

Chapter 1 Introduction

As an undergraduate student, I volunteered at a Johannesburg-based Non-Governmental Organisation whose primary focus is abandoned babies. This organisation takes in babies deemed to be in need of care and then aims to find them a permanent home; whether this is through adoption, foster-care placement or placement with extended, biological family members. After completing my honours degree I spent a period of approximately eighteen months working for the organisation. During this time I was involved in fetching babies who had been abandoned at various places such as hospitals and police stations, as well as meeting with birth mothers who were seeking to place their babies for adoption. Another part of the job entailed ensuring that the babies who were placed for adoption had had all the necessary medical evaluations done. Adoption days were bitter-sweet moments: the main aim of the organisation is to find a permanent family for the babies. Working with the babies on a daily basis, it was difficult not to form attachments, but the privilege of watching the formation of a family at the moment of meeting on adoption day, was something that is very difficult to accurately convey in words.

As a researcher in this field I have read extensively around the subject of adoption – both fictional and non-fictional works. Each adds something to the conversation, sometimes raising aspects that I had not considered since they are not in my realm of experience. One question which has often played at the back of my mind is how is that baby, the one I handed to forever parents? How did the child adjust? What do they know of his or her story and how do they interact with it? What is the narrative that they provide when asked about their family?

My actual research topic was selected from an experience which took place in the school in which I worked. An innocent conversation took place one day amidst a small group of seven-year-olds who were busy playing on the mat. I overheard one little boy ask his friend, a boy who had been transracially adopted by a white, same-sex couple, if he knew what his mom looked like. The adopted child replied, “Well, I don’t know. I never saw her. I just came out of her tummy!” This explanation sufficed to satisfy the curiosity of the friend and the little boys continued with their animated game on the carpet.

This conversation led me to consider how teachers approach similar discussions, specifically about transracial adoption and the adoption of children into families who do not conform to the imagined ‘ideal’ of a same-race, heterosexual couple with their own biological offspring;

and in turn how parent/s of transracially adopted child/ren equip their child/ren to handle the conversations that may emerge in relation to their family structure within the school environment.

The novel written by Cathy Donald (2016) titled *The Reluctant Cuckoo*, introduces the voices of the people who comprise the adoption triad – the birth parent, child and the adoptive parents and conversations which can arise in relation to them.

“...Stuart put up his hand. “Teacher,” he said questioningly. “My mummy says that it’s not possible for a mummy and daddy who are white to have a baby that is black.” (Donald, 2016, p. 143).

“Their friends and colleagues, who had not had first-hand experience of inter-racial adoption, were intrigued with them as a family” (Donald, 2016, p. 122).

“You won’t ever know me and I’ll never know you, but there will always be characteristics of yours that will crawl out of your genes and remind you that there’s stuff inside you that comes from someone else!” (Donald, 2016, p. 100).

The reader is able to hear how each of the characters navigates his or her story through the process of adoption. As these are the people who comprise the adoption triad, it is important to become familiar with them and the position which they occupy in the adoption process.

The words “orphan,” “poverty,” “HIV/AIDS” and “abandonment” are found scattered in the chronicles of South Africa in relation to children who are classified as vulnerable. The statistics which exist in South Africa that pertain to the number of children who are orphaned, abandoned or in need of care appear fraught with controversy and are fragmented and ill-recorded. The last recorded abandonment statistics are from 2010 (Allen, 2017). Chuimia (2014, p. unknown) citing research conducted by the Children’s Institute based at the University of Cape Town in 2014, noted that “there are an estimated 3.5 million orphans in South Africa. Most – around 2.13 million – have lost their fathers. Around 611 000 children could be classified as ‘maternal orphans’ and 812 000 children have lost both their parents.” The sentiment that the data is fragmented and ill-recorded was echoed by the National Adoption Coalition of South Africa (NACSA), which noted a lack of recorded government statistics of children in need of care. Statistics on the number of children in need of care in 2016 and 2017 are not available online. This points to an area of great concern: if the

numbers of children are not known, how does the overall problem of children classified as vulnerable and in need of care begin to be cohesively addressed?

Adoption is considered to be one of the options for children in need of permanent care. In South Africa adoption has been legally governed since 1924, by the implementation of the “Adoption of Children Act 25 of 1923” (van der Walt, 2014, p. 431). Since this initial law, various Acts have been passed that pertain to the adoption of children in South Africa. Currently in effect is the Children’s Act 38 of 2005, the last element of which came into effect in 2010 (van der Walt, 2014).

Finley (2008), an American-based researcher, discusses the changes in the format of adoption over time, commenting

At mid-20th century, one could write about adoption, secure in the knowledge that there was a great deal of similarity among adoptive families and adoptees. The modal adoptive family consisted of intact, Caucasian, middle class adoptive parents under age 40 with adoptees drawn from the pool of healthy, genetically sound, “blue ribbon” Caucasian infants in traditional closed adoptions (Finley, 2008, p. 3).

The author contrasts this with the reality found in adoption today stating “what one finds are many divergent adoption realities and many competing best interests” Finley (2008, p. 2).

In the South African adoption landscape, there have been significant changes to the laws governing adoption, particularly those relating to race as well as the family units subsequently created through adoption. Wilson, quoted in the work of Brown (2014, p. unknown), highlights the uniqueness of the South African situation by explaining that “transracial adoption in South Africa has another distinctive feature: this may be the only country in the world where the racial minority regularly adopts from the racial majority.” It is noteworthy that, while it may be the minority adopting from the majority, children in this adoption context continue to live in a society in which the majority of the people who are likely to surround them during their daily interactions look like them; an element that may be absent in the event of an international adoption. This unique element, however, creates a space for other conversations to emerge in relation to adoption and the formation of a family unit through this process.

As part of this research is on adoption and the discourse used in the school environment of the adopted child, it considers the link between schools and the discourses that are employed

within these environments. The work of both Haupt (2010), writing in a South African context, and Palacios in Wrobel and Neil (2009) exploring different forms of adoption and changes which have taken place in countries around the world, examine children and schools. Palacios (2009) specifically looks at the school and the adopted child exploring the life of the adopted child through the framework of an ecosystem and the different components thereof. Palacios (2009) comments in relation to the family – school component of the ecosystem that

there is a notable dearth of information on how adopted children fare in the other microsystem where they spend a good part of their life, namely the school. The little we know about adopted children in schools is clearly outcome orientated, showing a better school performance in adopted children compared with their siblings and peers left behind, but a higher incidence of school difficulties in adopted children compared with their non-adopted classmates (Palacios, 2009, p. 78).

It is evident that there is little to no focus on the interactions and discussions that take place about adoption and the family which results or on the discourses employed in relation to this family structure in the school environment. Palacios (2009) concludes that “very few research projects on adoption can be identified as simultaneously taking into consideration person-process-context-time in the analysis of the adoptive family microsystem” (Palacios, 2009, p. 78).

The discussion around school is picked up by Haupt (2010), in direct relation to South Africa’s education system, stating

schools have been inextricably linked to the national political discourse for many years. The seminal events which were defining moments of our society not only had a direct influence of the content of what is taught in schools, but also on teaching methodology and the broad framework of education policy and legislation” (Haupt, 2010, p. 2).

Evident in this comment is that schools cannot exist in isolation from the society in which they are located, nor can what is taught in them remain untainted by ideologies which are circulated in broader society.

Given the racial polarisation of South Africa’s history, there is a gap in the research to consider the family, presented through discourse, of the transracially adopted child in South

Africa specifically within the school system. It is within this framework that this research finds its position.

Prior research on adoption has been done in South Africa. These works, have however, looked at topics such as the factors which motivated couples to adopt transracially in South Africa (Gishen, 1996), what sort of permanent placement is in the best interest of the child from a legal perspective (Ferreira, 2009), as well as child abandonment, the implications and complexities surrounding the issue and also the adoption of these children (Blackie, 2014).

The question which needs to be considered is what language is employed in relation to the family unit formed through adoption within the school environment. The children adopted as babies naturally become individuals capable of speech, understanding and the ability to express an opinion. What language, if any, exists for these families to engage with and explain their family structure within South African society?

This research has been considered within the broader framework of South Africa, exploring how conversations around transracial adoption are held and whether this discourse leans towards normalising families created through adoption or whether a barrier exists which needs to be removed and a vocabulary altered. This project has been conducted within a social constructionist ontology and epistemology. The data which was gathered for this research was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers who have taught transracially adopted children as well as parent/s of transracially adopted child/ren. Emphasis was placed on the narrative which was generated and was considered in the analysis process. Later in this work there is an in-depth discussion around the manner in which a narrative is constructed and the importance of this in relation the data gathered and analysed in this research. Teachers and parents were not selected from the same schools, thus ensuring an ethical distance between both groups of research participants. The transcribed interviews were analysed using Applied Thematic Analysis. Analysis was considered through a critical literacies lens.

The main question which has informed this research is *How do parents of transracially adopted children and the teachers who teach them construct their understanding of families created through adoption?*

During the research process the sub-questions listed below informed and directed the research process. Some of these questions were included in the interview schedules which were created for the purpose of data collection.

Family questions:

- How did the parent/s arrive at the decision to adopt transracially?
- How do parent/s discuss the formation of a family with their child/ren?
- How are difficult questions which have been posed in relation to the family structure addressed?
- How is the topic of race discussed within the family structure?
- How are children prepared to answer questions about their family when they enter the school system?

School questions:

- Is the school system and those who work within it, equipped with sufficient and appropriate knowledge regarding different family structures, particularly those formed through transracial adoption?
- How is the topic of race engaged with at a general level and then specifically in the context of the classroom?

At the outset of this research I had no assumptions about what my data might reveal. This research has been specifically conducted within the area of Johannesburg. The reason for this decision is due to the researcher living in the area and therefore this made logistical sense. Due to the density of the Johannesburg population, finding research participants was likely to be easier than it would be to find a large enough sample in more rural areas where smaller populations are prevalent. Parents who participated had to have adopted transracially and their children needed to be at school in a grade ranging from grade 000 to grade 12. The reason for this is that parents needed to have experienced enrolling their transracially adopted child at school. Parents who had adopted intra-racially were excluded from the study as the conversations which they are likely to have with their children are likely to be different from those of parents with transracially adopted children. A transracial adoption makes the adoption visible and therefore subject to conversation at times which may be beyond the

control of the adoptive parents. As this research was conducted in an urban area, the findings may not be directly transferable to rural areas, where parents of transracially adopted child/ren may have a different experience. This is an aspect which could be considered for exploration at a later stage, possibly in the form of a journal article.

This research is structured as follows: The theoretical framework provides clarity on extant information in the field and how this in turn informs the work done in this project. A historical overview of adoption from a general, international position as opposed to a specifically South African standpoint is undertaken, as is a historical overview of the school system in South Africa. The reason for these historical explorations is that history informs the current conversation and South Africa is a country with a complex history bound through conversations around which race are constructed and woven. This discussion is followed by the literature review in which the researcher explored articles which related to more practical aspects which formed this research. The methodology explains the manner in which data collected was analysed. In this section an in-depth consideration of the construction of narrative and the importance of considering the words which are chosen is undertaken and these then inform the dominant discourse which is employed in relation to a specific topic. The discussion section of this research is divided into two components –a discussion analysis of Adoptive Parents’ interviews and Teachers’ interviews with an exploration of gaps and overlaps in the discussion between these two groups. It is within these gaps and overlaps that it can be determined how parents and teachers construct conversations which inform the possible ideas that transracially adopted children have in relation to the concept of family and specifically their family. Each of the main sections have subsections based on the themes which emerged in the analysis process. Each subsection has been explored under its own heading. Lastly, the conclusion draws together all the elements which were explored during the research process and considers what needs to be changed within this conversation to extend it beyond merely an observation of what is happening in society and to make a tangible difference.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

The frameworks of family, adoption and school are explored in this chapter, as well as the component of identity and the construction of a sense of childhood. The reason for this exploration is because the concept of childhood is interwoven in the conversations which are held about family, adoption and school.

2.1 Family

What makes a family? The clichéd, tongue-in-cheek, middle class, western traditional “husband, wife, 2.4 kids, white picket fence and a dog” quip is a common response.

This response is little more than imagined; reality presents an entirely different picture.

The South African concept of family and the structure thereof, is influenced by the lasting legacy from modernist, apartheid era ideologies as well as overarching implications of laws which were passed during this time period.

Gunkel (2011) explains that during apartheid the ruling government effectively perpetuated the ideals of a white, nuclear, heterosexual family unit. Christianity was one of the tools used in the perpetuation of this family ideal. Bray *et al* (2010) pick up this discussion commenting that

Apartheid had devastating effects on many families, reproducing in family life the divisive hierarchies and separated living imposed on society by the state. Privileged South Africans enjoyed relatively comfortable lives, and were strongly encouraged to live in stable nuclear families, in part through state-validated-Christian ethics.

(Bray *et al*, 2010, p. 48).

