and familiar. Their adoptive status was known there and no longer begged explanation, unlike in the larger and unfamiliar community, such as in a shopping mall or at an incidental social gathering.

The seven latent phase children in this study did not indicate a significant amount of resentment at the loss of their adoptive status privacy. The absence of abject resentment may be accounted for by the three reasons above, as well as by the fact that the participating families celebrated the differences in TRA and were largely focused on establishing social interactions with like-minded people (see Chapters 5 and 6). The subject of intentional parenting is discussed in a later section of this chapter.

#### **7.6.4. *Unmanifested Loss of Access to Culture and Ethnicity***

None of the seven participating TRA children were able to speak a Black language (Chapters 5 and 6). They hosted friends from different races, cultures and genders, but were hesitant to interact in an exclusively Black setting.

Carlo, Chad and Cassidy were reluctant to join their father when he preached to a Black congregation, preferring their White, familiar congregation (PI-M, p.4). They also preferred to engage with Black children that shared a more westernised and familiar culture (PI-M, p.4). Corina actively tried to instil some traditionally Black cultural practices but had at the time of the study only succeeded in getting Carlo to play African drums and enjoy traditional African music (PI-M:5, 22-23). She acknowledged that Black cultural exposure was her own need; such exposure did not seem to interest the children at all. Diana and David visited the home of their domestic worker (PI-M, p.17), but seemed

heedless of the poverty and poor infrastructure experienced by many Black people in squatter camps, in spite of being actively involved in outreach programmes (PI-M, p.17; PI-F, p.17). They were happy to engage in cultural discussions at school, but these were international cultures and practices, not solely African traditions, since there are many children from international countries in the school (Diana-TI, p.5). Diana appeared to be most comfortable with children that shared a similar status and way of living rather than any shared culture. The teacher added that this was a general trend among the children in the school (TI, p.5,6), confirming the findings of Shutts *et al.* (2011) that young, contemporary South African children are very sensitive to social status. Notably, Dirk and Denise wanted the children to embrace the family culture with family-specific practices, as well as a “worldview” (PI-M, p.21) rather than traditional Black culture.

Atlegang and Brenda-marie shared a similar approach to cultural practices. They were most comfortable with cultural practices that were more familiar to them, although their parents tried to expose them to different cultures. Atlegang’s parents actively tried to interact with other families that upheld Black cultural practices (PI-F: 11-12; PI-M: 11-13), while Brenda-marie’s parents tried to instil in her a “worldview” (PI-M, p.5, 15; PI-F, p.15, 16). Interestingly, Bryce and Blanche and Denise and Dirk opted for a “worldview” (their choice of words) rather than exposure to an African culture.

Although these seven young children did not appear to identify or express a desire to identify with traditional Black cultural practices, Thomson (2005), in research work regarding TRA adolescents in South Africa, found these teenagers to experience the absence of knowledge, if not the actual practice, of Black culture as a profound loss. It may be that, in adolescence and young adulthood, only once a social understanding of ethnicity and culture is reached and ethnic (Black) consciousness develops, (See Ch 2, section 2.4.2.), this lack of knowledge or cultural experience becomes perceived as a significant identity loss (Gupta & Featherstone, 2020; Guzman, *et al.*, 2020; Grotevant *et al.*, 2017). Early school going South African TRA children, being in their latent developmental stage, do not appear to perceive this lack of Black cultural exposure as a loss.

Culture may not be a significant entity for the young children of this study, yet loss of culture is one of the most expected outcomes and pronounced criticisms against TRA in South Africa. Tanga and Nyasha (2017), Kausi (2014), Warria and Gerrand (2020), Gerrand and Nathane-Taulela (2015), Mokomane and Rochat (2012), Mosikatsana (2003) and the Child Care Act, No. 38 of 2005, concur that same race adoption is desirable. The disproportionate ratio of Black adoptive babies to prospective adoptive Black parents, however, makes this ideal largely unattainable (NACSA, n.d); (See Ch 2.2.2 and 2.2.3).

TRA dissent centres around the loss of Black culture and the ensuing severance of ties with deceased forefathers and ancestors (Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Snyder, 2012,2017; Mosikatsana, 2003).



These deceased figures are held in high esteem, and loss of access to them implies that the child is without guidance and has a threatened future lineage (Mosikatsana, 1997, 2003).

“Cultural genocide” (Tanga & Nyasa, 2017, p.233) is also cause for dissent amongst the older Black generation, who fear that the loss of traditional Black cultural ties inhibits positive racial identity development and creates social confusion. Some of the older Black people who have lived through apartheid consider TRA to be a deliberate action of White people to possess and undermine the Black race (Tanga & Nyasa, 2017; Snyder, 2012; 2017; Jackson, 2018; Mosikatsana, 1997, 2003). Perhaps it was this historical perspective that caused an older, Black female colleague of Bryce to insult the process of TRA (Brenda-marie, PI-F:25) and the White stranger who told Dirk that he was destroying the life of his TRA children by racially mixing the families (Diana and David-PI-F, p.2).

#### **7.6.5. Theme 4. Conclusion: Pursuing Acceptance, and the Innate Fear of Rejection**

Acceptance, rejection and the experience of loss are all well-documented emotive aspects of all forms of adoption (Brodzinsky, 2011; Gupta & Featherstone, 2020; Harlow, 2019; Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019; Neil, 2012; Rosnati & Ferrari, 2014; Snyder, 2012, 2017; Grotevant, 2017; Smit, 2002). However, loss of adoption privacy and the loss of access to culture and ethnic roots are challenges more specific to the TRA child and his or her family (Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019; Rosnati & Ferrari, 2014; Smith, 2002; Gupta & Featherstone, 2020; Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015; Mokomane & Rochat, 2012; Rochat *et al.*, 2016). All of these emotive facets may have a debilitating effect on the developing self-identity of the TRA child. The participating children in this study seem to have managed to limit the negative impact on their self-identity through actively acquiring social acuity, integrating their adoptive narrative into their life story and addressing adoptive loss positively. Cultural and ethnic loss do not appear to have an impact on the TRA child in middle childhood, but the literature (Thompson, 2005, Finlay, 2006; Jackson, 2018; Ramsey & Suyemoto, 2018) warns that such loss may become a problem as consciousness of race and culture develops (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016).

### **7.7. Theme 5. Intentional Parenting**

“En ja, toe het ons besef dat babas kom in huise deur normale geboorte, of deur ‘n keiser of deur aanneming en ek dink ons het ook toe besef dat... wil ons ouers wees, of wil ons ons eie biologiese DNA sien voortleef...en toe het ons besef ons wil ouers wees” (Atlegang, PI-F, p.2) (And yes, then we realised that children come into homes through normal delivery, or via a caesarean or by adoption,

and I think that's when we realised...do we want to be parents, or do we want our own biological DNA to survive?...And then we realised, we want to be parents).

The eight parents of the participating TRA children come from various walks of life and differ vastly in the personality traits they exhibited at the interview. However, their starting point was the same – they were all unable to have their own children, and following failed fertility treatments, made the conscious decision to adopt in order to become parents. This was their overriding need and motivation (AJ). Several more shared parental aspects of TRA were observed during my interactions with the families and are discussed below.

### **7.7.1. Subtheme 5.1. A Cognitive Approach to Parenting**

Seven of the parents held either a master's or PhD degree, and the eighth parent had extended tertiary medical training (biographical information). In their consideration and investigation prior to TRA, they admitted to being true to their academic nature, conducting extensive literature searches and interviewing people, such as social workers, involved in TRA.

Park (2012) identifies this sense of commitment and expansive data gathering with American parents considering international adoptions. Romanini (2017) and Jackson (2018) confirmed that parents contemplating TRA in South Africa were found to be exceptionally diligent in their preparation for the adoption and parenthood.

During the interviews, it became clear that after the adoption, they purposefully considered what they perceived as possible shortfalls in the children's lives owing to their TRA status, and attempted to compensate or provide a suitable substitution for shortcomings on an ongoing basis (FN):

In preparing a place and space for their TRA child, all the couples approached and explained their choice and decision to their extended families (AJ). Only Conrad and Corina's parents were in immediate accord with TRA, but they live in Europe and were not intimately involved in the rearing of the children. Blanche and Bryce were met with objections regarding race, while Adam, Anna, Dirk and Denise faced arguments relating to both race and religious concerns (AJ). The couples all insist that while their families' approval was important, they were steadfast in their decisions and would continue with the process. "Ons het die familie voorberei op 'n swart baba... dit was 'n tyd om gewoon te raak aan die idee... ons commit (sic) vir die lang termyn" (Atlegang-PI-M, p.1,3) (We prepared the family for a Black child... it was a time to get used to the idea (because) we commit for the long term). All couples concurred that they were prepared to lose their extended families rather than change their decision to adopt transracially if they found their families unwilling to welcome their children. "Die opsie is jy kry 'n kleinkind by of jy verloor jou kinders, that's it...ek

het net gesê, well if you don't like it, that is fine, dit is jou besluit, jou issues, nie myne nie (Brenda-marie, PI-M, p.3). (The options are that you either gain a grandchild, or lose your children, that's it...I just said, well if you don't like it, that is fine, it is your decision, your issues, not mine). The sense of commitment and purpose in establishing an accepting milieu prior to starting the process and meeting their TRA child demonstrates intentional and cognitive attentiveness, characteristic of the participating TRA parents (Camara, 2014).

Schools were deliberately chosen for their ability to accommodate and manage TRA sensitively. Atlegang was placed in a Christian school with a racially and socio-economically mixed population (PI-M, p.11). Brenda-marie was in a Christian school where hearing impaired children were included in a mainstream curriculum because her parents felt a high positive premium would be placed on empathy and uniqueness (PI-M, p.27). Despite financial constraints, Diana and David were in a Christian school with a mixed demography, and Dirk and Denise were adamant that they would not move their children. Diana was placed there after a failed placement in an all-Black school, when she began to withdraw from her adoptive family (PI-M, p.8, 9, 13) (See Ch 6, section 6.3.2.) The three Dutch children attended a school affiliated with their church, but their status was known to all the children and was no longer of interest to the other learners (BI-F; BI-M; TI p.2). The informed approach of the four couples to put their TRA children in a mixed school coincides with the findings of Park (2012), Bilodeau (2015), Soares *et al.* (2017, 2109) and Romanini (2017), who found that TRA children are most comfortable in a mixed demographic school setting, rather than a single race school.

- Park (2012) notes that TRA forces the adoptive parents to move out of their own cultural context to ensure their child's healthy self-identity development and to set the stage for positive race consciousness, as described by Nesdale *et al.* (2014), Hailey and Olson (2013), Tan and Liu, (2019) and Quintana (1998). While Bryce and Blanche attempted to give Brenda-marie a worldview (PI-M, p.5, 15; PI-F, p.15, 16), and Denise and Dirk focused on a family *and* worldview (PI-M, p.21), all four families have tried to include traditional Black music and food and expose the children to stories with powerful Black role models to enhance their experience of their Black race (Bilodeau, 2015).
- The parents were reportedly positive about their children's physical attributes and promoted their self-esteem by complimenting them frequently (PRS). Dirk and Bryce both spent hours in a traditional Black hairdressing salon as their daughter's hair was braided (Diana-PI-F, p.19; Brenda-marie-PI-M, p.12, 13). Romanini (2017), Dos Santos and Wagner (2018) and Jackson (2018) found White South African TRA parents to be eager to improve their knowledge of caring for their Black

children's skin and hair, a need also expressed by the participants of this research (Brenda-marie, PI-M, p.12, 13; Atlegang, PI-M, p.14). "Hierdie hare is 'n major ding... we have to enter into their world" (Diana-PI-M, p.19).(This hair is a major thing...we have to enter into their world). These words mimic the findings of Marco (2012, p.10) that "Hair is socially embedded and historically represented in Black (South African) society as well as in contemporary society where there remains (sic) political and colonial undertones". The desire for more appropriate and accurate caring for physical attributes reflects the parents' cognitive approach to their children's race and the differences inherent in each race (FN).

- These eight parents remained purposeful in their introduction of prominent and successful Black people to prevent "modelling" (Tanga & Nyasha, 2017, p.235). Modelling occurs as children assign social and employment status according to race, such as a Black domestic worker and a White doctor, based on their social interactions. Bilodeau (2015), Tanga and Nyasha (2017) and Kausi (2014), in assessing South African perspectives on TRA, found that the community considered interaction with prominent and dynamic Black role models to be one of the most positive aspects of TRA.
- According to the Parental Response Scales and evidenced by the children's advanced verbal skills and teacher's descriptions, the parents spent much time discussing thought-provoking and potentially sensitive subjects with their children. They discussed aspects of adoption and race as the opportunity arose to equip their children with a better understanding and the skills to manage challenges pertaining to TRA. This more contemporary approach refutes the earlier findings regarding TRA and family discussions. Formerly, Marr (2011), Finlay (2006), Ferrari *et al.* (2015), Chang *et al.* (2017), Dos Santos and Wagner (2018) and Dunbar *et al.* (2016) found that many TRA parents perceived themselves as colour blind. According to Bilodeau (2015, p.21), "colour blind childrearing is a method of raising a child that does not bring attention to their race. Oftentimes, (colour blind) parents will highlight that 'we are all the same' or that 'colour doesn't matter'". More recently, the interviewed participating parents rejected this idea, stating that race always matters "every day and in every way" (Hall & Steinberg, 2013, p.15), especially in South Africa. They prefer to focus on "colour-conscious child rearing" (Bilodeau, 2015, p.21), where family discussions on race and prejudice are commonplace and where positive images, such as stories, dolls, images and role models, are shown to the children. The purpose is to instil a positive sense of racial identity and promote a healthy self-identity, as well as to improve TRA family cohesion (Gupta & Featherstone, 2020; Morgan & Langrehr, 2019; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). These discussions also provide for

the acquisition of effective coping strategies against racial prejudice and microaggressions (Morgan & Langrehr, 2019; Godon-Decoteau *et al.*, 2018; Gupta & Featherstone, 2020).

- Despite finding it hard to share her son's affections with an absent biological mother, Corine provided Chad with as much detail as possible to augment his adoption narrative (PI-F, p.15; PI-M, p.15, 16). The parents related mainly positive stories about the biological mothers and intuitively emphasised the "taken away" rather than "given up" component of adoption to limit feelings of abandonment and loss (See Ch 7, section 7.6.5.) (Neil, 2012). They also gave visual and tangible evidence of the children's journey to facilitate positive adoption exploration, and in so doing, equipped their children with a positive sense of self and effective coping strategies (Grotevant *et al.*, 2017).

These indications of intentional parenting were present in all the participating families and exhibited the parents' persistent and cognisant approach to parenting. While they admitted to employing a cognitive approach, it was also observed that these parents possessed a robust ideology that they used in their daily functioning as people and parents.

### 7.7.2. *Subtheme 5.2. Parental Ideology*

#### 7.7.2.1. **Belief System**

With the exception of Brenda-marie's family, the families were explicit about their Christianity and very active within the church and community. Conrad is an ordained minister (BI) and Adam and Anna hosted regular Christian cell group meetings which Atlegang was free to join. "Hulle sien hoe belangrik dit in ons lewens is... Atlegang is baie lief vir Bybelstories en hy bid baie goed" (PI-M, p.13) (They see how important it is in our lives... Atlegang loves Bible stories, and he is very good at praying). Dirk and Denise are church leaders in their religious community (BI, AJ).

These three families went about their daily activities using their Christian faith as a guiding principle and also raised their children to be religious. In the projections of Chad, Cassidy and Carlo, faith appeared to play a very dominant and positive role in their lives (KFD-Cassidy, Chad, Carlo). Diana and David's family was one of five TRA families in the big church they attended, and they enjoyed the social interactions generated by the church (Diana and David, PI-M, p.15; PI-F, p.15).

Although Blanche and Bryce are not religious, their children were in a religious school and attended the celebrations of faith at school. Brenda-marie was reported to have a very well-developed moral consciousness and enjoyed the pronounced spiritual life of her school (SB, TI, p1,2).

Blanche was a self-professed feminist and insisted on raising her daughters with feminism as an ideological guideline. "So ek is nou weer baie meer 'n feminis. Vir my is dit belangrik om te weet dat

vrouens allerhande goed kan doen en nie die kleur nie - dis meer waarop ek sal kyk” (Brenda-marie, PI-M, p.27). (I am much more of a feminist; it’s important for me to know that women can do all sorts of things, and not the colour, that’s more what I will see to).

Irrespective of their differing ideologies, these parents followed a robust belief system to raise, educate, prepare and protect their children.

#### 7.7.2.2. Altruism

Zhang and Lee (2011) note that there is always an intrinsic element of altruism present in adoptive parents. Camara (2014) found that the South African community often considered TRA from a “rescue perspective” (P.78), a viewpoint that the TRA parents of this study found disagreeable.

“Is dit jou kinders? Jissie, jy doen ‘n goeie ding.” Dit is nie my social programme nie! These are my children, so thank you for your thoughts on this but you are wrong. This is my family; I’m doing these kids no favours and don’t give them a better opportunity in life...I am their daddy...we are privileged to have children. Ons kinders het ons kom red van ’n kinderlose lewe, I’m not saving them from anything” (Diana and David, PI-F:20, quoting an example of a public interaction) ((They say: Are those your children? Jeez (sic), you’re doing a good thing! (And I reply:) This is not my social programme, these are my children, so thank you for your thoughts, but on this you are wrong...This is my family; I’m doing these kids no favours and don’t give them a better opportunity in life... I am their daddy... we are privileged to have children. Our children saved us from a childless life).

In similar vein, Conrad, when speaking about his three children: “When we adopted (them), we did not intend to make a statement, but because we love them and wanted to give them a home” (Cassidy-PI-AJ).

Anna said that she had wanted a child. It was her need, and not an altruistic conviction, that moved her to adopt, but added that she knew from the outset that it would be a TRA child, since God had indicated to her that she should take care of orphans: “Dis wat Hy in Sy woord sê, en in Suid Afrika dink ek is dit duidelik genoeg dis waarop die nood lê... by die swart kinders (Atlegang, PI-M, p.2).(That is what He says in His word, and in South Africa I think it is clear that this where the need exists – with the Black children).

While the parents rejected the notion of rescuing a child, they were also angered by people’s response that the adopted children were “lucky” and should be grateful for their new opportunities. Several authors (Gupta and Featherstone, 2020, Soares *et al.*, 2017, Grotevant *et al.*, 2017 and Brodzinsky, 2011) argue that this often-observed community approach makes it difficult for the adopted children to express contrary feelings, augments their sense of loss and confusion and compromises their self-identity development. The TRA parents in this study appear to be vocal in

setting the community members to rights and encouraging their children to explore their adoptive losses and emotions through communication and intra-family discussions.

