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**Mothers' observations of their transracially adopted children negotiating racial
identity.**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or other examination at any other university.

V. PILLAY (Miss)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Aim

The aim of this study was to explore mothers' observations and experiences of their transracially adopted children negotiating racial identity during adolescence.

1.2. Introduction and Rationale

Whilst there has been an increased understanding of the experience of adoption for families and their newly adopted children, focusing on the various aspects of adoption such as the attachment process and the adjustment of adoption (Barone & Lionetti, 2012), this interest has not yet extended to the way that parents experience transracial adoption as well as negotiating racial identity during adolescence. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that whilst much has been written about South Africa's political transition, there have been no in-depth research studies about racially blended families in South Africa having to navigate racial identity.

According to Ferreira (2009), adoption was legalised in 1923 as part of the Adoption of Children Act 25 of the same year. While the prohibition of transracial adoption was not explicitly stated in this Act, transracial adoption was highly unlikely at the time due to the views of race and segregation during racial Apartheid (Ferreira, 2009). Transracial adoption was prohibited in the South African Child Care Act of 1983, and amendments were made to the Child Care Act in 1996, stating that adoption is in the interest of the child and that transracial adoption was legally possible (Van der Walt, 2014). Furthermore, it was noted in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, that the court considers all factors when presented with an adoption application. These factors not only include the cultural and religious background of the child, but also that of the child's biological parent and the parent who is likely to adopt the child (Jackson, 2018). It is stated that precedence is given to a family with the same race as the

child so that they may bear a resemblance to a 'natural family'. As stated by Jackson (2018), South Africa's Child Welfare system affirms this by expressing that a social worker makes it a priority to match a child with adoptive parents who share the same race as the child. However, because there are a few black adoption applicants, black children are not always placed in the care of black families. As a result, if child welfare services are unable to find an adoptive family that is of the same culture and race as the adopted child, transracial adoption is then considered (Ntongana, 2014). Although Louw (2009) found that the childcare and protection system is mainly comprised of black children eligible for adoption, Jackson (2018) stated that white children being adopted by step-parents were the majority of adoptions taking place in South Africa. Nelson and Colaner (2018) affirm that, although there is research on international transracial adoption, it is important to study domestic transracial adoptions. According to Vandivere and Malm (as cited in McAdoo, 2002), today, 20% of domestic adoptions are transracial. While there were expectations of a decrease in racism over time, it is apparent that discrimination and racism are unrelenting (McAdoo, 2002). Racial tensions are still rife (Mashau, 2018). According to Jackson (2018), South Africa may be the only country in the world where a racial minority group often adopts from a racial majority group. This pattern of transracial adoption is unique compared to other parts of the world.

Given the historical and current socio-political racial tensions, Nelson and Colaner (2018) state that the views of parents' perceptions of transracial adoption may be influenced by the historical context in South Africa. Studies have shown that individuals believe that transracial adoption aids in the tolerance and awareness of different cultures and races in South Africa (Moos & Mwaba, 2007). Gaganakis (2006) states that while there is ample literature that interrogates the perception that culture and identity are fixed and that these constructs are developed during the early years, it is suggested that identity and culture are constantly negotiated and changed due

to various environments, socio-historical periods, social processes, and local contexts. While many international studies focus on the facilitation of adoptive parents negotiating racial identity with their transracially adopted children, it is necessary to investigate the negotiation of racial identity among adoptive parents and their adolescents within the South Africa context (Lee, Vonk, Han & Jung, 2018).

Adolescence is a period that involves the development of identity (Erikson, 1968). The developmental issue that adolescents and young adults wrestle with, is namely the development of personal identity (Morsunbul, 2015). Adolescents are engaging with questions of who they are and where they belong. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the ways in which mothers of transracially adopted children negotiate their adolescent's sense of identity. Moreover, it is important to explore mothers' observations of facilitating the development of racial identity in children whose racial identity is different from their own (Behari-Ram, 2016; Lindsey, 2012). It is hoped that a greater understanding of this issue can provide more nuanced support and awareness of the potential challenges during adolescence, which is already experienced as a period of existential crisis.

The **overview** of the chapters included in this research report is presented below.

Chapter 1 introduces the importance of the study as the experience of adolescents negotiating their racial identity has not received much attention in the literature.

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature explored in this study. The chapter first looks at the theory of adoption, then discusses the issues related to adoption with a greater focus on transracial adoption, race, and racialisation and finally examines the various aspects of adolescence, touching on family theory.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology of the study and the framework of the research used. This

chapter will explore the type of sample, the procedure, the interview schedules as well as the analysis method used in this study. Lastly, the chapter will explore the reflexivity of the researcher as well as the ethical considerations that were taken into account.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the study using thematic analysis to discover the themes that emerged from the interviews with the participants. The nine main themes found are as follows:

1. Transparency and open communication within the family unit
2. Siblings as facilitative of racial identity and a sense of belonging
3. The need for different kinds of support systems
4. The need to physically identify with the mother
5. The use of humour in acknowledging racial and cultural differences
6. Identifying with the adoptive culture
7. Language as an indicator of identity
8. The school environment as facilitative of negotiating racial identity
9. Family acceptance vs societal acceptance

Chapter 5 includes the discussion, conclusion, limitations of the current study and provides recommendations for further research in this field of study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the various issues that occur when discussing the topic of negotiating racial identity in transracial families during adolescence. This chapter will include the constructs of a family system, international and domestic research on transracial adoption, and concepts of race and racialisation as well as ethnic and racial identity. The chapter will end with a discussion of theories on adolescence and the development of identity.

2.1.1 Terms and definitions

Transracial/Crossracial Adoption

For ease of reading, I will refer to transracial adoption although the term crossracial is also used in the literature (Van der Walt, 2014; Anderson, 2014; Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Feigelman, 2000). Simon and Alstein (1996) define transracial adoption as the act of situating a child or infant in the care of a family that is of a different race than that of the child's birth family. Transracial adoption can also be defined as the legal adoption of a child by parents of a different race to the child, including international adoption (Perry, 2011). Furthermore, Silverman (1993) defines transracial adoption as the act of joining racially different children and parents together in adoptive families.

For the purposes of this study, transracial adoption is defined as the adoption of a child by a mother of a different race. While transracial adoption can include any combination of race in a family, most transracial adoptions in the South African context are black children being adopted by white parents. This is due to black children being the majority in need of adoption and white adoptive parents being the majority of adoptive parents according to Louw (2009).

However, in this current study, while most participants in the study were white adoptive mothers who had adopted black children, one adoptive mother was Indian and one child mentioned in the study was coloured.

2.2. Building a family

According to Punamäki, Qouta, and Peltonen (2017), the family systems approach states that families consist of various dynamically relational subsystems that are interacting. Families commonly include marital, sibling, and parent-child relationships.

It is seen that South African families are unique in terms of how families are defined (Schlebusch, Dada & Samuels, 2017). Smit (2001) states that the South African context involves a quickly changing social reality. Research shows that there is a continual process of change. Due to this, there is no single description of what a family structure is comprised of, especially when the differences in ethnic groups are taken into account (Smit, 2001). South African families include a large amount of diversity and often include individuals outside their nuclear family. In a study, it was found that families included extended family members such as nieces, nephews, aunts, grandparents, siblings, and close friends, as well as paid domestic helpers who were acknowledged as family members (Schlebusch et al., 2017). Furthermore, Allan (1979) states that the most significant and important relational bonds between individuals are between siblings. It is suggested that these relationships have longer durations than any other relationships, such as the relationships between parents and partners because children spend most of their time with their siblings rather than with other close relatives and friends (Dunn, 2007).

With regard to adoptive families, Algood, Hong, Gourdine, and Williams (2011) state that a family's dynamic and routine changes when an adoptive child arrives and as a result, may cause confusion and instability among family members. Watson, Stern and Foster (2012) explain that although literature suggests that both children and parents express positive experiences during the adoption process, the research found that the family dynamic is influenced by the child and parental circumstances, which oftentimes results in symptoms of maladjustment among adopted children. However, Ferreira (2014) states that adoption provides the opportunity for a child to receive permanent parental care and become part of a family that may not have been possible before adoption. While there is the question of why families may want to adopt, it is noted that there is limited literature on this topic, therefore providing little information about a family's reason to adopt as well as to why they desire a certain type of adoption, in addition to whether the reason for adoption benefits the well-being of the child as well as the parent (Jackson, 2018). According to research, it is found that families may want to adopt due to reasons such as; infertility, a desire to increase the family size, individuals that are single and have always felt the desire to be a parent as well as having a connection to a particular child and establishing a bond before adoption (Yourparenting.co.za, 2013). Studies also found that prospective adoptive parents often define their intentions as wanting to create a change in a child's life and are able to do so by providing a positive family environment for the child (Tyebjee, 2003). Furthermore, Malm and Welti (2010) explain that social workers are given an indication of whether the proposed adoption would be in the best interest of the parents and child through the motivation of why families choose to adopt.

2.3. Adoption

Studies on adoption in South Africa suggest that many individuals prefer adopting babies rather than older children. Furthermore, it was observed that these results are similar to the results of

international studies (Mokomane & Rochat, 2012). Moreover, in developing countries, it was found that children who are abandoned are less likely to be adopted because the adoptive parents feel uneasy about the lack of medical records and the possibility of a family history involving abuse and neglect that could lead to emotional and behavioural problems at a later stage after adoption (Dhami, Mandel & Sothmann, 2007). Furthermore, studies show that there is a lower chance of being adopted at a later age (Cowan 2004; McRoy 2007; Snowden et al) (as cited in Mokomane & Rochat, 2012). Connell, Katz, Saunders and Tebes (2006) suggest that this is due to older children being more likely to have a risk of placement disruption. Studies have shown that when a child is in foster care or an institution for a long period of time, they are more likely to have attachment and developmental disorders (Mokomane & Rochat, 2012). Research suggests that the age at which children are adopted has a substantial effect on the child's post-adoption behaviour and way of adjusting (Pugliese, Cohen, Farnia & Lojkasek, 2010). Evidence was found to support this claim, such as Van den Dries, Juffer, van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg (2009) stating that children who have been adopted at a younger age developed a better attachment to their adoptive parents and demonstrated a more secure attachment style, whereas children who had been adopted at a later age were more likely to develop a more insecure attachment style according to Pugliese and colleagues (2010).

As well as considering the age of adoption and the implications of the child's age, adoptive parents find themselves feeling distressed and inexperienced when having to negotiate the new demands of parenting (Bird, Peterson & Miller, 2002). Adoptive parents need to adjust not only to the new financial demands but also to the social and emotional demands that could bring about induced stress (Bird et al., 2002). Adoptive parents are also left with feelings of chronic pressure, such as anxiety about bonding with the adopted child and concern about whether the child will cope developmentally. In addition, they need to cope with the strain of

instantly becoming a parent and the stress of later having to disclose the adoption to the child (Bird et al., 2002). Moreover, it was observed by Samek and Rueter (2011) that there are lower levels of shared reality among adoptive families compared to genetically related families. However, it was noted by Ward (1987) that parents believed support groups for adoptive parents to be helpful, allowing parents to relate to similar family experiences. According to Baxter, Norwood, Ashbury, Jannusch and Sharp (2012) adopted families face difficulties before and during the process of adoption. Furthermore, difficulties are also experienced during the facilitation of family identity negotiation that occurs after the process of adoption. Farber, Timberlake, Mudd, and Cullen (2003) explain that adoptive parents may feel overwhelmed by having to accept responsibility of becoming parents, understanding financial commitments, informing people about their choice to adopt, informing their adoptive child about the adoption as well as managing possible relationships with their child's biological family. While support services are often helpful in the adoption process, it is also necessary that parents be made aware of the challenges they may face post-adoption (Doubell, 2014). Some of these challenges include meeting the needs of a child and taking into account that the parents may require assistance when having to meet the child's needs. It is important to note that adoptive parents and children face difficulties throughout the adoption process. Furthermore, adoptive families face concerns such as, the adoptive parent's past family dynamics, the competency of parenting, available resources as well as the considerations of the adopted child's cultural identity, all of which contribute to a complex and rich family dynamic (Watson et al., 2012). Furthermore, transracial adoptive parents face challenges of racial difference in society, noting racism, identity formation, providing an environment for the facilitation of learning a second language as well as racial awareness (Findlay, 2006). It is important to note that all parents would benefit from resources that provide support in managing these above mentioned challenges (Jackson, 2018).

2.3.1. Transracial adoption

As a universal practice, adoption involves cultural, legal, political, and psychosocial implications for families and societies (Ferrari, Ranieri, Barni & Rosnati, 2015). In recent times, there has been a large number of internationally adopted children in Western countries. It was found that the majority of the adoptions that occurred in these countries are labelled as transracial adoptions, which can be described as those parents who form families with children who are from a different ethnic group by birth (Ferrari et al., 2015). According to Lindsey (2012), as cultural and racial lines are overlapping more and more within families, transracial adoption is an increasing phenomenon that must be taken into account for families that are looking to expand by way of adoption. Transracial adoption carries with it a lot of questions that cannot be overlooked, and it is necessary for health care workers who work with these families and children to be educated and equipped to help them along their unfamiliar journey and to answer any questions these parents may have (Lindsey, 2012). It is also observed that the uncertainty of what adoption may involve can hinder parents from starting the process of adoption, especially when adopting a child of a different race (Lindsey, 2012).