The White Paper on Families in South Africa (2012), “a document used as a means of presenting government policy preferences prior to the introduction of legislation” (White Paper on Families in South Africa, 2012, p. 9), defines a family as “a societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or the ties of marriage (civil, customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and go beyond a particular physical residence” (White Paper, 2012, p. 11). It is a document used when laws which pertain to children and the formation of families are drawn up.

Various authors, both in South Africa and internationally, have offered different explanations. De la Rey *et al* (1997, p. 3) suggest the following as a definition of family, “a group of people who are related by blood or by law, living together or associating with one another to a common purpose, that purpose being provision of food, shelter and the rearing of children.” Lubbe (2007b) notes the Eurocentric and patriarchal structures which inform the traditional ideology of family, have begun to shift. Lubbe (2007b, p. 46) explains these changes in relation to the social elements of “working mothers, adoption, divorce and HIV/AIDS.” Each of these elements has altered the imagined ‘norm’ of the family structure. De la Rey *et al* (1997) acknowledge the diversity that occurs in family groups; they note, with specific reference to South Africa, three elements which may be attributes of different family structures, namely: racial / ethnic diversity, the lingering class divisions which tend to fall along racialised lines and the residual effects of migrant labour practices. These aspects have historical origins and still have lasting implications in society in the present day.

Stacey (1990), whose work was based on research in the United States of America, explored through extensive field work the construction of families and those who gather together under this umbrella term. From this field work Stacey (1990, p. 149) offered the following definition of a family, saying it is “composed of two or more individuals who promote the health and well-being of those who live together, such a family [...], could include married or unmarried, homosexuals or heterosexuals, one parent or more, and related or unrelated people.”

Lubbe (2007a, p. 260 -261) captures the changes and complexity of family, noting that “advances and changes in globalised culture compels people to take cognisance of a wide variety of ways in which families are formed and in which children grow up. Such new family arrangements are forcing the redefinition of what is understood, meant and implied when the term ‘family’ is used.”

From each of the above discussions about the concept of family, it is evident that there is no single, simple definition of family. It is however, evident that when this term is used, the inference – expressed or covert – implies that the term is most frequently applied when children become a part of this unit. It is within these frameworks of definition of family that the research in this project has been undertaken. The researcher takes the position that there is no definitive definition of a family and has allowed those who are part of the research to

apply the labels with which they are most comfortable, when they attempt to explain their own 'family' unit.

While the parenting role is not the sole domain of women, there are men who successfully occupy this position; the dominant narrative around parenting roles tends to position women as primary occupants of this space. Due to the positioning of women in this manner as mother and nurturer within the family unit, there is a need to explore the concept of what it means to be a mother and the manner in which women are constructed in the position thereof. There are women for whom there is a life-long desire to be a mother and for others, there is no desire at all. Society perceives and positions these women differently. In relation to this research it is also important to discuss the concept of a mother, as in order for an adoption to take place one woman needs to renounce her rights to the child to whom she gave birth to so that another may raise the child as her own.

2.1.1 The Motherhood Conundrum

"The moment a child is born, the mother is also born. She never existed before. The woman existed, but the mother, never. A mother is something absolutely new" – Rajneesh.

It is impossible to explore different forms of family units without taking time to contemplate the notion of a mother and motherhood. The term mother is applied to women who have children, whether biological or adopted. The above quote captures the idea that in order for a mother to exist, a baby has to have been born, but that the woman who gave birth existed as somebody different prior to the birth taking place. This quote also serves to further highlight, and creates the space to critically engage with and challenge, the dominant narrative that it is women who are assumed to be the principal occupants of the position of primary caregivers of infants and children. In this manner alerting the reader to the way in which men, either heterosexual or homosexual, are side-lined and silenced within the conversation around parenting and the occupation and fulfilment of this role. Within this either covertly or overtly expressed concept of occupation of position of primary nurturer is the space to ensure that this dominant, gender divided ideology remains firmly affixed in its current position. Men who are primary nurturers are not, as yet, seen as a social norm. Men either heterosexual or homosexual are perceived to be doing a good 'job' when they care for young children, especially when they perform tasks which are deemed to be 'women's work' i.e. nappy

changing. Rather than being seen as simply performing a parenting task, without a gendered lens.

It is possible to take this discussion one step further and extend it to the family formed through adoption. The duality of this bond, between two different sets of parents, is captured in the words of Jody Lander who says “*A child born to another woman calls me mommy. The magnitude of that tragedy and the depth of that privilege are not lost on me.*” It is within the structure of adoption that this discussion will take place.

Park (2006) explored how a pronatalist stance on motherhood positioned the body of the adoptive mother as one that was always to be found wanting in some capacity. Park (2006) looked at this from her position as both a birth mother and an adoptive mother, as well as from the stance of a lesbian woman. The article by Park (2006) was given the title *Adoptive Maternal Bodies: A Queer Paradigm for Rethinking Mothering?* The author used the word “queer” in the title; a word that has various meanings: one a previously offensive reference to homosexual sexual orientation; it is a term which has since been reclaimed, while the other is a rather antiquated term used to describe something as being odd or unusual. It is, therefore, possible to read the title of the article with this dual meaning of the word “queer” in mind. This concept ties into the discussion which Park (2006) presents to the reader about the adoptive mother.

The term mother is applied to a female who has come to occupy a position in which the criteria for this label are met. However, this term appears to have a sliding scale of application, attached to prefixed terms which include: teen-mother, adoptive-mother, and foster-mother. The subtle implication in such labels is that the body which is presenting itself as a mother is someone who has come to occupy the position in a manner that does not entirely align with the ‘idyllic’ imagery of a mother. Park (2006) captures this complexity by commenting

The term adoptive mother is oxymoronic. Insofar as mother is defined as a procreative being, adoptive mothers (as non-productive beings) are impossible. Our impossible status may give us a unique position from which to examine and resist normative conceptions and practices of mothering (Park, 2006, p. 203).

McMahon (1995) picks up the intersection of mother, motherhood and the female body by stating

No woman is only a woman (or mother) – she is socially located by race, class, age, sexuality, motherhood or non-motherhood, abilities and so on, which do not simply shape but constitute the meanings and experience of being female and of mothering (McMahon, 1995, p. 10).

It is at this point that, different forms of motherhood may be explored. Teenage-mothers, single-mothers, poor-mothers and women who choose to remain childless are conventionally seen by society as operating outside of the mores of motherhood and definitions of the ideal.

McMahon (1995), Bray, Gooskens, Kahn Moses & Seeking (2010), Burman (2008) and Blackie (2014) all analyse components of the ideals of mothering by exploring teenage mothers. McMahon (1995), in research conducted in Canada amongst middle- and working-class mothers, noted that when young women became pregnant, especially when they were not in a relationship (inferred a heterosexual relationship) the focus tended to be on how these young women would mother “improperly”. Engagement with the factors of poverty, poor access to education, lack of support and limited employment opportunities was negated (McMahon, 1995). Burman (2008), thirteen years later in the United Kingdom, picks up the discussion about young mothers, noting like McMahon (1995), that these women are labelled as social problems. The assumption is that they are not able to parent in a manner that is deemed as fit and proper in accordance with what society has labelled as ‘appropriate’. Burman (2008) explains by citing Phoenix (1991) that

Single mothers are thereby either rendered invisible within normative definitions of mothering or recognised only in order to be treated as deviant – thus appearing in policy and research literature in terms of a dynamic of ‘normalised absence / pathologised presence’ (Burman, 2008, p. 110).

As with the work of McMahon (1995) there is silence around topics which further compound the issues presented in relation to teenage pregnancy; there appears to be a fear of engaging with the complicated and deeply socially imbedded elements which contribute to the discussion and labelling of young mothers as ‘problematic’.

In the South African context, child abandonment is added to the discussion as is the apparent lack of willingness to tackle the many other social ills associated with it; many of which appear to be insurmountable and are consequently ignored or dismissed. The work of Blackie (2014) and Bray *et al* (2010) present two different sides of the discussion around young

mothers. Blackie (2014) in one part of her research looks at media representations of abandoned babies and the language used in relation to the mothers who have abandoned them. Blackie (2014) explains how the mother is vilified and dehumanised for committing such an act, but there is no discussion as to what may have led to this event taking place nor are tangible solutions expressed. The impact of this language and the image of the mother who abandons her child paint an entirely different picture to that of the imagined 'ideal' of motherhood. Women who abandon their babies are effectively relegated to outside of the term of "mother." In this particular discussion, I do not wish to engage in a debate about the women who abandon, but rather wish merely to draw attention to the harsh and destructive language that is employed in the discussion of these women.

In work which involved interviews with groups of teenagers in Ocean View, Masiphumelele and Fish Hoek, Bray *et al* (2010) explored teenage pregnancy. The research showed how teenage mothers adjusted to the new role they came to inhabit. The teenagers explained that the most difficult changes to which they had to adjust, were those that involved changes in relationships between friends – those with and those without children, coping and adjusting to being a parent and its associated responsibility, as well as a shift within the family structure; the teenage mother became an adult within the family (Bray *et al*, 2010). The research also showed that after the shock of a teenage pregnancy had been overcome, these girls were able to "recuperate their standing in the community as they distinguish themselves as more mature and responsible than their childless peers" (Bray *et al*, 2010, p. 281). There were similar sentiments about responsibility and a sense of maturity expressed by the working-class women who were interviewed in the work of McMahon (1995).

McDermott and Graham (2005) effectively bring together all the components of the above discussions. These authors explain that "the construction of the mother identity is made difficult for the young women because they are positioned, by virtue of their age and class, outside of the dominant cultural norms of motherhood; they are unsuitable mothers" (McDermott & Graham, 2005, p. 70).

This creates the space to pose the question what and who is a 'good' mother and how is this position attained and maintained so that this identity is fulfilled?

The work of Johnston and Swanson (2003) explicates in the process of examining ideas of motherhood that indeed "motherhood is not biologically determined or socially ascribed. Motherhood is a social and historical construction" (Johnston & Swanson, 2003, p. 21).

These authors further draw on the work of Foucault, by tying in how hegemonic power in a society is able to relegate those who fit the expected criteria into the fold, and expel to the outer margins those who do not; in this instance, the women who are deemed to be 'bad' mothers.

The identity of 'mother' is explained by Collet (2005, p. 328) as follows: "a woman may become a mother by giving birth, but she truly takes on a mother identity by playing a socially defined, publically visible role." It is implied that only when actions attributable to 'mother' are fulfilled and validated through public observation is a woman deemed to actually be a mother. A very similar sentiment is expressed by McMahon (1995, p. 51) stating "becoming a mother is not simply about having children; it is also about engaging available cultural identities."

Returning to the work of Park (2006), it is possible to engage with family forms that do not fit the heteronormative construct. Park (2006, p. 209) points out that "adoptive maternal bodies are not, thus, "natural" bodies [...] They are bodies who know how to announce themselves as normal, even as they are marked as abnormal." It is here that the space to look at gay fathers, lesbian mothers, single mothers and fathers and the voluntary childless emerges. In relation to gay fathers, the authors Jennings, Mellish, Tasker, Lamb and Golombok (2014) and Patterson and Riskind (2010), remind us that gay men who parent are faced with the challenge of raising children within a society that has dominant heterosexual ideas about parenting and parenting roles. These men, therefore, have to negotiate these obstacles as well as the possible perception that they are merely playing out the role of parents. Literature about heterosexual fatherhood, Fox and Bruce (2001) and Eerola and Mykkänen (2013), imply that it is a performative role which men are able to do; it is not necessarily seen as an innate yearning or key element in identity formation of a man. Emphasis is placed on the ability of a man to provide financially for the family which he has created. McMahon (1995, p. 233) muses "in spite of considerable changes in ideologies of fatherhood, research continues to show a greater salience of parental identities for women than for men cross-situationally, whether familial or non-familial situations." Men, both homosexual and heterosexual, who come to occupy the position of 'mother' by taking on the role of primary nurturer, still manage to escape the conversation that the occupation of this position is an element that is innate and inscribed in their gendered make-up, while women remain positioned in this manner. Women who choose not to parent and for whom the

occupation of this position arises through ways other than through giving birth to a child, remains an area which is discussed and contrasted in relation to concepts of femininity.

Lesbian mothers have to negotiate the challenge of having the ability to create a child biologically in relation to sexual orientation and the various options which could render this possible (Jennings *et al*, 2014). Many of these women may also need to allow themselves the space to let their sexual orientation identity and that of motherhood merge before they decide to become parents. Sexual orientation does not determine who is able to parent and who is not.

Single parents face the scrutiny of society, where people will wonder how this individual came to be a parent (Mannis, 2008). This is again determined by the heteronormative ideologies which are dominant in society.

There is another group of people who need to be considered in relation to the concept of motherhood and being a mother; these are women who elect to remain childless, while this is a side step in the conversation around adoption, it is necessary to acknowledge their existence. They, like the women who are childless, yet seek to become mothers, face the challenges of various assumptions by broader society. This group of women choose, within a society where motherhood is seen as one of the ultimate expressions of femininity, not to have children (Kelly, 2009). They must then navigate the preconceptions about their childless state. These include that they are infertile, that they are selfish and that they are actively defying an assumed 'norm' of being a woman (Kelly, 2009). The author, however, suggests that rather than viewing these women in the above mentioned manner, they should be seen as resisting the "pronatalist cultural imperatives of femininity that conflate woman with mother, highlighting the emergence of a positive female identity separate from motherhood" (Kelly, 2009, p. 167). Effectively, these women need to be seen as complete people, without the need to take on the identity of mother to affirm this position. This is an idea that can be extended to all women, regardless of their status of mother.