### 7.7.3. *Subtheme 5.3. Heightened Racial and Social Awareness*

While the parents and their heightened social and racial awareness did not directly relate to the young TRA's developing self-identity, the acquired knowledge equipped them with more information and skills to guide their children as they negotiated the social and racial challenges of TRA and put interventions in place within the community that were favourable to healthy self-identity development.

In interviews with TRA mothers and transracial foster mothers, Dos Santos and Wagner (2018) identified five racial aspects that these mothers commonly encounter:

- resistance of their own parental and extended family,
- their TRA children being referred to in derogatory terms,
- being subjected to difficult questions by adults and other children,
- the acquisition of a Black language, and
- the ability of White people to look after Black children's hair.

Camara (2014) concurs with these findings and adds that TRA parents are often subjected to negative non-verbal cues from members of the public and accusations of having robbed the child of his or her culture. This supports the findings of Mosikatsana (2003), Gerrand and Nathane-Taulela (2015) and Tanga and Nyasha (2017) that Black opposition to TRA is based mainly on perceived loss/theft of culture and the child's access to forefathers and their guidance (See Ch 2, section 2.3.1.).

Brenda-marie's parents were not aware of racism until they adopted their daughter (Brenda-marie, PI-F, p.25). They subsequently developed a heightened sensitivity, particularly to latent racism encountered (although infrequently) within both the Black and White community (PI-M, p.25, 26). Blanche cited an example where the derogatory term "ape" (PI-M, p.25) (monkeys) was used to describe Black children in her presence. When confronted, the perpetrator claimed humour as his subject, rather than racism. Dos Santos and Wagner (2018) refer to this as an attempt to legitimate the racial conversation.

Adam and Anna acknowledged their own lack of knowledge of the Black race before adopting Atlegang and his younger brother. They were unaware that Black skin had different shades prior to adopting their two sons and did not appreciate its diversity (PI-M, p.8). Adam praised his children for their spontaneous accommodation and appreciation of human diversity and colour and admitted that he had to do some introspection about his own racial convictions once he had adopted Atlegang. "Ons

het gedink ons is nie rassiste nie - tot jy 'n kind van 'n ander kleur in jou huis het... en dan besef jy daar is goeters wat jy nie eers geweet het in jou eie hart is nie, wat uitkom, dan besef jy, jy was tog bevooroordeeld,... dis 'n groeiproses vir ons ook” (Atlegang-PI-F, p.14-15) (We thought we were not racists, until you have a child of another colour in your house...and then you realise that there are things in your heart that you didn't even know of...then you realise, you were prejudiced... it is a process of growth for us too).

For all the prospective adoptive parents, complete acceptance of their prospective TRA children by the extended family was a non-negotiable condition for ensuring continued family relationships. The extended families were informed of the decision to adopt *before* the onset of the process and given the opportunity to come to terms with the couple's decisions.

Language skills and the importance of learning a Black language, as well as microaggressions and difficult questions pertaining to TRA, were addressed at length in the previous sections.

While the ability to care adequately for a child of another race remains a contentious subject, the TRA parents of this research continue to exhibit a willingness to learn to bridge the gap in their knowledge about physical attributes and to shift their frame of reference to accommodate cultural and ethnic shortfalls.

#### 7.7.4. *Theme 5 Conclusion: Intentional Parenting*

The eight TRA parents were intentional in their parenting of their TRA children. They tried to preempt what might, within the family and community systems, have been viewed as detrimental to the development of the child's self-identity within their chosen ideologies, by –

- facilitating interfamily acceptance as far as possible,
- purposefully choosing and creating an accommodating school milieu,
- attempting to provide for perceived shortfalls in their children's cultural exposure,
- mitigating losses related to adoption by communicating and fostering a sense of permanence,
- promoting exploration of the adoption through augmented adoptive narratives, and
- trying to equip their children with the necessary coping strategies to address TRA demands in South Africa.

The couples had undergone treatment for infertility, but without success. Becoming parents was their primary motivation for exploring other available options. All of them were open to TRA, since there were more than 500 000 Black babies that would benefit from adoption or long-term care (NACSA/Add-option, 2020). While they described their TRA journey as an ongoing learning process



(Atlegang-PI-F, p.14), they appeared to be in agreement that the journey had been “worth it!” (Cassidy-PI-AJ).

## 7.8. Theme 6. Teaching A TRA Child in a Tolerant and Sensitive Environment

*“There is in every child, at every stage, a new miracle of vigorous unfolding which constitutes a new hope and a new responsibility for all” (Erik Erikson, 1950)*

Children’s primary caregivers provide early self-identity development within a familiar, safe and consistent environment before Grade 1. However, schools have a new, strange and demanding culture, with specific challenges and requirements. Criteria for success and failure at school differ from the criteria at home, and new goals, skills and social and personal limits must be learned and internalised within a larger and unfamiliar community through work, play and socialisation (Erikson, 1963; McAdams, 2013).

To address these challenges, as well as more socially complex tasks such as bridging group membership through multifaceted criteria, TRA children need to be assured of belonging through focused interventions and the management of a visible adoptive status (See Ch 2, section 2.4.7. &2.5.5; Ch.3, section 2.4.3.). (Erikson, 1963 : Smit, 2002 Snyder, 2017 ; Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019; Rosnati & Ferrari, 2014; Ferrari *et al.*, 2015) .

Racially, culturally and socially diverse people within the larger school community now bear the responsibility of nurturing the self-identity of the developing young child in the absence of constant parental involvement. Erikson notes that while this is a very demanding developmental phase, school is vital to self-identity development, since children cannot develop physically, socially, and emotionally in the absence of significant influences within the community (Erikson, 1963).

Teachers and fellow learners form the backbone of this school environment. Seven teachers were interviewed for the purpose of this research. All the teachers were White women of varying ages. Two spoke Dutch, one was English and the other four teachers were Afrikaans. Five of them were married and had children of their own, while two were still single and without children.

Despite the initial unstructured format of the interviews, the following comparable findings were made:

- The TRA children under their tutelage exhibited superior communication skills, were described as outgoing, spontaneous, happy, friendly, talkative, well-liked and very confident; five of them exhibited leadership qualities. They were also mostly considered empathetic and able to observe and respond to other children’s needs (Atlegang, TI, p.1, 7; Brenda-marie, TI, p.1, 5; Cassidy, TI, p.3;

Carlo, TI, p.1, 2, 7, 8; Diana, TI, p.1, 2; David, TI, p.1, 4). Chad was considered quieter, but still exhibited a good sense of humour, confidence and an easy social demeanour (Chad, TI, p.1, 2, 3).

- “Sy is ‘n opgewonde jong graad 1, (sy’s) net soos al die ander maatjies” (Brenda-marie, TI, p.1) She is an excited, young Grade 1... she’s just all the other little friends). Atlegang was described as a little boy typical of all the other boys in his class, “‘n tipiese maatjie” (Atlegang, TI, p.2). “Hy is ‘n oulike kind... hy cope goed met sy omstandighede... ek dink dis die liefde en so wat sy ma en sy pa vir hom gee... en ook die feit dat hy nie anders hanteer word nie, by die huis en die skool, dink ek maak dit makliker vir hom” (David, TI, p.6) (He is a cute child...he copes well with his circumstances... I think it is the love that his mother and father give him, and the fact that he is not treated differently at home or at school, I think, makes it easier for him). These remarks were consistent with the viewpoint of the other teachers. The TRA children did not differ in their behaviour or presentation of themselves from their fellow classmates in any way. Carlo had observable behavioural problems that were probably not directly attributable to his adoptive status, but rather to a developmental disorder (Carlo-TI, p.2, 7, 8-12).
- The participating families were described as being very involved with their children and their schooling as well as with school-related social programmes. The teachers perceived communication between the school and the parents as positively reciprocal and attributed the observed wellbeing and stability portrayed by the kids in part to their involvement (Chad, Cassidy, Carlo-TI, p.12, 17; David, Diana-TI, p.1, 2; Brenda-marie, TI, p.3, 10; Atlegang, TI, p.4).
- While the participating children did not exhibit any attributes that distinguished them from their classmates, the seven teachers concurred that they were aware of the children’s TRA status and the potential to unwittingly evoke emotional trauma through subject or family discussions. Atlegang’s teacher stated that she was sensitive to all contentious social situations, as she had children with varied family situations, socio-economic challenges and adopted children in her class (Atlegang, PI, p.8, 9). Chad, Carlo and Cassidy’s teachers added positive visual aids to cultural discussions to boost cultural pride and discuss varying family perspectives from a Christian point of view (Chad, Carlo, Cassidy-TI, p.1-3, 14-15). The teachers of David (TI, p.5), Diana (TI, 5-8) and Brenda-marie (TI, p.8, 10) preferred to address situations as they arose, but added that they remained mindful while they taught subjects that might have emotionally disturbing content.
- Although the teachers agreed on the above-mentioned aspects of teaching a TRA child, the aspect they were most resolute about was the choice of school for a child with a visible adoptive status. They were adamant that the school environment had to be positive and accepting. David’s teacher stated that their school focused on love for each other, for God and community and a lot of grace,

providing for acceptance and accommodation of differences (TI, p.2). Likewise, Diana's teacher noted that the Christian school provided a "more forgiving" and "accepting" setting (TI, p.8, 9). The other children's teachers expressed similar viewpoints. Brenda-marie's teacher (TI, 9, 10) and Atlegang's teacher (TI, p.4, 5) added that using their previous teaching experience, TRA children in a school with less emphasis on Christianity-based teachings and a single culture, either Black or White, would be less easily accepted. They considered a mixed demographic and mixed socio-economic pupil population in an environment that promoted love and acceptance as the optimal school environment for young TRA children.

In summary, the teachers viewed TRA children as "typical" children, happy, outgoing and well adjusted. The teachers had not observed any difficulty with positive group membership, and all the children seemed well liked and had a diverse and accommodating circle of friends based more on current activity than on gender or race. They appeared to be more empathetic and responsive to other children's needs than their peers. The families were involved in the school and its variety of activities, making for positive reciprocal relationships.

Although they considered their TRA children indistinguishable from the rest of the class, the teachers remained cognisant of the positive emotional content of certain subjects or tasks, such as family drawings. They attempted to address these possible problems through sensitivity, keen observation and immediate management as the need arose, as well as by cultivating open relationships to enable the children to seek them out for clarification or discussion.

For all seven teachers, the most salient point in accommodating a TRA child was the appropriate choice of school. They rejected the idea of a single-race, single-culture school, advocating instead a mixed school with positive values such as love, grace and acceptance.

## **7.9. Conclusion. Interpreting and Describing the World of the TRA Child**

To explore, interpret and describe the self-identity of the early school going Black TRA child in South Africa, it is necessary to construct and assign meaning to the community with which he or she engages as it is experienced, since it is in this space and context that his or her personal and social self-identity develops (See Ch 4, section 4.2.1.) (Creswell, 2012; Sefotho, 2018; Gaus, 2017). This was done using the lived experiences of the seven participating TRA children in their larger social community as recounted by the parents and teachers, as well as their projections in the psychometric assessments and my understanding and interpretation of what the families shared with me.

Although each of these TRA children had a unique story to tell, it is the shared findings of the children, and their families, that allows interpretation and description of the world they engage with and in which their self-identity is nurtured and formed. All seven babies were placed in safety care after being initially removed or given up by the mother, thus losing access to their biological family. Suffice to say that the reasons for placing children in care were mostly socio-economic and that all the infants had an absent biological father (See Ch 2, section 2.2.1.). Reportedly, all the children, with the exception of Carlo, had the opportunity to bond with their place-of-safety mothers and continued to view their presence in their adoptive journey as positive. Since a modicum of trust had already been established, attachment and trust continued to develop between the baby and adoptive parents, providing an essential base for preliminary self-identity development and positive social interactions (See Ch 3, section 3.4) (Bowlby, 1969; Erikson, 1963, 1968; Knight, 2017).

By preschool age, all children appeared to have established secure attachments and good interpersonal relationships with their parents and siblings as well as their extended families, despite some initial familial trepidation. The toddlers and very young children were reportedly happy and mostly well adjusted, with incremental episodes of withdrawal (Diana) and anxiety (Brenda-marie) which were attended to timeously. Their social environments were somewhat protected, and their parents were intentional in the structuring of situations and managing potential socially awkward confrontations – they chose locations and social places that they considered favourable for their TRA children and acted as a buffer when their children were questioned regarding their visible adoptive status. They also absorbed and addressed any negative feedback regarding TRA.

As the toddlers progressed to preschool, their social world became more unpredictable and parental protection more permeable. The children had the opportunity to defend their “real” parents and question their intrafamilial and visible physical differences, but were still secure in their attachment, since they were concrete in their assessments, making their home and family absolute and trustworthy (Piaget, 1929). The parents were mostly still in control, and the children did not yet have to rely solely on their own (immature) coping strategies and social skills to deal with TRA confrontations and questions (Voigt *et al.*, 2018; Zembar & Blume, 2009; Finestone, 2014).

After preschool, the six to ten-year-olds came to “big school” with the assurance and expectation that they were loved and belonged to the only family they knew. Together with all other children, they began to deal with academic and social challenges and needed to perform well enough to be considered competent. However, unlike other children, the TRA children have an intrinsic fear that if not deemed “good enough”, or inferior (Erikson, 1968), they might lose their place in the family; an improbable situation for a biological child living with his or her biological family (Soares *et al.*, 2017, 2019).

Smit (2002) notes that a TRA child makes continuous and concerted efforts to be viewed “a keeper” as opposed to “I wasn’t a keeper” in the event of placement failure (Smit, 2002, p.143). The TRA child begins to actively and intuitively cultivate characteristics that define him or her as a keeper and ensure his or her continued acceptance and promote a sense of belonging. Acceptance and belonging are present in all themes identified in the Thematic analysis and appear to be persistent and dynamic motivators in the psychological development of a TRA child.

Beyond their academic aspirations to be considered “good enough”, expressed in their DAPs and indicated by their depicted feelings of inferiority due to their lack of mathematical prowess (Diana, David, Atlegang, Brenda-marie and Carlo), the children also cultivate characteristics and social skills that make them more amenable and attractive to others.

This ensures access to others and increases acceptance across generations and genders. They were spontaneous and friendly, verbally strong and showed an innate sense of compassion. They were quick to forgive because belonging was more important than harbouring a grievance (Atlegang, PI-M, p.9, 10; Brenda-marie, PI-M, p.19). They showed only limited gender preference (Diana and Brenda-marie) and no preference for race. In colloquial terms, “they put themselves out there”.

As social interactions become more complex and play assumes elements of competition and co-operation in school (Piaget, 1929; Voigt *et al.*, 2018; Zembar & Blume, 2009; Finestone, 2014), the TRA children are confronted with racial scenarios of “them” and “us”, with no clear demarcation or understanding whether they are “them” or “us”. To skirt this confusion and feel secure in group membership, they join a group based on appealing and shared activities and disregard the traditional age-related categorisation based on gender and race (Nesdale *et al.*, 2004, 2014; Shutts, 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Rutland *et al.*, 2017). They simultaneously address the social and identity-affirming challenge of belonging to a desired group and ensure that their identity motivators (continuity, distinctiveness, purpose, belonging, self-worth and self-efficacy) remain intact (See Ch 3, section 3.5.2.) (Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010, 2012).

The challenges at school continue. Without comprehending South Africa’s history of racial discord and socio-economic disparities as well as its residual emotions, they must negotiate a mixed-race community that may be prejudiced against them, their families and the practice of TRA, necessitating appropriate coping strategies to protect their developing self-identity (Tanga & Nyasha, 2017; Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015; Mosikatsana, 2003; Romanini, 2017).

Because of the colour of their skin, they are expected to be able to speak a language that is foreign to them and to have an intuitive understanding of Black culture, the lack of which results in a barrier between them and those that look like them. They also have to consider their place and viewpoint in potentially emotive school subjects such as History and Life Orientation or contemporary social

occurrences such as Blacklivesmatter, where either the Black or White race may be negatively presented (Mayeza & Vincent, 2019; Morgan & Langrehr, 2019; Syed & McLean, 2017).

While the TRA children in this study enjoyed large social gatherings (Parental Response Scale), strangers at these events could ask confrontational questions and unwittingly commit microaggressions. For example, as a TRA child stands near his or her parents, a stranger, noting the absence of Black adults, may ask the child where his or her family is, challenging his or her sense of permanence and place in the family without malicious intent.

At such events, racial slurs and cultural insults are sometimes delivered, phrased as a joke in an attempt to make them less offensive (Dos Santos & Wagner, 2018; Brenda-marie, PI-M, p.25). The parents of these seven children stated that they mostly confronted such incidents and microaggressions as and when they became aware of them. However, it seemed that the children in this study, with their advanced communication skills, integrated adoptive identities, sense of belonging, positive group membership and the benefit of intentional parenting had formulated positive responses to these questions and microaggressions and limited the negative impact on their developing self-identities.

Something as mundane as prescribed hair styles or the prerequisite of a particular hairstyle for a school concert may trigger a significant emotional response if not managed with sensitivity (Brenda-marie PI-M, p.12, 13; PI-F, p.13). While the schools the TRA children attended had been chosen with care, such incidents still occurred, resulting in a need for the accelerated development of skills and coping strategies to protect their personal and social identity from attack.

Despite the ongoing TRA-related challenges, the children appeared confident in their “own skin(s)” (Atlegang, PI-M, p.8). This is a necessary counterbalance to the nonverbal cues and voiced opinions of the public encountered by the TRA child and his or her family as they engage with the larger community.

Dirk and Denise stated they were deliberately physically demonstrative with David and Diana in public spaces (PI-F, p.2, 13, 20) so as to emphasise their interfamilial relationships. Anna, who is fair of hair and skin colour, remembered that a Black stranger, struggling to make sense of a White woman cuddling her dark-skinned little baby, Atlegang, in a shopping mall, approached her and said “Sjo, (sic), his father must be very dark” (Atlegang, PI-M, p2). Conrad and Corina admitted that they never admonished Chad, Cassidy and Carlo in a public space, as they feared reprisal and judgement. People would assume that White people were disciplining another (Black) family’s child. “In elk geval wil hulle weet – dis nie julle biologiese kinders nie, nou hoekom raas jy dan met hulle?” (Chad, Cassidy, Carlo, PI-M, p.3) (In any case, they want to know, these are not your biological children, so why are you scolding them?).