Johnson (2002) states that there are certain risks and considerations involved in transracial adoption since many of these adopted children have previously experienced abuse, instability, neglect, malnutrition and inadequate medical assistance in institutes or orphanages. All these issues can lead to behavioural problems as well as attachment and adjustment issues. However, these challenges can also be experienced by those who adopt children of the same race as their own. Baxter, Ashbury, Jannusch, and Sharp (2012) found that adoptive parents are faced with different challenges during the adoption process as well as during the negotiation of family identity after adoption. Furthermore, it was found that those who adopt transracially are urged to be more considerate of the environment in which they raise their child and need to explore

their own readiness to facilitate the awareness of their child's indigenous culture (Doubell, 2014). Being deprived of a sense of identity and culture at an early stage of a child's life brings about difficulties in development (Anderson, 2014). While it is important for health care workers to help adoptive families become aware of these common risks, it is necessary to take into account that these risks cannot be generalised, as adopted children have many different experiences of life before adoption (Lindsey, 2012).

With regard to adopted children adapting to their new adoptive families, studies have shown that most children who are transracially adopted adapt to their new families and develop racial identities that are positive and secure (Lindsey, 2012). However, conflicting results around the studies of transracial adoption are common (Lindsey, 2012). Factors that may lead to conflicting results include age at adoption, gender, geographical location, issues in pre-adoption life, and current family dynamics, all of which are not always taken into account (Lindsey, 2012). The current study had a sample that included mothers who had adopted children by the age of six months. Research found that a common problem that is presented in transracially adopted homes was the negative emotions caused by the lack of physical resemblance between adoptive family members, and the feeling of not 'fitting in' with their adoptive family in terms of their cultural heritage or appearance (Lindsey, 2012). According to Lindsey (2012), mothers enjoy being told that their children look like them, as this gives them a sense of personal identity and a sense of belonging. However, this is not the experience of mothers who have adopted transracially as the children of these mothers do not share the same physical characteristics as their adoptive mothers. It is also important to consider that a child's desire to look like his or her family members should be recognised and not overlooked (Lindsey, 2012). Lindsey (2012) argues that families that have transracially adopted children disprove the belief that all members of a family unit have common biological traits or racial

identity. Given this difference, parents, children, and onlookers may experience confusion because of these physical differences, which may have a damaging impact on the family unit. Furthermore, Samuels (2009) found that adopted children experienced that, when the parents were blind to issues of race, the children felt invalidated and racially alienated from their parents.

2.3.2. Adoption in South Africa

The South African Bill to bring about the adoption of children was introduced in 1923 by Mr. R. Freetham, in the House of Assembly of the Union of South Africa (Ferreira, 2007). The formalisation of Adoption in South Africa was a result of the many informal adoptions that were taking place due to informal adoptions not having an effect on the biological parents in any way as well as adoptive parents having no rights over their adopted children (Ferreira, 2007). However, while past efforts were made to decrease informal adoptions in South Africa, many still occur (Ferreira, 2007). The new Children's Act 38 of 2005, which had provisions that became operative in 2010, provided new ways of changing the adoption process, allowing for new opportunities for adoption in South Africa (Van der Walt, 2014). South Africa is burdened with many instances of vulnerable children and orphans in need of placement, assistance, and care (Van der Walt, 2014). While problems of HIV/AIDS, child abandonment, and illegal immigration all affect the state of South Africa, the constitution aims to protect the rights of children, enforcing that all children have the right to appropriate care, even though all children may not be experiencing a family life (Van der Walt, 2014). Adoption is seen as a solution to the problem of abandonment and neglect of many children (Van der Walt, 2014). The Department of Social Development and other stakeholders work together to bring about change through adoption, promoting awareness on provincial and national levels and recognising that children in institutions and foster care should be assessed in order to decide

whether adoption and permanent placement can be arranged for such children (Van der Walt, 2014). Furthermore, statistics produced by the Department of Social Development (DSD), showed a substantial decline in adoptions, with a decrease every year since the inception of the Children's Act (Voster 2018). It was noted that the adoptions dropped to a number as low as 1,033 in 2017. Moreover, social workers provided evidence stating that the decrease in adoption is continuing (Voster, 2018).

2.4. Race and racialisation in South Africa

While there has been the hope of a non-racial society in post-apartheid South Africa, race is still a part of people's identities in the South African context (Hammett, 2010). Race continues to be a central theme of everyday life, and there is an ongoing tension between concepts of multiracialism and non-racialism (Hammett, 2010). The new South Africa and the socio-political reality of its people have been tainted by a history of racial oppression that peaked during apartheid (Kok, Coetzee & Elliker, 2017). It would be strange if the new post-Apartheid South Africa was not intensely shaped by the past, experiencing distinctions according to the economic, political and social roles played by race (Kok et al., 2017). While aspiring to have a post-apartheid society that is free from racial identities, there has been a reintroduction of race and ethnicity as prominent themes in discourses on cultural diversity and socioeconomic rights (Hammett, 2010). Racial issues are in various areas of everyday life and bring about strong feelings and experiences when these racial issues are discussed. However, it is observed that many individuals often avoid confronting these issues in a direct manner (Kepe, 2009). According to Johnson (2008), change towards democracy can result in resistance from those who were socially higher ranked in South Africa during Apartheid. Furthermore, it is observed that individuals with a high ascribed social rank have obtained certain socially constructed beliefs, worldviews, sense of self, life experiences and values due to their ranking (Johnson,

2008). All social hierarchies explicitly express the intrinsic qualities which lead to the various social ranking between the subordinate and superordinate groups (Johnson, 2008). It was observed that in the old South Africa, the natural order involved races and the intrinsic superiority of 'whites' (Malan, 1991). However, many individuals find themselves disoriented in the post-Apartheid South African context, having to accept another view of being as well as viewing other races in a different light (Malan, 1991).

Racial socialisation can be described as the process of parents sending explicit and implicit messages about race in the larger social context (Tang, McLoyd, & Hallman, 2016). Research on ethnic and racial identity (ERI) has largely increased over the past decades and has become a central component of the normative ethnic and racial development of youth (Umaña-Taylor, Quintana, Lee, Cross, Rivas-Drake, Schwartz & Seaton, 2014). Given the diverse South African context, it is important to note that there are also biological multiracial families, along with adoptive multicultural families (Anderson, 2014). According to Kreider and Raleigh (2016), because transracially adopted children are brought up in families with parents or extended members who do not share the same racial and ethnic heritage, it is suggested that an adopted child of this type is brought up differently than a child created by an intimate relationship (Kreider & Raleigh, 2016). This will be further explained when discussing the dynamics of a transracial adoptive household.

2.4.1. Racialisation

According to Keskinen and Andreassen (2017), 'race' is understood as being culturally and socially constructed, having a strong impact on the lives of people and societal processes. Frantz Fanon (1963) introduced the concept of 'racialisation', but this concept had a wider influence due to the theoretical elaboration of Robert Miles (1989, 1993). The benefit of using

‘racialisation’ as a concept is found in its emphasis on processes and the different ways that concepts of race are used in practice on various levels of society (Keskinen & Andreassen, 2017). Racialisation can arise due to alleged biological differences and differences in culture and skin colour. It is also noted that a lot of the time these factors are joined. Ylva Habel (as cited in Keskinen & Andreassen, 2017) argues that the term racialisation focuses on racial and/or ethnic subordination that is brought about by political, historical and societal processes, which were created by racial identities, discriminations, and privileges. Gans (2017) suggests that while most literature pertaining to racialisation focuses on adults, it would be important to engage with racialisation literature focusing on children and young people as it may provide useful information about the process of racialisation. It is believed that research focusing on children paying attention to what adults perceive as racial differences as well as children replicating the judgment of their parents, and other adults or their peers can bring about new information on this process of racialisation (Gans, 2017). Literature found that most international young white individuals are more racially accepting, therefore suggesting that studies focusing on how children racialise may be different from the process experienced by adults. Furthermore, it is recommended that research focusing on whether and under what conditions these children later develop adult processes of racialisation would be crucial (Gans, 2017).

2.4.2. Racial differences and physical appearance

According to Lindsey (2012), adoptive parents should not enter the adoption process believing that their children will not have issues with being a different race from their adoptive families. It is important for adoptive parents to be aware of the encounters that they may experience in society, such as being asked questions or bearing the brunt of society's racial stigma due to the physical and ethnic differences between them and their children (Lindsey, 2012). Parents

should take into account that these situations will occur and should expect them before being presented with such occurrences. Furthermore, parents should expect and understand that their children may be asked questions like 'What are you? Is that your mother? Where did you come from?' Parents will also be asked similar questions (Lindsey, 2012). Simon and Alstein (2000) argue that while adoptive parents can be made aware of the factors that will come into play once they have adopted children, transracially and can try to prepare themselves and their children for the unavoidable prejudices of society. Furthermore, it is suggested that there are those who believe that white families are not able to assist children of other races to cope with and understand racism in society (Lindsey, 2012). Crolley-Simic and Vonk (2011) state that there is a belief that adoptive parents may encounter this problem throughout their adopted children's lives. It is further argued that adoptive parents should be aware of race and not oblivious to it, thinking that it does not have an effect (Lindsey, 2012). Studies have shown that positive transracial adoption outcomes can occur when the feelings of the child are validated and when there is clear open communication between the parent and child (Lindsey, 2012). A study done by Docan-Morgan (2010), showed that those adoptive parents who participated in positive, clear, affectionate, and open communication with their children about concerns involving race, created environments for positive results and appropriate coping for the child they had adopted (Lindsey, 2012).

2.5. Ethnic identity, racial identity, and transracial adoption

According to Goulbourne and Solomos (2003), ethnicity and race are terms that are regularly mistakenly used to define the same thing. However, it is noted that while 'race' is recognised as a biological term, it is often understood as a social construct used to make sense of the dynamics of racism, while ethnicity is used to describe the socio-cultural factors that include memories, customs, values, histories, and sentiments (Goulbourne & Solomos, 2003),

According to Helms (1990), racial identity can be described as a sense of a collective identity built around the awareness of a shared commonality of racial heritage with a certain racial group. According to the model of Harris O'Connor (1999), the process of racial identity in transracially adopted children starts from the time they are born and is known as their genetic racial identity (Ung, O'Connor & Pillidge, 2012). Phinney and Rosenthal (1992) describe ethnic identity as the sense of belonging to an ethnic group, as well as the way in which a person thinks, feels, and behaves according to the ethnic group. It is argued that the authors of this model take into account that the current research shows that race is not determined genetically, but rather as biological traits that become conceptualised as a race and can be explained as genetic (Ung et al., 2012). It is stated that an individual's genetic racial identity creates the basis for the later development of true racial identity (Ung et al., 2012). Characteristics brought about through an individual's birth parents including traits such as size, physical features, hair texture, and skin colour are known as genetic racial identity (Ung, et al., 2012). The model further states that all transracially adopted children start with their genetic racial identity (Ung et al., 2012). According to Ung, O'Connor, and Pillidge (2012), the foundation in which racial identity is built for transracially adopted children lies in their access to correct information about their true heredity. However, when there is a lack of precise genetic racial identity, the transracially adopted child can feel inferior because of their uncertainty about who they are racially, resulting in them being more sensitive to racism. This can further exacerbate racism, insecurity, shame, or confusion about their racial identity (Ung et al., 2012).

According to Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous (1998), racial identity encompasses many different aspects of identity, for instance, the way in which individuals create meaning from their ethnic-racial group membership (Douglass, Wang & Yip, 2016).

Due to the importance of racial identity during adolescence, it is necessary to familiarize oneself with the meaning of ethnic-racial identity. Ethnic-racial identity has become a recognised developmental stage in the life of an adolescent (Douglass et al., 2016). Phinney (2003), states that ethnic identity develops in early childhood and provides an individual with a protective factor of resilience against racial discrimination and prejudice (Anderson, 2014). The occurrence of ethnic differences may sometimes lead to fewer ethnical social networks for the child to relate to, resulting in a child feeling socially isolated (Anderson, 2014). Research by White, O'Brien, Jackson, Havalchak, Phillips, Thomas (2008) suggests that adopted children face conflicting loyalties, one of wishing to acquire a sense of belonging to the adoptive parent, while alternatively moving further away from their true ethnic identity (Anderson, 2014). It is also important to note that ethnic identity negotiation is more complex when it comes to individuals of a minority race group as they are also confronted by issues of their minority status and discrimination (White et al., 2008). It is found that caregivers of a child of a different ethnic group may have difficulty expressing affection and loyalty due to different language backgrounds, which results in more strenuous negotiation between the child and parent (Anderson, 2014). While some adoptive families adopt the idea of ethnic and racial difference, finding it valuable to acknowledge the difference of their adopted adolescent, other adoptive families choose to embrace the idea of being colour blind towards race and ethnicity, choosing not to focus on the ethnic differences of their adopted adolescent (Kim, Reichwald & Lee, 2013). According to Plaut (2002), the transracial adoptive parents' choice to claim to not see 'colour' and ignore race is not solely among these parents. There is also societal encouragement to 'see beyond' race on the grounds of ideology. It has been suggested by Kirk (1984) that there has been a better outcome of adjustment among transracially adoptive families for those that have acknowledged and embraced the ethnic differences and the multiracial family system (Anderson, 2014).

Taking into account the process of racial identity, research found that adopted children tend to take on many habits and characteristics of the adoptive family that they are being raised by (Chimezie, 1975). Transracial adoptees experience a dual connection of two cultural backgrounds: the heritage culture and the national culture (Ferrari et al., 2015). However, it is suggested that these adoptees may not have the same access to both of their cultures (Scherman, 2010). It is found that their national culture is conveyed intrafamiliarily as these adopted children are assimilated into their adoptive families' culture. The heritage culture becomes secondary, and adopted children may learn about it through the efforts of the adoptive family rather than being brought up in a family with that culture (Ferrari et al., 2015). According to Baden, Treweek, and Ahluwalia (2012) transracially adopted adolescents and young adults are forced to come to terms with their heritage culture and bring meaning to their ethnic group membership. These transracially adopted adolescents are most likely to engage in ethnic exploration in hopes of reclaiming their birth culture (Ferrari et al., 2015).