It is therefore possible to conclude that despite the different forms of family which exist and the roles which are fulfilled by different people, the idealised heteronormative regulations are still dominant within society; women are the nurturers and men are the providers. Park (2006, p. 221) however, offers this musing, "as participants in motherhood who resist reproductivity and reproductivity, adoptive maternal bodies have the potential to queer our notions of 'normal' mothering and normalise our notions of queer mothering."

2.1.2 Childhood

As this research focuses on children within the context of adoption, it is necessary to engage with the concept of childhood and the associated connotations of this terminology.

The model of childhood has shifted, as changes have taken place in society. These changes are explained by Bezuidenhout (2013) who states “for centuries it was believed that children came into the world as miniature adults and as the property of the father” (Bezuidenhout, 2013, p. 2). The implication of this position of ‘miniature adult’ meant that children were treated as such, rather than as in need of special care and protection. Green (1998, p.2) picks up on the discussion of children as miniature adults and the shift to an actual period known as childhood, explaining “children were gradually removed from their society, largely through the introduction of formal education, at first among the middle classes, but then spreading across the social spectrum.”

UNICEF explains

Childhood is the time for children to be in school and at play, to grow strong and confident with the love and encouragement of their family and an extended community of caring adults. It is a precious time in which children should live free from fear, safe from violence and protected from abuse and exploitation. As such, childhood means much more than just the space between birth and the attainment of adulthood. It refers to the state and condition of a child’s life, to the quality of those years (www.unicef.org).

In the legal framework of South Africa, a person is considered to be a child if they are under the age of eighteen years (Children’s Act 38 of 2005). De la Rey *et al* (1997) factor into the idea of childhood and the associated social and historical elements, that there are many dynamics which can alter the imagined experience of children contrasted with the realities experienced by many children. These features include poverty, violence and adversity. De la Rey *et al* (1997, p. 100) note that this situation is not confined to South Africa, commenting that “these powerful influences are not unique to South Africa, and many similar scenarios are replicated in developing, war-torn or post-colonial countries as well as many inner-city communities of developed countries.”

It is within the discussion by De la Rey *et al* (1997) around children and childhood and the shifts which occur in society in relation this, that this research positions its understanding of the ideas of children and childhood.

2.2 Adoption

Adoption is not a new concept; rather it is one that has been in practice in various forms and for different purposes thousands of years (van der Walt, 2014 & Potter, 2013). Van der Walt (2014) explains that adoption is evident in the writings of the ancient Romans, Egyptians and Greeks. Of interest within these civilisations is that the practice of adoption was not focused on expanding the familial labour force, an aspect explored by Potter (2013), but rather at its core was a focus on creating a family and the continuance of a blood line, especially within the royal families (van der Walt, 2014). In contrast Potter (2013) explores shifts in adoption practices, with the focus on America and the changes which have occurred. Potter (2013) notes that during the period of colonisation through to the twentieth century, adoption was more likely to be a process where

Indenture, placing children in homes for domestic service, apprenticeships, and the emergence of alms houses were used for the care of dependent children who could not live with their biological families. In other words, child adoption began as an exchange of “property” and was a way for citizens to gain profit and status in the new land (Potter, 2013, p. 110).

The practice of “baby farms” was evident at the start of the 19th century. Children, especially boys, were bought as a means to increase the family labour force. Over time, adoption laws were altered and adoption came to be seen as a matter of child welfare and not merely a means obtain additional labour (Potter, 2013). Today, adoption is a means through which to create a family. There have been changes in this process too; initially focus was on intra-racial and familial adoptions, but currently there is also a space for transracial, international and open adoptions to occur.

The above discussion is contrasted by the discussion by Park (2006, p. 219), quoting the work of Betzer and her reflection on her relationship with her adopted child,

I cannot walk on ice or rocky terrain without stumbling; she can dangle from trees by her toes. I cannot carry a tune; she can imitate any succession of notes from the first hearing. I agonise over every alternative; she leaps spontaneously towards every decision [...] On the other hand, like me, my daughter likes cooking, cuddles, puzzles, red and irony. Coincidence? Parallel genetic construction? Environment? Nurture? Chance? Magic? Does it matter?

Within these contrasting reflections on adoption and the position that it has come to occupy in society is the evident shift in the position of the child as a means to create and expand a familial labour force and the child coming to occupy the position of a family member.

As this research is focused on transracial adoption in South Africa, it is necessary to explore the historical position that this has occupied. Van der Walt (2014, p. 422) explains

In 1923 the Adoption of Children Act 23 was adopted. Provision was made for adoption as a legally recognised institution, allowing for such adoption to take place where it was in the interests of the child concerned. The Adoption Act was superseded first by the Children's Act 31 of 1937, followed by the Children's Act 33 of 1960, Children's Amendment Act 50 of 1965, Child Care Act 74 of 1983 and finally the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

Prior to the legal framework establishment, adoptions took place on an informal basis and were effectively regulated by the parties concerned (van der Walt, 2014).

The 1923 Adoption of Children's Act came into effect in 1924. It was noted that interracial adoption was not overtly expressed as illegal, but due to extant racial ideologies of this time period it was not considered an option by adoptive parents.

This Act was followed by the Children's Act 31 of 1937 and again this Act contained no outright ban on interracial adoption since "racism was already firmly established in the nation at the time, and there was thus no need for legislative intervention in this regard" (van der Walt, 2014, p. 433). This Act was replaced by the Children's Act 33 of 1960. By this point in South African history, laws pertaining to racial segregation had been firmly put into place. Acts which were implemented for this purpose included The Group Areas Act 41 of 1950, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act 55 of 1949, the Immorality Act 21 of 1950 and the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950 (www.sahistory.org.za). Each of these Acts sought at some level to ensure that people who were categorised into different racial groupings on the

basis of a predetermined set of criteria, did not interact and that any interaction between groups was not accepted and could be legally punished. At this point in time interracial adoption was outlawed, as laws which governed adoption stated that “in selecting any person in whose custody a child is to be placed, regard shall be had to the religious and cultural background and the ethnological grouping of the child and, in selecting such a person, also to the nationality of the child and the relationship between him and such person” (van der Walt, 2014, p. 435).

It was within this set of guidelines that adoptions were performed, ensuring that it was not possible for people to adopt a child who was not classified in the same racial category as themselves. It is interesting to note that the word “race” is not used in this law; rather religion, culture and ethnic origin form the basis for the ruling. In discussions around interracial adoption in South Africa at present, the notion of culture and cultural loss or identity still linger as a point of contention around which this narrative pivots itself. The Children’s Act 33 of 1960 was amended in 1965, and it was at this point that the regulation of race as decreed through apartheid legislation came firmly into effect. The Population Registration Act 30 of 1950 was used as a means to prohibit interracial adoption, law makers stating that “a child shall not be placed in the custody of any person whose classification in terms of the Population Registration Act, 1950, is not the same as that of the child except where such a person is the parent or guardian of the child” (van der Walt, 2014, p. 438), ensured that transracial adoption was not a viable option for creating a family.

The Child Care Act 74 of 1983 took the place of the preceding Act. At this point in time apartheid was at its height and racial classification was the order of the day. It effectively barred anyone from attempting to adopt a child who was not within their own racial classification.

By 1996 the new Constitution of South Africa had come into effect, along with The Child Care Amendment Act 96 of 1996. In this Act the focus was not on the race of the child and the adoptive parents, but rather on whether the potential parents would be able to raise the child in “a fit and proper” (van der Walt, 2014, p. 446) manner and that this placement would be in the best interest of the child. This Act legally permitted transracial adoption. It was replaced by The Children’s Act 38 of 2005, the Act which is still in effect and serves to regulate adoption both at intra-country and inter-country level in 2018. Different aspects of this Act have been rolled out over a number of years and amendments have been made to

various components thereof as the need has arisen or as objections have been raised. An element that is considered to be a key feature in this Act is the development of the Register on Adoptable Children and Prospective Parents (RACAP). Gerrand and Nathane-Taulela (2015, p. 58) explain that once this system has been fully implemented, (it is still in a testing phase), the aim of this system “is intended to facilitate the matching and screening process and ensure that children eligible for unrelated adoption are not unnecessarily uprooted from their ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic origins.” In the event that parents who match these criteria are not found for eligible children, the option for transracial and intercountry adoption becomes available. The focus of this Act is on providing children with a permanent home, a place in which they are able to be protected, grow up in a secure environment, and develop stable and lasting relationships within a family (van der Walt, 2014). It is important to note that no specific definition of what the family structure is supposed to look like is provided in this Act. This, despite the criteria listed on RACAP before interracial and international adoption is able to be considered as an option for permanent placement of children deemed to be in need of such care.

2.2.1 The South African Welfare System

As many of the babies who are placed for adoption in South Africa start their story in a children’s home, there is a need to take time to consider the welfare system in South Africa and the changes which have taken place within this system since it was first implemented.

The concept of a baby home, the current term used for a place of safety for children in need of care, is not uncommon in present day South Africa. Historically such places have existed, but their focus and governance has varied according to the social climate.

McCamant (2008) explains that in the latter part of the nineteenth century, baby farms became a point of scrutiny in the United States and the United Kingdom. McCamant (2008) clarifies that babies who arrived at these places did so for various reasons: some were handed over by desperate mothers, who due to circumstance – poverty and illegitimacy – placed their babies in baby farms in the hope that the infant would be cared for. Some of the ‘farms’ took a payment of some description for the infant. Potter (2013) explained how, in the United States, such farms were a source of additional labour for families who ‘needed’ more children to work in family based industries, often those of an agricultural nature. McCamant (2008)

alerts us to the more sinister side of baby farms, while not proven, it is suspected, based on high levels of infant mortality recorded by the baby farms, that infants were sometimes neglected to the point of death. In this manner, such places became known as a possible way to ‘get rid’ of illegitimate children who were seen as a source of scandal in society.

South Africa did not escape this practice. This is highlighted in the work of Badassy (2012) in a paper presented at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) on this topic. Badassy (2012) explains that research from archived newspapers from the 1890s Transvaal, as it was then referred to, indicate that baby farms existed in South Africa. Prior to the implementation of the “Infant Life Protection Act” (Badassy, 2012, p. 24) in 1909, authorities had no way of controlling or acting on reports of events which took place in these institutions. Many of these baby farms operated under the guise of orphanages, but the reality is that far more ominous events took place behind closed doors. It is, however, important to note, that although the Act was implemented to protect children, it extended predominantly to white children and excluded children from other racial categories. This bias fell in line with the extant racial ideologies of South Africa at the time. This concern for a single race group is emphasised through the concerns of the then Transvaal government, where “focus in the rise of whiteism and indecency which was seen as a result of the various effects of poverty, economic depression, increasing urbanisation, competition for employment and moral perversion through illicit alcohol trafficking and prostitution” (Badassy, 2012, p. 18) was deemed to be a cause for concern. As white people were assumed to be superior to other race groups, society did not wish to have to acknowledge the presence of illegitimate children, who were more frequent in society than was acceptable and attributed to the above mentioned list of social ills.

More than one hundred years on, in 2017, poverty, urbanisation and the breakdown of family structures are still touted as factors which contribute to the increasing number of abandoned and vulnerable babies and children considered to be in need of care. The difference now, is that the babies and children in need of care are predominantly black; however, this can be attributed to the racial demographics of South Africa.

A history of child welfare in South Africa was explored by Schmid (2013). Schmid (2013) highlighted that initially child protection was concerned with the white Dutch settler children during the time of colonialism. Essentially children and adults who were considered to be in need of care were placed in the homes of more well-off settlers. Schmid (2013) observed that

many of the children placed in orphanages at the time that these establishments had been formalised were “children perceived as being needy, neglected and ill-treated [...]”. These origins are not unlike the beginnings of Anglo-American systems, where the members of the middle class saw themselves as rescuing poor children from immoral and degrading environments” (Schmid, 2013, p. 296). This concept is important due to the overarching narrative of ‘rescue’ which is sometimes touted in relation to adopted children and specifically transracially adopted children. One of the major shifts of the Amended Child Care Act of 1983, which was implemented in 1996, prior to the 2005 Act; was the move away from the idea of an unfit parent to a focus on what determines a child in need of care. While this may be the idea, the reality is that the discourse of an unfit mother still thrives; it only takes a glimpse at the comments section when a baby is abandoned, to see the slander which is meted out towards the mother.

The social welfare system in South Africa is provided by both the state and by non-profit organisations (Patel, Schmid and Hochfeld, 2011). The organisations which function as non-profits can be divided into two categories. There are those which are referred to as

the formal welfare sector, made up of well-established organisations, partly subsidised by the state, some of which are contracted to deliver services on behalf of the state such are residential or statutory services (largely in the field of child protection). They are organised, regulated, largely urban, and are represented by national councils that are umbrella bodies of welfare agencies (Patel, Schmid and Hochfeld, 2011, p. 8).