There appears to be an intrusion into expected family privacy and anonymity in public spaces, as a TRA family is consistently subjected to social scrutiny. They are viewed as an anomaly (Smit, 2002; Snyder, 2017; Romanini, 2017). Their actions and intentions as a family are public knowledge, and while most public responses are positive in content, they are still invasive. An evening out at a family restaurant will invariably include a stranger asking the TRA family: “Are these your kids?” (Diana and David, PI-F, p.2), reminding the children that their membership of this family has been legally manufactured and is not a matter of biology. These constant reminders of their observable adoptive status necessitate the exploration and successful integration of their adoptive identity into their developing self-identity.

Frank discussions of unique subjects form part of the TRA family’s conversations around dinner tables. “Daddy, will I become the same colour as you? Why am I a different colour (Diana, PI-F, p.13) and “Maar ek is anders (as julle)” (Chad, Cassidy, Carlo, PI-F, p.6) (But I am different from you). These emotive discussions are necessary for the children to firstly, understand that they belong to the family, irrespective of any differences); secondly, to have continuity and purpose, and thirdly, to promote their sense of worth and efficacy, so that their self-identity development can continue to flourish (Morgan & Langrehr, 2019; Gupta & Featherstone, 2020; Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010, 2012). Perhaps it is in acknowledgement of their young age that all the families referred to the desirability of being “chocolate, caramel and vanilla” in these discussions (see Chapters 5 and 6).

While non-adoptive children are able to track their entrance into the world with photos and family history, the (TRA) adoptive children rely on their adoptive parents to augment their knowledge of their adoptive journey and provide the “bits and pieces” (Levinge, 2015, p.92) of their lives. As they page through their adoptive journals in search of colour and details of their brief birth synopsis, their adoptive parents must respond to questions to which the answer is not always known. Cassidy and Carlo had no pictures, letters or names that linked them to their biological families (AJ). Cassidy expressed this profound loss through ambivalent responses. On a cognitive level, she asked many questions pertaining to adoption; emotionally, she withdrew when family-related activities or discussions arose at school (Cassidy-TI, p.4, 5, 6; PI-M, p.6, 7).

Although none of the children exhibited any significant emotional trauma directly attributable to adoption in their psychometric assessment, Thomson (2005) and Du Plessis and Naude (2017) warn that adolescence is a difficult phase for children with any untoward circumstances influencing their self-identity. It is with this intuitive concern in mind that the TRA parents continued to make pre-emptive decisions to safeguard their children’s self-identity. Schools were chosen for their accommodation of TRA and the values that make TRA acceptable. They remained actively involved

in the children's schooling, nurturing reciprocal relationships with the teachers and trying to substitute what they perceived as shortfalls such as cultural exposure and knowledge of dynamic Black role models. In the world of the TRA child, this means an enthusiastic attempt to dress up in traditional African costumes and taste African food (Chad, Cassidy, Carlo), play "African" music (Atlegang, Carlo) and purposefully seek out friendships with other Black families (Atlegang, Diana, David, Chad, Carlo, Cassidy).

Despite these differences in the world of the TRA child, much of his or her day-to-day interactions and social demands are comparable to those of his or her fellow schoolmates. This may be what the parents strove for when they reiterated that TRA was not a social programme (Diana, David, PI-F, p.20) or used to make a statement (Conrad-AJ), but rather a way to become parents and form a family (Atlegang, PI-F, p2). In light of this, being considered "n tipiese maatjie" (Atlegang, TI, p.2) (a typical friend) is a measure of great success.

In the following chapter, Chapter 8, the summary, conclusions and recommendations are made, based on the findings, interpretations and discussion contained in this chapter.



## Chapter 8 Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

### **BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONTENT-CHAPTER 8**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **STUDY SYNOPSIS PER CHAPTER**

#### **SYNOPSIS OF CURRENT LITERATURE**

#### **SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS OF THIS WORK**

- Findings pertaining to TRA children
- Findings pertaining to the TRA parents
- Findings pertaining to the teachers of TRA children

#### **CONCLUSIONS (RESEARCH QUESTIONS)**

##### **Secondary research questions**

- How do the adoptive parents describe their engaged world as a TRA family?
- How does the teacher of a young transracially adopted child describe the adoptees' self-identity?
- What are the systemic predictors for a healthy self-identity in the early school going TRA Black child?
- What are the individual predictors for a healthy self-identity in the early school going transracially adopted Black child?

##### **Primary research question**

- How does the self-identity present in the young school going Black TRA child?

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Recommendations for parents
- Recommendations for teachers and schools
- General recommendations
- Recommendations for future TRA research

#### **POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH**

- Theoretical contributions
- Practical contributions
- Conclusions

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

#### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

### 8.1. Introduction

Transracial adoption is becoming an increasingly frequent occurrence in South Africa. It addresses the desperate need of a large, vulnerable and adoptable Black child population, since Black people appear reluctant to adopt children and helps White couples seeking to adopt a child. TRA is not free from intrinsic social and legal hindrances or community driven, familial and personal problems. However, although not a study with significant statistical numbers, the present research has shown that many of the problems foreseen in TRA do not occur by middle childhood, and that acquired social skills and timeous and focused strategies can limit the negative aspects of TRA in South Africa.

This chapter concludes the research with a synopsis of the findings. Conclusions based on the existing literature research and the study-specific themes emerging from Thematic analysis are briefly mentioned (they were comprehensively discussed in the previous chapter). The research questions are addressed, the four secondary questions augmenting the primary research question.

The strengths of the study, as well as its limitations and contributions, are identified and recommendations for appropriate management and possible therapeutic interventions are provided for

social workers, parents and teachers to promote optimal self-identity development in the TRA child. Lastly, further areas of research are proposed to augment the understanding of TRA in South Africa.

## 8.2. Study Synopsis Per Chapter

In **Chapter 1**, TRA was defined and statistics relevant to adoptable Black children and prospective adoptive parents were given to place TRA in a South African context. The purpose, aim and rationale of the research were explained, and key concepts were clarified. The primary research question, dealing only with the description of the TRA child and his or her self-identity, and the four subsequent, more exploratory questions were formulated. A preliminary literature review, serving as a guideline for a more comprehensive information search, and reasons for the choice of qualitative research methods were provided. Lastly, the provision in the event of heinous discovery was noted.

**Chapter 2** dealt specifically with the relevant aspects of race and adoption in TRA. Firstly, reasons were provided to justify my viewpoint that TRA in South Africa differs significantly from TRA and international adoption practices worldwide. Secondly, the pervasive racial awareness and current residual racial tension in South Africa, together with the historical racial segregation that characterised apartheid South Africa, provided context to TRA. Racial development was explained with reference to racial awareness and racial preference using mainly the models provided by Quintana (1998), Shutts (2015), Shutts et al. (2011, 2013), Olson et al. (2012) and Nesdale et al. (2004, 2014). The concepts of prejudice and developing group membership in the young child were expounded.

Adoption, with a brief overview of the history of adoption and South African adoption law, was also described in this chapter. The adoptive identity model, initially proposed by Grotevant (1997) and Grotevant et al. (2017) and supported by Brodzinsky (2011) and Brodzinsky and Smith (2018), together with a rich description of the adoptive child and his or her experiences of adoption-related losses, were noted. In conclusion, I described a Black TRA child in South Africa using these two emotive discourses of race and adoption.

**Chapter 3** consists predominantly of well-known developmental theories which provided a conceptual framework to explain the development of both the personal and social identity of the TRA child. These theories followed a tabulated overview of the expected development of a child in middle childhood. Using the attachment theory, based on the work of Bowlby (1969) and Bell and Ainsworth (1972) and the psychosocial theory of Erikson (1963, 1968, 1980), the development of a child's personal identity was explained. The social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Tajfel (1981) and Breakwell's (1986) identity process theory provided the framework for social identity

development. A graphic representation and description allowed a conceptual integrated framework from which the self-identity of the TRA child could be described.

Research design and methodology formed the focal points of **Chapter 4**. Social constructivism and interpretivism were identified as the working paradigmatic assumptions and the research design of collective/multiple case studies was discussed. Strategies for sampling and data collection and for ensuring data quality and verification were examined. The process of Thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) and Kiger and Varpio (2020), was described comprehensively and illustrated with a flow chart. The chapter concluded with the ethical considerations taken into account for this research, as well as my role as researcher.

**Chapter 5** and **Chapter 6** presented the data as collected from the various sources. The parental interviews, their completed questionnaires, the interviews with the teachers and the completed CBCL forms, as well as the psychometric assessments of the children (conducted by an independent psychologist) formed the body of data. Presented as a narrative to describe the child, it included all necessary references; and where indicated, verbatim quotes. Examples of the child's psychometric assessment were provided to illustrate and augment the findings. Lastly, using the prescriptions of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) and Kiger and Varpio (2020), initial codes for preliminary patterns and possible interrelationships were tabulated from the body of data collected for each child. Chapter 5 covered the children who did not have other TRA siblings but fit the inclusion criteria for this study, while Chapter 6 described the children whose families consisted of more than one qualifying TRA child.

Themes and subthemes were identified in **Chapter 7** using social constructivism and interpretivism as chosen philosophical paradigms and Thematic analysis to manage the data and identify themes. The emergent themes and subthemes were discussed at length and linked to the existing data. Where there was an unexpected finding, efforts were made to find supporting information. Findings pertaining to the TRA child enjoyed the sharpest focus, but there were also significant findings relating to the parents of TRA children as well as the teachers involved in the schooling of TRA children. These findings have special importance in the drafting of recommendations for parents and teachers of TRA children.

**Chapter 8** concludes the study with a summary, conclusions and recommendations of the research and the strengths and limitations of the study. Answers to the research questions are formulated and areas for future research are proposed.

### 8.3. Synopsis of Current Literature

With five hundred thousand vulnerable children in need of care in South Africa, an alternative approach to traditional adoptive practices in South Africa is needed. TRA is gathering momentum in view of the scarcity of prospective Black adoptive parents, a significant number of prospective White adoptive parents and the overwhelming number of Black babies and children needing placement.

International adoptions and TRA in first world countries (Chapter 2) have been researched to some extent, but this research cannot be applied to South African TRA unconditionally due to certain pivotal differences. South Africa, marred by decades of enforced racial segregation and ongoing residual tension, is the only country where members of the racial minority adopt children from the majority race. TRA is also considered only as a last resort, being viewed as culturally and ethnically unfavourable (Chapter 2.2).

It is within this contentious milieu that TRA and its ramifications for the self-identity of the young school going Black child are considered as he or she enters the larger and more diverse community of school. Middle childhood, for all children, is characterised by the acquisition of many personal, cognitive and social skills set out in tabulated form in Chapter 3.1.). These attainments change the understanding and experience of TRA for the adopted child and his or her non-adopted peers as they progress to abstract reasoning, prioritise group affiliations, gain physical independence and increase emotional and racial awareness and variances. Latent childhood is all about procuring skills and coping strategies that are specific to promoting healthy self-identity.

Achieving a sense of competence through industry, attaining membership within a perceived ingroup, maintaining self-worth and self-efficacy and garnering and sustaining a sense of belonging and continued acceptance in healthy interpersonal relationships are all conducive to the wellbeing of the developing personal and social identity as expounded in the personal and social developmental theories described in Chapter 3.

Literature pertaining to TRA adolescents in South Africa found that the teenagers had difficulty integrating their ethnic and racial origins with their TRA identity, with resulting interpersonal problems and racial identity confusion. This begged the question as to whether these teenagers had enjoyed a healthy self-identity prior to the ethnic confusion and ensuing emotional distress, and whether there were earlier symptoms of a self-identity under threat. In the dearth of supporting literature, these considerations served as the point of departure for the current work.

## 8.4. Synopsis of Research Findings in this Work

Following the Thematic analysis, four main themes pertaining to the children were identified, a fifth concerning intentional parenting and a sixth pertaining to teachers' perceptions (Chapter 7).

### 8.4.1. *Findings Pertaining to the TRA Children*

Despite varied content, the four TRA child-specific themes indicated the primary identity motivators and end goals to be the promotion of their acceptance, both individually and socially, and the nurturing and sustaining of a sense of belonging. These motivators were not limited to the immediate family but extended to the larger community. The need to belong and to gain acceptance is well documented in the case of adopted children generally. However, the present research indicated the distinctive and novel strategies TRA children employed to deal with their clearly demarcated separateness from their families and engaged communities to procure the necessary acknowledgement that they belonged in the space and with the people that form his or her world. These strategies were discussed at length in the preceding chapter and will facilitate the response to the research questions in the following sections.

### 8.4.2. *Findings Pertaining to the TRA Parents*

In this research parental involvement was found to be deliberate and focussed. Since the adopting parents were all unable to have their own children, becoming parents was their paramount need, and the race of their adopted children was not a deciding factor. Their careful pre-adoption preparation, assiduous monitoring of potentially debilitating social situations, together with their purposeful selection of schools and other social activities and honest acknowledgement of the role of TRA in their daily lives contributed to the healthy development of their TRA children's self-identity, as evidenced by the psychometric assessments and teachers' descriptions. Many of the strategies employed by these TRA parents are comparable to the strategies documented and used successfully by TRA parents internationally. However, unique to South Africa, the data gathered in this research indicated the unavoidable and influential role of traditional Black beliefs in the acceptance of TRA and TRA families. Secondly, through the parents' admirable frankness, the data also disclosed the ever-present awareness and preconceptions of race inherent to most South Africans. The parents admitted to having to address certain hitherto unknown racial and cultural biases within themselves as TRA parents, as well as the ubiquitous presence of racially driven social and public responses and prejudices directed

at their TRA family. This is an important finding, *as these reciprocal biases may complicate familial and social interpersonal relationships as race and ethnicity become more pronounced entities towards adolescence*, which, according to Erikson's psychosocial theory, is the pivotal stage of identity development. This may possibly be an explanation of why the young participants of this research do not display signs of identity distress, while Thomson (2006) and international authors Chang, *et al.*, (2017) and Snyder (2017) found significant identity issues with TRA adolescents and young adults.

#### **8.4.3. Findings Pertaining to the Teachers within the Greater Community**

Seven teachers were questioned about the seven participating TRA children and about the teaching of a TRA child. Without exception they considered the children to be typical primary school children. Although the interviews were conducted individually, there were several significant parallels between the teachers. These parallels may be found under the secondary research questions.

## **8.5. Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the self-identity of the young TRA child in South Africa. While I acknowledge that the sample size was small, indicating a need for further research, a rich, descriptive picture of the young school going TRA child emerged that allowed several conclusions to be drawn and the five research questions to be addressed.

### **8.5.1. Secondary Research Questions**

#### **8.5.1.1. How Do the Adoptive Parents Describe their Engaged World as a TRA Family?**

The participating TRA families aspired to be seen as "normal" and considered their daily lives comparable with all other non-TRA families. Their TRA status only gained significance in a social setting where their visible family differences were publicly observed and they were regarded as an anomaly, prompting varied reactions, some positive, some negative.

While the parents reported a mainly constructive TRA adoption journey, their anticipation of negative responses induced heightened social alertness. This, in turn, resulted in intuitive and

deliberate interventions to limit their children's exposure to possible harmful incidents, all the while striving to be a "normal" family<sup>83</sup>.

**a. Deliberate interventions**

The focus remained on creating a conducive milieu to advance healthy self-identity growth through purposeful actions.

- The TRA children were deliberately equipped with finely honed communication and social skills by the family, which included effective coping strategies against intended and unintended microaggressions. They had learned to surround themselves – initially aided by the parents who deliberately chose conducive environments – with ingroups that favoured them, instilling a sense of belonging, establishing stable interpersonal relationships and allocating a desired social status (Rutland et al., 2017; Weyns et al., 2018). Additionally, the family studiously integrated their child's or children's adopted narratives with their self-identities to limit the emotional impact of being adopted (Grotevant et al., 2017). These measures enabled the children to conduct themselves with confidence in public spaces and to have adequate defences in place in the event of an assault on their pivotal needs of acceptance and belonging (See Ch 2.5).
- The parents prepared their children for possible adverse social situations through open and frank discussions of race and adoption. They endeavoured to nurture a sense of self-worth and belonging to protect their children's identities when under threat (See Ch 3.4.2. and 3.5) and created a feeling of confidence and pride in their physical and cultural differences, so that they were "comfortable in their own skins" (Atlegang's mother, PI-M, p.8).
- Lastly, the families were mindful of the public places they visited since their status as TRA family stripped them of adoptive privacy. They tried to ensure that their social environments were racially mixed, since single-race events such as visiting a Black or White-only church emphasised their differences. However, they in no way limited their social interaction, since all the children appeared to enjoy social gatherings and the families reported an active social life with extended family and friends.

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<sup>83</sup> The world of the TRA child as it is lived is discussed comprehensively in Chapter 7, Section 7.9 and should serve as the primary reference for this research question.

### **b. Positive contributions of the measures to the developing self-identity**

While the noted intentional measures had been put in place to limit harmful consequences on the self-identity of the TRA child, these measures also contributed richly to the well-being of the self-identity.

- These TRA children were considered socially acute, spontaneous, confident and popular, gaining easy access to ingroups and exponentially increasing their sense of belonging and acceptance.
- Since they were assured of continued parental support and involvement, they participated freely in activities that added to their sense of worth and promoted self-reliance and gained easier access to group membership through team play and shared activities.
- The families endeavoured to actively mix with people of different races and socio-economic standing and were intentional in their social outreach programmes. It is unclear whether this is an intrinsic characteristic of the parents, since there is always an altruistic element in adoption (Zhang & Lee, 2011) or a faith-based charity value (three of the four families were active churchgoers) or a need to teach their children compassion and empathy. However, in the psychometric assessments, these children were all found to have a higher-than-expected level of empathy, values and morals and displayed well-developed ethical convictions.

### **c. Differences between non TRA families and TRA families**

The world of the TRA child and his or her family in South Africa is not unlike the world of his or her non-adopted peers and their families, but there are some distinct differences:

- The differences can be found, firstly, in the persistent and anticipated awareness of the possibility that the TRA child's place and permanence in the family might be disputed or disrupted, adversely affecting his or her sense of worth, efficacy, belonging and purpose (Soares et al., 2017, 2019; Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010; 2012).
- Secondly, the TRA family is more socially and racially aware when visible as a TRA family and open to scrutiny and public reaction.
- Thirdly, intentional and cognitive steps are undertaken by the family to safeguard the self-identity of the TRA child and secure his or her sense of belonging and acceptance.
- Lastly, the TRA child may have a greater lack of knowledge of the "real family" than biological children, who usually have contact with, and knowledge of at least two generations



of family. A TRA child, often placed in care following hard abandonment<sup>84</sup>, may have no or limited access to information about his or her family of origin. His or her ethnic group and the possibility of living relatives remain a mystery, as does the primary reason for abandonment. Unique physical attributes, an unfolding creative talent, a medical malady – none of these can be linked to any known person, making a large component of what the child understands as “this is where I come from” an irremediable void. Frisk (in Latchford, 2019, p.35) refers to this lack of knowledge as the “hereditary ghosts”. This gap in knowledge may have a debilitating effect on the developing self-identity, but according to Latchford (2019) it may be successfully mitigated through mindful guidance and the establishment of a conducive adoption narrative (Grotevant et al., 2017)<sup>85</sup>.