Most international transracial adoptions take place in the United States and it is found that the majority of adoptive parents are white (Lee, Vonk, Han & Jung, 2018). According to Jackson (2018), the number of white adoption applicants is greater than the number of black adoption applicants in South Africa. Mokomane, Rochat and The Directorate (2011) found that black citizens of South Africa expressed that the process of legal adoption does not align with their cultural and social belief systems. According to Jackson (2018), black South African citizens are of the opinion that adoption hinders the relationship between the adopted child and their family of origin and clan roots, resulting in severe implications with regards to the child's security, welfare, and ancestry. As it is already a difficult task for biological parents to provide support and develop sufficient skills in order to parent effectively, it is felt to be potentially even more challenging for transracial adoptive parents to provide adequate parenting (Lee,

Vonk, Han & Jung, 2018). They are required to facilitate a connection to their adopted child's culture of origin and provide the necessary support while bringing them up to live in a society that is racially divided. Furthermore, Lee, Vonk, Han, and Jung (2018) found that international studies focused on the cultural and racial practices of transracially adoptive parents as well as facilitating the negotiation and formation of the racial identities of their transracially adopted children. It is shown that adoptive parents in support of socialisation practices created a more positive outcome of the adjustment of the adopted child (Lee, Vonk, Han & Jung, 2018). These parents increased the child's self-esteem, feelings of family belonging, development of racial identity, and in addition, decreased the child's experiences of stress due to racial discrimination. Berbery and O'Brien (2011) state that transracial adoptive parents are more likely to engage in cultural socialisation practices than racial socialisation practices, as supported by the findings of Crolley-Simic and Vonk (2012), further suggesting that this is due to the parents feeling uncomfortable with issues of race and their lack of experience with prejudice and discrimination, thus focusing on culture rather than race (Lee, Vonk, Han & Jung, 2018).

It is noted that while some parents are not forthcoming with adopting transracially in the South African context, studies reveal that there are individuals that demonstrate positive attitudes towards transracial adoption and it is found that where adopting does take place, a pattern of transracial adoption is displayed (Mokomane & Rochat, 2012). Although growing up can be seen as difficult even for children from secure backgrounds, children who are of a different race from their parents are more likely to have an even more difficult time growing up (Anderson, 2014). This is due to adopted children not having contact with their family of origin, thus having no sense of the language or culture of their biological background (Anderson, 2014). In addition, a child from a disadvantaged community may experience further difficulties

such as racism (Anderson, 2014). Research suggests that families of the same race and culture as the adopted child are able to offer the child an ethnic background that they can find similarities with and are able to provide the same racial attachment figures that are positive for the child, allowing them to internalise these figures (Anderson, 2014). Children are able to relate to role models of the same race and find similar ways of coping and dealing with issues pertaining to race, such as racism (Anderson, 2014). Lindsey (2012) also found that adoptive parents should take into account the incorporation of the child's culture or heritage into the new family environment as certain difficulties may arise.

According to Feigelman (2000), some studies show that transracial adoption can lead to children experiencing psychological stress, behavioural problems, an inability to cope with racism, and uncertainty about their ethnicity (Anderson, 2014). However, other studies have shown contradicting results, finding that 70-80% of transracial adoptees have fewer emotional and behavioural problems compared to adopted children with the same race as their adoptive families (Lee, 2003). In addition, one particular study showed that transracially adopted children adjust well to their new adoptive families and develop racial identities that are secure (Butler-Sweet, 2011). Furthermore, findings show that most transracially adopted children are more likely to identify with the culture of their adoptive families rather than their heritage culture, because of their exposure to the adoptive families' culture (Ferrari et al., 2015).

2.5.1. Factors facilitative of integrating racial identity

The literature identifies various environments as facilitative of adopted children integrating their racial identity. Samuels (2009) argued that adopted children develop a confident sense of racial identity due to being exposed to various racial environments and cultural heritages in school. Douglass et al (2017) found an increase in consciousness around ethnic and racial

identity among adolescents just beginning to attend high school. Furthermore, it was found that most adolescents attend high schools that consist of a more ethnically diverse environment compared to middle schools (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007).

With regard to the school environment, Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang (2001) found that there was a higher sense of belonging, exploration, and ethnic racial identity among children who were more frequently in contact with those of the same ethnicity. Furthermore, the study observed that more time spent among those of the same ethnicity resulted in a higher ethnic racial identity due to conversing in an ethnic language, which is noted to play an important role in developing ethnic racial identity among peers. Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, and Romero (1999) found a connection between the construct of exploration and the frequency at which people interact with those of a similar background, discussing cultural events as well as engaging in behaviours related to culture and conversing with others about their backgrounds. Furthermore, Syed, Juang, and Svensson (2018) concluded that the development of ethnic racial identity is positively related to the frequency of interactions between those of the same ethnicity as well as individuals immersing themselves in co-ethnic environments.

For further facilitation of the negotiation of racial identity, it is also stated that it is important that adoptive parents attach value to their adoptive child's racial identity and heritage, causing the child to feel supported (Lindsey, 2012). It is argued that adoptive families should be urged to promote a sense of pride in the racial and cultural heritage of their adopted child. In addition, to allow for a positive and confident sense of self, a transracially adopted child should be exposed to different cultural practices related to their heritage (Lindsey, 2012). This can involve cooking certain meals, practising particular customs and traditions, and being exposed to places and communities that are part of the adopted child's ethnicity (Lindsey, 2012). It is

further argued that it is important that healthcare workers urge adoptive parents to expose their children to others that 'look like them' and purchase books or toys that are associated with their ethnicity (Lindsey, 2012).

The above mentioned tools correlate to the research by McRoy, Zurcher, Lauderdale, and Anderson (1982) who found that children who were exposed to their cultural heritage and communities with racial diversity were more inclined to develop a stronger sense of racial identity. Most research focuses on addressing the adopted child's adjustment problems, the racial development of the adoptee and psychological outcomes, as well as the development of racial identity (Lindsey, 2012). Therefore, it seems necessary to investigate the observations of the adoptive mothers of transracially adopted children during the period when their children are negotiating their racial identity in South Africa (Behari-Ram, 2016).

2.5.2. Adolescence and identity development

Adolescence can be described as an important developmental stage of a person's life, where physical, psychological, and behavioural changes occur (Brand, Angst, & Holsboer-Trachsler, 2010). Erikson (1968) believed that adolescence can be seen as a vital stage for the formation of identity. Adolescents proceed to explore their identity and engage in behaviour that is proactive and includes novelty seeking and risk-taking (Brand et al., 2010). Each individual may reach many cognitive and social milestones during childhood and adolescence, being presented with the developmental tasks that may improve understanding of how the components of ethnic and racial identity come about (Umaña-Taylor, Quintana, Lee, Cross, Rivas-Drake, Schwartz, & Seaton, 2014). The term ethnic-racial identification can be explained as ethnic-racial self-labels and identifications that are developed during childhood (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). However, during the stage of adolescence, an individual is able

to explore their own race-ethnicity and personal values from their ethnic and racial groups (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Adolescents are able to connect their own identity with their group of reference and form an ethnic group consciousness (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). During this key stage of adolescent development, adolescents engage in the exploration of their ethnicity and race by interacting with others of the same race and taking part in activities that represent their ethnic group (Syed & Azmitia, 2008). Individuals are faced with the questions of ‘Who am I?’ and find themselves wanting to understand and gain knowledge about this question (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Demerah (2006) states that language can be used to build a sense of identity and provide meaningfulness. Moreover, Demerah (2006) claims that an individual becomes more committed to an identity if they have a greater sense of meaningfulness. However, Motyl (2010) found that others felt as though identity can be found as an answer to the question: ‘Who am I?’ (Ragelienė & Justickis 2016).

According to Chen, Lay, Wu, and Yao (2007), it is vital for adolescents to build meaningful relationships with those around them in order to construct a sense of belonging in their environment and to form a sense of personal identity. Furthermore, it is stated by Erikson (1968), as well as other researchers, that the role of families are vital in the construction of an adolescent’s identity development (Dwairy et al., 2010; Malekpour, 2007; Syed & Seiffge-Krenke, 2013; Faber et al., 2003; Mullis et al., 2009; Dumas et al., 2009 as cited in Ragelienė & Justickis 2016). In a study done by Yablonska (2013), it was noted that, in order for an adolescent to build a strong sense of identity in his or her family, there should be ideal levels of family adaptability, cohesion, acceptance of the children, a parenting style that is democratic, as well as parental consistency and the opportunity for personal autonomy (Ragelienė & Justickis, 2016).

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research has focused on the theory of adoption, suggesting that transracial adoption in the South African context differs from transracial adoption that occurs internationally due to the diversity of the South African context. The literature focused on the theme of race still being apart in everyday life in South Africa and having an influence on adoption in South Africa. The literature provided evidence that the structure of families in South Africa differs from typical family structures found around the world and this may influence the way adoptive families are constructed in South Africa. Furthermore, the literature provided evidence that supported the importance of adoptive parents being aware of the challenges that would occur during the stage of adolescence of their children, being confronted with their child's curiosity in regards to their ethnic identity, among other challenges experienced during adolescence as well as family negotiation before, during and after adoption and taking into account different resources and social support. The literature provided evidence that addressed the crucial role that individuals of the same ethnicity as the adopted children played in the negotiation of racial identity as well as the importance of environments that facilitated the negotiation of racial identity. It was noted that adoptive parents were required to facilitate environments that allowed for the negotiation of racial identity beyond their own ethnic identities and cultural values. To address the gaps in the literature, this study will explore the observations of adoptive mothers that faced various challenges during the negotiation of racial identity, considering the racial concerns in the South African context as well as the challenges experienced by adolescents.

Thus the following research questions emerge;

1. How do mothers of transracially adopted children experience their children's negotiation of racial identity during adolescence? More specifically:

- 1.1 What were mothers' observations of their children's experiences during this developmental task?
- 1.2 What aspect of this process, if any, was difficult for mothers?
- 1.3 What aspect of this process, if any, was surprising for these mothers?
2. How does the socio-political landscape in South Africa facilitate, and/or hinder this developmental process for adoptive mothers, their children, and/or their relationship?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the method used to conduct this study will be discussed and explained. The areas of discussion will be as follows: the research design, the methods of collecting data and ways in which participants were interviewed, the methods used to analyse the data, ethical considerations, and lastly, the discussion on the self-reflexivity of the researcher.

3.2. Research design

The research design that was used in this study was a qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach was effective as it described the reasons why these relationships occur and gain information about individuals' observations and feelings (Terreblanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). This approach necessitated an in-depth, detailed study, requiring individual perspectives and understanding, which was acquired using interviews (Terreblanche et al., 2006). As there is little research on this topic in South Africa, an exploratory research method was used.

3.3. Sample

Convenience and purposive sampling were used to select participants. Eight participants were selected to participate in this study. Participants were mothers of any race who has adopted children who are of a different race to themselves. While it is necessary to acknowledge that both fathers and mothers can be primary caregivers, mothers were focused on in this study in order to ensure a more homogeneous participant group. While most studies in the South African context focus on the experiences of adoption and attachment, further research on the racial factors influencing the experiences of adoption and adolescence between a mother and

child is necessary (Behari-Ram, 2016). For ease of access, permission was requested from local churches and community organisations to advertise the study and to invite potential participants to contact the researcher. Adverts on social media were also used to invited participants. Due to the sensitivity of the research topic, churches and organisations were hesitant about racial discourses and the researcher needed to be respectful and sensitive, providing enough information about the research and why it was necessary. Most of the participants were found through social media. Potential participants shared adverts through social media and made other possible participants aware of the study, using the snowball sampling method. The table below provides a description of the sample in this study.

3.3.1 Table 1

Sample Description

Race of mother	Race of child	Age of adoption	Age of child now	Gender of child
<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>6 months</u>	<u>17, x</u>	<u>Female</u>
<u>Indian</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>6 months</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>Female</u>
<u>White</u>	<u>Coloured</u>	<u>6 months</u>	<u>13, x</u>	<u>Male</u>
<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>6 months</u>	<u>14, x</u>	<u>Male</u>
<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>2 weeks</u>	<u>13, x</u>	<u>Female</u>
<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>5 months</u>	<u>13,15,18,17</u>	<u>Males</u>
<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>4 months</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>Female</u>
<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>6 months</u>	<u>14, x</u>	<u>Male</u>

While the intention of the study was to gather information from mothers who had adopted at least one child of a different race to their own, it was observed that all but two mothers had adopted two or more adopted children. This was an inadvertent finding of this study. Furthermore, while most of these mothers did have more than one adopted child, the child that

had reached adolescence was focused on in the interview in order to answer the research question of negotiating racial identity during adolescence.

3.4. Interview schedule

An open-ended semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide the collection of data in this study (see appendix A). These interviews can be described as conversations introduced by the interviewer for the purpose of finding information that is relevant to the research objectives of a study (Aksu, 2009). The order of the interview schedule was flexible and the interviewer was able to give examples and explanations if needed (Aksu, 2009). The advantages of using semi-structured interviews were to provide the researcher with information about the participant which cannot be overtly observed and to explore in-depth responses (Aksu, 2009). However, a disadvantage of interviews was that they could be seen as difficult when participants are asked to give information that is psychologically sensitive, potentially leaving the participant feeling vulnerable (Aksu, 2009). However, it was observed that while some mothers were hesitant to answer openly, nobody was visibly distressed. The schedule was constructed through collaboration with the supervisor and relevant literature.