The other part of the sector is less formal and tends to be based within the community where they tend to be “functioning individually and in sometimes isolated conditions, unpredictably resourced and mostly unorganised” (Patel, Schmid and Hochfeld, 2011, p. 8). Many children who are found to be in need of care, either while awaiting adoption or those who are not eligible for adoption, are housed in Child and Youth Care Centres (Perumal & Kasiram, 2008). According to Perumal and Kasiram (2008, p. 165) “a Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC) is a facility for the provision of residential care to more than six children outside of the child’s family environment in accordance with a residential care programme/s suited to children in the facility.” It is under this category of care that children’s homes are located.

2.2.2 The Point of Intersectionality: Family, Race, Adoption and Identity Collide

It is not possible to read, write or speak about adoption, especially transracial adoption, without taking into consideration the idea of family, the implications – either acknowledged or not – of race, or side-stepping the concept of identity. It is for this reason that these elements will be explored.

There are many theoretical positions which can be employed in relation to the discussion about family, race, identity and adoption.

The idea of identity formation is frequently explored from a psychological angle. Sigmund Freud developed a theory of psychosexual development, Erik Erikson offered a theory of psychosocial development and Jean Piaget presented a theory of cognitive development (Nicholas, 2003). Within each of these theories is the idea that resolution within each developmental phase needs to be achieved in order for the individual to successfully move on to the next stage in the developmental process. Theorists have also worked within the dichotomy that development is either influenced by nature (Freud and Gesell) or by nurture (Watson and Bandura), while many contemporary thinkers are of the opinion that it is more likely that a blend of nature and nurture are at work in the developmental process of the human being (Nicholas, 2003). Burman (2008, p. 13) takes the position that there is no clear cut explanation of developmental psychology, proposing rather the idea “that it is a perspective or an approach to investigating general pathological problems, rather than a particular domain or sub-discipline.” Burman (2008, p. 14) takes this discussion further by explaining that early psychology and undefined disciplines which pre-date the formal discipline of psychology were concerned with “how best to ensure that the person immanent in the child will become a responsible cultural heir and fulfil the necessary destiny envisioned for him by the family and society.” Burman (2008, p. 14) explains that modern theorists place themselves and their theories within the frameworks of “natural history, anthropology, physiology and medicine.” In this manner creating a more rounded theory of human development, the path that it takes and the outcomes which may occur; dependent on a variety of factors which may take place within the life of the developing human.

The position of the researcher on the concept of identity is not located within the psychological paradigm. Rather it is explored from the position of a social constructionist. In this manner the discussion of identity formation moves from explicitly within the individual and the manner in which they did or did not reach resolution at different points in their

developmental process to instead exploring how it is that concepts of identity are formed within society. From this position the research takes into consideration the language which is employed to bring into being or existence a certain idea or set of expressions in relation to a given topic.

Prior to exploring the understanding generated and how this contributes to a sense of identity formation within the outline of a social constructionist framework, it is necessary to briefly engage with what the terms “race” and “identity” are, dependant on the position of those who are explaining the terminology.

Defining the term “race” is not easy, as there are different schools of thought on this concept. Lopez (1994) explains two categories through which the term “race” is explained and understood. It appears that the position of the person talking about race will inform the manner in which they construct their understanding of the term and thus their interaction with it and the power dynamics which are at play in its application. Lopez (1994) explains that the biological position on race is the idea “that there exist natural, physical divisions among humans that are hereditary, reflected in morphology, and roughly but correctly captured by terms like Black, White and Asian” (Lopez, 1994, p. unknown). It is within this position that the idea that a person is born a specific race and that the identity which they will then come to form and have constructed about them, will be determined based on biology.

On the other side of the debate is the idea that race is socially constructed. Those who subscribe to this position on the definition of race do not believe simply that race only exists because people speak it into being. Rather they position themselves in relation to the idea that

race is neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisionsreferents of terms like Black, White, Asian and Latino social groups, not genetically distinct branches of humankind” (Lopez, 1994, p. unknown).

It is evident from this above discussion that race is a contested notion, one where a vocabulary can develop and words be discarded or included according to the constructs which are drawn upon in the discussion about race.

Goldberg and Hendricks cited in the work of Distiller and Steyn (2004, p. 4) draw similar ideas in relation to race commenting that “race is a fluid, transforming, historically specific

concept parasitic on theoretic and social discourses for the meaning it assumes at any given moment.”

The work of dos Santos and Wagner (2017, p. 2) in research conducted in South Africa, highlights that “transracial adoption (TRA) and fostering offer fertile ground for exploring how constructions of race can operate.”

This construct, of a fluid concept of race is the point of understanding, employed within this research. A position of this nature indicates that for an expression to be generated about a concept, in this case “race,” it requires a framework within which to be articulated.

Within the framework of Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development identity is explained as “an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organisation of drives, abilities, beliefs and individual history” (Nicholas, 2003, p. 39). The more colloquial explanation of identity is how does someone answer questions like “Who are you?” what is it that makes you tick?, who do you align yourself with?, what drives you and what does not resonate with you at all?

The question which needs to be posed here is which words are used to construct this idea of identity, especially in relation to adoption and the formation of a family within a transracial family unit? The use of these words which attach themselves to the different ideas of identity and the identity formation of the child who is adopted transracially have been considered within this research.

Since this research has a social constructionist ontology, consideration of this theoretical stance in relation to the discussion about the formation of an identity is undertaken. Andrews (2012, p. unknown) explains that “social constructionism originated as an attempt to come to terms with the nature of reality.” Social constructionism is concerned “with how knowledge is constructed and understood” (Andrews, 2012, p. unknown). It is from this position that this research will be explored. The researcher will constantly pose the question, what power dynamics are at play and how is it that they came to occupy the position of power that they currently hold which effectively gives those ideas and understandings the dominance that they hold.

Having explored the understanding of social construction in relation to race and identity it is necessary to look at identity and adoption, exploring the research which has been done before and what it is that these authors have to say.

An element which needs to be considered in relation to adoption is the lingering idea alluded to in the work of Finley (2008) is the changes in the concept of adoption from creating an 'idyllic', non-stand out family unit through adoption and same race placement – thus keeping the adoption concealed - to the form in which it currently takes place; normally allowing the formation of a variety of groups of people to which the label "family" is applied. The complexities of culture, identity, race and the positioning of the self as an adopted child are examined by Lind (2011 & 2012) and Hübinette and Anderson (2012). The research for these articles was conducted in Sweden. Lind (2012) explains that within the Swedish context, children who are adopted interracially are frequently adopted transnationally as well. The author grapples with the wording which is used in relation to the discussion of interracially adopted children who have become Swedish citizens.

Initially, race was glossed over or omitted from the conversation in Sweden, creating a space for erasure of a past and the acknowledgement that the child was not white and opening a gap for potentially insensitive conversations to take place. Lind (2012, p. 86) suggests that in order to change this conversation, it is necessary to engage with "the relationship between Swedishness and whiteness, as well as the negative associations on non-Swedishness." It is in this manner of bringing the speaker and the world which they construct through their use of specific terms face-to-face that space can be made for an alternative conversation to begin to be formulated.

In South Africa, this element of difference does not emerge in this manner, due to the minority adopting from the majority population. Transracially adopted children in South Africa do not live in a country where their skin colour places them in a minority; they are more usually surrounded by people, on a daily basis, who look like them. Lind (2012) noted that prior to the space being created to acknowledge the origin of the adopted child in Sweden, the stance of colour blindness had been in place; effectively seeking to erase the past of a transracially and most likely transnationally adopted child.

The key element in this discussion, one which is fraught with different arguments and opinions, is that each adopted child has a story which is theirs, a story which they need to acknowledge and which they need to be allowed to engage with and explore in their own time. These children need to construct their own narrative based on aspects of their story which they have determined as important.

As this research is South African based it is necessary to explore work on transracial adoption which has been conducted in the country. The work of Ntongana (2014) explores the narratives which have emerged in relation to transracial adoption in South Africa, with a particular focus on those of people who disapprove of the practice.

Those who are against it substantiate their position through concepts of culture, identity and loss of a connection to the clan ancestors. This is evident in the comment of Mndende in Ntongana (2014, p. unknown) in which he states “black children adopted by white parents lost touch with their culture and ended up losing their identity.” A social worker, who was interviewed explained that those in favour of transracial adoption, take up the position that “there are currently far more white adoption applicants and therefore black children are placed with white families as it is in their best interest to be placed within a stable family environment, even if not racially or culturally the same as their own, instead of growing up in child and youth care centres,” (Ntongana, 2014, p. unknown). These ideas coincide closely with the concept of childhood as offered by UNICEF. The social worker went on to explain that parents who adopt transracially are encouraged to allow their child to know about the culture, language and identity they may have been raised in, had they not been adopted. This discussion of identity and culture opens the space to ask the question: Is a child born with a specific identity and culture or are these elements learned and absorbed by the child from within the environment within which they are raised?

Bowes (2010), a white South African parent of a transracially adopted child, in a reflexive blog entry, discusses negotiating the space of race and people’s reactions to her child. Bowes (2010) observes that

Because we have chosen to adopt transracially, our adoption is ‘public’. Strangers cannot help but notice, and often stare or, better than staring, ask questions. Although I appreciate people’s honesty and would prefer questions to whispering behind our backs and possibly coming to incorrect assumptions about us and adoption, sometimes it can be tiring and draining to feel ‘watched’(Bowes, 2010, p. unknown).

It is evident in this discussion is that there are different ‘obstacles’ to be negotiated in the interracial adoption process. The option to choose when to discuss adoption and the formation of a particular family unit is not necessarily afforded to parents who choose this form of adoption.

Like Bowes (2010), in the form of a blog entry, Wolfson (2015, p. unknown) also discusses her experience as a mother of a transracially adopted daughter in South Africa commenting, “I will never think of my daughter as anything other than black, but instead of seeing that as something negative to be overcome, we see her skin colour as one of the many things that makes her special.”

Evident in both the comments by Bowes (2010) and Wolfson (2015) is that sense of need to acknowledge who their daughters are, taking into consideration their race and the conversations which may arise from the fact they are adopted transracially; sentiments which agree with Juffer and Tieman (2009). These writers both appear to acknowledge that race and adoption will form part of the life narratives that their daughters will have and that this will in turn construct an element of the identity that they form.

Juffer and Tieman (2009) comment

Because this type of adoption is so visible, the adoption cannot be concealed. This should be evaluated in a positive way, because open communication about adoption enhances children’s coping and acceptance of adoptive status (Juffer & Tieman, 2009, p. 643).

The work of Fredericks (2014) sought to gather various narratives from people who have adopted transracially. Common in each discussion with the parents who formed the research base for Fredericks (2014) was their willingness to acknowledge that the child whom they had adopted has an origin that is different to their own and that their adoption story forms part of the history that constructs the child’s identity.

Hübinette and Anderson (2012) examine the discussion of race and ethnicity in the narratives of interracially adopted children within the Swedish context. Interracial adoption is, according to the authors, seemingly accepted. This space provides a platform for a specific type of conversation to emerge. Prior to the conversations that are negotiated in this country, it is important to note that this was not always the dominant narrative. According to Hübinette and Anderson (2012) until the mid-1900s, Swedes pictured themselves as the epitome of whiteness and projected this image to both themselves and the outside world. From the 1960s onwards, after a social revolution, these thoughts on race were seemingly removed from public discourse and gave way to “multicultural policy, anti-racist rhetoric and

colour blindness” (Hübinette and Anderson, 2012, p. 99). Currently Sweden seeks to promote itself as one of the most tolerant and open-minded nations in the world.

However, Hübinette and Anderson (2012), note in their discussion that despite this image that is presented to the world, the discursive experience of the interracially adopted child and their parents is somewhat different and apparently hinges on the types of conversations that take place within the family structure. The authors observed that “the word ‘Swedes’ almost always denotes white Swedes. Code words and euphemistic expressions have been invented to avoid speaking about race while at the same time differentiating between white Swedes and Swedes of colour” (Hübinette and Anderson, 2012, p. 99). The authors determined, from a series of interviews with transracial families, that the conversations which were had within the family structure ultimately influenced and shaped the conversations about the family unit within the broader parameters of society.

The transracial discussion is entered into by Phoenix and Simmonds (2012) in a manner that effectively ties together the various points which have been raised by the authors who have been mentioned above. Phoenix and Simmonds (2012), quoting Barn and Kirston, state that “transracial adoption calls into question our ideas of racial and ethnic boundaries, identity and belonging.” The authors offer terms which they use in an attempt to explain where the different discourses and opinions which arise in relation to interracial adoption occur. Drawing on the work of Cohen (1988) who offered the terms “multiracisms” and “multiculturalisms,” Phoenix and Simmonds (2012) explain that multiracism is used in relation to the different forms of racism that a family formed through transracial adoption may experience. This experience may vary according to context. When the term “multiculturalism” is employed it is more likely to be in relation to the development of the different policies which are put in place with regard to transracial adoption. The work of Cohen, cited by Phoenix and Simmonds (2012) effectively captures this complex situation explaining that between the terms of multiracialisms and multiculturalisms “lies the debate on, and experiences of, transracial adoption. Recognising this contradiction is helpful for understanding the context within which family placements and family formations create new kin who come from different ethnicised categories and/or were born in different nations” (Phoenix and Simmonds 2012, p. 3).