#### **d. The engaged world of the TRA family-in conclusion**

As the seven children were reportedly well-adjusted and happy, it would seem that for the most part the families were successful in their aspiration to normalise their families, only having to be vigilant in the face of anticipated (and fortunately) infrequent public disapproval. It is possible that as TRA families become a more frequent social configuration, the need to comment on what is currently perceived as a social anomaly will decrease, allowing these families to go about their daily engagements without undue public inference.

#### **8.5.1.2. How Does the Teacher of a Young TRA Child Describe the Adoptee’s Self-Identity?**

Although five of the seven young participants required additional assistance in mathematics and three of them presented with ADHD, reflecting the observation by Dalgaard et al. (2020) that there is a higher incidence of learning disabilities in adopted children, all of the children were described unequivocally as “typical” primary school learners. There were no personality traits or behavioural manifestations that distinguished them from their classmates other than their observable physical

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<sup>84</sup>Hard abandonment occurs when the safety of the baby is not the priority, but rather the anonymity of the mother. The child will usually be left in a public space such as a toilet or in an abandoned building or open field, making the possibility of tracing the mother very slim.

<sup>85</sup>Four of the seven children had some knowledge of their families of origin, but Cassidy, Carlo and Diana possessed very little information. It is significant that the two girls asked many questions regarding their TRA status, and, when younger, were more pronounced in their desire to resemble their adoptive parents in skin colour and other physical attributes (See Chapters 5 and 6). Carlo was reportedly unperturbed about his TRA status, which might have been due to his autism spectrum disorder and lack of adherence to social cues.

differences from their adoptive parents. They compared favourably with their peers in all developmental spheres<sup>86</sup> and appeared to have acquired additional skills that promoted their social acceptance (Soares et al., 2017,2019; Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010) and to have developed an essential and stable sense of belonging.

- They exhibited well-developed communicative skills and were intentional in their attainment and maintenance of ingroup membership (Mangum & Block, 2018; Nesdale et al., 2009, 2014; Olson et al., 2012; Hailey & Olson, 2013; Rutland et al., 2017; Weyns et al., 2018).
- They showed compassion with other children and put others' needs above their own, possibly for fear of jeopardising their interpersonal relationships.
- While they were confident and spontaneous in social settings, it was evident from the psychometric assessments that the TRA children put a high premium on academic performance and their difficulties in mathematics negatively affected their sense of worth and competence. Being still very young, it could be concluded that TRA children are more susceptible to feelings of inferiority in the absence of superior academic performance and continuously aspire to be “good enough” in their search for acceptance (Erikson, 1963, 1968[industryvsinferiorityearlyTRAchildinSA](#)). It may also be argued, as noted in Chapter 7.6.2.1., that these TRA children are more aware of academic prowess since their parents have received extensive tertiary education.

The four schools the TRA children attended encouraged parental involvement and all practised Christianity-based teaching. The teachers noted that the TRA children enjoyed the rituals and routines practised at the schools, such as morning assembly and hymn singing, probably most notably the social aspect thereof. They concurred that the parents all displayed a high level of sustained involvement in their children's schooling and that their observed collaborative involvement (Sun et al., 2021; Fox et al., 2019; Peukert & Gogolin, 2017) with their children was continued at home, as the children were well versed in contemporary and potentially emotive topics.

Since the children had all attended their respective schools for a number of years, their TRA status and the visible differences from their other family members was no longer of interest to their fellow classmates. The teachers agreed that, with the possible exception of Cassidy (who had voiced a number of questions pertaining to her family of origin and who appeared reluctant to discuss her adoptive

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<sup>86</sup>Each participating child has been compared in tabulated form with expected middle childhood development in physical, psychosocial, cognitive, emotional, linguistic and spiritual and ethical spheres in Chapter 5 and 6

family), all of the TRA children in primary school were happy, well-adjusted and proud of their adoptive family.

### **8.5.1.3. What are the Systemic Predictors for a Healthy Self-Identity in the Early School-going TRA Black Child?**

There are many factors at play in the development of a healthy personal and social identity of a young child. Dynamic growth of this self-identity does not occur in isolation but is moulded through hereditary factors and the successful and progressive accomplishment of hierarchical developmental tasks in the presence of trusting and conducive interpersonal relationships (Erikson, 1968).

Interaction and group formation in the larger and diverse community shape social categorisation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and group membership (Weyns et al., 2018; Nesdale et al., 2009, 2014) whilst aiding the development of identity motivators (Breakwell, 1986 [Identityprocesstheory](#)). The latter social factors are considered in determining the systemic predictors of a healthy self-identity.

In very early work pertaining to TRA in South Africa, Ledderborge (1996) identified factors that were conducive to the success of TRA. Subsequently, Francis (2007) and the findings of the present study confirmed these findings and indicate additional predictors that may be attributable to the longevity and increasing occurrence of TRA in South Africa. These predictors are tabulated in Table 8.1 and a brief discussion follows the table.

**Table 8.1**

Systemic Predictors for Conducive Self-Identity Development in Young TRA Children in South Africa and the Presence Thereof Per Participating Family.

**Note** New findings specific to this study indicated by.\*

Systemic predictor	Alegang' s family	Brenda- marie' s family	Chad, Cassidy Carlo' s family	Diana and David' s family
Meaningful interactions with people of all races		X	X	X
Attending mixed racial schools	X	X	X	X
Living in mixed racial residences	X			X
Access to dynamic Black role models such as sport stars	X	X	X	X
Access to Black heritage through acquisition of (biological) knowledge	X	X	X Chad	X David
*Nurturing of Black identity through the practice of cultural activities	X		X	
*Nurturing of Black identity through pride in physical appearance	X	X	X	X
*Knowledge of Black people in positions of power (modelling)	X	X	X	X
*Access to positive and diverse social media regarding Black identity	X	X	X	X
*Heightened parental racial awareness as a self-identity defence mechanism	X	X	X	X
*Interaction in demographically, diverse structured gatherings (e.g.) church	X		X	X
*Sensitive management of TRA related situations, (e.g.) family trees	X	X	X	X
*Sensitive approach to potentially emotive school subjects (e.g.) history	X	X	X	X
*Schools that practice tolerance and grace to accommodate TRA diversity	X	X	X	X
*Continued public TRA education and addressing of negative perceptions	X	X	X	X

Significantly, while NACSA (n.d.) advocates membership of TRA support groups as a beneficial support system, all participating families had declined membership of such a group or similar TRA rallies and functions. They mostly maintained contact with their respective social workers and remain active on TRA platforms in social media, but do not anticipate joining such person-to-person groups in the future. They all declare that they prefer to interact with their friends and families, rather than with strangers who have only TRA in common.

It seems from Table 8.1 that most of the families intuitively and deliberately implemented systemic predictors that would contribute to their child(ren)'s self-identity. While two families did not actively nurture a Black identity, since they wanted their children to rather adhere to a racial "worldview", all four families went to great lengths to promote their children's pride in their Black physical attributes. They also made efforts to introduce the children to Black role models that are dynamic and influential in society and could serve as positive role models. This included people that fulfil a function within their community, sports stars and well-known philanthropists and was done in family discussions, through social media exposure and the selection of racially sensitive schools and social gatherings. Where the parents perceived themselves to be lacking in the implementation of identity-affirming measures, they stated their intention to rectify this shortcoming.

While teachers need to educate the children within a set curriculum, the teachers interviewed for this research showed noteworthy sensitivity and insight when approaching subjects that could evoke an emotional response, such as social sciences. As a result, the adoptees were mostly comfortable in describing their families and their transracial adoptive status, which in turn resulted in improved communication skills, positive self-worth, favourable group membership and a healthy self-identity.

Owing to the purposeful selection of social gatherings and places of entertainment, exposure to racial slurs and microaggressions directed toward the TRA children were limited, allowing them to interact without fear and to gather essential social and coping skills. According to the adults interviewed, negative social responses were limited and mostly were successfully addressed by the parents or teachers at the moment of occurrence and without undue ramifications.

Apparently, the significant adult role players effectively provided a conducive and protected environment within which the young TRA children were able to develop their self-identity, both social and personal.

#### **8.5.1.4. What are the Individual Predictors for a Healthy Self-Identity in the Early School-going TRA Black Child?**

Mostly, individual predictors of healthy self-identity fell in domains over which the young child had no control (Grotevant, *et al.*, 2017; Brodzinsky, 2011) yet these indicators still affected the child on a highly personal level and played a pivotal role in the formation of such an identity. Many of these predictors hold true for all adopted children and are not limited to TRA children but are noted here since they play a significant role in self-identity development. The predictors are not presented in tabulated form, as are the systemic predictors (See Ch8.5.1.3.) since they require broader explanations.

##### **a. Age of child at placement**

- While this predictor was not specifically researched here, the TRA parents mentioned the importance of the placement age in promoting trust and significant interpersonal relationships, both are which essential self-identity building blocks. For this reason, it is noted as an individual predictor for healthy self-identity. Having his or her physical needs met is the primary attachment motivator for an infant between 0 and three months (Johnston, 2012; Bowlby, 1969), making earlier placement desirable (See Ch 3.3.1). However, such a young baby may react adversely to the familial excitement and adjustment of routine from the place of safety, resulting in an initial stressful transition (Pylypa, 2016**[bowlbyandadoption](#)**). Only one of the children was placed during this period (at four weeks), as bureaucracy and lengthy legal processes made earlier placement for the other children unattainable.
- An older baby (>3 months) is more adaptable but he or she has usually already established a bond with a prior caregiver. Johnston (2012), Erikson (1968) and Bowlby (1969) agree that the loss of such a very early bond can evoke feelings of profound grief, making the next bonding formation and establishment of trust more difficult. Three participating children, one separated from his birth mother, and the other two from a place-of-safety mother with whom they had formed a strong attachment, displayed signs of separation anxiety, emotional loss, anger and distress at the time of separation. There were subsequent incidents of disrupted bonding as they grew up that the parents considered to be largely attributable to the traumatic loss of the first trust relationship.
- Additionally, children and older babies (>6months) in more institutionalised care and exposed to many volunteers rather than specific and constant caregivers have a higher incidence of delayed milestones and developmental obstacles (Johnston, 2012, Brodzinsky, 2011) that will impact on the developing self-identity. One of the young TRA boys was in a care facility run by rotating volunteers, which hindered the formation of a significant relationship with a single caregiver. He was placed at eight months and, at that time, already displayed developmental issues that could affect his developing self-identity (Carlo-PI-M, p.12; PI-F, p.12)

#### **b. Bonding before “coming home”**

Bonding while the baby is still in a place of safety appears to be beneficial for the new adoptive family, according to the information obtained from the TRA parents during their interviews and their descriptive adoptive journey. Prior bonding allows secure bonds to be established (Bowlby, 1969) and, as the parents begin to accurately interpret his or her needs, the nurturing of an initial relationship of trust that will inform the infant that the world is a good place (Erikson, 1963, 1968, Knight, 2017). A sense of trust is crucial to the healthy development of a self-identity and is the first step in the

development of identity. Three of the families had the opportunity to bathe, feed and soothe their new babies over a period of weeks before bringing them home, establishing the first building blocks of trust and positive relationships. While the fourth family did not have the opportunity to “pre-bond”, they subsequently established good interpersonal relationships, but reported that it had been a slower process.

### **c. Creating an adoptive narrative**

Grotevant (1997), Grotevant et al., (2017), Grotevant & McDermott, (2014) and Brodzinsky (2011) emphasise the role of a rich adoptive narrative to create an adoptive identity that may be successfully integrated into the self-identity. While earlier writings held that genetic and biological knowledge was paramount in creating an adoption narrative, more recent authors (Latchford, 2019; Homans, 2013) posit that the *process* of examining the adoption journey is important. Homans (2013) notes that an exploratory narrative may expose the lack of a discernible origin and allow for the “work of making an origin” (Homan, 2013, p.117). This is important for TRA children who have experienced hard abandonment, such as two of the seven participating children (Cassidy and Carlo), and who have scant knowledge of their backgrounds. Significantly, it was also one of these two children who experienced the greatest distress regarding her race and adoptive status, whereas the young boy, who also suffered from a developmental disorder, never referred to his TRA status.

Other authors, such as Beaupre et al. (2015), consider the integration of race and racial identity into the adoptive narrative as more important than biological background. Thus, being “colour blind” (Bilodeau (2015, p.21) in a country such as South Africa, where race matters every day (Hall & Steinberg, 2013), would be detrimental to self-identity development. Acknowledging the race and racial identity of the young TRA child, as the participating parents did, would have a positive and affirming effect on the developing self-identity and possibly timeously address adolescent identity issues pertaining to TRA.

### **d. Parental involvement in the adoptive narrative**

Soares et al. (2017) and Grotevant et al. (2017) agree that a positive adoptive narrative and a subsequent healthy adoptive identity are obtained through information seeking, comparisons of an own perception with other perceptions and reflection on the personal meaning of adoption. In the absence of information, tangible objects and mementos, however insignificant they may seem, mark the point of origin and provide information needed in the exploration of adoptive narratives. Parents who are active in seeking the information and aiding their child(ren) in gaining perspective and insight contribute significantly to the formation of a narrative that may be integrated into the self-identity.

The converse also appears to be true: adoptive parents that would shy away from the difficult aspects of creating an adoptive narrative hinder such a process, to the detriment of healthy identity formation. While the parents of the participating TRA children, particularly the mothers, admitted their own emotional insecurities and distress at including the biological mothers through family discussions, mementos and photographs, they understood the value of adding such elements to their children's adoptive identity and self-identity. The families indicated their intention to continue to acknowledge the role of the biological family as their children matured, thereby intuitively facilitating adoptive exploration and adoptive identity integration.

#### **e. Intentional parenting**

Purposeful and sustained parenting, coupled with cognitive and racial awareness of the potential consequences and social reactions to TRA, creates an environment for the children to develop their self-identity free of fear of reprisal or rejection. Additionally, the introduction of dynamic Black role models by way of TRA-related family discussions, the promotion of racial culture and the deliberate coaching in social skills using tools such as collaborative conversations, equips the children with the necessary social proficiencies to conduct themselves well in social situations and gain ingroup membership – all active contributors to healthy self-identity development.

In this research, all the parents exhibited continued intentional parenting, for example when they sat in a traditional Black hair salon, sourced an animation movie with a dynamic Black leader, confronted an adult who made a derogatory racial remark couched as a joke or visited schools to improve their ability to successfully accommodate their TRA child.

#### **f. Personality traits**

Confirming acceptance and experiencing a sense of belonging, both within the family and in the larger community, are kingpins in identity formation of the TRA child. While this was a small sample, and therefore not amenable to statistical analysis, the in-depth psychometric assessment of the seven children, together with the characteristics reported by the parents and teachers of these children, provided the details for a rich and colourful personality description. This description forms the content of the primary research question and will follow this section. Suffice to say here that their personality traits encouraged social interaction across all generations, making them available for interpersonal relationships and thereby supporting their sense of belonging and assuring them of acceptance. It is noted that there must be TRA children with more reticent personality traits, resulting in a different approach to social settings which would influence the formation of their self-identities. However, in



this study, the young participants all presented personality traits that sought social interaction across cultural groups and generations.

### **g. Superior communication skills**

As in the case of the personality traits, a TRA child's possession of well-developed communication skills has multiple benefits for the burgeoning self-identity. Firstly, the communication skills demonstrated by the participating adoptees enhanced their social attractiveness to other people, as they appeared confident, were well liked and spontaneous and were often considered to have leadership abilities. They were described as orators and good social negotiators. Secondly, these communication skills allowed them to have meaningful conversations with all generations, which enhanced their understanding and management of emotional and social challenges and therefore also benefited their self-identity. Being able to accurately describe complex social and emotional experiences, such as the ambivalence encountered in gaining an adoptive family, but simultaneously losing access to the biological family (as was the case with one of the TRA children in this study) allowed timely and focussed interventions that limited the negative impact on the developing self-identity. Thirdly, these advanced communication skills made easier disclosure and discussions of adoptive status possible (Soares et al., 2017, 2019), which in turn aids integration of the adoptive identity into the self-identity. It is significant to note that the superior communication skills exhibited by these seven children benefited not only their TRA status but stood them in good stead in all other social interactions as well.

### **h. Admittance to ingroup membership**

Like the advanced communication skills noted above, group membership was discussed extensively in the previous chapter. However, the ability to adapt and become a member of a group through attractive personality traits, a firm value system and social acumen allow the TRA child to enjoy the benefits of belonging to a positive ingroup. Weyns et al. (2018) and Rutland et al. (2017) agree that inclusion in a positive group improves self-esteem and the self-identity and develops the art of interpersonal relationship building. These eight individual predictors are not regarded as the only predictors of a healthy self-identity in a TRA child in middle childhood. However, they were consistently found to be present in the lives of the seven TRA participants and their families. Further research would undoubtedly add to this list of predictors, which serve as a good guideline to assist the role players in establishing a conducive identity environment.

### 8.5.2. *Primary Research Question: How does the Self-Identity Present in the Young, School-Going Black TRA Child in South Africa?*

The four main elements of the self-identity as defined in this research work<sup>87</sup>, namely the established personality traits, the values and beliefs, the interpersonal relationships and the membership of favourable groups serve as a structure within which to address the primary research question. The findings used to formulate the presentation of the self-identity allowed an accurate description of the self-identity, since they were evident in all of the seven participating TRA children. Some of the characteristics, such as an innate fear of rejection, are undoubtedly shared with same-race adoptees; but as their adoptive status is undeniable and ever present, the TRA children need to be more robust in their cultivation of a healthy self-identity.

#### **a. Established personality traits**

The psychometric findings confirmed the spontaneity and friendliness of the participating TRA children, as initially reported by the parents and teachers in their interviews and questionnaires. In order to breach possible observed racial and adoption-related differences and secure a sense of belonging, they “put themselves out there” and remained amenable to other people.