3.5. Data collection

Once ethical clearance was given by the Non-Medical Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand (number: MCLIN/18/008 IH), a local church was approached to source potential participants. After gaining permission from the leaders of the church to obtain a participant group, the church was asked to liaise with the congregation for the appropriate participants and announce an invitation of participation in the study, either in church or on the church website. Another source where participants were located was through local community support groups working with adoptive mothers of transracial children. The

president of these community support groups was approached and permission was given to approach potential participants from these support groups. Once participants indicated interest, a participant information sheet (see Appendix B) was provided to the participants to inform them about the details of the study and what would be required of them as participants. Participants were also given a consent form, asking for written consent to participate in the study (Appendix C). In addition, participants were asked to sign an agreement consenting to an audio recording of the interview to allow for accurate data collection. (Appendix D). These audios were stored on a password-protected computer and in digital form. One-hour interviews allowing for rich and in-depth data collection took place at a location that was convenient for the participant and researcher, such as a coffee shop, the home of the participant, or another area offering privacy and comfort for the participant. Six interviews were conducted telephonically.

3.6. Data analysis

Data analysis and interpretation were done using thematic analysis of all data collected. Thematic analysis can be described as a method used to identify, analyse, and report themes that are found in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are six phases of analysis that were followed to complete thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This first phase, called 'familiarising oneself with the data', is the transcription of the data by the researcher by repeatedly reading it and jotting down initial ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In phase two, which is called 'generating initial codes', the researcher creates codes for interesting characteristics found in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase three is called 'searching for themes,' and this is where the researcher gathers codes into potential themes and assembles the data relevant to each potential theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In phase four, which is called 'reviewing themes', the researcher generates a thematic 'map' of analysis where he/she checks whether the themes

work in relation to the coded extracts as well as the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase five is called 'defining and naming themes', which is when the researcher refines the specific nature of each theme to generate clear definitions and names for the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The final phase, phase six, is called 'producing the report,' and this is where the researcher selects vibrant, persuasive excerpts to relate to the analysis of the research question and the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each of these stages was used in the data analysis for this research.

The audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were examined thematically in order to classify commonalities and variances among the responses of participants (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis was used to observe previously unidentified patterns or themes. Once the pattern had been identified, the next step was classifying or encoding the pattern by giving it a label, definition, or description. The third major step was interpreting the pattern.

3.7. Ethical considerations

To adhere to the ethical considerations of a research project, ethical clearance had been received to conduct the research. Permission was first received from the University of the Witwatersrand Non-medical Human Research Ethics Committee. Participants were informed about the confidentiality and anonymity of their demographic information and their participation in the study. They were also informed that no identifying information such as their names would be mentioned, and pseudonyms were used when discussing their input, their contribution to the study was completely voluntary, and they were able to leave the study at any time without any consequence or penalty. Electronic copies of data collected during the study were kept indefinitely in a password-protected computer and stored in digital form. The

findings may be published. While participants were not considered vulnerable, consent was required from participants to conduct research along with consent for audio recording. Participants were informed that they had control over the interview and could terminate it if they wanted, as participation was voluntary. Participants were also informed that there was no direct benefit to them if they participated in the study, but their participation was helpful for adding to research. Participants were allowed to withdraw their contributions if they decided to. Once the WITS ethics committee provided ethical clearance, research commenced. Participants were informed that, if they felt distressed at any point during the interview, they could stop and decide whether they wanted to continue shortly afterward or at a later period in time. Although it was not anticipated, the interviews had the potential to become emotionally taxing for the participants. Since the researcher wanted to be sensitive towards the participants throughout the research process, counselling resources would be provided at little or no cost to them should any participants become distressed. Counselling resources that were available were Lifeline and the Emthonjeni Centre, and the contact details of these facilities were included in the participant consent and information sheets.

3.8. Self-Reflexivity

Given the sensitivity of the research topic, engaging in racial discourse and becoming familiar with adoptive families and the observations of mothers, it was important that the researcher was aware of their own position in the current study and towards the participants (Mrcuk & Breuer, 2003). While engaging with participants that could potentially be of a different race to my own, I believe that I was able to engage as an observer and also relate in certain ways when the participants shared the same race as I did. However, as I am not a mother, I feel as though I was not able to fully understand the experience of a mother or an adoptive mother and as a result, this could have had the potential to be a limitation as my understanding could be limited

as well as my understanding of their personal feelings towards their observations of their adopted children. Furthermore, the researcher struggled to become aware of underlying hidden feelings as the researcher wanted to remain objective and take in whatever the mothers had reported. The researcher found herself wanting to see the mothers in a trying and good light. However, this component at times served as an advantage as I engaged on a deeper level in order to understand the observations of the mothers. It was observed that the mothers were not visibly distressed during the interviews but at times were guarded around possible discomfort when discussing themes of race and racial identity. During this time, the researcher made attempts to build rapport and provide a space that allowed the mothers to feel heard and accepted. At times, the researcher often felt the need to reassure or normalise the feelings or uncertainties of the mothers. While the mothers were able to voice their opinions about their observations of their transracially adopted children negotiating racial identity, the researcher at times felt the responses to be guarded and requiring validation. During the interviews, the researcher felt frustrated and a sense of helplessness when the terms of race and culture were used interchangeably, becoming aware of a lack of insight into the meaning of these terms. Moreover, the researcher at times observed possible defensiveness around the mother's feelings of disappointment or uncertainty about their facilitation in the negotiation of racial identity. However, the researcher felt unable to gain a more in-depth vulnerable answer from the mothers and as a result, would accept what was provided, in fear of possibly bringing about a comfortability for the mothers.

Chapter 4: Results

The eight transcriptions were analysed and explored using thematic analysis and the following themes were found. The themes identified were:

1. Transparency and open communication within the family unit
2. Siblings as facilitative of racial identity and a sense of belonging
3. The need for different kinds of support systems
4. The need to physically identify with the mother
5. The use of humour in acknowledging racial and cultural differences
6. The choice of identifying with the adoptive culture
7. Language as an indicator of identity
8. The school environment as facilitative of negotiating racial identity
9. Family acceptance vs societal acceptance

For each theme, relevant subthemes were identified. The validity of thematic analysis relies on supportive data and, and therefore there are quotes throughout the paper which are extracts from interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each participant was given a pseudonym when the study referred to their contribution as no real identifying information was added to the study.

4.1 Transparency and open communication within the family unit

The families found it important to speak to their children openly and honestly, finding that they developed a better relationship and that this allowed the children to express their feelings of difference or their anxiety around being different or being treated in a different way due to being part of a transracial family. From the responses of Nancy, Mandy, Nicole, Samantha, and Amy, it was seen that the mothers shared the same sentiment of having an open relationship

with their children, allowing them to voice their concerns and difficulties. Furthermore, the mothers illustrated the use of communication as a way of not being colour-blind to the racial differences in the family and refraining from shying away from discussing race. They commented:

Um, I don't, I don't think there was something that really was an issue. Not racist. We have never, there is nothing in our family or in our home that is off-limits. Um, so she knows that there is nothing she can't ask us, there is nothing she can't tell us, and that's not just about adoption. There are so many things she is dealing with now, this one with this in school, and this one with smoking. It's not something that occupies everyday life. (P1)

Nancy valued having open communication, feeling as though it allowed her child the opportunity to bring up other issues that she experienced as difficult and unmanageable.

No, you see the thing is, we believe that we rather talk about things than hide things away from them. I feel like I rather talk to him and be open to him about things, and we do sit down and we do talk. And we, er, I know I feel like, the more open and honest we are with him, the better he is able to understand what is going on around him. (P2)

Mandy explained that the transparency in her family brought about an awareness and allowed her the opportunity to be able to make sense of her child's difficulties.

I initially thought that adoption would be more difficult across the colour line, but, in retrospect, I think it's so much better. You can't, there can't be a misconception around it, if people can see that your child is adopted, and for me that led to a transparent relationship with my child and with the world at large. You know some people take great offense at people asking questions and stuff. For me, that was never a problem, for me and for the kids. They know they're adopted, and people know they're adopted, and they don't have a problem talking about it. And for me, that has actually been a good thing, whereas for someone that's not a different colour, I'm not saying you have to share with everyone when you have adopted, but I think it's just more transparent when you can see it, to state it as what it is and there is more transparency. (P3)

Nicole found a sense of relief in the overt colour difference of her child, allowing for the unspoken understanding as well as the physical appearance of their racial difference to be noticed and seen.

They are able, what can I say, their feelings are open and able to be spoken about. I think that's why they have been able to deal with the difference that I'm white and they're black. (P5)

Samantha found that her openness allowed her children to address their physical difference and allowed them to find acceptance in their difference.

Well, I think I've become pretty thick-skinned. Um, the, look, we talk openly as a family, we talk about it, and if the boys experience anything, they will tell me about it. (P7)

It was observed that Amy found that her family had to cultivate resilience towards the judgment of others due to their physical difference.

4.2. Siblings as facilitative of racial identity and a sense of belonging

A common factor was that these mothers had more than one adopted child, thus finding that their children identified with each other, even indifference. The intention of the research was to interview mothers who had adopted a child of a different race. However, it was observed that six of the participants had more than one adopted child, which could have contributed to the findings on the negotiation of racial identity. Jane found that her children shared a commonality, commenting as follows:

So, I think that having two definitely for me helps because they have a commonality among them. And even if they're not close now, they will always have each other. And I think that they can understand, and they might have a different take on what being adopted is. But I think that you know they both having that is for me I think it is important. Maybe it isn't important for them, I don't know, but I think especially for them as they get older. And one day when we, we no longer there, and just having another person in the world that understands your parents and you, is really important. (P4)

This quote illustrated how Jane valued the experience of her children having another family member who they could relate to in a physical way, allowing them the opportunity to find a sense of comfort in their commonality. It was observed that Samantha shared the same sentiment, commenting as follows:

Think, it does in a sense, um, because obviously they can identify with what happened to them, and they stand up for each other and help each other. So, it's like real brothers and sisters (P5)

Samantha expressed that her children were more able to feel as though they were siblings due to sharing physical similarities. Amy noticed that it was easier for her children to relate to each other through physical differences, given that there was more than one child. She stated:

I think it probably is a good thing. I got this little black community of my own, (laughs) ...it probably does help, whereas, if there was only one, in a big white family, it might be more difficult. (P7)

Amy felt that her sons were able to find a sense of belonging, given that they had other siblings that shared their race. Nicole found it important to consider adopting another child of the same race to avoid feelings of separateness and isolation, commenting:

I just felt like, for him, it would be better if your sister was the same race, I don't want to cause an issue by having a child of a different race, because I've seen it happen where my cousin has adopted two black children and then her third child is white and the white child actually turned around and said to the other kids,

‘Actually I'm superior to you guys, you're just the gardener’, So, I didn't want an issue like that. I didn't want to cause a problem at a later stage. (P3)

Nicole illustrated her need to facilitate an environment that allowed her children to feel a sense of belonging and commonality with another family member that shared the same race. However, it was observed that Jessica felt as though having two kids of the same race didn't really impact the outcome of racial identity, due to them having different experiences. She commented as follows:

Oh gosh, now that's a tough question. (laughs), um, you know I think the way they feel, both of them are completely different.

It was observed that Jessica felt that her children didn't have to experience commonality through race to help with the negotiation of racial identity as they were very different and had different experiences. (P6)

4.3. The need for different kinds of support systems

It was seen that there was a common theme among mothers who stated that support was needed in different forms, whether it was from a social worker, family, partners, or friends. Seven out of eight mothers conveyed that they often found comfort from those who were more aware of their experiences:

Obviously, we would seek help if we feel we don't, we don't know everything.

We don't feel we know nothing but can always benefit from an expert who can

help in whatever way, and we will seek out help. But you know I think we have.

Just, I don't think there is anything specific we would have looked for. (P1)

Nancy accepted 'not knowing' and found comfort in seeking out those who could provide support and assistance. It was observed that Mandy found that she was able to seek guidance from their social worker who had a better understanding of the process. She commented:

Actually my social worker, (she is very good social worker), she said if I have a problem discussing things with child, I can always bring him into her and she will try and make him understand, you know, and we will sort it in that sense because she is also, she will explain matters and things better to him (sigh) (P2)

Mandy found a sense of comfort in having the support of the social worker who was able to make sense of the difficult feelings and uncertainty for her child. The other mothers shared the common theme of finding support from different groups, finding that the groups allowed them to share their experiences and observations and provide input and guidance through their journey. This theme was reinforced by Nicole, Jane, and Samantha, respectively:

I think if there are some families that are much closer, and I think having more role models, and if you're more religious and belong to the church, or if you're a boy scout, you know, I think if you belong in groups, where you have support, I think that would really help. Um, if that's who you are as a person, um, but we're not, so I think it absolutely would have helped to have more role models to other people that are just naturally in our world. That would have helped this stage. (P3)

Nicole found it necessary to find support in different groups as she felt as though her family was not able to provide as much support as external groups may have been able to. Further, she expressed the need to find support from those that could provide similarity in regards to race.

We went through a parenting course, an amazing course. We went through the love, the bond before. We could understand the children, and it helped tremendously. And so, right from the beginning, when we started working with children, we were already fully prepared for children, and our hearts were there and it was just, unfortunately not all parents that adopt can actually have that space, that foundation of being able to grow from there. I wish that I could actually find that course, because it's a course that I would love to take people through, in preparation of what they're going to deal with. (P4)

Jane found support in the form of a parenting course that allowed her to prepare for future questions, which gave her the opportunity to anticipate and become more aware of the needs of her children.

There must be a type of support group, because, honestly, there is no one out there for you. Who do you turn to? You can't relate your feelings to friends or family members. They also white. They haven't experienced it. (P5)

It was observed that Samantha reported having struggled to find comfort from her family and friends as she felt that they were unable to relate in the way she needed; thus, she expressed the need for comfort from support groups that shared a similar experience to her own.