A similar discussion is picked up by Chau, Yu and Tran (2011). While their work is not based on adoption, they explore manners in which to engage in culturally sensitive topics in

an appropriate manner and offer up theories on possible ways this can be done. Chau *et al* (2011, p. 24) offer two approaches namely: “Shared Cultural Knowledge (SCK) and the Diversity Based approach.” In the use of Shared Cultural Knowledge the position is taken that “culture has an essential nature. Members of the same ethnic minority always share similar ways of attaching their life to their culture” (Chau *et al*, 2011, p. 24-25). If this approach is applied to transracial adoption, the notion that culture is something that a child is inherently born with would be applied and therefore that this child would most likely benefit from being raised in a family which subscribed to the same cultural practices or any of the items listed on the RACAP list.

The Diversity Based approach however, allows for a more individual based reflection of a situation as this method assumes that “culture can be fluid in nature, that members of the same ethnic minority groups may differ significantly in their ways of attaching their life to their culture and that the problems faced by ethnic minority groups may be caused by unequal and racist power relations” (Chau *et al*, 2011, p. 25). In relation to transracial adoption, the emphasis is unlikely to be placed on the possible culture of a child. This is pertinent in the South African context for a number of reasons, firstly because of the inverse adoption process where the minority adopts from a majority race group. Secondly, as there is a very high incidence of child abandonment, the actual cultural and ethnic origin of the child is not always known. It is important to take these elements into consideration in the discourse which is employed in relation to the unique identity formation of the transracially adopted child and his or her family - both the adoptive and the biological.

Schmid and Patel (2016, p. 247) posit that, in relation to the development of policies which pertain to child protection and adoption, the “tension between universal norms and the local ideas and practices might be addressed through the notion of glocalization – a construct that allows one to hold onto the benefits of globalisation whilst also maintaining and sustaining the value of local action.” Similar ideas are expressed by Abdullah (2015) in which the author notes that attempts have been made in the process of creating guidelines for policies which serve to regulate different social elements in South Africa. Abdullah (2015, p. 45) comments “in terms of service provision, emphasis has been placed on developing greater cultural sensitivity towards indigenous and black communities and marginalised groups whose worldviews and values were disregarded during apartheid times.”

It is evident that in both the Swedish and South African contexts, there are echoes of the same conversations in relation to families formed through transracial adoption. This indicates that conversations regarding race, culture and identity of the transracially adopted child occur, regardless of the country in which they reside. The question to be considered is what is the content of this conversation and what ideas and frameworks does it construct regarding families and transracial adoption and how do possible shifts in this narrative occur?

2.3 School

Part of this research was conducted in the school environment, with a focus on the discourse which is used by the parent/s of transracially adopted children, as well as the teachers of these children. It is necessary to consider what sort of images and understanding these conversations create and how these link to the narratives which are held in broader society in relation to transracial adoption. In this section an overview of historical aspects of schooling in South Africa, teachers and the teaching process and identity formation in the school context will be considered.

2.3.1 The South African School System: A Historical Overview

The South African school system has not always been a space of racial integration. The dynamics of the school environment are a key element to bear in mind, a thought process explained by Haupt (2010), in relation to schools being linked to the broader social aspects of the society in which they function. Van der Berg (2007) explains that during apartheid, schools were segregated along the lines of race and finances were given to schools on the basis of race. Schools allocated to white children benefited most from government resources, while schools for black, coloured and Indian children were vastly under resourced (van der Berg, 2007), to varying degrees. Bray *et al* (2010) explored this discussion with reference to the payment of fees at schools and the resource difference that this payment creates. Schools at which payment of fees is necessary, especially those of considerable amounts, are better resourced and able to offer a wider variety of subjects, smaller classes and a greater variety of extra-curricular activities.

The historical origins of schooling in South Africa therefore has bearing on the South African education system and schools as they currently stand. The work of Booyse, le Roux, Seroto and Wolhuter (2012), Soudien (2012) and Msila (2007) take a historical look at education in South Africa, although it is primarily the work of Booyse *et al* (2012) which will be used in this discussion. Booyse *et al* (2012) alert the reader to the importance of taking history into consideration when seeking to understand a specific concept or entity. In this context it is education which is under consideration, explaining that

A careful reading of the history of education is indispensable if we are to accurately grasp the future possibilities and most importantly, a study of the past cautions against accepting prevailing conditions without questioning how they developed and why they developed in the way that they did (Booyse *et al*, 2012, p. 19).

Education was not a concept which arrived only with the arrival of the Dutch at the Cape in 1652. It did exist in South Africa, but not in the formalised manner to which society has become accustomed today. According to Booyse *et al* (2012, p. 44) education was “intimately integrated with the social, cultural, artistic, religious and recreational life” of the people who inhabited South Africa. Children were taught about the society and its expectations through a process of socialisation from the older members of the community.

The Dutch began to establish schools from 1663 (Booyse *et al*, 2012). These schools were created mainly for the education of Dutch children in the colony, but the children of slaves were permitted to attend as well. The curriculum taught at the time had a firm emphasis on Christian teachings; this was enforced through careful selection of who was hired to teach. When the British took over at the Cape during the period of 1795 – 1803 (Booyse *et al*, 2012), the education system which was in place remained largely unchanged. When the Dutch took control again, Jacobus Abraham de Mist, along with Governor Jan Willen Janssens, was appointed to the position of High Commissioner (Booyse *et al*, 2012). It was in this position that de Mist decided that there needed to be a more formalised structure created in relation to education. This decision may have been influenced by changes around education which were taking place in the Netherlands at the time. De Mist determined that there was a need for “the introduction of secular schooling that provided mother-tongue instruction, a more modern curriculum extending to secondary education and the professional training of teachers” (Booyse *et al*, p.72). It is evident however, that the education available during the first two hundred years of Dutch and British occupation was heavily premised on

the basis of religious instruction and the ideas which were integral to this concept. A comment by Jan van Riebeeck, made with reference to the schooling which was provided for slaves, said slaves “would be taught to speak, read and write the Dutch language and to learn the Christian prayers and religion” (Booyse *et al*, 2012, p. 83). It is evident that schools for children of the colonisers, children of slaves and slaves themselves were used as a means to instil the social order which was being created through the process of colonisation. Each group was to learn their position within the system and education appeared to be the means through which this idea was imposed. This concept is captured in the statement

Schools and the knowledge taught there is a function of social power and that it reflects the distribution of power and the principles of social control. Socio-political and economic factors determine the education provided in a particular society (Booyse *et al*, 2012, p. 83).

With the arrival of the 1820 Settlers, there was a shift in education which occurred in the areas in which the British took control. Greater emphasis was placed on the establishment of a more secular curriculum; however the religious teaching component remained in place. The Boers who were at this time moving inland to avoid having to live under British occupation had a different education plan in place. As they were on the move, the establishment of a formal school structure was not possible. Parents at this time sought to enforce the strict Calvinist ideals which governed their beliefs into their children’s education. As there were no established schools, parents had to rely on those school masters who were available to teach their children. It is apparent that at this time education was relatively informal and delivered on an ad-hoc basis. This changed when people established settlements and the option to create formalised schools arose. This is evident in the example cited of schools in the Free State area, then referred to as the Orange Free State. Different types of schools with different foci and social stratification were established. There were schools allocated to miners’ and railway workers’ children, schools for children of the poor, schools for children whose parents were employed (it is not stated in what employment, but it is possible to infer these were not working class children), as well as the development of industrial schools and those for infants (Booyse *et al*, 2012). What is clear is that there were two different forms of educational structures which were implemented, dependant on whether a child attended a British ruled and established educational institution or a Dutch and later an Afrikaans one. Each had a unique style and content which informed the curriculum which was taught.

From 1948 onwards, after the enforcement of the apartheid regime, education took on a strictly racially segregated form; as was explained in the opening discussion by van der Berg (2007). During the time period from 1948 – 1994, many events took place in South Africa which influenced and impacted on the ideas which different groups of people held in relation to education. These events included police demonstrations, banning of political parties, June 16 1976, Sharpeville and the decision for South Africa to become a republic, as well as economic complexities. Booyse *et al* (2012, p. 216) comment that “all these and similar events had a marked influence on the opinions people held and the intensifying political tensions in the country. It also led to more radical demands in the sphere of education.”

It was during the apartheid era that the ruling government implemented the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (Booyse *et al*, 2012). This contentious Act was brought into effect after the Eiselen Commission’s report. In this report recommendations essentially gave the grounds for the implementation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. This Act which fundamentally ensured through its implementation that racial segregation between black and white people would be further entrenched in an already deeply fragmented and racially unequal society. Soudien (2012) explains further that through the implementation of this antagonistic Act, there was a move away from the ideas of missionary education and that which was provided for under what was termed Native Education. Under this new education practice, emphasis was placed on teaching black pupils the concept of “ ‘civilised Native gaze’ towards the mainstream of European society, and even intimated the possibility of his or her incorporation into it” (Soudien, 2012, p. 106). Bantu Education, however, introduced an entirely different idea, rather than aiming to ‘civilise’ a people seen as needing to be brought in line with European ideas, this system sought rather to shift the point of “African socialisation, through schools, churches and so on, [...] right out of white society and placed in the confines of a social environment that was unmistakably *Bantu*” (Soudien, 2012, p. 106). Along with the implementation of this Act, were changes to the curriculum which was taught to Black, Indian and Coloured children. These curriculum changes sought to ensure that each racial category was taught what was deemed by the government to be of importance to the group. Prominence was placed on the ‘own culture’ of each group. Language of teaching was also taken into consideration and Black children were advised to be taught in their mother-tongue for the first five years of schooling (to present day grade 5) and thereafter in either English or Afrikaans. Emphasis in the curriculum, as determined by the government, was that it would enforce “obedience, communal loyalty, ethnic and national

diversity, acceptance of allocated social roles, piety and identification with rural culture.” (Soudien, 2012, p. 107). It is noteworthy that the implementation of this curriculum was to ensure that racial segregation and ideas of white racial superiority were firmly instilled in society, by teaching other racial groupings to accept their allocated position in the social strata. It appears that a warped case of “children live what they learn” was being implemented. Msila (2007) captures this perception succinctly, stating, in relation to the implementation of the education system under apartheid,

Bantu Education for black South Africans had been a means of restricting the development of the learner by distorting school knowledge to ensure control over the intellect of learner and teachers and propagating state propaganda [...] The education system had been an obvious instrument of control to protect power and privilege (Msila, 2007, p. 149).

Therefore from the 1990s onwards, as apartheid structures were dismantled and South Africa was on the path to becoming a democratic country, there were intense discussions on how the education system should be radically changed. This saw the process of policy development emerge (Booyse *et al*, 2012).

Since this time South Africa has undergone a number of curriculum changes, as different ideas have been implemented. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) was implemented in 2012 (Ramrathan, 2015). It is curriculum which was in use for the duration of this research during the time period of 2016 to 2018. An important factor in the development of the new curriculum in the early 1990s which was proposed in a document entitled *A curriculum model for education in South Africa: discussion document* (Booyse *et al*, 2012), was that the curriculum development be guided by three main ideas:

- Equal opportunities had to be created for every inhabitant of the country irrespective of race, colour, creed or gender.
- The religious and cultural ways of life of all inhabitants as well as their languages had to be recognised.
- Provision of education had to be directed not only at the needs of the individual and society, but also at satisfying, for example, the demands of economic development.

These guiding ideas elucidate a clear move away from the ideas which the apartheid regime sought to entrench. This is aptly summed up by Booyse *et al* (2012, p. 269) who comment

“the new education system was built on principles mostly dramatically opposite from those which had determined pre-1994 education.”

Education today is governed and controlled through various documents and legislation. Key among these include:

- White Paper on education and training
- The National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996) (NEPA) – this Act set out in law the policy, legislative and monitoring responsibilities of the Minister of Education (note that from 2009 under President Jacob Zuma, the education department was split into two: The Department of Basic Education and The Department of Higher Education and Training (www.en.m.wikipedia.org)).
- The South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) (SASA).
- National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF).
- Early Childhood Development (ECD).

(Soudien, 2012, p. 112 -114).

The current curriculum, CAPS, has the following aims: to equip learners with the necessary skills to actively engage with broader society, to address inequalities in the education system which was inherited from the apartheid policies as well as to teach pupils to critically engage with and question the world around them – rather than learning by rote (www.education.gov.za). In line with the curriculum guidelines schools should be a place for critical engagement and robust debate about topics which are present in society, key among these is that of family and various forms that this is able to take. If the education system has been used in the past to entrench social ideologies, it can be a place to challenge and change dominant narratives too.