Their emotional nuances and verbal expression of feelings exceeded the expected age-related abilities and may be a reflection of the mindfulness within the TRA family of emotions and emotional experiences. The children displayed a good sense of humour, were proficient conversationalists and enjoyed interactions with large gatherings and with people of all ages, making them socially attractive and ensuring accessibility to others irrespective of race, age or gender.

While they exhibited a positive sense of self-worth and efficacy, the TRA children appeared to experience feelings of inferiority in terms of their scholastic performance. This was accompanied by an innate fear of rejection, of being considered “not good enough” (Erikson, 1968) and consequent loss of their adoptive family. Since competency is the developmental challenge associated with middle childhood (Erikson, 1963, 1968), their developing self-identity is particularly susceptible to feelings of inferiority and being threatened in middle childhood.

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<sup>87</sup>The self-identity may be considered to be a collection of mental constructs that are shaped by contexts, experiences and social situations, interaction with family, school, learners and teachers, the greater community and peer comparison. These social situations and contexts influence choice, behaviour and action. The self-identity reflects the stable and committed characteristic traits, values, goals and beliefs, social relationships and group membership the child finds emotionally and socially satisfying. As awareness develops and relationships evolve, the self-identity may be sustained, developed, changed or transformed to achieve future success.

According to the identity process theory (Breakwell, 1986), the self-identity under threat will result in either emotional, academic or social distress and withdrawal or oppositional behaviour, the latter being observed in the child with a developmental disorder, while four other children displayed heightened distress at poor academic performance. While these coping strategies of withdrawal and oppositional behaviour are not conducive to healthy self-identity development, they appeared to be limited to academic performance in the participating TRA children. In other social situations they seemed to have procured skills that promote acceptance and belonging and confirm their self-worth, aiding positive self-identity development.

### **b. Values and beliefs**

The adults involved with TRA children described them as being mostly compassionate and considerate of their peers. In their psychometry, the participating TRA children projected feelings of empathy and a firm adherence to a belief system beyond their expected level of maturity. Since three of the families were devout Christian families, it is possible that the TRA children observed altruistic values and ability to show empathy had been nurtured through frequent involvement in community outreaches. Notably, this altruism was not directed toward any specific race, age or socio-economic group and appeared to be a spontaneous trait, possibly related to their own intuitive understanding and experience of personal vulnerability.

### **c. Interpersonal relationships**

Much has been said about the TRA child's interpersonal relationships, and the nurturing thereof, in the preceding sections. Without exception, the seven children had accumulated the necessary trust and social skills to cultivate numerous, positive interpersonal relationships with children, parents, extended family and the engaged community, which were all conducive to their burgeoning self-identity. They achieved these successful interpersonal relationships through an open and frank demeanour, social acumen, intuitive empathy and advanced communication skills. While different cultural practices did not (yet) appear to hinder the formation of interpersonal relationships between the TRA children and other Black children, the limiting effect of not being able to speak a traditional Black language was evident in social and group interactions where language played a significant role. This led to the TRA children's observed avoidance of social situations where a traditional Black language was predominantly spoken and could disrupt the ethnic and racial integration that is necessary for healthy identity development in adolescence (Bilodeau, 2015; Thompson, 2005; Finlay, 2006).

#### **d. Group membership**

It has been reiterated that group membership enhances feelings of self-worth and social acceptance (Weyns et al., 2018). For a TRA child the primary identity motivators are achieving a sense of acceptance and belonging despite being visibly different from those to which he or she aspires to belong. Membership of favoured groups is essential to confirm this acceptance and belonging. To gain and maintain membership of a perceived ingroup, the TRA children will set aside their personal identity needs, such as seeking an apology from another group member for a perceived slight or rebuff, in order to satisfy their social identity needs. This form of group membership, defined as social identification in the SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), supersedes the more casual social categorisation commonly practised by children in middle childhood. TRA children also shun the traditional reasons for inclusion in a group such as gender, race or even socio-economic status (Olson et al., 2015), employing more mature membership tactics such as shared activities or games. They may choose this more advanced approach to group membership because it is largely devoid of aspects that may draw attention to their racial or adoptive status.

The consistent findings that have emerged from the current research allowed a theoretical description of the self-identity of the young TRA child. However, a self-identity is a dynamic entity that becomes most significant when evidenced in an interpersonal setting (Erikson, 1968; Brown, 2017; Corenblum, 2014), and encapsulating it within a static description, without personal and social context, may be restrictive and limit depth of understanding. It is therefore important to use the descriptions and interpretations of the TRA child, as provided by the significant role players such as parents and teachers, to augment this presentation of the developing self-identity<sup>88</sup>.

While there is no doubt that a TRA status makes exceptional demands on the developing self-identity of the young TRA child, it would seem that these children are resilient and innovative in acquiring the necessary social skills and abilities to address these demands, microaggressions and social challenges, provided that they find themselves in an environment characterised by intentional parenting and sensitive teaching.

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<sup>88</sup>For further reading and the philosophical paradigms of interpretivism and social constructivism, an *ambitious* presentation of the self-identity of a TRA child as she engages with her lived world is provided as supplementary information in the appendices, using examples given by the parents, teachers and projections. The description takes on the form of a narrative as told by a seven-year-old TRA girl, since the self-identity of the child is couched within *the story of the child* (Soares et al., 2017; Grotevant et al., 2017; McAdams, 2001,2013; Erikson, 1968, 1980). Relevant literature correlations and references to the emergent themes have been made in the secondary column to enhance understanding.

## 8.6. Recommendations

Making recommendations about TRA does not imply that TRA children are “special needs” children. For the most part, they strive, successfully, to be considered “typical” children in a “typical” family, despite circumstances that complicate their understanding of themselves and their development of self-identity, such as their loss of a biological family and access to family history. These are factors that are present in most adoptive families. However, compounded by the continued visible intrafamily differences, given the lack of adoption privacy and the subjection to public scrutiny and reactions that question their place in the family, there are areas of vulnerability that may threaten TRA’s developing self-identity. Using information gained from the literature study and the researched findings of this work, the following recommendations are made to address these vulnerabilities.

### 8.6.1. *Recommendations for Parents*

The following recommendations are made to guide parents:

- The adoptive parents in this study appear to have taken a cognitive approach to adoption. They gathered information and communicated with active TRA role players. They worked in academic fields that gave them access to information. Nevertheless, a social media forum, focussing on information pertaining to TRA in South Africa and easily accessible for everyone should be provided by the role players in TRA. Add-option (NACSA) is one such an informative platform, but awareness of the site should be promoted by the social workers and others involved in the adoptive process.
- The TRA parents expected many social, cultural and emotional problems and situations that had not realised yet at the time. While they did not express an affinity for large social and interactive TRA groups, they might have benefited from smaller, more contained TRA groups who share similar experiences and concerns. Since they maintained contact with their social workers, the latter would be best suited to facilitate contact between such parents. This may be especially helpful if parents could gain insights from parents with older TRA children.
- Parents and prospective TRA parents should be made aware of the importance of regularly addressing and confirming their child(ren)’s need for acceptance and belonging. These seem pivotal needs, the satisfaction of which ensures the continued wellbeing of the self-identity.
- Several of the parents voiced concern about appropriate hair and skin care. They learned by trial and error that skin and hair products are not interchangeable between races. Since these two physical attributes constitute a large part of ethnic identity (Marco, 2012), it would be beneficial for the

parents to visit a sympathetic hairdresser at a Black hair salon for instructions on appropriate care and product use for education on unique racially unique attributes.

- The present research identified language as one of the most powerful social and ethnic tools in TRA. It may serve as a bridge between different races, or, in the case of Black people and the Black TRA child, a barrier if the child cannot converse in the vernacular. It is highly recommended that TRA parents, together with their children, learn a Black language to facilitate more fluid racial interaction and to aid teenage ethnic identity development.
- By all accounts, it is beneficial to place TRA children in racially mixed and socio-economically varied schools, since single-race, single-gender and/or equal-status schools limit their social development and negate their novel (and mostly successful) approach to group membership.
- For the participating couples, the adoption journey was mostly positive except for the bureaucracy and frustration linked to the legal process of adoption. Without exception, they complained about the long, stressful waiting periods, misplaced paperwork and the inability to procure the necessary forms to register their children. One couple noted that they thought the process very discouraging for potential adoptive parents who had not yet committed to a specific child. Forewarning prospective adoptive parents may prepare them better for the taxing administrative journey.
- Lastly, while not always practically sustainable, it would be prudent if all prospective TRA parents could complete a course prior to adoption to equip them with the necessary information, skills and support structure to facilitate their TRA journey.

### **8.6.2. Recommendations for Teachers and Schools**

These recommendations may serve as a useful guideline to assist teachers with addressing TRA in their classrooms:

- The seven teachers that participated in the study displayed an innate sensitivity to and emotional awareness of their charges. All children benefit from these characteristics, but they also afford the TRA child additional protection against potentially emotive incidents and microaggressions through early detection and pre-emptive interventions. An aware and sensitive teacher will be cautious and accommodating in his or her approach when discussing South African history, the construction of a family tree or even something as seemingly innocuous as prescribing a hairstyle for a school concert. Without calling for special attention, sensitivity and heightened awareness are consistent requirements in schooling a young TRA child.
- There are many different family constructs in South Africa. Since there is a distinct possibility that single-parent families, single-sex families, grandparent-headed families and other constructs coexist

with TRA families in a school, it would be prudent for primary school children to be educated in a mindful way regarding alternative family structures. This would promote understanding and accommodation and limit unwarranted attention and teasing for all children living in such families.

- Teachers should, where possible, establish a level of rapport with their learners, including the TRA children, so that the children are comfortable when seeking help or support from the teachers in times of emotional or social distress. They should be encouraged to report bullying, teasing or invasive questioning.
- It was evident that the TRA parents showed sustained involvement in their children's school life. Since adopted children show a higher propensity for learning and emotional difficulties, it would be conducive to the wellbeing of the TRA child if the channels of communication remain reciprocal between the parents and school for early detection and timeous and appropriate intervention.

### **8.6.3. General Recommendations**

These recommendations are for any organisation or person encountering TRA:

- Undoubtedly, same-race adoption is preferable to TRA. Black adults should be encouraged to consider adoption by informing them and by addressing the considerations and fears that deterrent them from adoption (See Ch 2, section 2.3).
- For the foreseeable future, however, TRA will continue to become more frequent. Public awareness and education should be promoted to limit the (albeit unwittingly delivered) negative responses that adversely affect the self-identity of the TRA child and encroach on the privacy of the TRA family.
- The many challenges experienced by adoptive parents at the Department of Home Affairs are disheartening and very stressful. It would be beneficial to all parties involved if the process could be more streamlined, since the anticipated difficulties and sometimes seemingly insurmountable obstacles serve as a deterrent to many prospective adoptive parents, both Black and White.

### **8.6.4. Recommendations for Future TRA Research**

*Research is never completed – around the corner lurks another possibility of interview, another book to read, another document to verify. (Catherine Bowen, 1897-1973)*

As noted, there is a dearth of literature pertaining to TRA in South Africa. The limited research that could be found focusses mainly on the ethnic identity of the TRA adolescents and parental expectations and experiences. Recent South African research considers the changing social perceptions related to TRA.

I remain of the opinion that international research on TRA should not be unconditionally applied to South African circumstances. This implies that there are large areas of TRA that are under researched and should receive attention. To note but a few:

- To my knowledge, no or very little research has been devoted to the school going TRA child. At this age, the child is moving away from the auspice of the adopted family and entering the larger and somewhat unpredictable and challenging school community. Any research in this area would contribute to the better understanding of the early school going TRA child in South Africa.
- One of the most distinctive subthemes to emerge from this research is the impact of a shared language on social interaction in middle childhood. Further research, such as a proposed comparative social study of TRA children who are fluent in a Black language versus TRA children who cannot speak the vernacular may yield surprising results concerning ethnic identity and group membership.
- A longitudinal or follow-up study of the children that participated in this study as they enter adolescence would be insightful in determining the sustainability of their identity wellbeing as observed here. In the event of the self-identity showing adverse effects in adolescence, it would be beneficial to ascertain retrospectively what factors could have had an unfavourable or detrimental effect.
- Establishing acceptance and sustaining a sense of belonging appeared to be the driving force behind identity motivators in the young TRA child. Interventions within the home and school environment that would be satisfy these two needs would facilitate the wellbeing of the self-identity.
- Although TRA is increasing, I could find no literature on the role of the school and the teacher in accommodating TRA children in South Africa. Any research in this unexplored field would be beneficial.
- A significant number of general adoption studies have been completed in South Africa and the rest of the world. A comparative study of TRA and non-TRA children in South Africa would yield further information and a more detailed description of factors directly attributable to the TRA status.

## **8.7. Possible Contributions of the Current Research**

The noted contributions address both theoretical and practical aspects.

### **8.7.1. Theoretical Contributions**

- Middle childhood characteristically receives the least research attention when compared with other phases of childhood development. In this case, the research was deliberately limited to children in



the latent development phase, thereby increasing the information available about this often-overlooked phase.

- While it was intuitively expected that the ability to speak a Black language was important, the extent of the social implications of bilingualism was surprising. This is, to my knowledge, an area not yet formally researched in South Africa, even though it is a contentious issue both as a social definer and because Black people consider the inability to speak their language a further obstacle to successful interaction with their ancestors.
- The importance of acceptance and an adoptee's sense of belonging are well documented in adoption studies. However, the unique strategies and interventions identified in this study provided new insight into the manner in which young TRA children incorporate their additional racial and ethnic distinctions into the management of these adoption needs.
- The novel and often ambitious approach to group membership that young TRA children employ in a country so aware of race and status is one of the unique strategies referred to above. This approach challenges the traditional and well-documented understanding of group membership in young children.
- According to Winnicott (1971) and Levinge (2015), the “bits and pieces” tell us about our lives. This study highlighted the importance of having a place, possessions and a space to confirm the permanence of a TRA child's position in the family, perhaps more so than a same-race adoptee, since his or adoptive status is not frequently under scrutiny.

### ***8.7.2. Practical Contributions and Possible Implementations Throughout TRA Processes by Role-players***

- The themes emerging from this study identified important aspects of TRA for the child. These findings may serve as a guideline for the parents who are intentional in their approach and who actively try to compensate for any perceived social shortcoming, such as cultural exposure. They also emphasise the importance of frank and honest discussions within the family of subjects pertaining to the children and their TRA status.
- Allowing for a period of bonding with the adoptive parents prior to permanent placement, as was the case with most of the families, yielded clear benefits. It would be beneficial for attachment if, where possible, the prospective adoptive parents could meet and tend to their child or infant regularly for a few weeks and establish the first relationship-building blocks in a safe and familiar environment, such as the place of safety.

- The findings of this work also provide for all role models in this field, such as social workers, teachers and counsellors, to detect areas of concern and to implement timeous and focussed interventions, such as a TRA child who struggles to gain positive group membership.
- The benefits of mastering a Black language, both as a social skill and to enhance acceptance across racial lines, were frequently confirmed, and TRA families should be encouraged to acquire this language skill where possible.

### **8.7.3. *Implementing the theoretical and practical contributions – creating a novel TRA tool***

In the preceding sections, the research findings of this work have been noted and discussed. Most findings regarding the young TRA child living in South Africa could be considered new in the dearth of existing literature. While acknowledging the limited number of participants, this new information provides a unique opportunity to improve the inhabited world of the TRA child since:

- There is a rich and detailed description of the self-identity of the young TRA child, allowing the observation and understanding, firstly, of the way he or she considers him- or herself personally, and secondly, the manner in which he or she conducts him- or herself socially:
- The communication skills and social approaches employed by these children to garner social acceptance and advance belonging are flexible and conducive to the establishment of good interpersonal skills, achieving normative developmental goals and the securing of positive group membership:
- Parents who understand the underlying identity motivators of their TRA child(ren), who support the exploration of an adoptive identity, who are racially aware and promote ethnic pride and who are open to frank family discussions regarding social issues surrounding race and TRA in South Africa, practice intentional parenting with positive results as their children develop their social and personal identities:
- South African teachers appear to be sensitive to the possibility of racial microaggressions and the importance of inclusion and acceptance of diversity, such as racial and ethnic diversity, family configurations and physical differences.

These factors, together with the knowledge of the systemic predictors identified in Table 8.1 and the individual predictors of healthy self-identity development in Ch 8.5.1.4 allow for the implementation of a *novel, focussed and dedicated tool* to assist the TRA family, prior, during and post

adoption.<sup>89</sup> Compulsory pre-adoptive TRA workshops and an informative booklet, specific to TRA and focussed on contributing to the well-being of the TRA child and his or her family would be extremely beneficial. It would appear as if such a guideline does not currently exist.

According to C.M. Hattingh (personal communication, October 15, 2021; February 7, 2022), a senior adoption officer in public social service, there is no difference in the screening or pre-adoptive educational process of same race adoption and TRA. There is also no formal post adoptive follow up of the family, since, unlike foster care or place of safety care, adopted children are considered as belonging solely to the adoptive parents, and legal supervision is not required (Child Care Act 38 of 2005). In a social phenomenon that is gathering momentum, but still plagued with residual political and social hinderances of the South African past, together with a lack of knowledge of expectations as the TRA child grows older, this appears to be a shortcoming within the adoptive system that should be bridged.

While same-race and TRA adoptive parents will share many of the same concerns, there are concerns unique to TRA that should be addressed timeously. As previously noted, none of the families were inclined to join a TRA group for support but did comment on their need for sustained information.

- I consider a pre-TRA workshop to be a compulsory event for prospective TRA families, prior to screening commencement. The TRA child, as he or she may present, should be described as far as possible while noting the uniqueness of each child. The individual and systemic predictors for healthy personal and social development, as identified above must be discussed in detail. This should be hosted by social workers and TRA experienced parents. Ideally, adult TRA children living in South Africa would be able to offer a distinctive and insightful perception. A platform for questions, some of which would be communal and therefore beneficial for all workshop attendees, would allay fears and provide an opportunity for further information gathering. While incidental adoption workshops are hosted by persons concerned with adoption, this is not a compulsory event, and as noted, not focussed on TRA.
- The findings following data analysis demonstrate an undisputable advantage to the TRA child mastering a Black language. While there appears to be an emotive reluctance displayed by the TRA families to encourage the acquisition of a Black language by the child, and preferably the family, the personal, social, group and ethnic benefits outweigh their hesitance, and the attainment of such a skill should be strongly encouraged as a post-adoptive intervention by the social workers.

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<sup>89</sup> While it is not possible to include a comprehensive TRA booklet in this work, it is my intention to create, in collaboration with other key role players such as social workers, teachers, experienced TRA parents and adult TRA children, such a guideline, including, but not limited to, the aspects noted in 8.7.3.