4.4. The need to physically identify with the mother

Differences in hair and skin tone were discussed. It was also noted that there was a notably strong theme of children wanting to identify with their mother's race. Some mothers shared how their children wanted to look like them, and this was expressed by Samantha and Jessica respectively:

The one very big challenge is hair in the Alice band. And my daughter is always very sensitive, and hair has always been a difficult challenge and she, you know, sometimes she's like, 'I wish I had hair like yours', and I said, 'It might be like you had really curly hair and your mother had straight hair'. (P5)

Samantha illustrated the child's need to physically identify with and relate to her mother as a way of possibly feeling accepted and creating a sense of belonging to her mother through physical attributes. The next quote provided an explanation of Jessica's experience of feeling worried about her child's need to identify with her and her concern around what it meant for her child.

'My daughter went through a stage of complaining and saying 'Mommy, I wish I was white like you.' Um, I was a bit concerned.' (P6)

While all mothers shared observations of their children having the desire to look like their mothers, Nicole explained that, at a younger age, her child was unaware of his physical difference and felt that he looked like his mother. She commented:

And um, and we went to a stage when he was smaller when he thought he was white, and he doesn't think so anymore. (P3)

4.5. The use of humour in acknowledging racial and cultural differences

While the families were aware of their racial differences, all of the families described using humour to talk about race and embrace their differences through jokes. This was illustrated by Nancy as follows:

We often laugh about it and make racist jokes because it's a non-issue, but that doesn't mean it's not going to be an issue in the big wide world. But we can't, you can't always anticipate what's going to be, and you can only prepare your child. (P1).

It was also observed that mothers used humour as a defence against uncomfortable and difficult feelings and situations. Nancy found it important to normalise the experience of racial and cultural differences using humour, thus allowing the family to welcome their differences. Furthermore, it was seen that this sentiment was reinforced by Nicole who stated that she had to make light of the way the world saw her family, saying:

'It's hilarious, you can just see it on their face, wondering "What are they doing?"', (laughs). You know, you need to have a sense of humour.' (P3)

Nicole found it necessary to find humour with regard to the way in which society would perceive her family and their racial difference. Most mothers used humour around the idea of their children finding partners of a different race and responded respectively as follows:

I try and joke around with things. Like I do know that when he's older and wants to get a girlfriend and he goes to choose a Zulu girl or whatever, he will probably have to do the lobola thing, so I joke around with him about that, and I'm like, 'You know what, you need to start saving you steaks now'. (P2)

This quote illustrates Mandy's need to show acceptance of difference in the form of humour, gently encouraging openness to difference.

I would tease my son, 'Don't you want a pretty blonde girl?' and he says no, they got to be an Indian or coloured he said. You know, he absolutely loves curry, and I said, 'If you get an Indian lady, you get all the curry, biryani, and if you get a black lady, I don't know if you going to like putu.' But you know, we joke. You can't be serious about this all the time. You going to drive them to insanity. I will drive myself there (laugh). (P4)

Jane found it vital to use humour to express her acceptance of different cultures and allow her children to explore racial differences and culture. It was found by one of the mothers, Samantha, that her family would make jokes between each other about their physical differences. She commented:

I mean all the jokes, I mean when they were growing, the oldest, proud because he was the lightest, and [the] second being called 'black man' because he was the darkest. You know being able to joke amongst themselves, and you know when they doing their hair and they learn from each other. And now I think it

probably is a good thing. I got this little black community of my own (laughs).

(P7)

Amy illustrated the importance of humour as a way of embracing racial differences and finding comfort in the difference. Furthermore, it was observed that humour was used as a way of connecting through difference. Samantha commented on her child humorously stating that she was his birth mother, despite physical differences of race:

You accept them as you are. My one child tells his friends that he was born white, but it was a very, very, hot day and that's why he's that colour. He still tells everybody that he comes from me (laughs). (P5)

It was observed that Samantha laughed when explaining her child's need to use humour as a way of making sense of the racial difference between his mother and himself. However, it further illustrates the need to make light of needing to accept and embrace the overt difference as well as possibly masking her child's need to identify with his mother and her helplessness around being unable to provide this for him.

4.6. The choice of identifying with the adoptive culture

It was important for the mothers that their children were able to find out more about their heritage at age 18 if they wished to. While the children had no interest, it was also a common theme that the mothers allowed their children to choose where they felt more comfortable in terms of their culture. More than half of the mothers that were interviewed found that their children found more comfort in the culture of their adoptive families. From the responses of

Mandy, Nicole, and Amy, there was a theme of mothers feeling that their children identified more with the culture they had been raised in. This was commented as follows:

She is more Indian than African, and I think has made her more South African. She is in the art of living. She practices yoga. She practices meditation. There are plenty of times she would do yoga. She has been...she is Indian...it has helped her to blend in with the family as well... she has an Indian boyfriend (laughs), also she has met a lot of African boys, she cannot, she is not, she is more comfortable with an Indian. (P2)

This quote described the child's desire and need to identify with the culture of her adopted family and find a sense of belonging in this identification.

You know, it actually makes me feel quite upset because the thing is, my child will never know where he comes from and the thing is, no matter what I can give him, the heritage from my side, he will never know his true heritage...He will never know like his clan name and things like that, and it's difficult because I feel like I don't want to take his culture away from him, but we don't know what it is., Well, at the moment he basically acts white. He does everything, you know like, how a white person would do it because he doesn't know anything else. (P3)

Nicole demonstrated her awareness of her child choosing to identify with her and finding that it was where he most fitted in.

But of course, the thing is, growing up in a white family, everything is a little bit different. I mean they are real coconuts, my boys, (laughs).’ (P7)

This quote illustrated the difference found in growing up in a home that was different from their indigenous culture. The children felt they identified more with their adopted family’s culture than with their indigenous culture.

One of the mothers shared sentiments of giving her children a space to explore their culture when they are ready. Jane commented:

I think that they believe a lot in custom, and you know the custom and tradition in African culture and but I think, we have left it open. So, if they end up marrying into a traditional family, they're not going to copy all of that. I think that they will go in with an open mind and be open to the experience of it all.
(P4)

Another mother shared her experience of her child finding no interest in exploring their own culture, even though her mother expressed her desire for her child to know and identify with her racial identity, this could have left her feeling helpless and possibly disappointed with her child’s choice to not explore his indigenous culture. Nancy commented:

Um, I’m not 100% sure what her racial identity is. She clearly looks in the mirror and sees a black person but she has grown in a white family, and we can only wish these things. She is not, she has no interest in, um, exploring her culture of origin, so how that impacts on her racial identity. (P1)

4.7. Language as an indicator of identity

While their indigenous language was important or necessary, it was found that all children found no interest in the indigenous language of their birth mother or father and preferred not to learn it. They appeared to find more familiarity and comfort in the language of their adoptive families, seeming to feel that this helped them to fit in more with their adoptive families and their way of being. It was seen by three of the participants that their children were resistant towards their indigenous language, as stated below by participant Nancy, Mandy, and Samantha:

She only speaks English, um, and that was her choice. She, um, was, she never wanted to learn any other language. In fact, she strongly resisted it and continues to resist it'. (P1)

This quote illustrated Nancy's awareness of her child's unwillingness to explore her indigenous language. Mandy also found that her child did not want to identify with her indigenous language:

She is more Indian than we are, and then it's also the problem with the hair and so on. You have to learn to also adapt to that and acceptance by their own race. Like, she will say she doesn't know isiZulu, 'I'm not isiZulu,' and becomes very defiant about it, and Africans don't like it and tend to look down on her and specifically want to antagonise her and speak to her in isiZulu. That kind of thing. (P2)

Furthermore, it was observed that Samantha found that her child expressed his dislike of his indigenous language and felt the need to communicate in English, only:

He doesn't like it when you speak Zulu. He'll understand it, but he'll ask you in English, and I say 'Why don't you speak it?' And he will say, 'Because I don't like it.' (laughs). (P5)

The same thing was also observed by Nicole and Jane, who expressed that their children had not made any attempts to speak their indigenous language. These mothers could have been left feeling confused and unsure of whether to persuade their children to speak their indigenous language or to accept their choice to not explore their indigenous language. The following statements were made:

He doesn't speak Zulu at all, and I feel that's going to be a bit of an issue, ya.
(P3)

The following quote illustrates Jane's concern about her child not being able to speak his indigenous language:

The fact that they speak French, and then obviously they have done Zulu or whatever at school, they never opened up to it in a way, like 'It's my roots and I must speak an African language'. So, I think, I'm still hoping. (P4)

While Jane demonstrated an awareness of her children not experiencing the need to explore their indigenous language, she shared her wish of wanting her children to learn an African language to foster a sense of belonging.

4.8. The school environment as facilitative of negotiating racial identity

It was found that some of the schools mentioned by the mothers are comprised of children of various races where their adoptive children found peers and teachers to identify with. The adoptive mothers felt that their children felt less isolated when surrounded by others of the same race and that the exposure to children of the same race in school allowed their children to negotiate their racial identity. Three of the mothers found that being in schools that had children of races similar to their child's as well as races that were different to their child's race allowed the exposure of similar racial experiences as their children and would foster the development of racial identity. Participants Nancy, Jane, and Amy commented as follows:

No, I don't think so, you know we made our biological children, they went to a Jewish school, and we made the conscious decision not to send her to a Jewish school because we wanted her to be in a school where there were children that looked like her. We didn't want her to be a freak show where she is the token black child at school. So, she has always been in a very racially mixed school and just has never been an issue. She has friends of all colours and ya. (P1)

The mothers expressed that their children being exposed to environments with other children of the same race allowed their children to find commonality and build a sense of racial identity, as seen in the following extract:

Especially in the schools, we have chosen. We have chosen like private schools, and often there aren't those black role models, because I think that it is important to be able to associate with someone of the same colour as you because otherwise, you might end up thinking I have to be white or be this or be that you know. But since, I mean now my son is in a school where there are a lot of boys of colour, and that has been amazing for him because I think it helps him with his identity. (P4)

The mothers shared awareness of the racial diversity in their child's school environment, stating:

No, I don't think so. Look, the school is a good mix, as I say the principal is white. He started school. They have a mix of black and white teachers. Um, and as I say, you know, I think they have always had black friends and white friends. (P7)

Another mother, Nicole, stated that she felt that her child being in a school mainly with children of his own race limited him in the way he interacted with friends, stating that:

He is basically in a mostly black school. He goes to a farm school because we live on a farm. So, it's mostly black, and I do see that he has a problem with friends. (P3)

One mother, Jessica, expressed her concern about her child becoming more prone to bullying due to being unable to identify with children of colour:

There is a concern because most of the high schools are non-white, and because she is from a white culture, I do expect her to get picked on a lot and you know, that is a huge worry. It hasn't been too bad. I think it depends on the school. (P6)

4.9. Family acceptance vs societal acceptance

Mothers found that not all people will accept their children and were fine with people having their own perspective. The mothers found that, when they were able to accept their differences, they were better able to cope with society and with the concerns of their adopted children. Six of the participants found that they experienced acceptance from relatives, Mandy stated:

So, I think the intercultural integration is more like amongst the races than the family itself. Like, all members of our family have accepted her as a part of the family.' (P2).

Nicole described how she experienced that while her family accepted their transracial family, it was society at large that struggled to accept their physical differences. Furthermore, it was noted that Jane found that their relatives accepted their intercultural integration, as seen in the following extracts:

There haven't been issues, like with my immediate family or even my extended family like my cousins, sort of thing.' (P3)

We come from a loving family, so it was kind of like a delusional type of fear because I think, no one, no one at all, I mean everyone just embraced the opportunity. (P4)

The following quotes illustrate how mothers find comfort in their relative's acceptance of their decisions to adopt children of different races. Samantha also explains that she believes that her family would have been even more accepting if they had been involved from the beginning.

The more you involve your parents and your close family, the better, because I think the acceptance would be better where had I explained why and I'm going to do it, it would have been easier and not you're an outcast. (P5)

He definitely doesn't have any issue at all, about his race, my race, as long as he is accepted by countless friends and family like my cousins, that sort of thing. (P6)

This quote explains Jessica's awareness of her child finding comfort in his adoptive relatives' acceptance of his physical differences from them, allowing him to embrace it.