From this discussion it is apparent that many changes have taken place in the education system in South Africa. It is noteworthy, that despite the many changes and the aims and ideals which are enshrined in the above mentioned frameworks which inform education in South Africa, there are still many discrepancies in the quality of education which is received at the different types of schools which are found within the country.

2.3.2 Teachers and the Teaching Process

As teachers were participants in this research, it is necessary to explore the manner in which to take into consideration the code which governs this specific job and to which people in this profession are expected to adhere to as they carry out their allocated tasks in the profession.

Currently, The Code for Professional Ethics, governs the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (www.sace.org), and explains among other points that the role of the teacher is to:

- Acknowledge, uphold and promote basic human rights, as embodied in the Constitution of South Africa
- Acknowledge the uniqueness, individuality, and specific needs of each learner, guiding and encouraging each to realise his or her potentialities
- Strive to enable learners to develop a set of values consistent with the fundamental rights contained in the Constitution of South Africa (www.sace.org)

It is apparent that these guidelines are meant to guide a teacher in how they approach the task of teaching and interacting with the children in their classrooms, apart from teaching the curriculum. Msila (2007) explains that within the framework of a school, there is space for teachers to challenge issues within society stating that “schools have a role of either enhancing or challenging socialisation into inequality” (Msila, 2007, p. 147).

The work of Lubbe (2007b) picks up on the discussion about the school environment and its possible reflection on aspects of change in broader society. Lubbe (2007b) in an article focusing specifically on the experiences of children from same-sex families in schools, states that it is the school environment that may “act as an ‘ideal’ context for ascertaining how far a society has progressed in terms of tolerance and acceptance of diversity” (Lubbe, 2007b, p. 45). While this article does not specifically focus on transracially adopted children, the questions which the author raises can be applied to these families as well. A statement like the one above invites the discussion about how teachers are equipped and prepared to enter into conversation about changes that have occurred in society.

Schools perform a dual function of teaching children to read and write and are also places where learning to engage with and question the world occurs. The CAPS curriculum, which is presently implemented within schools, appears to reflect this dual function, stating that it

aims to equip all pupils “with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country” (www.education.gov.za). It is within these specific guidelines that this research has been considered in the school environment.

The work of Msila (2007) takes the discussion about the position of schools in society further, commenting on the important position which schools occupy in society and the manner in which they manage to “occupy an awkward position at the intersection between what people hope society will become and what they think it really is, between political ideal and economic realities” (Msila, 2007, p. 158).

This opens up a space to explore when and how change is implemented as it occurs within the broader society in which schools are located. Stoffels in Weber (2008) reflects that there are two factors which may influence the manner in which teachers operate within their classroom and in turn influence how they engage with the content of the curriculum which they teach. Firstly Stoffels (2008, p. 25) notes “the classroom actions and behaviours of teachers are to a large extent shaped by their thoughts, judgements and decisions.” Secondly it is observed that through the course of studying the process “of teacher thinking and decision making, together with the context in which they operate provides a better understanding of why teachers do what they do in their classrooms” (Stoffels, 2008, p. 25 - 26). These points are important when considering how teachers teach and the manner in which they engage with topics and convey information to the children who they teach. As humans cannot operate in an objective bubble, it is necessary to take into consideration how personal experiences, learning and understanding of a situation may influence how a topic is approached. This is especially important in a classroom situation as teachers are in an influential position and the manner in which they impart a lesson may impact on the thought process of the children whom they teach.

In post-apartheid South Africa, there have been a number of changes in education and teaching styles have changed. During apartheid the method of teaching was based on the idea that students would learn passively, much was learned by rote. The curriculum was prescriptive about what was taught, therefore there was little scope for teachers to creatively engage with the content of what they were teaching (Stoffels, 2008, p. 26). Education practice has now shifted to a more student-centred approach to learning. Pupils are now encouraged to actively engage with the content of what they are learning (Stoffels, 2008). These changes are

necessary to take into consideration in relation to this research, as teachers who have been in the profession for many years have potentially taught under both apartheid rule and democratic rule and would have had to change their teaching styles as education policy and practice changed under vastly different governments.

These changes tie into the above discussion about what influences the teaching style of a teacher, taking the personal aspects of the person into consideration.

De Kock and Slabbert in Weber (2008, p. 110) draw together these two conversations when they note that “teaching, to be good, has to be personal, because we teach who we are.” The personal and the professional aspect of the job cannot be entirely separated; rather they need to be taken into consideration together. There needs to be awareness in teachers how these two elements interact with each other and how in turn this can play out in the classroom situation. The gap to ask how change is implemented in teacher training and curriculum implementation is created at this point. Vandeyar in Weber (2008) discusses change and the manner in which it can be effectively implemented. Vandeyar (2008) cautions that merely changing the curriculum, the way teachers teach and students learn, without making changes to “the teachers, the classroom, the school and the community” (Vandeyar, 2008, p. 113) may not result in change actually taking place. This statement indicates that there is a close tie between what is taught in schools and influences from the greater society in which the school operates.

Vandeyar (2008, p. 113) elaborates on the concept of change and its implementation, noting that “change is a complex process that happens within an organisational ecology and is difficult to achieve [...] change operates at three levels, namely, symbolic, linear and appropriation. Additionally, change is often an expression of political symbolism.”

How teachers can be taught to think and engage differently with the children and the curriculum which they teach will be explored in the literature review section of this research.

2.3.3 Beyond the Curriculum: School as the Place of Identity Formation

Schools are not only places where children go to learn to read and write. Bray *et al* (2010) explain that there is a two-fold process which occurs within the school environment. Firstly, children’s “circumstances, relationships and attitudes at home and in the neighbourhood” (Bray *et al*, 2010, p. 203) impact on the experience of the child at school. The second component which impacts on the experience of a child at school is linked to “social interaction that takes place daily at school, particularly among the peer group, and what is

meant by school-pupil identity are of central importance to young people with respect to their developing personhood, their sense of well-being and their decisions about formal education” (Bray *et al*, 2010, p. 203). This discussion about school and the broader environment and the implications of this interaction is evident in the work of Palacios in Wrobel and Neil (2009), in which the author reflects on the school as a microcosm of the broader environment in which the child lives. This concept of school and identity formation will be explored, as was done in relation to the formation of sense of identity of self within the framework of the family. The reason for this is that, in relation to the transracially adopted child, the language and narrative within the school environment that is constructed around them and their family, can impact on their sense of identity.

The work of Dolby (2000) explores the way in which ideas of race are constructed at a South African high school. This structuring process is explored through identity and the way in which it is labelled in relation, specifically, to how students from different racial categories dress. It highlights the manner in which race and class is read through a variety of different means. These are both aspects that need to be taken into consideration during this research process. The author explains how it was observed that “clothing takes on very specific and charged race and class connotations” (Dolby, 2000, p. 15). Dolby (2000) explained that in the research process it emerged that within the conflicting racial dynamics which were at play in the school, there were also clashes along the lines of class between the pupils. In relation to clothing and the apparent preferences of styles and brands on the basis of race, it was noted that “taste, in tandem with other forces, structures how students define themselves and how they construct racialised others” (Dolby, 2000, p. 17).

For a child who has been transracially adopted, it may be necessary to consider where in this set of ideas they may be positioned by those observing them from the position of an outsider and how they would seek to navigate the position in which they may find themselves within the school context. Peck (1993, p. 89) comments on the use of language and the way that it is used to structure an understanding that “we have to ‘speak through’ the ideologies which are active in our society and which provide us with a means to ‘making sense’ of social relations and our place in them.” Examining this statement in the context of the school environment, it may be possible to see how the language which students employ, in relation to discussions about various aspects of themselves and others, enables them to try to create a sense of who they are in relation to their peers. They may draw on what is familiar within their environment and build a narrative of identity upon this basis.

Steans (2007) in an article exploring solidarity and difference among feminists, noted an aspect which can be applied to the concept of identity in relation to school children, she comments that “since identity is neither stable nor essential, it becomes necessary for social actors to establish a locus of attachment and secure shared meanings in order to stabilise identity” (Steans, 2007, p. 731). For students this could be achieved through the validation of their peers. The peer group becomes that anchor onto which an identity may become attached.

These concepts of identity formation within the confines of the school environment and the manner in which they may reflect or challenge the ideas which are circulated within broader society will be taken into consideration in relation to this research.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

This literature review explores three elements – family, transracial adoption and adopted children in schools. These topics have been explored within the context of the theoretical framework of this research. The phenomenon of transracial adoption in South Africa is unique when compared to countries around the world. In South Africa transracial adoption takes place through the minority racial group, in this instance white people, adopting from the majority black, African population. In the literature review, these topics will be approached from the position of how they exist as foci which previous researchers have explored. These will then be considered in relation to the research which was carried out in this project and its relevance to the broader discussion.

3.1 Adoption

3.1.1 Who Adopts and Why?

The primary focus of this research is not on the motivations which inform people's decision to adopt a child; however, it is necessary to briefly engage with this element as what motivated people to adopt may influence or inform the language that they employ in the context of conversations related to adoption.

Jennings, Mellish, Tasker, Lamb and Golombok (2014) explored the decision to adopt by heterosexual and homosexual couples, while the work of Malm and Welti (2010) looked at reasons which people gave when asked why they had adopted. Farr and Patterson (2009) took the discussion a step further and looked at people who had chosen to adopt transracially and the motivation that was given for this choice. It is perhaps best to start with the work of Potter (2013), as this author opens the discussion about some of the complexities that parent/s who adopt may have to grapple with, during and after the adoption process has been completed.

Potter (2013) explains that adoptive parent/s may have to negotiate some of the following situations:

- the importance placed on a genetic link to a child and therefore that adopted child/ren are a second best option

- adopted children are perceived as being second-best as there is often an absence of genetic history
- due to a lack of biological link to their child/ren, adoptive parents are not 'real' parents.

As this discussion continues to explore the motivations that parent/s have to pursue and complete the adoption process, the above mentioned notions need to be kept in mind. They may either, overtly or covertly, influence external conversations and opinions which are held by the general public in relation to adoption, specifically transracial adoption and the formation of a family through this process.

Farr and Patterson (2009) explain that their research found two different motivation standpoints. The first, they termed "child-centred reasons" (Farr & Patterson, 2009, p. 196). The authors explained that people who cited this motivation provided an explanation that resonated along the lines of "there are many children in need and waiting to be adopted" (Farr & Patterson, 2009, p. 196). It was noted that when motivations of this nature were offered people were more likely to complete the process of interracial adoption. The second explanation which was offered was termed "adult-centred reasons" (Farr & Patterson, 2009, p. 196). Within this motivation framework reasons to adopt included "challenges with infertility" (Farr & Patterson, 2009, p. 196). The authors, however, noted that there were other factors which motivated or impacted on people's decision to complete the adoption process. These factors included: age of parent/s, education levels attained, religious background, whether the parent/s lived in rural or urban environments and the number of children already in the family (Farr & Patterson, 2009,).

The work of Malm and Welte (2010) echoed very similar sentiments to that of Farr and Patterson (2009), as did that of Dance and Farmer (2014). These authors did not use the same terminology as Farr and Patterson (2009) when discussing people's motivation to adopt. They did note that very similar processes existed, namely that of infertility or the desire to make "a difference for a child in need" (Malm & Welte, 2010, p. 188). Malm and Welte (2010) introduced another element into this discussion when they observed that people who had previous experience with adoption either through family or friends who had adopted a child or in the event that the adopting parent was adopted, motivated people to complete the adoption process as well. Implied in this discussion is that exposure to people who have completed the adoption process acts as a motivating factor for those who are considering

adopting a child. This creates the space for the discussion of the importance of adoption support groups and networks. In the event that an adopting person/s had some connection to a particular child, they were more likely to complete the adoption process. It is these elements of motivation to adopt that will be taken into consideration in relation to this research project.

Jennings *et al* (2014) pick up the same threads of motivation as the preceding authors. Their work however, extends to include why homosexual parents complete the adoption process and takes a look at some of the obstacles that need to be considered in the motivation process. These authors explain that until the complexity of infertility is experienced, it is seemingly assumed that a heterosexual couple will be able to conceive a baby and thus create a family. When this is not the case, Jennings *et al* (2014) explain that heterosexual couples have to grapple with the social element that they are considering taking on a child that is not biologically related to them, as well as the complexities of infertility.

Lesbians, according to Jennings *et al* (2014), because they are women, may have considered biological parenthood but may feel that due to their sexual orientation or perhaps infertility, that this is not an option available to them. The authors indicate that for some women, there was the challenge to “overcome their own beliefs that lesbian sexual identity and motherhood were simply incompatible” (Jennings *et al*, 2014, p. 207). In the event that a lesbian woman did consider biological children and was unsuccessful in this pursuit, like the heterosexual couple, she had to come to terms with her inability to conceive a child. However, when the desire for biological children was not at the forefront of the discussion, lesbian women said that adoption seemed like an obvious option for creating a family.

In relation to gay men, Jennings *et al* (2014) explained that gay men who chose to adopt, had to compete with raising children outside of the heteronormative framework as well as contending with possible “sexism for parenting as a male couple or individual subverts of gendered norms of caregiving” (Jennings *et al*, 2014, p. 208).