- In similar vein, and heeding the findings of Thomson (2006), Bilodeau (2015), Snyder (2017) and Chang, *et al.* (2017), the TRA family should strive to instil ethnic pride in their children and avoid colour-blindness from a young age. This should be a formal post-adoptive stipulation or at the least, a verbalised undertaking by the TRA family. The children participating in this study do not (yet) present with significant awareness of ethnic loss, but it is clear from the existing South African and international literature that racial and ethnic pride may play a fundamental role in adolescent self-identity development. The absence of ethnic awareness and -pride may have a detrimental effect on the identity development.
- All of these stipulations can be implemented, or at least strongly recommended, with the underlying literature to support it. In the current legislature, post-adoptive workshops cannot be enforced, as already mentioned, but such a workshop may well address some of the emerging issues and concerns, identify familial shortfalls and provide conducive guidelines as the children enter into latent childhood and adolescence, with new developmental tasks, challenges and demands.

#### **8.7.4. *Conclusions Regarding Theoretical and Practical Contributions of this Research***

Information pertaining to TRA deepens cognitive understanding of this social phenomenon. However, when parents and teachers describe seemingly innocuous and often relatable social situations, as they did in this research, it impinges on emotive and personal understanding. Seeing the lived world through the lens of the TRA family, facilitated through social constructivism and interpretivism, may improve our understanding, our compassion and our social approach of this uniquely human phenomenon.

### **8.8. Limitations of the Study**

The following limitations may have affected the study findings:

- The sample size of the study prohibited the use of statistical analysis but did allow for rich and colourful descriptions of the TRA child. However, there are certain aspects of this TRA study that would have benefitted from a larger sample size and an underlying statistical analysis, such as the statistical prevalence of certain individual characteristics noted on the CBCL or the individual items of the parental response scale.
- To ensure data quality, facilitate verification and allow comparisons, stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria were set (Silverman, 2010). A large number of TRA children who are still in

contact with their biological family were excluded, as were non-traditional TRA families that exist in South Africa such as single adoptive parents, same-sex parents, mixed-race families and families that have not lived together as a family for five years or more. These alternative family constructs should also be considered in future TRA research in South Africa.

- Since participation in this research was non-captive and voluntary and purposive sampling was used, parents and children experiencing a problematic adoption placement would probably have declined participation. This limited the diversity of the data findings and may have resulted in a skewed positive perception.
- This study was limited to an area within a reasonable driving distance, which resulted in the selection of families all living within a city. It was therefore beyond the scope of this study to determine whether the size and nature (urban/rural) of the community would have any effect on the findings. Rural areas are traditionally more conservative and choices of schools and social circles more limited, which may have a more restrictive impact on the developing self-identity.
- Although a concerted effort was made to avoid “cherry picking” of data, it was not possible to eliminate researcher subjectivity completely. The examples used and initial codes generated were subject to my understanding and interpretation, a limitation common to qualitative research methodology. All processes to ensure data verification and quality, as set out in Chapter 4, section 4.3.6. were utilised to counterbalance researcher subjectivity.

## 8.9. Concluding Remarks

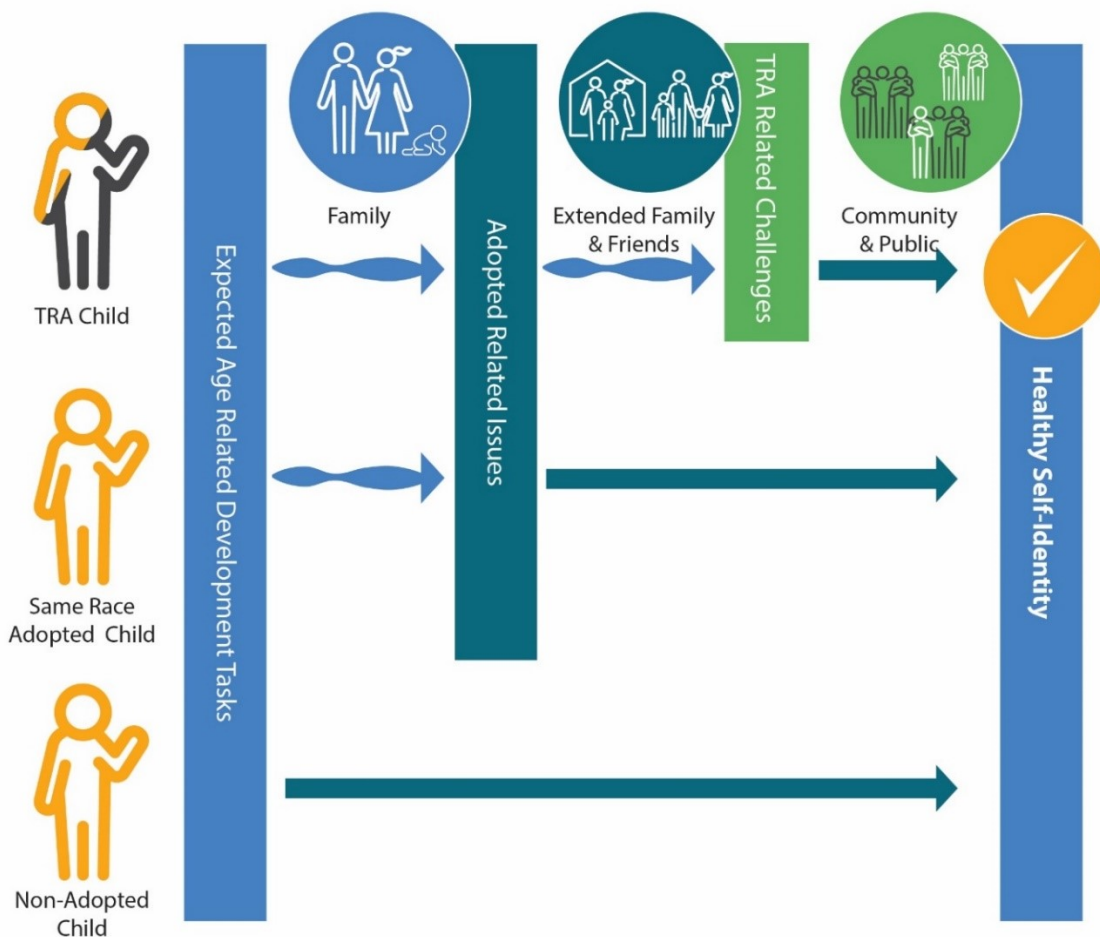
Just as *adrogatio* and *adoptio* in ancient times addressed a social need (Chapter 2.4.1.), TRA is a modern response to a pressing welfare need in South Africa. With many children in need of care and many adults seeking to be parents, bringing them together to create a family appears to be a simple solution. However, in practice TRA comes with its own ramifications and demands. In a country like South Africa, often described in terms of its rigid racial divides, this intimate and multiracial family unit may experience these challenges more intensely.

Children in the latent phase must accomplish set developmental tasks to gain skills conducive to self-identity development. All adopted children must acquire these set age-related skills and face their persistent need for acceptance and belonging while simultaneously dealing with the knowledge of their prior loss. Transracially adopted children must carry out these progression tasks successfully as all children in middle childhood, assure themselves of acceptance in the face of known historical loss and the possibility of future ethnic, cultural and interpersonal loss, as adopted children must do, *while*

convincing their family, society and themselves that despite their “non-belonging physical appearance” they are exactly where they need to be, in the family they need to be in. Nurturing a developing self-identity is therefore a threefold task for a TRA child (See Figure 8.1).

This research has indicated a number of strategies that the child and his or her family employ, mostly with success, to facilitate healthy self-identity growth. These children showed remarkable resilience in dealing with their less than favourable start in life, in no small measure due to their learned social skills and unique approach to life situations, as well as the ubiquitous presence of mindful parenting.

It is hoped that this work, possibly the first to explore the self-identity of the early schoolgoing TRA child in South Africa, may set the stage for further research in the field of TRA and provide country-specific information for all those who become engaged in this rapidly growing and exciting human phenomenon.



**Figure 8.1**

*Schematic representation: The TRA Child's Journey toward Healthy Self-identity formation*

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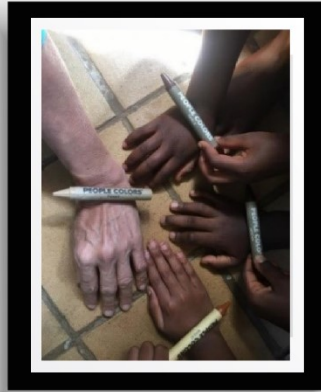
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## Addendums:



### Addendum A: A Child's Narrative -The Contextual Presentation of the Self-Identity

Using the consistent findings that have emerged from the current research has made a theoretical description of the self-identity of the young TRA child possible. However, *a self-identity is a dynamic entity that becomes most significant when evidenced in an interpersonal setting* (Erikson, 1968; Brown, 2017; Corenblum, 2014) and encapsulating it within a static description, without personal and social context, may be restrictive and limit depth of understanding.

To address this possible deficit and facilitated by the philosophical paradigms of interpretivism and social constructivism, an *ambitious* presentation of the self-identity of a TRA child as she engages in her lived world is provided as supplementary information<sup>90</sup>. The description again takes on the form of a narrative, as told by a seven-year-old TRA girl, since the self-identity of the child is couched within *the story of the child* (Soares, et al., 2017; Grotevant et al., 2017; McAdams, 2001,2013; Erikson, 1968, 1980). Relevant literature correlations and references to the emergent themes have been made in the secondary column to enhance understanding.

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<sup>90</sup> The information used was gathered from all the children's psychometric projections, the interpretations and social constructs of the parents and teachers, the emergent themes of the research data and finally, my interpretation of the data. Only real situations and examples as recounted by parents and teachers, albeit different families, have been used.

*Contextual presentation of the self-identity*

My seven-year-old self-identity and I	Notes, themes and relevant literature correlations
<p>Before I go to school, I have to tidy up my room, full of things that belong to me. It's my favourite place in the world because it's pink and it tells me I belong in this house and in this family.</p> <p>My mom struggles to get my hair in a style, and I am reminded again that it looks and feels different from her long, straight hair. But I don't really feel bad about that because my dad tells me that it is beautiful, and when I get to school, there are friends who look like me and who are teaching me to comb it into an afro.</p> <p>School is mostly great. I love to talk to all my friends, and we laugh a lot. I have a big circle of friends, boys <i>and</i> girls, who make me feel loved and wanted. Thato is very dark, and Keisha is an Indian girl who brings us fantastic samoosas. Johan thinks because he is Afrikaans, he knows everything about rugby, but it is a lot of fun when we all play it together. I really like being in that silly rugby team. When I first came to this school, I thought I should join the Black girls who look like me. But at breaktime they spoke to me in a language that I didn't understand, and I felt left out. In the beginning, the Black children thought I was being a "coconut", Black on the outside, White on the inside, but I just didn't understand them. I do wish I could speak their language because I would probably have even more friends. Once I explained to them about my parents, they understood a bit better, and we all speak English now when we play together. Their parents still click their tongues at me when I don't greet them in their language. I think they think I am being rude.</p> <p>Shopping is always fun, but today, as I ran back down the aisle for something my mom forgot, the shopkeeper took</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of place and possessions (Theme 3) to confirm sense of belonging</li> <li>• Hair is one of the most significant ethnic identifiers in South Africa</li> <li>• Potentially emotive- has political and colonial undertones</li> <li>• Physical attribute affirming of identity when viewed as positive</li> <li>• Care of hair often repeated area of concern of TRA</li> <li>• Contentious area in Black perception of TRA -can White people take care of Black hair</li> <li>• Spontaneous and friendly nature- "putting myself out there" (Ch 7, Sect 9)</li> <li>• Novel approach to group membership (Theme 2)</li> <li>• No traditional inclusion and exclusion criteria</li> <li>• Group membership dictated by activities</li> <li>• Encouragement of cultural and ethnic practices that affirm developing identity (Ch 8, Sect4.1.3-systemic predictors)</li> <li>• Sense of belonging and acceptance within a team setting for increased self-worth and esteem (Weyns, et al., 2018)</li> <li>• Traditional choice of group membership based on gender and race (Ch 3, sect 3.1)</li> <li>• Unintentional microaggression (Yearwood, 2013) assaulting sense of belonging</li> <li>• Public visibility with unpredictable responses that may impact negatively on self-identity</li> <li>• Heightened social and racial awareness of all the family members</li> <li>• Threat to self-identity due to loss of sense of self-esteem and self-worth, as well as decreased</li> </ul>



my arm and asked why I was on my own. She said that I was too little to be shopping alone. I pointed to my mom, but I could see that at first that she didn't believe me. It was only when my mom saw me pointing that she quickly came and explained that I was her daughter, and that I wasn't alone. The lady wasn't trying to be mean. She just didn't see a Black lady close to me.

But these things do make me feel a little sad because then it seems as if people don't think I belong to my family. My friends and their parents don't get stopped or stared at by other people when they go somewhere, probably because they look alike.

When people ask about me, my mom used to explain that I am adopted, but I am getting really good at answering people's questions myself. We even talk about it at home, so that I know what to do and say if people ask me about my family. It gets easier every time I do it, and I don't really mind so much anymore, but just sometimes I wish we could just be an ordinary family.

I used to worry about being adopted, but now it's just something that other people want to know about me.

Maybe when I am a teenager, that might worry me again, because teenagers seem to worry about everything.

I know that my Oupa and Ouma are coming for supper tonight. I love them, and I especially love the photo of all of us together that is in their sitting room.

It is the same photo that I used for our school family tree project last year in Grade One. Some of the children told me that my family tree was fake, that those weren't my "real parents and grandparents". I told them that they were real because they are the ones that take care of me, that play games with me and teach me long sentences, just like the other children's real parents do. I told them that my

sense of belonging and acceptance and disruption of sense of permanence and continuity

- Loss of privacy regarding adoptive status
- Forced disclosure of adoptive status
- Family discussions to provide skills that protect a threatened identity
- Intentional parenting
- Advanced verbal skills due to persistent and challenging conversations (Theme 1)

- Potential to identity challenges in adolescence as described by Thomson (2005) (Ch 2, sect 4.5)

- Importance of extended family (Johnston, 2012) as confirmation of belonging to a social entity
- Acknowledgement of belonging to the family-increased self-worth and self-esteem
- Importance of objects to confirm "my place and my space" (Theme 3)

- Loss of a "real" family
- Forced disclosure (Ch2, sect.4.3)
- Ensuring belonging and innate fear of rejection (Theme 4)

- Cultivation of verbal prowess to address microaggressions (Theme 1)
- Deliberate choice of school to allow for TRA accommodation and promote acceptance (Theme 6)

parent's surname is my surname and that we all live together as a family. That only happened when I started my new school.

My teacher is really kind, and she tells us that God loves everyone, Red and Yellow, Black and White. Nowadays, everyone knows what my real family looks because they are always coming to the athletics and concerts at school, and nobody really talks about it anymore.

The only thing that worries now in Grade 2 is that I am struggling with maths. My dad is a lecturer at the university, and I know he is very clever. I am so scared that he thinks I am too stupid to be his little girl, so I am trying really hard. I just don't want the other children to know about my maths problems, so sometimes I keep quiet when I should be asking for help. Luckily, my dad plays funny games with me on the computer to help me learn my timetables, and he keeps telling me that I am getting better and better every day

Sometimes, in secret, I wonder about my other "tummy mummy" and what she is like. I wonder whether I have other brothers and sisters that look like me. I have a letter from her, and a small photograph that is in my baby album that I like to look at it. I don't know why she had to leave me, and I am really happy with my family now, but sometimes, when people pass me, they say "Wow, she's lucky that one". My parents get angry with the people then. I think they remember then that I had to lose my family to come and live with them. That's when they hug me and tell me how much they love me, and I know that *I am okay*.

- Teacher sensitivity (Theme 6)
- Intentional parenting (Theme 5)
- Parental involvement and mixed demographic school as predictor of healthy self-identity development (Ch 8, sect. 4.1.3)
- Fear of being inferior (Ch.3, sect 2.2)
- Afraid to not be considered "good enough" (Erikson, 1963, 1968)
- Fear of not being considered "a keeper" (Smit, 2002, 143)
- Higher prevalence of learning difficulties in adopted children (Ch 8, sect. 3)
- Sustained parental involvement as predictor of healthy self-identity
- Adoption is always accompanied by loss
- Exploring the adoptive narrative is essential to integrate adoptive identity into self-identity
- Augmenting the memories with the "bits and pieces" of life are beneficial if possible (Ch 7, sect5.3)
- Burden of "being grateful" that limits verbal expressions of loss (Ch 2, sect. 4.3.)
- Parents eschew the idea of their TRA child being a "social project"-their children made them a family- an accolade to the child's sense of belonging and acceptance

## **Addendum B: Parent Information Brochure**



### **Parent information brochure**

**Study Title: The self-identity of the young transracially adopted child**

**Researcher: Maynette Heyns (PhD research student)**

**Institution: University of Pretoria: Department of Early Childhood Education**

Dear Parents,

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter and to consider participating in my research.

I am Maynette Heyns and currently enrolled as a PhD student in the Department of Early Childhood Education, at the University of Pretoria. My research field of interest is transracial adoptions in South Africa and forms part of my academic requirements towards a doctoral degree in Early Childhood Education. My supervisor is Dr Melanie Moen, and co-supervisor is Dr Michelle Finestone, all affiliated with the University of Pretoria.

This document describes the research study, and your role as possible participants. It is to help you decide if you would like to participate. You need to understand what is involved, before agreeing to take part. Please read the information carefully and feel free to ask questions or raise concerns with either myself or my supervisor, Dr Moen.

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be required to complete an informed consent document. You will receive a copy of both signed documents for your records.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw your consent at any time. You may also take your time in deciding, and no study activity will be commenced without your written consent.

#### Introduction and aim of the study

Transracial adoption in South Africa was legalised in 1991. There are many more Black babies and children eligible for adoption than prospective Black adoptive parents. There are significantly more prospective White adoptive parents than White adoptable babies and children. This has led to an increase of transracial adoption of specifically Black babies and children by White parents. You, as

a family, are being asked to take part in their research study because you have exercised this option and have adopted a child from a different race. The focus is on exploring the self-identity of the early, school-going transracially adopted Black child.

To be part of this research, you and your adopted six to ten-year-old child must have lived together as a family, from placement to adoption, for a minimum of five years. This means that your child is now starting school or has been attending the foundation phase of school.