4.10. Summary of Results and Conclusion

The results showed that the mothers experienced some difficulties with a lack of acceptance from society. This meant that they had to sometimes develop 'thick skin' and accept that everybody had different opinions and that their physical differences to their children would always be noticed. However, the mothers stated that they found comfort in support systems such as family members, support groups, friends, social workers, and even the family system itself. This was evident when mothers stated that they found people that were able to understand them and show them support and compassion. However, some did not, but they were able to find spaces that allowed them to embrace their family differences and receive guidance and

support when they needed it. The mothers in this study expressed how important it was to have open and honest communication with their children regarding their racial differences and also regarding other aspects of adolescence. They found that, by doing this and having transparent communication, their adopted children were able to express their concerns and questions around racial difference and even adolescence in general. The mothers also expressed that it was also important that the family sometimes spoke about their racial difference in a light-hearted way, bringing awareness but also acceptance of their differences. Humour plays a big part in all the mothers' lives, allowing them to subtly talk about things that might be difficult for the children or even for the mothers themselves. However, it was observed that humour was also used as a way of accepting that there was no way of changing the physical difference between the children and the mothers. It was interesting to find that all the mothers experienced their children as being comfortable with the culture of their adoptive families. Most children experienced familiarity and comfort in the language and culture of their adoptive families and displayed no interest in exploring their biological culture and heritage. This was highlighted when the mothers expressed that their children did fit in with their adoptive families and found that they were better able to relate to their adoptive families as opposed to their heritage. The results further highlighted that mothers were more comfortable placing their adopted children in schools that are composed of racially diverse children, allowing their children to negotiate racial identity and feel at home with other children with whom they could identify. It was found that the above-mentioned themes were very common among the adoptive mothers who participated in the study. This showed that the adoptive mothers in this study had very similar experiences around the negotiation of racial identity in their transracial homes.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study intended to explore mothers' observations of their transracially adopted children negotiating racial identity during adolescence. Given the historical and current socio-political racial tensions in South Africa, it was important to explore mothers' observations of facilitating the development of racial identity in children whose racial identity is different from their own (Mashau, 2018; Behari-Ram, 2016). This was achieved by looking at the observations of mothers and understanding and gaining in-depth insight into how mothers feel about witnessing their adopted children's experiences with racial identity. As this study was an explorative qualitative study, there were no preconceived ideas of the observations of these mothers. It is also necessary to take into account that there is limited research on the racial negotiation of adoptive mothers of transracial adolescences. Furthermore, very little research has been done in this field on the personal observations of such mothers. This section will aim to accurately bring alive the observations of these mothers and will show evidence of their narratives as a source of reference. This chapter explores the themes found within these narratives in order to answer the research questions mentioned earlier respectively, namely:

How do mothers of transracially adopted children experience their children's negotiation of racial identity during adolescence? More specifically:

5.1 What did the mothers observe of their children's experiences during this developmental task?

The themes answering the above-mentioned research question are:

- 5.1.1 Transparency and open communication within the family unit
- 5.1.2 Language as an indicator of identity
- 5.1.3 Family acceptance vs societal acceptance

5.2 What aspect of the facilitation of the negotiation of racial identity, if any, was difficult for mothers?

The themes answering the above-mentioned research question are:

5.2.1 The need to physically identify with the mother

5.3. What aspect of the facilitation of the negotiation of racial identity, if any, was surprising for these mothers?

The themes answering the above-mentioned research question are:

5.3.1 Siblings as facilitative of racial identity and a sense of belonging

5.3.2 Identifying with the adoptive culture

5.3.3 The need for different kinds of support systems

5.4 How does the socio-political landscape in South Africa facilitate, and/or hinder this developmental process for adoptive mothers, their children, and/or their relationship?

The themes answering the above-mentioned research question are:

5.4.1 The use of humour in acknowledging racial and cultural differences

5.4.2 The school environment as facilitative of the negotiating of racial identity

5.1 The expectations of the mothers

5.1.1 Transparency and open communication within the family unit

The adoptive mothers found it important to have transparent communication in their family and to express their views openly and honestly. There was a strong theme of feeling as though being transparent and open allowed their adopted children to feel that they could approach their mothers when they felt uncertain, confused, afraid, or curious about their backgrounds and even about their many different encounters during adolescence. These findings are

corroborated by the findings of Nelson and Colaner (2018), who explain that the parents in their study expressed the need for an open, communicative relationship, allowing them to discuss race and culture in age-appropriate ways. The mothers used communication as a way of facilitating racial identity negotiation for their children during adolescence. This theme corresponded to the research found by Kim and colleagues (2013), who state that some adoptive families embrace the idea of ethnic and racial difference, finding importance in acknowledging the differences of their adopted adolescent. Furthermore, the results in the current study identified the mothers' needs to be aware of the colour difference in their families, facilitating environments that provide open communication, thus allowing their children to feel seen and validated. These results added to the evidence of literature by Samuels (2009), who found that adoptees who didn't have this environment expressed feelings of alienation and invalidation by their parents. However, it was seen that the results found in the current study contradict the results found by Shiao and Tuan (2008), who explain that other adoptive families decide to take an approach of being colour blind towards race and ethnicity, choosing not to focus on the ethnic differences of their adoptive adolescent. This is different from the ideas expressed by one of the mothers, who stated:

'No, you see the thing is, we believe that we rather talk about things than hide things away from them. I feel like I rather talk to him and be open to him about things, and we do sit down and we do talk and we, er, I know I feel like, the more open and honest we are with him, the better he is able to understand what is going on around him'.

This mother explained how she found that it was safer and easier to provide acceptance and an open environment for her child to share his or her feelings and concerns, as these are issues

that are sometimes hard to express openly with fear of judgement or being misunderstood. The results of this study further correlate to the research of Lindsey (2012), who stated that positive outcomes were found when the feelings of the child were validated and when there were demonstrations of clear and transparent communication between the adoptive parents and the adopted child. A study by Docan-Morgan (2010) also found that those adoptive parents who participated in positive, clear, affectionate, and open communication about concerns involving race created environments for positive results and appropriate coping mechanisms for the child they had adopted. Similarly, the mothers in this study found it important to have discussions about race and culture not only with the family but also with other supportive people who engaged with the family. Similarly, Nelson and Colaner (2018) found that discussions about culture and race were not only within the family unit but also with other supportive figures who positively reinforced the racial and cultural identities of the child. The findings in the current study relate to previous literature, demonstrating the mother's positive observations of communication and open dialogue in their families which allow for the facilitation of identity negotiation. These findings further answer the question of the mother's expectations while negotiating racial identity. It was observed that the mothers expected a better relationship and smoother negotiation of racial identity through open communication and transparency in the family unit, allowing for acceptance and understanding of their adopted child's experience of the negotiation of racial identity.

5.1.2. Language as an indicator of identity

Another common theme found in the study was that, while the adopted children were raised speaking the home language of the adoptive families, the mothers did encourage them to learn their indigenous language. However, it was found that all the children of the adoptive mothers preferred the language of their adoptive mothers and were not interested in their indigenous

language at the current time of their adolescence and resisted the indigenous language, appearing to find no commonality with it. This correlates to the research found by Anderson (2014), who suggested that adopted children that have not been in contact with their family of origin have no sense of the language of their indigenous background. Demerah (2006) states that language can be used to build a sense of identity, providing meaningfulness. Similarly, it was observed that an individual becomes more committed to an identity if they have a greater sense of the meaningfulness of the identity. The results in the current study suggest that the children were unable to find meaning in their language of origin, which explains the outcome of the children not having a need to explore their indigenous identity. While it wasn't common, some mothers expressed that they allowed their children to decide individually whether they would like to explore their own heritage and culture, and also choose their own religion at a later stage. Research found that parents using such a democratic style of parenting are able to create a balance of control and support, form clear boundaries, facilitate a warm, understanding, and encouraging environment, which allows adolescents to build a sense of autonomy, acknowledge their own needs and differences, and gives them the opportunity to make their own decisions (Stienberg, 2011; Ragelienė & Justickis, 2016). This gives adolescents a choice about their identity, facilitating the opportunity for them to be responsible for their actions and choices. In the current study, it was observed that the mothers found it important that their children make their own decisions and find which ways suits them best, while the mothers provided support and guidance. This adds to the body of literature that supports parents' awareness of allowing their children to build a sense of autonomy through facilitating an environment that allows them to make their own decisions. While the mothers encouraged other languages that would have resonated with their adopted children, their children found comfort and interest in the languages that they were familiar with and grew up

within their adoptive family unit. This was shown as a common theme, and all mothers similarly expressed the same thing:

‘She only speaks English, um, and that was her choice. She um, was, she never wanted to learn any other language. In fact, she strongly resisted it and continues to resist it...’

These results correlate to the findings of Ferrari, Ranieri, Barni, and Rosnati (2015), who state that adopted children are assimilated into their adoptive families' cultures. The results in the current study are in line with that of the literature, finding that mothers experience their children as not having a sense of their language of origin. Furthermore, the findings in this study conclude that, while the mothers' allowed their children the choice to explore the language of their biological parents, they noticed that their children strongly resisted the exploration of the language of origin. The outcome of these results showed that the mothers in the study dealt with the negotiation of racial identity by allowing their children the choice of whether they want to engage in the language of their indigenous culture. The findings in this study link to the idea that adopted children relate more to their adoptive family's culture, thus finding less value in the language of their indigenous culture. The findings of this theme provide evidence of the mother's difficulties as well as their expectations during the negotiation of their children's racial identity. It was observed that while most of the mothers expected their children to explore their indigenous language, most of the children found no interest in exploring this. Furthermore, the mothers displayed a sense of disappointment regarding the choice of their children, finding it difficult to facilitate the negotiation of racial identity with regards to the exploration of their indigenous language.

5.1.3. Family acceptance vs societal acceptance

The mothers had found comfort in being accepted by those around them, stating that they found it warming and encouraging when the difference in their family was positively acknowledged. The mothers found that they were able to accept their differences, allow for the awareness of ethnic and racial differences, and encourage racial socialization which led to the facilitation of their child's racial identity. These findings are related to the literature (Hughes, 2003; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Rodriguez & Wang, 2007) that racial and ethnic socialization among families facilitated the process of an adolescent's cultural identity. However, the results showed that the mothers experienced an awareness of their external world as struggling to accept their intercultural integration. Furthermore, the mothers felt this awareness allowed them to prepare themselves and their children for the potential stigma, racism, and discrimination that may occur. These findings further contribute to the studies that suggest that adoptive parents become conscious of the potential social stigma that occurs due to an adoptive child's origin, appearance, and status (Reinoso, Juffer & Tieman, 2013). Research by Lindsey (2012) found that it is important for adoptive parents to be aware of the encounters they may face in society, such as being asked questions and are also likely to experience society's racial stigma due to the physical and cultural heritage differences between them and their children. The mothers in the current study stated that they enjoyed being shown compassion and a willingness to be understood and respected. Mothers often spoke about how they began to understand that not everyone had open perspectives about their choice to adopt a child of a different race and that not everyone would be willing to understand. While this was sometimes difficult to accept at first, the mothers adapted and learnt to embrace the physical differences in their family system. This was stated by most mothers, in the following way for example:

“The more you involve your parents and your close family, the better, because I think the acceptance would be better and not ‘you’re an outcast.’

Mothers commonly expressed that they found comfort in being accepted and understood by family members, whether it was extended family members or intermediate family members. However, although some were not as eager as others, the mothers expressed that they mostly experienced acceptance and were welcomed by those who did take an interest and embraced the opportunity of meeting a new family member and providing support to the family unit. The results of the current study correlate with a study by De Haymes and Simon (2003), who report that adopted parents experienced different responses from their families when they decided to adopt transracially, stating that some families displayed encouragement and approval from the start of the adoption process, while others initially expressed resistance and eventually showed support and acceptance. The results in the current study corroborate other research findings De Haymes & Simon, 2003; (Reinoso, Juffer & Tieman, 2013; Hughes, 2003; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Rodriguez & Wang, 2007). which demonstrate that, while some families provide acceptance and support to adoptive families, other families express resistance. Furthermore, it was observed that, while the mothers found comfort and support from their families, they also came to terms with society's struggle to accept their family's racial difference. This theme provided findings that supported the evidence of the family's displaying support and acceptance. Furthermore, it is observed that these findings provide insight into the mother's expectations of the South African context and its response to their transracial family system, that being resistant at times as well as occasionally unsupportive and discriminative at times. Almost all the mothers in the study reported being mindful and aware of the challenges they were to face in society and felt comforted by their family.

5.2. The difficulties experienced by the mothers

5.2.1. The need to physically identify with the mother

A common theme was that children wanted to physically identify with their mothers or other family members, for example making comments of wanting to have the same hair or wanting to be the same colour as their mother. A study by McRoy and Grape (1999) found that children often wanted to identify with their adoptive parents and would want to pass as white (where applicable) in order to resemble their adoptive families. A quote from one of the mothers demonstrates her adopted child's need to identify with the mother's physical attributes:

“Sometimes she's like. “I wish I had hair like yours”, and I said, “It might be like you had really curly hair and your mother had straight hair””.

This quote also demonstrates the mother's need to explain that there are differences between all children and parents, even in biological families. A study by McRoy and Zurcher (1983) found that many children verbalised their desire to look ‘similar’ to their families and their peers, which correlates to the findings in the current study. The mothers in the current study try to positively affirm difference and help their children when there are concerns or the need to identify, finding it important to make sense of their children's difficulties and allow for the opportunity of acceptance of physical differences. Lindsey (2012) found that it was necessary for health care workers to urge adoptive parents to expose their children to others that ‘look like them’, in addition to purchasing books or toys that help their children to identify with their ethnicity. Research by Reinoso, Juffer, and Tieman (2013) found that a large number of children in their study expressed the wish to be different or to not look the way they do. The results in the current study provided an account of the mothers' reaction to their child's desire to be different, observing that the mothers struggled to confront the need for their children to

physically identify with them, displaying a sense of longing to fulfil their child's need, as well as trying to make sense of their child's distress around being different. While authors such as Juffer (2006) and Juffer and Tieman (2012) addressed the feelings of internationally adopted children and their experiences of looking different, Reinoso, Juffer and Tieman (2013) suggest that there has only been limited research. The findings in this current study add to the body of literature that points out the children's need to look the same as their parents, as well as the mothers' need to make sense of their children's need to identify with them. Furthermore, these findings answer the question of what the mothers found difficult during the negotiation of racial identity. The mothers reported that they often struggled to ease the frustration and confusion of their children wanting to physically identify with their mothers. Moreover, the mothers expressed their difficulty with having to confront the issue of racial difference and learn to embrace being unable to physically share the same features of each other.

5.3. The surprises experienced by the mothers

5.3.1 Siblings as facilitative of racial identity and sense of belonging

It was noted that most of the mothers that were interviewed had more than one adopted child. While this was not the focus of the study, it was interesting to find that this may have supported and contributed to the mothers' facilitation of the negotiation of racial identity among their adolescent children. The following quote demonstrates a mother's experience of feeling as though her sons were able to find a sense of belonging because they had other siblings who shared their race:

“I think it probably is a good thing. I got this little black community of my own, (laughs) ...It probably does help, where it is. If there was only one, in a big white family, it might be more difficult.”