The discussion about motherhood and the single mother who comes to occupy this position through adoption is picked up by Mannis (2008) and Park (2006). Park (2006) specifically addresses the concept of the maternal body – the one formed through giving birth and the one created through the process of adoption. Park (2006, p. 203) comments that “adoptive mothers have a dual consciousness arising from our first hand experiences of mothering combined with an ongoing and unavoidable awareness of how biological (“natural” or “real”) mothers – and others – perceive us.”

Mannis (2008) specifically explores the motivation of single women who choose to adopt and their experience of this process. Mannis (2008, p. 30) notes that “historically, the single mother has been viewed at best as an encumbrance or as unconventional and at worst as sinful or outside the pale of society.” It would appear that this observation is made in relation to the mother who biologically comes to occupy the position of parent. In the event that a woman has become a parent through adoption, Mannis (2008) notes that the ensuing conversation has a different undertone. The women who formed the basis of the data that was collected for the purpose of Mannis’ (2008) research highlighted four major themes which are explored in detail, namely:

- the morality of raising a child without a father
- how the women handled fears and pressures of society and the ideas of this form of family structure
- how they defined themselves and their needs in the world in which they lived
- how they found support for the family which they had formed

These discussions were contrasted by Mannis (2008) with the preconceived ideas about single mothers, namely that they were single parents due to divorce or death of a spouse, failed birth control, that they are immoral and intentionally conceived a baby out of marriage or that they seek to occupy a position that is anti-male (this sentiment was uttered in the direction of lesbian mothers).

The idea of a single man, either homosexual or heterosexual, adopting alone is one that appears to be a novel concept. The items that have been written on this topic originate predominantly in the United States of America or the United Kingdom (www.abcnews.go.com & Blincoe, 2013). In South Africa, the laws governing adoption permit a person to adopt with the view to becoming a single parent, without specification of the gender of this person, therefore it is possible to adopt as a single man in South Africa (www.adoption.org.za). However, there is a marked absence of literature with a focus on single adoptive fathers. In the event that men are mentioned in adoption literature, it is usually in the context of a committed relationship, either homosexual or heterosexual.

In June, 2016, Friedman wrote an article titled *The joys of fatherhood for the first single black male to adopt a child*. In the article the author wrote about her discussion with the first single,

black man who had successfully adopted a baby. An article of this nature indicates that single men who adopt are rare. In this instance, the adoption was intra-racial in nature.

From the literature available it is evident that within each of the groups of people who choose to adopt, there is a conversation that takes place within the broader society in which these families live.

3.1.2 Transracial Adoption

Farr and Patterson (2009, p. 188) explain the term transracial adoption to mean “the placement of children with a parent or parents of a different race, this usually refers to the domestic or international adoption of racial or ethnic minority children by White parents.” As the focus of this research is on families formed through the process of transracial adoption, it is exclusively this form of adoption which is engaged with.

The work of Ntongana (2014) opens the discussion about transracial adoption in South Africa. Prior to exploring the work of Ntongana (2014), recollection of the discussion of the history of adoption in South Africa and the observations about race and the powerful influence which this concept held in the adoption process is required.

Ntongana (2014, p. unknown) highlights in the current adoption landscape in South Africa, that “priority is therefore given to ‘same race adoption’ as it ‘resembles a natural family.’” This discussion is taken further by Lumka Oliphant (former National Spokesperson for the Department of Social Development) in which she stated that

Adoption social workers first try to place a child within a family of the same race and culture. It is this that makes it almost impossible for a black family to adopt a white child. It is also important to realise that adoption social workers look for families for children and not children for families (Ntongana, 2014, p. unknown).

What is evident in this discussion links into previous discussions around adoption and identity and the notion that culture and identity are instilled in a child when they live within a family unit which resembles that of the assumed culture of the child. This situation is complicated in the South African context. The reason for this is that a large number of the babies who become available for adoption have been abandoned at birth for a variety reasons. The question to be considered in relation to this and the concept of culture and identity of the

child is: “Does anybody actually know which ethnic group and cultural specifications would the abandoned child would have been raised in, in the event that they had remained in the care of their biological parent/s?” This does not mean subscription to an ideology of total erasure of the possible culture of a child, but rather the idea that culture and identity is shaped and taken from within the family structure in which the child is raised. It is necessary for adoptive parents to be sensitive and willing to engage with their transracially or even intra-racially adopted child, about a possible alternative culture and identity they may have had, had the child not been adopted. Parents, however, also need to ensure that the child forms a secure identity within the framework of the family in which they are raised. This discussion speaks to the preceding discussion on the formation of identity, and the opinion that it is socially constructed.

The work of Fenster (2008) straddles both the United States and South Africa, in an exploration of interracial adoption and the shifts that have occurred in the ideas surrounding it. Fenster (2008) explains that after World War II, many Japanese and Korean children were adopted in the United States. By the end of the 1960s and early 1970s in the United States there had been “sweeping changes in society – the legalisation of abortion, increasing availability of birth control, lower levels of fertility, the lessening of the stigma against single motherhood – led to a dramatic decline in the availability of white infants for adoption” (Fenster, 2008, p. 35). The subtle inference here is that white babies were placed for adoption only in the event that their mother would have to raise them as a single parent and that this was not acceptable, until the above changes took place and ideologies in society began to shift. It is worth noting that the adoption of Japanese and Korean infants and children in the years after the war was a form of interracial adoption.

The Civil Rights Movement was at its height at the time that the above mentioned changes took place in the United States. This effectively opened a space for the acceptance of interracial adoption, in this instance the adoption of African-American children by white Americans. However, by 1975, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) began to voice their disapproval of interracial adoption. Their primary concern was that black children placed in white families would lose what was termed as their African-American culture (Fenster, 2008). These positions on transracial adoption lead to a very limited number of interracial adoptions taking place during this time period. In 1994, the discussion around transracial adoption was opened again, but viewed rather as a “last resort placement” for a child, when the only alternative was to remain in institutional care (Fenster, 2008). Tanga and

Nyasha (2017), whose work is South African based, pick up this discussion around transracial adoption and different perceptions thereof, citing the works of Moos and Mwaba (2007) and Gerrand and Motlalepule (2013), and comment

That during apartheid rule, the practice of CRA (cross-racial adoption) was simply illicit as a result of the apartheid government's internationally denounced racial ideology [...] racial prejudice and segregation still play an influential role within the practice of CRA owing to diverse incongruities in societal perceptions of the practice

(Tanga & Nyasha, 2017, p. 231).

The sentiments expressed in this article appear to resonate in certain circles of thinking within present day South Africa; there is a concern about the loss of culture in the event that black children are adopted and raised by white people.

Shortly after the end of apartheid, research was conducted in South Africa surrounding ideas about transracial adoption which was now an option made available to people wishing to create a family through this process of adoption. Those in favour of transracial adoption cited the following reasons:

- seeing race as socially constructed
 - seeing prohibition of interracial adoption as morally indefensible
 - seeing interracial adoption as an alternative to permanent institutional care
 - seeing interracial adoption as a means to counter act the effects of apartheid
- (Fenster, 2008, p. 40)

Those, however, who were opposed to interracial adoption cited these reasons:

- racism is too entrenched in society
 - racial identity would be an issue for the child adopted interracially and that this could lead to psychological problems
 - black and white cultures are too varied to be able to coexist
 - white parents would not be able to effectively convey black culture to their interracially adopted child
- (Fenster, 2008, p. 40)

From this discussion it is evident that ideas around transracial adoption in both the United States and South Africa, across different time periods, echo similar concerns and ideas. These

ideas may still linger in the present day of both these countries and may still influence the discourse which people employ in relation to transracial adoption.

3.1.3 Adoption and Identity

Tied into the discussion around transracial adoption is the corollary of creating a family that will look alike, a family that is able to be perceived as ‘natural’. Within this concept is the idea that the topic of adoption can be kept concealed from the public eye and therefore from public scrutiny. When a parent and child have the same skin colour, it is more likely to be assumed that they are biologically related as well; therefore it is up to the parent/s to determine when the discussion about adoption is raised. This is not always an option afforded to a transracially adopted child and his or her family.

Reflecting on otherness as highlighted in the form of racial commentary, Lind (2011) opens the discussion around identity and origin commenting that:

The non-Swedishness of intercountry adoptees, resulting from acknowledgement of the xenophobia that many adoptees encountered, in turn led to an emphasis on the adoptees’ birth nationalities and cultures. An emphasis on background, however, does not refer only to the child’s connectedness with a cultural context that is non-Swedish. It also serves to emphasize her or his connectedness with a birth family and a past that the child did not share with her or his adoptive family (Lind, 2011, p. 122)

Therefore simply glossing over a topic or omitting it opens a space for further complications to arise. This does not mean that the race of a person needs to be the sole topic of conversation, but rather that it is necessary to take into consideration the power and privileges that are afforded to different races and the possible implications of such ideas which have become affixed to racial classification. Furthermore, ignoring the skin colour of an interracial adopted child is to effectively seek to erase an element of their adoption story, a component of which is vitally important to the adopted child. Smith, Jacobson and Juárez (2011, p. 4) explain in relation to a colour-blind stance that “colour blindness is a learned behaviour of willfully not seeing race when, in actuality, skin colour is one of the first characteristics that individuals see about each other.” In South Africa, this element of difference with regard to skin colour does not necessarily emerge in the same manner as it does in Sweden, due to the minority adopting from the majority population. Lind (2012)

picks up on a discussion, which reflects how ideas in a society are able to be altered and the implication that this can have on those who actually live in that society. Lind (2012) explains that prior to a space being created to acknowledge the origin of the adopted child in Sweden, the stance of colour blindness had been in place.

Within this conversation there is space to acknowledge the conversations which occur in relation to different family structures. It is within this space that ground opens up for the ideas, which people may hold about these families, to take root. Fredericks (2014) gathered together various narratives of people who have adopted transracially in South Africa. Common in each discussion is the willingness of the parent/s to acknowledge that the child whom they have adopted has an origin that is different to their own and that their adoption story forms part of the history that defines the child's identity. Some of these comments reflected similar ideas to those which were put forward by Bowes (2010) and Wolfson (2015) which were explored earlier. The acknowledgement of this sentiment is captured in the comment:

Our boy has always known that he is adopted – it's part of his narrative. Do you remember anyone telling you what your name is? There are some things you just know – and you get on with it. That's his attitude. He knows his parents are not his biological parents, but he also knows that they are his forever parents, who will be there for him no matter what.

(Parent of an adopted child, Fredericks, 2014, p. unknown).

Within each of these conversations is the space to ask how transracially adoptive parents equip their child/ren to negotiate the space in which their story is told. Which words are used and what discourses inform these decisions?

The ideas around race, ethnicity and colour-blindness need to be taken into consideration as they are all elements at play in discussions around adoption. Hübinette and Anderson (2012) pick up the discussion about race and ethnicity in the narratives of interracial adopted children in the Swedish context; a country in which the notion of colour blindness, tolerance and the debate on whether white people should adopt black children is apparently not on the radar.

Tanga and Nysha (2017) in direct reference take the discussion of colour-blindness in the South African context, noted in some of their interviews that this was a position that some transracial adoptive parents had chosen to take. The danger in this position is that an element of whom the adopted child is and the implications of this may create issues in the process of the formation of a cohesive identity. This is discussed in the work of Harris (2014), whose research was based in the United Kingdom. Data was collected from adult transracial adoptees, for the purpose of an article which explored the experiences of adults who had been transracially adopted as infants or young children. In the United Kingdom similar debates around race, culture and identity appear to be present as are seen in South Africa. It is apparent that the common element in each discussion is that the option of total erasure of the child's past or the idea of colour-blindness being employed, does not serve the child's best interests.

There are echoes of sentiments on how to have discussions about interracial adoption in the work of each of the authors who were explored in this section. These will be taken into consideration in relation to the discussion of the data which has been gathered for this research.

3.2 Family

There are a variety of groups of people to whom the term family is applied. In the context of this research single parent/s, same-sex parents and heterosexual parents will be considered. While other forms of family may exist, these fall outside the parameters of this research project. Also considered in this section is how parents discuss adoption with their children and some of the approaches which are taken in this process.

3.2.1 Family Forms

3.2.1.1 Single Parents

Literature in this category comprises mainly of studies of women who have become mothers through adoption, the subtle implication being that parenthood and child rearing are still the domain of women. Park (2006) engages with discussions in relation to the adoptive mother, with regard to the biological experience of child birth and the manner in which the adoptive mother comes to occupy the position of mother, without having given birth. Within this

reflection are the complications of infertility, the idea that giving birth makes a woman a mother and the constant reminder that the child the adoptive mother cares for, came to be hers through a process where many aspects of her life were placed under intense scrutiny and may still be under surveillance from society; especially in the case of a transracial adoption. The work of Mannis (2008) picks up similar threads of this discussion, especially with reference to the woman who adopts as a single parent, however with an emphasis on the obstacles that women who have completed this process are confronted with in the society in which they raise their child/ren.