Making the move from home to the bigger and more diverse environment of school is a daunting challenge for any child. However, it has been my experience as a counsellor that transracially adopted families view this transition as particularly challenging. Parents fear that their children might experience social problems and be victimised because they are adopted or transracially adopted.

Two compounding developmental processes occur while children are in the foundation phase of school. Firstly, they become more racially aware and realize that race is more than the colour of skin. They raise questions regarding language, cultural practices and racial differences. Secondly, as their reasoning abilities mature, adopted children may want to investigate aspects relating to their adoption in more depth. They may seek information regarding their biological families and question what it means to be so visibly different to the rest of the adoptive family. These two processes are particularly relevant to your child. It is not clear whether these processes play a role in how your child develops his or her self-identity at this stage.

Your child's self-identity is the way he or she presents him- or herself to the world and consists of two equally important and interdependent social and psychological components. A healthy self-identity is a prerequisite to raising a well-adjusted adult with the ability to secure good relationships, have a consistent sense of self-worth and self-esteem, and be optimistic about the future.

This research is an attempt to explore and understand:

- How your child perceives him or herself in the world
- What characteristics he or she possesses that helps or hinders him or her in “fitting in with the world”.
- what skills and strategies he or she uses to meet the challenges?
- and how he or she views relationships with peers, teachers and others community members.

#### Selection of study participants:

To ensure that data is comparable, participants must comply with certain criteria. It is expected that a minimum of six to eight children with their families will participate in the study. Transracially adopted Black children between the ages of six to ten will be invited to form part of the research.

They will be asked to draw and describe two pictures and build a scene in a small box, using figures and props provided. No formal interview will be conducted, and all effort will be made to make participation in the study non-threatening and enjoyable for the children.

Children will be excluded for the following reasons:

- They do not assent to study participation
- They do not live with their adoptive mother *and* father
- They still have contact and visitation with members of their biological family
- They have not lived as a family since placement for five years or more
- They do not attend school

You as parents and a teacher of your choosing will also be asked to contribute information with regards to your child.

#### The schedule of procedures:

You and/or your spouse will be contacted by myself telephonically, or via email, to establish contact and set up an initial meeting if you express an interest in study participation.

- *First meeting*

At the first personal meeting, you will be given this information sheet and informed consent document to read through. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns, if any. You will also be made aware that participation is voluntary, and that consent, once given, may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or loss.

It is also important to note that your identity will be protected, and that all information collected will be treated confidentially throughout the study.

Should you give your written consent, your child will also need to express his or her willingness verbally to submit drawings and build a scene for the study. He or she should also sign the assent form. Although the nature of the study cannot be explained in detail to your child, as this may inhibit spontaneity during the projective techniques of drawing and playing, it will be explained to him or her that it is to study children that are adopted. You will be present during this explanation and assenting, but not during the assessment process to limit any undue influences.

- *Data collection with parents-following consent*

Once you have given your written and informed consent, data will be collected from you in the form of a demographic/parental questionnaire, a Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL), and a semi structured interview. The questionnaire and CBCL will provide background information pertaining to you, your family and your transracially adopted child. The CBCL will provide insight into his or her general behaviour at home as well as with friends and family. These two documents will take

approximately 60 minutes to complete and may be done at a time convenient for you. I will collect them once finished.

The semi-structured interview consists of twelve open-ended questions, with most of the content dealing with your description of your child and the manner in which you and your child manage challenges, interpersonal relationships, adoption and racial interaction. It is estimated that this interview will take between 60 and 90 minutes. It will also be necessary to audio-record it for transcription purposes, preceding analysis.

- *Data collection with teachers-following consent*

A teacher that is identified by yourselves as having sustained contact with your child at school will be approached to contribute to the study. Once informed and written consent is obtained from him or her, he or she will also be asked to complete a CBCL at a convenient time. A semi-structured ten question interview of approximately 45 to 60 minutes will be conducted and audio recorded. The questions in this interview will concentrate on your child's interaction with teachers and peers, as well as the teacher's management of possibly social and racial subjects.

- *Data collection with your child-following assent*

The emotional safety and security of your child is of utmost importance. A child psychologist will be conducting the assessment for data collection and is a registered child psychologist who specialises in child evaluation and therapy. Two of my supervisors are also clinical psychologists. Your child will only be assessed if he or she is comfortable in drawing two pictures and building a scene with figurines. Most children find these activities enjoyable and non-threatening. There will be no formal interview with your child to minimise intrusive probing. Once rapport has been established, he or she will be asked to complete and describe the two drawings. There are minimal instructions and there is no chance of failure.

Your child will also be asked to build a scene as if he or she is a director of a stage production. The assessment is in the form of a portable box, and all the figures and props are in the box. Once he or she has completed the building, a photo is taken of the scene, and an unguided description of the scene is asked and recorded for subsequent analysis. The entire projective technique should not take longer than 45 minutes and will be done in a location suitable for assessing children.

- *Data analysis*

Thematic analysis is the strategy used for this research. This means that I will explore the information to identify themes that are important and re-occurring in all the assessed children regarding their self-identity, and then discuss them. I will be assisted by a psychologist, who has years of experience in assessing children's projective techniques for therapeutic and forensic

purposes. She will be analysing the drawings and scene buildings, as well as aiding in theme identification to confirm my findings. I will also be constantly supervised by Dr Moen and Dr Finestone.

#### Risks and discomfort

There should be no physical risk involved in study participation, although you may experience some emotional response to the interview. It is not expected that your child will experience any untoward emotional discomfort or distress during the assessment. However, should you or your child feel the need for emotional support following our interactions, a therapist will be recommended for intervention. You may also exercise your right to withdraw from the study at any time.

The interview and the projective technique will also be administered at a time that is convenient to you, in the comfort and familiarity of your home and a child friendly environment. This should limit any inconvenience and physical discomfort.

#### Benefit of participation

It is hoped that exploring the self-identity of transracially adopted Black children will lead to better understanding of these children, and their unique, if any, developmental needs. Knowledge of this self-identity may lead to early detection and intervention of children who are experiencing problems or at risk.

Understanding how the transracially adopted child views his or her psychological and social position in the world will make the support and intervention of other role players such as parents and teacher more appropriate and focussed. It should also enable all role players to create an environment that will promote healthy self-identity development.

#### Reimbursement for study participation

You will not receive any payment for participating in this study. However, it is not expected that you will incur any expenses related to study participation, such as travel costs, as I will be meeting you at your house and assessing your child at home.

#### Confidentiality

The clinical psychologists, Dr Moen, Dr Finestone and I are subject to the rules of confidentiality as set by the Code of Conduct for psychologists, so there will be no breach of confidentiality.

To ensure privacy, your names and any other identifying information will not be attached to any records released for further research purposes.

The interviews and assessments will be done in the privacy of your home and in a location that is suitable for assessing children.

Teachers will be seen at a venue of choice, and at no time will the name of the school be made known.

Findings will only be discussed with my supervisors, in the interest of academic research.

At the end of my analysis and discussion, I will give you feedback if you choose, as well as confirm that you are satisfied with the way in which your identity as a family is protected, prior to any publication.

All documents will be stored securely for a minimum period of 15 years.

#### Sharing the results

It is customary for the findings of a research study to be published as a doctoral thesis and journal articles published in a scientific magazine.

#### Source of additional information

Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact

- Maynette Heyns (Researcher) 012 5469902/082378940
- Dr M. Moen/Dr M. Finestone (Supervisors) 012 4205632

#### Participant questions

If there are any questions, please feel free to make notes on this document:

Thank you once again for considering participation in this study.

Yours sincerely

-----  
Maynette Heyns(researcher)

-----  
Dr Melanie Moen (supervisor)



## **Addendum C: Introductory Letter to Interested Parties**



### **Faculty of Education**

#### **Introductory letter to all concerned parties**

**Study Title: The self-identity of the young transracially adopted child**

**Researcher: Maynette Heyns (PhD research student)**

**Institution: University of Pretoria: Department of Early Childhood Education**

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter and allowing me to introduce my research.

I am currently enrolled as a PhD student in the Department of Early Childhood Education, at the University of Pretoria. My research field of interest is transracial adoptions in South Africa, and forms part of my academic requirements towards a doctoral degree.

A child's self-identity is the way he or she presents him- or herself to the world and consists of two equally important and interdependent social and psychological components. A healthy self-identity is a prerequisite to raising a well-adjusted adult with the ability to secure good relationships, have a consistent sense of self-worth and be optimistic about the future. Transitioning from home to a more diverse and challenging school community brings challenges to the self-identity of all children. In the case of the transracially adopted Black child, these challenges are compounded by growing racial awareness and adoptive identity.

The focus of this study is the exploration of the self-identity of the transracially adopted Black child between the ages of 6 and 10 years. I plan to collect data from a minimum of 8 early school-going transracially adopted Black children in a child-friendly location, using the non-threatening projective techniques of drawing and scene building. These projections should take less than 90 minutes and will be conducted and analysed by a registered psychologist who specialises in child assessments. Additional background and contextual information will be collected from the adoptive mother and father of the child, using a parental questionnaire, a Child Behaviour Checklist and the conducting of a semi-structured interview at home. The interview should not take longer than 60 minutes, and the questionnaire and checklist can be completed at the convenience of the parent. A teacher of the child will be asked to complete a Child Behaviour Checklist and will also be interviewed using a

semi-structured interview schedule, which should take approximately 30 minutes, and be at a venue of his or her choosing.

This research does not require the any names of the family, teacher and school. All data will be treated as confidential. Analysis will be done using the identification and further exploration of important themes.

It is hoped that improved knowledge in this field may assist in early detection and appropriate intervention in the young child struggling with self-identity challenges. A better understanding of the self-identity development and needs of the transracially adopted child may also enable more focussed effort by role players such as parents and teachers to encourage and promote healthy self-identity development.

Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact myself at 012 5469902 or 0823789410. Alternatively, you could contact my supervisors at the University of Pretoria:

- Dr M. Moen/Dr M. Finestone (Supervisors) 012 4205632

Thank you very much for your kind attention

Maynette Heyns

## Addendum D: Declarations of Consent



**Faculty of Education**

**Child participant information and letter of assent**

**Researcher: Maynette Heyns (PhD research student)**

**Institution: University of Pretoria: Department of Early Childhood Education**

**Name/pseudonym**

**of**

**child:**

.....

**Letter read to child, assisted or independently read by child:.....**

Thank you letting me talk to you about a research study. A research study is when you collect information about something important, so that you can understand it better. You have given me chance to tell you all about my study, and ask you to be part of it, but you don't have to say yes, if you don't want to be a part of it.

Let me explain to you what my study is about. My study is all about you, and children that have families like you. When things are different, even just a little different, people always want to know more and understand it. I know that you are adopted, and that you are growing up in a family that may look and seem a little different to other families. That is okay, but I would like to know more about it. To do that, I need to get some information from you, and from other children.

If you agree to be part of the study, a child psychologist, a lady who spends a lot of time with children, and I will see you once or twice. She will ask you to do three things. Firstly, she would ask you to make two drawings that I would like to keep, if that is okay with you. The drawings will be done with pencils, and there is no right or wrong way of drawing. Secondly, the psychologist would ask you to pretend to be the director in a movie. You would build a stage with the toys and small pieces of furniture that are in a carry-around box. The psychologist or I will take a photograph of your stage, before we pack the box up again. I will explain all of this again if you agree to be part of my study if there is something you are not sure about.

If you do agree to make the two drawings and build a stage but change your mind and decide at any time during our time together to stop, no-one will force you to carry on. No-one will be cross or upset with you if you don't finish or stop halfway.

If there are questions you want to ask me, let's see if I can answer them for you. You can also check with your parents, but remember, you get to decide if you want to be part of my study or not, no one else.

If you have understood everything, and you want to be part of the study, you need to sign your name in the box that says Your name below. Your mom and dad and I will also sign and date it after you. Thank you so much for hearing about my study.

Your name

Mom

Dad

Maynette



## **Faculty of Education**

### **Participating parent informed consent form**

**Study Title: The self-identity of the young transracially adopted child**

**Researcher: Maynette Heyns (PhD research student)**

**Institution: University of Pretoria: Department of Early Childhood Education**

Dear Parents

Thank you for taking the time to read the foregoing information sheet.

The social occurrence of transracial adoption of Black babies and children by White adoptive parents appears under-researched in South Africa. I am especially interested in the presentation of the self-identity, both psychological and social, of the early, school-going transracially adopted Black child between six and ten years.

All young children attending school face a challenging transition from the familiar family with regards to significant relationships, cultural practices and group membership, to the unknown greater community of school. However, these challenges may be more complicated and demanding in transracially adopted children. They may need to renegotiate their place in the world, their self-identity, as they become aware of the factors that distinguish them from other learners, such as race, language, cultural practices and adoptive status.

If you choose to assist in my research, I would like to interview you as the parents of your transracially adopted child \_\_\_\_\_. I would conduct a semi-structured interview of approximately 60 to 90 minutes or determined by your availability. With your consent, I would like to record the interview, which will be transcribed and form part of my PhD research analysis. I would also request a completed Child Behaviour Checklist and a parental questionnaire that will provide additional information.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and your identity, as all participants, will be protected at all times, if you so wish. You are also free to withdraw your consent and participation at any time. The interview content is confidential, but it is hoped that the final analysis and findings of all six to eight or more case studies may be valuable to all significant role players such as teachers, and other interested parties.

Thank you very much for contributing your knowledge and time.

Maynette Heyns

Dr Melanie Moen

Researcher

Supervisor

-----  
Contact number: 0823789410

-----  
Contact number: 012-420 5632

We hereby confirm that we have read and understood the information relating to the study: The self-identity of the early school-going transracially adopted Black child, and have been informed about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study. We have also had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to our satisfaction.

We understand that:

- participation in this study is voluntary and that we have the right to withdraw our consent at any time, without penalty or prejudice.
- we as a family will enjoy priority throughout active participation, and that we will not be at risk or deliberately harmed, either physically or emotionally, during the study.
- the interviews as well as our child's verbal and written assent will be audio-recorded for record keeping and for transcription purposes.
- the findings of the study, including data collected from our child and ourselves, will be anonymously processed into a study report. Our privacy and confidentiality will be protected throughout the study and also in publications and in document storage.
- there will be no deliberate acts of deception during the study process or its published outcomes, and we will be timeously informed of any changes in the study process.
- we will receive a signed and dated copy of this form for our own records.

We hereby consent to (Please initial in the corresponding block)

Study participation (father)

Study participation (mother)

Study participation (child)

Audio recording of the semi-structured interview

The use of some of our answers in quotes, with our identity protected

We also agree that (Please initial in the corresponding block)

Our child has assented to undergo projective technique assessment

Our child has assented to submit his or her drawings  
and built scene to the researcher

Our child's projective assessments may be used for  
Thematic analysis, providing his or her identity is  
protected at all times.

Is there an audio and written record of .....(child) assenting to drawing  
pictures and building a scene in a box?

Yes/No
--------

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study:

.....  
(Full name of adoptive father) (Full name of adoptive mother)

.....  
Signature and date (father) Signature and date(mother)



## Faculty of Education

### **Participating teacher information and informed consent form**

**Study Title: The self-identity of the young transracially adopted child**

**Researcher: Maynette Heyns (PhD research student)**

**Institution: University of Pretoria: Department of Early Childhood Education**

Dear Teacher of a transracially adopted learner

Thank you for taking the time to read this informed consent. You have been identified by the parents of \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of learner*) as a teacher to contact for additional information.

The social occurrence of transracial adoption of Black babies and children by White adoptive parents appears under-researched in South Africa. I am especially interested in the presentation of the self-identity, both psychological and social, of the early, school-going transracially adopted Black child.

All young children attending school face a challenging transition from the familiar family with regards to significant relationships, cultural practices and group membership, to the unknown greater community of school. However, these challenges may be more complicated and demanding in transracially adopted children. They may need to renegotiate their place in the world, their self-identity, as they become aware of the factors that distinguish them from other learners, such as race, language, cultural practices and adoptive status. My interest lies in the presentation of the self-identity of the early school-going transracially adopted Black child of six to ten years.

If you choose to assist in my research, I would like to interview you as the teacher of the transracially adopted learner \_\_\_\_\_. I would conduct a semi-structured interview of approximately 30 minutes or determined by the time you have available for me. With your consent, I would like to record the interview, which will be transcribed and form part of my PhD research analysis. I would also request a standardised Child Behaviour Checklist that you complete during a routine school week for additional information.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and your identity, as all participants, will be protected at all times, if you so wish. There will also be no attempt at identifying your school by name. You are also free to withdraw your consent and participation at any time. The interview content is confidential, but it is hoped that the final analysis and findings of all six to eight or more case studies may be valuable to all significant role players such as teachers, and other interested parties.



Thank you very much for contributing your knowledge and time.

Maynette Heyns

Dr Melanie Moen

Researcher

Supervisor

-----  
Contact number: 0823789410

-----  
Contact number: 012-420 5632

Please initial if you agree with the following statements regarding:

**Study title: The self-identity of the early school-going transracially adopted Black child**

I have read the letter of consent and understand the contents of the information.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers that are to my satisfaction.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

I understand that the school I am affiliated with is not identified in any way.

I understand that the information used in the research will be collected using a semi-structured interview and the Child Behaviour Checklist that I complete.

I am aware that the interview will be recorded and transcribed for analysis, with my identity withheld.

The findings of the study, including data collected myself will be anonymously processed into a study report. My privacy and confidentiality will be protected throughout the study and in publications and during document storage.

I agree to having the researcher anonymously quote some of my statements

-----  
(Full name and surname of teacher)

-----  
(Signature and date)

-----  
(Full name and surname of researcher)

-----  
(Signature and date)

## Addendum E: Ethical Declaration by Study Members



### Faculty of Education

#### Ethical declaration by study member

**Study Title: The self-identity of the young transracially adopted child**

**Researcher: Maynette Heyns (PhD research student)**

**Institution: University of Pretoria: Department of Early Childhood Education**

I, the undersigned, agree to conduct and analyse the above-mentioned study, or part thereof, according to the submitted and approved proposal, and all other South African and University of Pretoria regulatory, legal and ethical requirements.

I further agree that I have reviewed the proposal and informed consent documents and have the appropriate knowledge, qualifications and insight to conduct this study correctly, honestly and ethically.

.....

**Full name of person**

.....

**Signature and date**

.....