Research by Reinoso, Juffer and Tieman (2013) found that adopted children expressed positive experiences relating to their siblings and shared their longing to have more brothers and sisters than they already had, which provided an explanation for the results in the current study, that found some mothers sharing their observations of their adoptive children verbalising their want to have another sibling. Furthermore, another participant stated that it was important to consider adopting another child of the same race to prevent feelings of separateness and isolation. However, one mother felt as though her adopted children went through different experiences, and found it difficult to share in the experience of their siblings, which correlates to the findings by others (Grotevant, Wrobel, Van Dulman & McRoy, 2001). Some authors state that achieving a shared reality becomes more difficult in an adoptive family than in a genetically related family who might share the same experiences as another family member (Samek & Rueter, 2011; Deater-Deckard & Petrill, 2004). However, the mothers in the current study found that their children were able to learn from their siblings and were given the opportunity to develop a stronger sense of identity through commonality. These results added to the body of literature supporting that children were able to live as members of an ethnic group by developing a sense of belonging and by developing skills and values through the observation of their parents and siblings (Kim et al., 2013). Furthermore, the findings in this study answered the question of what the mothers found surprising during the negotiation of racial identity. The results found that while it was not the intention of all the mothers to have more than one adopted child, most of the mothers felt that their adopted children were able to build a sense of racial identity and find a sense of commonality within their family unit by having a sibling of the same race as their own, aiding in the negotiation of racial identity.

5.3.2. Identifying with the adoptive culture

The results in the current study found that heritage and culture are important for most of the mothers. They believe that it is necessary for their children to know about their biological background. These findings added to the evidence found by Kim et al. (2013), who states that mothers in a study felt comfortable discussing ethnicity and race with their children and often encouraged their children to learn about their indigenous racial and ethnic identity. However, in the current study, while the mothers were able to address ethnic identity, it was observed that the children most commonly found comfort in the culture of their adoptive family and did not find the need to explore their heritage, as they did not identify with it. As stated by Chimezie (1975), adopted children tend to take on many of the habits and characteristics of the adoptive family that is raising them. A quote from a mother expressing her view on the way her child sees his heritage is highlighted here,

“Well at the moment, he basically acts white. He does everything, you know, like/how a white person would do it because he doesn’t know anything else.”

This demonstrates the theme of the children mainly identifying with the culture of their adoptive families, while either not showing much interest in their heritage, or feeling as though they fit in better with the culture of their adoptive parents due to growing up in it. According to Scherman (2010), the fact that transracially adopted children do not share the culture of their biological parents nor the cultural background of their adoptive parents creates a difficulty with ethnic identity (Ferrari et al., 2015). In this current study, it was seen that the mother felt as though her child behaved in a way that was similar to behavioural patterns of those that were also ‘white’. However, through this, it can be suggested that this mother spoke of race as a culture, by using the words ‘act white’, which implied that the real meaning of culture was not explored. According to Goulbourne and Solomos (2003), ethnicity and race are terms that are

regularly mistakenly used to define the same thing. However, it is noted that while 'race' is recognised as a biological term, it is often understood as a social construct used to make sense of the dynamics of racism, while ethnicity is used to describe the socio-cultural factors that include memories, customs, values, histories, and sentiments. This finding suggests that the interviewee had not fully explored the idea of culture and what it meant for her child, as well as herself. This was seen in a study conducted by Lee et al. (2010), who showed that adopted Korean Americans presented with lower scores on their ethnic identity than those who were not adopted, finding that the adopted children displayed a less of a need to identify with their birth family's ethnic identity.

In addition, it was found that the adoptees had been exposed to the culture of their adoptive parents and identified themselves with their adoptive parents rather than with their biological heritage (Wickes & Slate, 1996; Ferrari et al., 2015). However, it is interesting to note that a study done by Irhammar and Cederblad (2000) found that while there were low scores of ethnic identity among adoptees, it did not result in a denial of ethnic origin. Furthermore, it was found that one third of the participants in the study found it necessary to take more interest in their ethnic origin, even though they showed lower levels of ethnic identification (Ferrari et al., 2015). Moreover, the results in the study contradict the findings by Baden et al, (2012), whom state that during adolescence, transracial adoptees are forced to come to terms with their heritage culture and bring meaning to their ethnic group membership, and are likely to engage in ethnic exploration in hopes of reclaiming their birth culture (Ferrari et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is stated that, while transracially adopted children are not familiar with their heritage cultures, they are able to embrace the opportunity to link the culture of their heritage with the culture of their adoptive families and find a middle ground and balance between the two cultures presented to them (Ferrari et al., 2015).

Another study was done by Tuan and Shiao (2011) on Korean adoptees, finding that transracially adopted children have to engage in 'choosing ethnicity' along with 'negotiating race' within their different transracial adoptive families (Kreider & Raleigh, 2016). It is demonstrated that, where a child's indigenous culture is learned through the genetic family system, these adopted children assimilate into their adoptive family's culture, resulting in their heritage culture becoming secondary. The adopted children may learn about their indigenous culture through the efforts of their adoptive family rather than being raised in a family with their indigenous culture (Ferrari et al., 2015). The results in the current study demonstrate the mothers' observations of their children wanting to identify with their adoptive family and being uninterested in their biological heritage. Given these findings, it would be interesting to see whether the adopted adolescents of these mothers will seek out more information about their heritage at a later age.

Furthermore, it was observed in this study that some mothers were unsure of the culture of their child and associated their behaviour with their adoptive family's race instead of with their culture. Moreover, while Feigelman (2000) found that transracial adoption can lead to psychological and behavioural problems due to being unsure of ethnicity, the participants in the current study found that their children did not display any behavioural problems and psychological stress. These findings correlated with Lee (2003) and Lindsey (2012), who found that a majority of transracially adopted children displayed fewer behavioural and emotional problems than those who were adopted by families of the same race. While Reinoso, Juffer, and Tieman (2013) suggested that transracial adopted children develop a stronger sense of identity with their indigenous background and country than those children who had the same race as their adopted parents, it is important to note that the children in Reinoso's study were

adopted at an older age and had been able to gain a sense of their indigenous culture. The results in the current study found that the transracially adopted children identify more with the culture of their adoptive parents. This can be due to the children in the sample being adopted at a much younger age (by six months) and being exposed only to the environment and culture of their adoptive families. These results provide insight into the research question regarding what the mothers found surprising, finding that while the mothers encouraged their children to learn and explore their indigenous culture, they found that their children preferred to associate themselves with the culture of their adoptive family.

5.4. Factors influenced by the South African socio-political landscape

5.4.1. The use of humour in acknowledging racial and cultural differences

It was found that humour was a prominent theme in addressing differences and negotiating racial identity. Winkler (2015) found that participants in a study highlighted the role of humour as a way of creating substitute relations that intersected between sameness and difference. While the mothers felt as though the racial difference was not something that affected them, they sometimes found it easier to engage in humorous behaviour when describing physical differences between their children and themselves that concerned them. Research by Winkler (2015) also found that peers used humour and laughter as a way of confronting differences in a lighter manner, addressing serious topics in a spirited way, and ‘making fun’ of what had the capability to create division and distance between peers. Furthermore, it was observed in the study that the mothers often used humour as a way of defending against the confrontation of physical differences between their children and themselves, which correlates to Vaillant (1994) stating that humour contains a degree of truth or self-observation. It was interesting to observe that while the mothers voiced their acceptance of difference in a humorous way, their possible disappointment by their children’s distancing from their biologically raced identification or

somewhat relief by their children's primary identification with their adoptive family. It was observed that most mothers often joked about their children getting used to new cultures when finding partners of the same race. The following quote highlights how humour is used in the family environment,

“I would tease my son...But you know, we joke, you can't be serious about this all the time, you going to drive them to insanity. I will drive myself there, (laughs)”

While it is observed that this mother confronts the reality of her child needing to be aware of the racial diversity around him, it relates to how mothers felt the need to explore different cultural experiences that their children would eventually go through in a lighter and gentle way, bringing in different cultures and ways of being, demonstrating acceptance of differences, and becoming familiar with differences among other people in society. It was observed that in the old South Africa, the natural order involved races and the intrinsic superiority of 'whites' (Malan, 1991). However, many individuals find themselves disoriented post-Apartheid, having to accept another view of being (Malan, 1991). These findings support the evidence in the current study which suggests that the mothers need to explore the different racial views and cultures among them. It has been suggested that there has been a better outcome of adjustment among transracially adoptive families for those that have acknowledged and embraced their ethnic differences and their multiracial family system (Kirk, 1984; Anderson 2014). Given the socio-political landscape in South Africa as well as the racial tension in daily life, the results in the study suggest that the discomfort of racial difference as well as the cultural difference was managed with the use of humour. While the historical and political aspects of South Africa

hinders the process of racial identity to a degree, the mothers engaged in humour as a way of addressing difficult topics that they were unable to directly approach.

5.4.2. The school environment as facilitative of the negotiating of racial identity

Another common theme was the mothers' need to make sure that their children did not feel isolated in terms of race in different schools. The adoptive mothers found that by situating their children in schools that are comprised of children of various races, it allowed their children to negotiate their racial identity and feel comfortable with their race and way of being. This finding is similar to the results found by Samuels (2009) and McRoy et al. (1982), who argue that adoptive children develop a confident sense of racial identity due to being exposed to various racial environments and cultural heritages in their schools. Most mothers found that their children were able to get along with people of the same colour as themselves as well as individuals that were the same colour as their adoptive family. A quote that describes this is as follows:

"Now my son is in a school where there are a lot of boys of colour, and that has been amazing for him because I think it helps him with his identity."

This quote highlights the mother's views on how it is important for her child to be exposed to an environment that allows her child to identify with other people, such as teachers and even peers that had the same race as her child, giving her child a sense of validation as well as acceptance, regardless of the colour of their skin. This relates to the findings of Lindsey (2012), who describes the importance of adoptive parents exposing their children to others that 'look like them'. The results in the current study support previous findings that express mothers' need to expose their children to school environments that allow their children to associate with other

children that share the same race as their own. This creates an environment that facilitates the negotiation of racial identity. These results are corroborated by the findings of Cookson (1992), who found that many minority parents preferred to enrol their children in schools where most of the children in the school share the race of their child. Furthermore, it was found that the mothers in the study believed that it was necessary for their children to gain a sense of belonging in social environments that are comprised of other people that share the same physical attributes as their children, avoiding a sense of isolation. The findings in the current study add to the body of literature and correlate to the research by Syed, Juang, and Svensson (2018), which demonstrates that the development of ethnic racial identity is positively related to the frequency of interactions between those of the same ethnicity and individuals immersing themselves in co-ethnic environments. Furthermore, Tedin and Weiher (2004) found that parents who had children that belonged to a race other than white often experienced a fear that their child would be isolated or develop other difficulties if they are in a school attended by mainly white children, and as a result, often searched for schools that were mainly the race of their child. Moreover, research shows that a child's school environment is vital for the facilitation of the development of their racial identity (Dutton, Singer & Devlin, 1998; Akos & Ellis, 2008). While there is current racial tension, the mothers in the study found it important for their children to associate with others of the same race as their own. The findings of this theme provide insight into the socio-political South African landscape facilitating the process of racial identity through the diversity found in school environments, allowing their adopted children to find a sense of belonging among their peers that share their physical attributes.

5.5. The need for different kinds of support systems

Another theme that emerged in the current study was the common theme of the mothers finding comfort in support systems when needing to negotiate racial identity during the adolescence of

their adoptive children. This correlates with findings that provide evidence stating that adoptive parents report support services to be helpful (Lee, Kobulsky, Brodzinsky & Barth, 2018; Tan & Marn, 2013). Furthermore, it was important for some mothers to have role models of the same race as their children as a source of heritage and culture. This outcome was similar to the research found by Anderson (2014), who explains that children are able to relate to role models of the same race and find similar ways of coping and dealing with situations pertaining to race, such as racism. Moreover, the support offered by family members, friends, significant others, social workers, religious groups, and even support groups for adoptive mothers of transracial adoptees was also found to be valuable, providing them with support and tools to help their children negotiate racial identity. The mothers found comfort in having others understand them and be non-judgmental, compassionate, and willing to interact with them and their children in a caring and open way. The study also found that it was important for the mothers and children to feel held when they experienced feelings of uncertainty and were sometimes overwhelmed by the negative actions and attitudes of society towards them and their adopted children. This is related to the research found by Ferrari, Ranieri, Barni, and Rosnati (2015) explaining that the encouragement of these support systems allowed the mothers to create a space for their child to work through uneasy feelings and concerns. A quote from a mother demonstrates this:

‘There must be a type of support group, because, honestly, there is no one out there for you. Who do you turn to? You can’t relate your feelings to friends or family members. They also white. They haven’t experienced it you know, so definitely.’

This quote shows that a mother experienced support as something vital for her for being understood and helped. This helped her to feel as though she was able to explain her fears,

concerns, and expectations in a situation that felt safe, where others were able to relate to her and share similar experiences, for example through support groups for adopted mothers. This mother explained how experienced more support from external support groups than from her relatives or friends. This theme relates to findings that suggest that parents gained support and comfort from other adoptive parents as well as finding that spaces involving other adoptive parents were valued as well as finding that adoptive parents found information, tools, and skills very effective during the adoption process as well as after the adoption process (Lee, Kobulsky, Brodzinsky & Barth, 2018; Ward, 1978). In the current study, it was observed that the mother's found adoption support groups helpful, allowing them to express their feelings around the adoption. Other studies also suggest that adoptive parents find programs providing skill building helpful (Lee et al., 2018). Furthermore, a mother in the current study found parenting groups for adoption helpful, allowing her to learn how to communicate with her family. This correlates to the findings of Lee, Kobulsky, Brodzinsky and Barth (2018), who explain that the preparation for adoption should include information about children who are transracially adopted. The findings of Hartinger-Saunders, Trouteaud and Johnson (2015) reiterated this, confirming that family dissolution between the members of an adoptive family was less likely if there was access to support groups for adoptive parents. Furthermore, it was found by Kreider and Raleigh (2016) and Hughes et al. (2003) that mothers in their studies felt as though support and resources were necessary and helpful when they were unsure of how to negotiate racial identity. These findings correlate to the findings in the current study, demonstrating the mothers' need for external support systems as a way of providing not only comfort but also information to help them negotiate racial identity with their children. The findings in this theme provided insight into what the mothers found surprising during the negotiation of racial identity. It was observed that the mothers were surprised by the amount of external support provided, that being through support groups, social workers and other adoptive parents who

shared the same experiences as themselves. The mothers found the support overwhelming at times as they were unaware of the resources available for their adoption process.

5.6. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore the observations of adoptive mothers who had adopted children that were of a different race to them, and who were helping their children negotiate racial identity during adolescence. Aspects of difference in the families were explored, including the way in which the mothers negotiate racial identity with their children. The study focused on the way in which the adoptive mothers experience their children while they negotiate racial identity, and how their children experience growing up in a family of a different culture, heritage, and language that was different from their biological background. While reviewing the literature, it was found that there is limited research on how parents and specifically mothers experienced adoption, and there is also limited research on racial issues in adoption and specifically on the implications of negotiating race during adolescence.

The interviews demonstrate that the mothers found a lot of benefit in having the support of family members, support groups, friends, and social workers. The adoptive mothers also experienced acceptance and understanding from these support systems and found that they were better able to cope with uncertainty and surprises during their adopted children's lives. The mother's expressed their need to accept the difference of their family, as it allowed them to be more transparent and open with their children about their adoption and way of life in the future. The mothers accepted that not everyone in society would understand their choices or accept their multiracial family, but instead, the mothers learnt how to embrace their differences and expressed the need to sometimes make light of their differences through humour, thus helping the family to cope with those that didn't always show compassion towards their

physical differences. The mothers found it necessary to expose their children to others of the same race, whether it be through neighbours, environments, or even schools. The mothers found that it was helpful for their children to identify with others that were similar to them. Most mothers expressed that, while they themselves were interested and encouraging of their children exploring their heritage and African language, their children were not interested in doing so and found more comfort in the culture of their adoptive family, feeling that they fit in more with their adoptive family than with their biological culture. In addition to the themes found in the research, the mothers did reflect that they found that having more than one adopted child could have helped to create an environment that allowed their adopted children to find their racial identity by having someone else in their family unit that was similar to them physically for them to relate to and identify with. While some of the findings in the current study correlate to the studies found in literature, there has been some difference in the results found in this study. It was found that some mothers observed their children preferring to identify with their adoptive family, which could not only be a way of connecting with their mothers but also due to the racial tension in South Africa and the meaning of 'race'. Furthermore, the reason for the conflicting results of this study could be due to the impression management of the mothers as well as the participant group being solely mothers compared to other studies that included both parents. Another reason for a difference in the findings in this current study could be due to the population size of the group. It is believed that a larger participant group including a greater number of different races may have yielded different results.

5.7. Limitations of the research and recommendations

Given the nature of the current study, including the limited research provided for this field of study, the adoption of transracial adolescents, and the observations of adoptive mothers, an

exploratory study was required. As this was the most appropriate method of conducting this research, it is necessary to take into account the limitations and shortcomings of the study. Some of the limitations include having a small sample size, which would influence the results due to it not being able to broadly represent the larger demographic population. While the results of the small sample size have been described in detail, it does not take into account experiences and observations from a variety of other people. Therefore, these results cannot be generalized to the broader population. Even though it was important to find homogeneity among the participants, focusing solely on the observations of mothers, the study did not take into account the many observations and expectations of fathers, which could have been different from that of the mothers that were interviewed. As this study only focused on adolescents, it excludes information from mothers who have younger children below the age of twelve. This could have resulted in very narrow observations and responses due to the age limit. Another limitation of the study was that it focused solely on the experience of negotiating racial identity. This excluded the many other observations that mothers had come across. Furthermore, the sample comprised primarily of white families adopting black babies, which suggests that a more diverse sample may yield different results. Furthermore, another limitation of this study is the impression management aspect of the research. It was noted that the mothers often provided responses that were appropriate, wanting to be portrayed as reasonable, sensitive and attuned to their children at all times. Given this, the mother's responses may have resulted in censoring certain information that may have put them in a negative light. Recommendations can be made for further research as follows: It is necessary to look at the different observations of fathers and siblings in adoptive families, which would offer information from a different population of participants. Another issue that can be looked at in further research is the outcomes of the negotiation of racial identity in adopted children after adolescence. It would be interesting to find out about the observations of mothers after their

children have explored different perspectives and possibly made contact with their biological parents or explored their biological heritage at a later age. While this was not a focus of the study, it was found that most mothers had more than one adopted child, and possibly, this allowed for better racial identity since the children had someone to identify within the family system. It would be interesting to further explore this influence on racial identity.

In conclusion, this study aimed to explore mothers' observations of their transracially adopted children negotiating racial identity during adolescence. These observations were researched in a sample that has received little acknowledgment in the literature focusing on the South African context, namely mothers of transracially adopted children experiencing the stressors of racial identity during adolescence. The study included an in-depth review of adoption in the South African context as well as the structure of families in the South African context, ethnic identity, the stage of adolescence, racialisation, transracial adoption and the factors influencing the negotiation of racial identity in families. The findings in the current study provided support for the importance of further research in these areas within the South African context. The results in the study found that adoptive mothers found support in the form of other adoptive parents as well as support groups providing comfort and tools that were believed to be effective during the facilitation of racial identity negotiation. Furthermore, it was found that adoptive parents facilitated home environments that were open and accepting, allowing their children to feel safe and understood during their time of adolescence. Interestingly, while the mothers did not intend on adopting more than one child aid with the negotiation of racial identity, they believed that this was beneficial for their children. In regards to the limitations of the study, it is important to note the shortcomings such as; a) a small sample size, which would influence the results due to it not being able to broadly represent the larger demographic population, b) the study did not take into account the many observations and expectations of fathers, which could

have been different to that of the mothers that were interviewed, c) due to focusing solely on adolescents, it is excluded information from mothers who have younger children below the age of twelve, as well as other factors that these mother's needed to negotiation. Finally, it is hoped that the study will bring about a greater understanding of the issues that occur among transracially adoptive families and can provide more nuanced support and awareness of the potential challenges during adolescence, which is already experienced as a period of existential crisis.

6. References

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Annexure A: Sample Interview schedule

1. What, if any were some of the fears of racial stigma that you had before and immediately after adoption?
2. How do you feel now in relation to any stated fears?
3. What were your expectations of your relationship, and how have they changed?
4. What were the surprises that you encountered after adoption?
5. What, if any, were some of the difficulties encountered in the bonding process?
6. How do you feel about your child growing up in a transracial home, given the racial views of the country?
7. How do you feel your child dealt with racial difference between you?
8. How do you think your cultural views shaped your child's view on their own racial identity?
9. What were some of the limitations of helping the process of racial identity negotiation during adolescence, given racial issues at school or in general?
10. What has been difficult, if anything, as a parent of child who has a different race as s/he negotiates adolescence/teenage hood?
11. What would have helped you manage this period with greater ease, if anything?
12. Was having two adopted children found to help the bonding process or formation of a racial identity?

Annexure B:



Participant information sheet



School of Human and Community Development

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa

Tel: (011) 350-2632

Email: vlada@worldonline.co.za

Dear Madam,

My name is Vireshnie Pillay, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. My research supervisor is Ms Renate Gericke, a lecturer at the Department of Psychology, University of the Witwatersrand. Her contact telephone number is (011) 717-4555 and her e-mail address renate.gericke@wits.ac.za.

Given the historical and current socio-political racial tensions, it would be important to explore parents' experiences of facilitating the development of racial identity in children whose racial identity is different to their own. My research will attempt to establish the mother's observations of their transracially adopted children negotiating racial identity during adolescence, gaining in-depth insight and understanding how parents experience racial identity and transracial adoption. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Participation in this research will entail being interviewed by me, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last approximately one hour. With your permission, this interview will be audio-recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Participation is voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

All of your responses will be kept confidential and to ensure anonymity, participant's names, and any other identifying information will not appear in any of the write up of the research. Although direct quotes might be used, no information that could identify you would be included in the research report. Access to the interview material (audio-tapes and transcripts) will be restricted to me and will be processed and transcribed only by me. For the duration of the study, the audio-tapes will be stored safely in a location with restricted access. After the research has been examined, all audio-tape recordings will be destroyed.

The results of the research will be reported in the research report, and may also be published in a journal article. After completion of the project you will receive a copy of the research report.

If you choose to participate in the study please contact me telephonically at 0737767362 or via e-mail vireshnie26@gmail.com. Please note that in order to participate in the research, you would need to satisfy the following inclusion criteria:

- You need to be a mother that has adopted a transracial child by the age of 6 months.
- You would need to be a mother of a transracially adopted child that is now an adolescent over the age of 13.

I will contact you back within one working day from receiving your communication in order to discuss your involvement in the research. If you agree to participate in the research, you will be asked to sign two separate consent forms: to be interviewed for the study and to have the interview session audio-recorded.

Should you experience distress whilst participating in the study, you will be referred to the WITS Emthonjeni Centre (011 717 4513) or to Lifeline (011 7281331) for free debriefing or follow-up counselling.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. If successful, this research will help provide a clinical benefit in being aware of how future transracial adoptive families can be supported by being more aware of their needs, along with providing awareness of identity formation.

Yours faithfully,
Vireshnie Pillay

Contact number: 0737767362

E-mail address: vireshnie26@gmail.com

Annexure C: Interview consent form



I, _____, consent to be interviewed by Vireshnie Pillay for her investigation of the mother's observations of their transracially adopted children negotiating racial identity during adolescence, and I understand:

- the nature and purpose of this study;
- that participation in this interview is voluntary;
- that I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to;
- that I may withdraw from the study at any time;
- that no negative consequences will arise if I decide to withdraw or if I decline participation;
- Identifying information, such as participant's names will not be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential;
- that direct quotes may be used in the published work based on this research; however, no identifying information will be used so as to protect my identity;
- that there are no direct benefits to participating in this study;
- that there are no known risks associated with this study.

I confirm that I satisfy the research inclusion criteria, as specified in the participant information sheet.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Annexure D: Recording consent form



I, _____, consent to my interview with Vireshnie Pillay for her investigation of the mother's observations of their transracially adopted children negotiating racial identity during adolescence being tape-recorded, and I understand that:

- access to the audio-tapes will be restricted to the researcher, Vireshnie Pillay;
- the audio-tapes will only be processed and transcribed by the researcher, Vireshnie Pillay;
- Identifying information such as participant's names will not be included in the transcripts or the research report;
- direct quotes may be used in the published work based on this research; however, no identifying information will be used so as to protect my identity;
- the audio-tapes will be stored safely in a location with restricted access
- all audio-tape recordings will be destroyed after the research has been examined.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

ANNEXURE E: Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research: Director

Date: 8 April 2018

Dear Director

My name is Vireshnie Pillay from the Discipline of Psychology in the School of Human and Community Development at the University of Witwatersrand.

Your organization/church is being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research on transracial adoptive families.

Given the historical and current socio political racial tensions, it would be important to explore mother's observations of facilitating the development of racial identity in children whose racial identity is different to their own. My research will attempt to establish the mother's experiences of their transracially adopted children negotiating racial identity during adolescence, gaining in-depth insight and understanding how parents experience racial identity and transracial adoption. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

The study is expected to select 8 participants/ adoptive mothers from the greater Johannesburg area. Participation in this research will entail being interviewed by me, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last approximately one hour. With your permission, this interview will be audio-recorded in order to ensure accuracy.

Please note that your participation is entirely voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point. Should you experience distress whilst participating in the study, you will be referred to the WITS Emthonjeni Centre (011 717 4513) or to Lifeline (011 7281331) for free debriefing or follow-up counselling.

Please note that there are no financial incentives for participating in the study, neither will you incur any financial cost.

All of your responses will be kept confidential and to ensure anonymity, participant's names, and any other identifying information will not appear in any of the write up of the research. Although direct quotes might be used, no information that could identify you would be included in the research report. Access to the interview material (audio-tapes and transcripts) will be restricted to me and will be processed and transcribed only by me. For the duration of the study, the audio-tapes will be stored safely in a location with restricted access. After the research has been examined, all audio-tape recordings will be destroyed.

The results of the research will be reported in the research report, and may also be published in a journal article. After completion of the project you will receive a copy of the research report.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. If successful, this research will help provide a clinical benefit in being aware of how future transracial adoptive families can be supported by being more aware of their needs, along with providing awareness of identity formation.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at 073 776 7362 or my research supervisor, Ms Renate Gericke, a lecturer at the Department of Psychology, University of the Witwatersrand. Her contact telephone number is (011) 717-4555 and her e-mail address renate.gericke@wits.ac.za.

CONSENT SLIP

I _____ the director of _____ have been informed about the study entitled Mothers' observations of their transracially adopted children negotiating racial identity during adolescence by Vireshnie Pillay.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study as have been explained to me.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my organisation's/church's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation at any time without penalty. I have been informed about counselling available to the participants in the event that they become distressed as a result of their participation in the research.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at the Discipline of Psychology, University of Witwatersrand (073 773 7362)

If I have any questions or concerns about my members' rights as study participants, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

Ms Renate Gericke
Lecturer
Department of Psychology
University of Witwatersrand
(011) 717-4555
renate.gericke@wits.ac.za

Signature of Director

Date