**Study role or designation**

## Addendum F: Parental Questionnaire



### Parental questionnaire

**Study Title: The self-identity of the young transracially adopted child**

**Researcher: Maynette Heyns (PhD research student)**

**Institution: University of Pretoria: Department of Early Childhood Education**

Dear Parents of a transracially adopted child

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please follow the guidelines in answering these questions. These questions are about you, your family and your adopted child. All the information is confidential, and identifying detail is limited, so please be as honest and thorough as possible. If you are unsure about a specific question, use the words or response scale number that most accurately reflect the way you feel. Please try and work independently and do not compare or discuss your answers with your spouse.

Once again, thank you for your time.

### Section 1

Please complete the biographical information in your own handwriting

Pseudonym or name:	Gender	Age in years
Living together as a couple (years)	Currently employed	Occupation
Highest Qualification	Home language	Other languages
Previously married	Children from previous relationships	Racial composition of residential suburb
Signature	Date questionnaire completed	

Other children in the household:

Gender of child	Age	Adopted/Biological	Scholar/home/away/other	Relationship with transracially adopted child participating in study

### Section 2

#### Response scale

For the next questions, please select a number from 0 to 7. Write the number next to the statement to indicate to which extent you agree with that statement.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not applicable	Not at all						Agree completely

- \_\_\_\_\_ I grew up in a stable home with positive relationships
- \_\_\_\_\_ I had/have a positive parental role model that I follow
- \_\_\_\_\_ I experienced childhood adversities that affect my parenting
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am happy in my current employment
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have many hobbies that my child also enjoys with me
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am actively involved in the social life of my community
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am actively involved in the welfare of my community
- \_\_\_\_\_ I prefer time at home with my immediate family
- \_\_\_\_\_ I prefer time at home with my friends and family
- \_\_\_\_\_ I do a lot of social activities with my extended family
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am actively involved in my church
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am physically healthy
- \_\_\_\_\_ I respond emotionally to situations
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have always wanted to adopt a child
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would have preferred to adopt a same-race child if it was an option
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am satisfied with transracial adoption
- \_\_\_\_\_ I wanted to make a difference and chose to adopt transracially
- \_\_\_\_\_ My partner and I were in agreement regarding the adoption
- \_\_\_\_\_ My extended family was happy with the transracial adoption
- \_\_\_\_\_ My extended family has many issues regarding transracial adoption
- \_\_\_\_\_ My extended family has accepted my adopted child completely
- \_\_\_\_\_ My child shares some of my personality traits
- \_\_\_\_\_ I recognize similarities in my child with other family members
- \_\_\_\_\_ I find some of my child's characteristics strange
- \_\_\_\_\_ My child prefers the company of the family
- \_\_\_\_\_ My child is very social and loves family and friend get-togethers
- \_\_\_\_\_ My child is happy and well-adjusted

- \_\_\_\_\_ I compare my child to my other children (if applicable)
- \_\_\_\_\_ I find my child's physical attributes foreign but acceptable
- \_\_\_\_\_ I find my child's physical attributes attractive
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am comfortable with our physical differences such as hair texture
- \_\_\_\_\_ I avoid subjects regarding my child's physical attributes
- \_\_\_\_\_ I make a point of complimenting my child's physical attributes
- \_\_\_\_\_ As a family, we talk freely about physical attributes and differences
- \_\_\_\_\_ As a family, we don't see any differences and thus do not talk about it
- \_\_\_\_\_ We are very culturally aware and teach our child/ren our culture
- \_\_\_\_\_ We try and expose our child/red to a more traditional Black culture
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have frequent social contact with people from other races
- \_\_\_\_\_ Our child/ren has/have strong Black role models
- \_\_\_\_\_ We chose a specific school because our child is Black
- \_\_\_\_\_ We chose a specific school because it met with our requirements
- \_\_\_\_\_ People in the community are mostly positive about transracial adoption
- \_\_\_\_\_ We address a situation publicly when we have a negative reaction to our child

Please feel free to comment, explain or elaborate on any statement(s) that is/are of importance to you.

---

---

**Section 3:**

**Adoption information:**

1. How old was your child when he/she first came to live with you? -----(months/years)
2. Were you planning on adopting him or her? Yes/No
3. Please supply more detail regarding question 2.

---

---

---

4. Please describe your adoption journey.

---

---

---

5. Do you have any knowledge regarding your child's history and time prior to coming to live with you? Please provide detail known to you

---

---

---

6. Does your child ask questions about his or her background? How do you deal with the questions, and how do you feel about the questions?

---

---

---

7. Any other comments or statements?

---

---

---

---

Thank you once again

Maynette

## Addendum G: Interview Schedule

### Semi-structured interview schedule with parents

**Study Title:** The self-identity of the young transracially adopted child

**Researcher:** Maynette Heyns (PhD research student)

**Institution:** University of Pretoria: Department of Early Childhood Education

*(Please note that statements in parenthesis and italics are for clarification purposes and will not form part of the schedule for parents or teachers)*

1. Describe your family using your own words.
2. As a family, what, if any, were some of the difficulties you or your child might have encountered in bonding? *(This will allow for non-directed information regarding attachment and the concept of basic trust/mistrust).*
3. Who do you think are the important people/significant others that play a role in your child's life, and why are they important? *(This will provide information regarding the ability to form relationships and indicate initial grouping).*
4. How do you think your child views his or her place in your immediate family? *(May indicate a perception of the child's identity, without indicating the concept of identity).*
5. How do you think your child views his or her place in the world beyond your family? *(May indicate a perception of the child's identity in the large community, as well as group membership).*
6. Are there coping strategies and social tools that you feel your child needs to be well-adjusted as a transracially adoptee, and how do you go about providing him or her with these skills? *(This is in keeping with the Psychosocial development theory, and the addressing of racial attitudes).*
7. What are the characteristics that your child has that are beneficial or detrimental to him or her as an early, school-going transracially adopted Black child in South Africa? *(To address the operational definition of self-identity).*
8. How do you think your child deals with the racial and cultural differences, if any, between yourselves, and has anything changed since he or she attended school? *(To explore the rationale of the research, and ascertain racial and ethnic awareness, as well as prejudice).*
9. When you see your child interacting with other children, what do you observe? *(If the parents struggle with an answer, or find the question too vague, then prompts such as observed group behaviour, choice of friends, size of group, etc will be given).*

10. When you see your child interacting with adults in the community, what do you observe? (*Both question nine and ten are to gain information regarding all aspects of the conceptual framework, but purposefully left vague to limit researcher influence*).
11. How does the fact that you are a transracially adopted family change, if at all, the way you as parents?
- ✓ Choose schools
  - ✓ Place of residence
  - ✓ Select extra mural activities
  - ✓ Plan social outings
  - ✓ Discipline your child
- (*This question deals specifically with expectations, and control over domains where choice is possible*).
12. What would help you as a transracially adoptive family negotiate any emotional or social problems with your child that you might expect or have experienced? (*Dealing with expectations, own bias and other findings that might inadvertently influence the psychosocial development of the child*).



## **Semi-structured interview schedule with teacher**

**Study Title:** The self-identity of the young transracially adopted child

**Researcher:** Maynette Heyns (PhD research student)

**Institution:** University of Pretoria: Department of Early Childhood Education

*(Please note that statements in parenthesis and italics are for clarification purposes and will not form part of the schedule for parents or teachers)*

*Although the term learner is used in the schedule, the child will be referred to by name during the interview.*

1. Describe your learner using your own words.
2. Describe your learner and his or her family using your own words.
3. Describe your school using your own words.
4. How do you think your learner views his or her place in the classroom with his or her peers?
5. Are there coping strategies and social tools that you feel your learner needs to be well-adjusted as a transracially adopted pupil, and how do you go about providing him or her with these skills?
6. What are the characteristics that your learner has that are beneficial or detrimental to him or her as an early, school-going transracially adopted Black child in South Africa?
7. How do you think your learner deals with the racial and cultural differences, if any, between him/ her and his fellow classmates?
8. When you see your learner interacting with other children outside of the classroom, what do you observe? *(Prompts might include socialising, choice of friends, relationship conflict, group acceptance, behaviour and management of cultural and ethnic aspects.)*
9. When you see your learner interacting with adults in the classroom and on the school grounds, what do you observe? *(Prompts might include socialising, choice of friends, relationship conflict, group acceptance, behaviour and management of cultural and ethnic aspects.)*
10. How does the fact that he or she is a transracially adopted learner change, if at all, the way you as teacher Manage topics with possible racial content?
  - Approach family drawings and family discussions
  - Discipline your learner?
11. What would help you as a teacher negotiate any emotional or social problems that your early school-going transracially adopted child might experience, or have experienced?

*(The reasoning behind the questions is the same as for the parental interview schedule)*

## Addendum H: Example of a completed note to file

### Note to file/Field notes/ Research journal

Date of note: 7/9/19

Date of event: 7/9/19 interview.

Participants in event: Parents - Family

Subject of note/event/journal entry: Interview observations

- Father emotional - got teary eyed when discussing the kids - "They made me a father"

- Children comfortable - enter the room freely - very tactile family - kids hug parents & mom & dad touch kids on the cheek / hair / face as they talk

Signed: 

**Addendum I: Example of a completed child behaviour checklist**

Please print **CHILD BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST FOR AGES 6-18** For office use only ID #

CHILD'S FULL NAME First Middle Last			PARENTS' USUAL TYPE OF WORK, even if not working now. (Please be specific — for example, auto mechanic, high school teacher, homemaker, laborer, lathe operator, shoe salesman, army sergeant.)			
CHILD'S GENDER <input type="checkbox"/> Boy <input type="checkbox"/> Girl	CHILD'S AGE	CHILD'S ETHNIC GROUP OR RACE	FATHER'S TYPE OF WORK		MOTHER'S TYPE OF WORK	
TODAY'S DATE Mo. ___ Date ___ Yr. ___		CHILD'S BIRTHDATE Mo. ___ Date ___ Yr. ___	THIS FORM FILLED OUT BY: (print your full name)			
GRADE IN SCHOOL	Please fill out this form to reflect your view of the child's behavior even if other people might not agree. Feel free to print additional comments beside each item and in the space provided on page 2. <b>Be sure to answer all items.</b>		Your gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Female			
NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL <input type="checkbox"/>			Your relation to the child: <input type="checkbox"/> Biological Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Step Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparent <input type="checkbox"/> Adoptive Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Foster Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)			

**I. Please list the sports your child most likes to take part in.** For example: swimming, baseball, skating, skate boarding, bike riding, fishing, etc.

	Compared to others of the same age, about how much time does he/she spend in each?				Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she do each one?			
	Less Than Average	Average	More Than Average	Don't Know	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/> None								
a. <u>Tennis</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. <u>Athletics</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**II. Please list your child's favorite hobbies, activities, and games, other than sports.** For example: stamps, dolls, books, piano, crafts, cars, computers, singing, etc. (Do not include listening to radio or TV.)

	Compared to others of the same age, about how much time does he/she spend in each?				Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she do each one?			
	Less Than Average	Average	More Than Average	Don't Know	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/> None								
a. <u>Playing lego</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. <u>Reading books</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. <u>Outside play</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**III. Please list any organizations, clubs, teams, or groups your child belongs to.**

	Compared to others of the same age, how active is he/she in each?			
	Less Active	Average	More Active	Don't Know
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None				
a. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**IV. Please list any jobs or chores your child has.** For example: paper route, babysitting, making bed, working in store, etc. (Include both paid and unpaid jobs and chores.)

	Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she carry them out?			
	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/> None				
a. <u>Cleaning room</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. <u>Unpacking dishwasher</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. <u>Setting table</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Be sure you answered all items. Then see other side**

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PAGE 1

Please print. Be sure to answer all items.

- V. 1. About how many close friends does your child have? (Do not include brothers & sisters)  
 None  1  2 or 3  4 or more
2. About how many times a week does your child do things with any friends outside of regular school hours?  
 (Do not include brothers & sisters)  Less than 1  1 or 2  3 or more

- VI. Compared to others of his/her age, how well does your child:
- |   | Worse                    | Average                             | Better                              |   |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| a. Get along with his/her brothers & sisters? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Has no brothers or sisters |
| b. Get along with other kids?                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |   |
| c. Behave with his/her parents?               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |   |
| d. Play and work alone?                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |   |

- VII. 1. Performance in academic subjects.  Does not attend school because \_\_\_\_\_

Check a box for each subject that child takes	Falling	Below Average	Average	Above Average
a. Reading, English, or Language Arts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. History or Social Studies <i>N/A</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Arithmetic or Math	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Science <i>N/A</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other academic subjects—for example: computer courses, foreign language, business. Do not include gym, shop, driver's ed., or other nonacademic subjects.

2. Does your child receive special education or remedial services or attend a special class or special school?  
 No  Yes—kind of services, class, or school:  
*extra maths lessons*
3. Has your child repeated any grades?  No  Yes—grades and reasons:

4. Has your child had any academic or other problems in school?  No  Yes—please describe:

When did these problems start? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Have these problems ended?  No  Yes—when?

- Does your child have any illness or disability (either physical or mental)?  No  Yes—please describe:

What concerns you most about your child?

*Nothing*

Please describe the best things about your child.

*Outgoing personality  
 Easy-going  
 Very good social + emotional intelligence*

PAGE 2

Be sure you answered all

Please print. Be sure to answer all items.

Below is a list of items that describe children and youths. For each item that describes your child *now or within the past 6 months*, please circle the **2** if the item is **very true or often true** of your child. Circle the **1** if the item is **somewhat or sometimes true** of your child. If the item is **not true** of your child, circle the **0**. Please answer all items as well as you can, even if some do not seem to apply to your child.

0 = Not True (as far as you know)		1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True	2 = Very True or Often True		
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1. Acts too young for his/her age	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	32. Feels he/she has to be perfect
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2. Drinks alcohol without parents' approval (describe): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	33. Feels or complains that no one loves him/her
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3. Argues a lot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	34. Feels others are out to get him/her
<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	4. Fails to finish things he/she starts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	35. Feels worthless or inferior
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	5. There is very little he/she enjoys	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	36. Gets hurt a lot, accident-prone
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	6. Bowel movements outside toilet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	37. Gets in many fights
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	7. Bragging, boasting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	38. Gets teased a lot
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	8. Can't concentrate, can't pay attention for long	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	39. Hangs around with others who get in trouble
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	9. Can't get his/her mind off certain thoughts; obsessions (describe): <u>TV PROGRAMS</u>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	40. Hears sounds or voices that aren't there (describe): _____
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	10. Can't sit still, restless, or hyperactive	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	41. Impulsive or acts without thinking
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	11. Clings to adults or too dependent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	42. Would rather be alone than with others
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	12. Complains of loneliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	43. Lying or cheating
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	13. Confused or seems to be in a fog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	44. Bites fingernails
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	14. Cries a lot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	45. Nervous, highstrung, or tense
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	15. Cruel to animals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	46. Nervous movements or twitching (describe): _____
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	16. Cruelty, bullying, or meanness to others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	47. Nightmares
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	17. Daydreams or gets lost in his/her thoughts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	48. Not liked by other kids
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	18. Deliberately harms self or attempts suicide	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	49. Constipated, doesn't move bowels
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	19. Demands a lot of attention	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	50. Too fearful or anxious
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	20. Destroys his/her own things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	51. Feels dizzy or lightheaded
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	21. Destroys things belonging to his/her family or others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	52. Feels too guilty
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	22. Disobedient at home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	53. Overeating
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	23. Disobedient at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	54. Overtired without good reason
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	24. Doesn't eat well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	55. Overweight
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	25. Doesn't get along with other kids			56. Physical problems <i>without known medical cause</i> :
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	26. Doesn't seem to feel guilty after misbehaving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	a. Aches or pains ( <i>not</i> stomach or headaches)
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	27. Easily jealous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	b. Headaches
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	28. Breaks rules at home, school, or elsewhere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	c. Nausea, feels sick
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	29. Fears certain animals, situations, or places, other than school (describe): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	d. Problems with eyes ( <i>not</i> if corrected by glasses) (describe): _____
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	30. Fears going to school	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	e. Rashes or other skin problems
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	31. Fears he/she might think or do something bad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	f. Stomachaches
			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	g. Vomiting, throwing up
			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	h. Other (describe): _____

Please print. Be sure to answer all items.

		0 = Not True (as far as you know)	1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True	2 = Very True or Often True			
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	57. Physically attacks people	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	84. Strange behavior (describe): _____
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	58. Picks nose, skin, or other parts of body (describe): _____	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	85. Strange ideas (describe): _____
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	59. Plays with own sex parts in public	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	86. Stubborn, sullen, or irritable
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	60. Plays with own sex parts too much	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	87. Sudden changes in mood or feelings
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	61. Poor school work	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	88. Sulks a lot
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	62. Poorly coordinated or clumsy	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	89. Suspicious
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	63. Prefers being with older kids	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	90. Swearing or obscene language
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	64. Prefers being with younger kids	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	91. Talks about killing self
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	65. Refuses to talk	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	92. Talks or walks in sleep (describe): _____
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	66. Repeats certain acts over and over; compulsions (describe): _____	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	93. Talks too much
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	67. Runs away from home	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	94. Teases a lot
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	68. Screams a lot	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	95. Temper tantrums or hot temper
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	69. Secretive, keeps things to self	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	96. Thinks about sex too much
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	70. Sees things that aren't there (describe): _____	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	97. Threatens people
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	71. Self-conscious or easily embarrassed	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	98. Thumb-sucking
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	72. Sets fires	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	99. Smokes, chews, or sniffs tobacco
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	73. Sexual problems (describe): _____	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	100. Trouble sleeping (describe): _____
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	74. Showing off or clowning	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	101. Truancy, skips school
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	75. Too shy or timid	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	102. Underactive, slow moving, or lacks energy
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	76. Sleeps less than most kids	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	103. Unhappy, sad, or depressed
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	77. Sleeps more than most kids during day and/or night (describe): _____	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	104. Unusually loud
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	78. Inattentive or easily distracted	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	105. Uses drugs for nonmedical purposes ( <i>don't</i> include alcohol or tobacco) (describe): _____
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	79. Speech problem (describe): _____	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	106. Vandallism
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	80. Stares blankly	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	107. Wets self during the day
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	81. Steals at home	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	108. Wets the bed
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	82. Steals outside the home	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	109. Whining
<input type="radio"/>	1	2	83. Stores up too many things he/she doesn't need (describe): <u>Hoold's ins fays</u>	<input type="radio"/>	1	2	110. Wishes to be of opposite sex
				<input type="radio"/>	1	2	111. Withdrawn, doesn't get involved with others
				<input type="radio"/>	1	2	112. Worries
				<input type="radio"/>	1	2	113. Please write in any problems your child has were not listed above:
				<input type="radio"/>	1	2	_____
				<input type="radio"/>	1	2	_____
				<input type="radio"/>	1	2	_____