3.2.1.2 Heterosexual Parents

Earlier writing on adoption presupposed that the couple adopting was white and that the baby they adopted was white as well. This discussion is expanded upon by Finley (2008). Today this family structure through the process of transracial adoption looks different. The adoption itself is made visible.

The reality of living as a transracial family in South Africa, formed through adoption, is reflected upon by various adoptive parents. One couple explained “we will never fit the norm as far as family goes; no matter how normal it may seem to us” (Ntongana, 2014, p. unknown). Captured in this statement is the struggle which was referred to by Jennings *et al* (2014). Bowes (2010) takes the discussion further and brings in an element relating to motivation to adopt and the implication that this could have, even if only on a subconscious level. Bowes (2010) explains that it is not for the parent/s to position themselves in a manner that makes them the ‘rescuer’ of their child, especially within the context of transracial adoption. This element of ‘saving’ is reflected in the work of Roby and Ife (2009) in the exploration of international adoption as a humanitarian action. It was noted by the authors that in many instances in the event of war or natural disaster that children from the affected country are suddenly rendered ‘adoptable’ and are then relocated to other countries. Roby and Ife (2009, p. 665), citing Freundlich (1999), comment “that adoptions being romanticised as ‘international charity’ may in fact be another manifestation of exploitation of poor nations by affluent ones.” This idea in the South African context needs to be cautioned against in relation to the country’s turbulent racial legacy; the adoption of a black child by white parents cannot be seen as a means of ‘atonement’ for apartheid’s racial legacy. The desire to adopt needs to be based on the desire to create a family, not on the desire to ‘save’ a black child from their present situation. This aspect is important to remember in the framework of the

adoption conversation within the family unit, as well as that conversation which may be had in relation to the adoptive family and specifically the transracial adoptive family. The conversation in the family may influence the manner in which the adopted child forms his or her adoption story narrative; it is not for the child to have to bear the ‘guilt’ of gratitude towards their adoptive family for ‘saving’ them from a situation that they may otherwise have found themselves in. This concept of the assumed desire to ‘save’ needs to be remembered when the conversation around transracial adoption is had in broader society. Adoption is not to be seen as an act of charity.

3.2.1.3 Same - Sex Parents

In South Africa, there is no gender or sexual orientation stipulated within the legal parameters of the adoption process (www.adoption.org.za). Lubbe (2007a, p. 256) notes that “in South Africa, in particular, the terms of the new Constitution give gay men and lesbian women permission to advocate their right to establish life partnerships, become eligible to adopt a child, keep custody of their own children in divorce proceedings, and more recently to establish co-parenting.” The reality of this, however, is still slow to change and to reach a point of acceptance in society.

Shelley-Sireci and Ciano-Boyce (2008) discuss becoming a parent as a lesbian in the United States. The authors comment that many of the lesbian parents whom they interviewed had formed families through a biological process, meaning that one of the women in the relationship had through some means given birth to a child. For those who chose to adopt, however, data was scarce, as the focus on lesbian families tends to be on those formed through previous heterosexual relationships. Lubbe (2007a) notes that a similar situation exists in South Africa; there is limited information on lesbian families formed through adoption. Lubbe’s (2007a) work tends to focus rather on lesbian families formed through a biological process. Looking through the Facebook page Adopt Transracial South Africa, it is evident that there are same-sex couples and single people who adopt; however literature on this experience is limited at best and at worst non-existent.

3.2.2 Discussions about Adoption

As part of the focus of this research is on how parent/s equip their transracially adopted child/ren to enter into discussions which may arise in relation to their family unit, it is necessary to explore articles in which this aspect has been probed. The work of Wrobel *et al*

(2008) explores how adoptive parents approach the conversation about adoption with their children, while the work of Gianino, Goldberg and Lewis (2009) looks at how children from same-sex families navigate this conversation in the school environment. The work of Watson, Latter and Bellew (2015) looks at adoption story books and how adoptive parents perceive these books and the adoption conversation which results from these books – what is said and what is omitted – in the discussion with the child/ren.

Wrobel *et al* (2008, p. 54) highlight that “family communication about adoption is a dynamic process that changes over time. Children’s informational needs change as they reach new developmental milestones that allow them to gain different understandings of adoption.” The authors explain that the amount of information that adoptive parents have about their child, will impact on the type of conversation that they are able to have with their child. In this article Wrobel *et al* (2008) look at the way in which the conversation about adoption is had within different family units. Changes in this conversation have occurred as the format of adoption has altered from matched, same-race, heterosexual couples, to the landscape which it inhabits today. Wrobel *et al* (2008) gathered their data for their research using The Family Adoption Communication Model (FAC). The reason that this model is used by the researchers is because the framework is said to “capture the dynamic nature of family systems by accounting for the interconnected relationships of adopted children, adoptive parents, and birth parents” (Wrobel *et al*, 2008, p. 67). This model navigates through three phases, each of which appears to be in accordance with the development of the child/ren and their ability to begin to ask about adoption. The phases are as follows:

- adoptive parents provide children with unsolicited information
- adoptive parents address children’s curiosity by answering children’s questions
- adopted children take control of finding their own information to satisfy their curiosity

(Wrobel *et al*, 2008, p. 69).

In the process of the gathering data for their research, the authors interviewed ten heterosexual families, using this model and discussed the main themes which arose from this process. These will briefly be considered.

Adoptive mothers acted as communication “brokers” (Wrobel *et al*, 2008, p. 77). It was noted that while the model presented a united parent communication, in reality, however, it

was mainly the mother who spoke about adoption to the child. Fathers tended to communicate once the topic of adoption and the foundation for this discussion had been created.

Information vs. emotion – the content of adoptive family communication (Wrobel *et al*, 2008, p. 77). At this point, the child is able to determine how they access, and what they do with the information that they obtain in relation to their adoption story. Children will vacillate between phases II and III, as they grapple with elements of their story.

The effects of information withholding (Wrobel *et al*, 2008, p. 79). This theme referred to information that adoptive parents were actively withholding from their adopted child for different reasons. The potential implications of withholding information from the adopted child, need to be taken into consideration. What reasons are cited for this action and will in the event that this information is discussed with or discovered by the child, how will this conversation be negotiated?

It is evident that there are different factors which determine how adoptive parents choose to navigate through the discussion of adoption with their child. While the research in their articles was done through interviews with heterosexual couples, the discussion about adoption with children can be transferred to both single and same-sex parent/s, taking into consideration the necessary adaptations that may need to be taken so that the conversation becomes specific to the family context of the child and parent involved in the conversation.

The work of Gianino, Goldberg and Lewis (2009) gathered data from teenagers who had been adopted and who lived in family units headed by a same-sex couple. The authors asked the research participants how they discussed their family structure within the framework of their school environment. The results of this research are divided into two main elements – the developmental process of disclosure and family modeling (Gianino *et al*, 2009). These two elements are closely linked and will be explored.

In the developmental processes of disclosure, the researchers noted that the age and current school phase of the child impacted on the responses that they gave to questions about their family. It is likely that children in the South African context would follow similar developmental and disclosure patterns. The work of Lubbe (2008), in which the author interviewed children on how they navigate and narrate stories about their family with same-

sex parents echo similar sentiments to those of the children who participated in the research of Gianino *et al* (2009).

The element of age and school phase was divided into two sub-categories, namely:

- Middle school – a challenging time for disclosure (Gianino *et al*, 2009, p. 214). In this stage, the teenagers interviewed expressed a retrospective reflection on their inability to find the appropriate vocabulary to be able to effectively explain their family structures.
- The continuum of disclosure practices (Gianino *et al*, 2009, p. 215). As the research participants got older, they developed a more advanced form of answering questions and of handling confrontation with regards to their families. These methods included:
 - Unintended disclosure of family structure (Gianino *et al*, 2009, p. 215). This label was used to explain how children in these family structures negotiated their feelings of having their family openly labeled and discussed by strangers in the public domain. There was an element of anxiety expressed as to potential implications that such public “outings” could have on their family and themselves.
 - Disclosure of adoption, non-disclosure of parental sexual orientation (Gianino *et al*, 2009, p. 216). In this case, the participants explained that they were more willing to discuss their adoption status due to the fact that, because they were not of the same race as their parents, it was already public knowledge that they were adopted. The participants, however, explained that they tended not to openly discuss the sexual orientation of their parents or if they did, omitted details of their family structure from conversations.
 - Ask and tell (Gianino *et al*, 2009, p. 217). In this section, the participants explained that they were wary about answering questions about their family. The researchers highlighted how the participants expressed that “they had ‘two moms’ or ‘two dads’ rather than that their parents were gay or lesbian” (Gianino *et al*, 2009, p. 217).

In this instance it would be interesting to observe whether there have been changes in the adoption discourse with regards to labeling family structures and the implications that this labeling process has for all who form a part of the family. Is it up to the family to decide on the label which they choose to use in relation to themselves? It is evident that the teenagers who were interviewed wrestled with the dynamic of labeling and its implications and therefore sought to negotiate their own path in this process. Choosing to use more

heterosexual terms, they distance themselves from using terms which refer to people whose sexual orientation places them in the category of homosexual. In this manner, they are perhaps seeking to try to prevent themselves being labeled in the same manner as their parents and having to then contend with the possible implications of this position in the school environment.

Gianino *et al* (2009) observed that teenagers who were interviewed chose to negotiate these conversations based on the level of trust that existed between the questioner and the teenager. There appeared to exist an element of fear of being labeled as homosexual themselves and the complexity that this can create for a teenager and lastly by a desire to fit in and not to be explaining constantly that your family does not fit the imagined, idyllic 'norm'.

Family Modeling, according to Gianino *et al* (2009), is a method used to discuss family structure which is comprised of two parts. The first part is how the parents discussed adoption and the child's adoption with them; the second part comprises the conversation about having gay or lesbian parents. These two conversations interlink, as the way in which the child came to be adopted and the family structure in which he or she is raised, become entangled in the conversation process or as reflected above, become points around which the child learns to negotiate the conversation.

Life story books is the term applied to books which children who are adopted sometimes arrive with. Contained in these books is, the story of how they became eligible for adoption, what they are able to do and possibly a schedule or list of things that specifically relate to the child e.g. needs a dummy to go to sleep. Watson, Latter and Bellew (2015) interviewed adoptive parents and asked them about how they used this book in the process of talking to their child about their story. It was noted that the authors received comments ranging from parents finding the books well put together and useful, to others who said they were badly compiled, were not usable or that they were not comfortable with discussing some of the 'darker' elements of their child's story which were contained in the book. As reflected in the work of Wrobel *et al*, 2008 there was also an element of withholding of information about the child. Oke *et al* (2015), in work conducted in India on intra-racial adoption, comment on the issue of the withholding of information and the need for support services in this process. Some parents require guidance as to how to have this conversation with their children.

Evident in this research is that there are conversations which arise in relation to transracially adopted children and when they are raised in same-sex households, there is a further component to this conversation beyond “Why aren’t you the same race as your parents?”

3.3 Schools

As schools form a site for data collection, as well as the focus for questions which will be asked of adoptive parents, it is necessary to explore the literature which has been written about various aspects of this topic. This discussion will explore two aspects which fall under the heading of school. The first will look at how adopted children navigate their way through the school system and how they construct their story in this environment. The second aspect to be explored relates to the manner in which teachers are taught to teach and changes which have taken place or programmes which have been implemented with the aim of educating and raising conscious levels of teachers, particularly around the concept of race. This section will be explored using articles which were based in both the United States of America and South Africa. There are some notable differences in the programmes of consciousness raising which were implemented in each of these countries. These differences and experiences in other countries could be drawn upon in the future for the development of more advanced programmes in South Africa; programmes which are necessary to move conversations and ideas along.

3.3.1 Teaching the Teacher

In South Africa the place and manner in which teachers have been taught and trained in their profession has changed since the 1994. Robinson and McMilan (2006) note that there has been a shift from teachers being trained specifically at teacher training colleges to having many of these colleges incorporated into universities. Many teachers are now learning their profession in this environment either through a Bachelor of Education Degree or a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) which is done on completion of a three year undergraduate degree. The authors make note of the following differences between the old model of teacher training and that which is currently in practice. Teachers trained at teacher training colleges “have been associated with the preparation of a practically skilled teacher who was competent in the classroom, on the sports-field and with cultural extra-murals”

(Robinson & McMilan, 2006, p. 8) while those who are now trained at universities are assumed to be trained in a less practical manner and rather emphasis is placed on “intellectual preparation” (Robinson & McMilan, 2006, p. 8). This distinction in training is observed by the authors to be somewhat simplistic, and they argue that merit from both forms of training need to be taken into consideration. In the context of this research it is important to consider how the different teachers may have been trained, dependent on their age. Those with many years of experience are more likely to have attended a teachers’ training college, while the younger, less experienced teachers may have come through the university system. These different learning processes may impact on how they engage with pupils in their classrooms. The above aspects as well the analysis of the types of curriculum content and manner of implementation, under apartheid and post-1994, which was explored in the theoretical framework and discussed by Stoffels in the work of Weber (2008) will be considered in the analysis process.

In order to become a teacher, training in the profession is required. This poses the question who teaches the teachers and how is this done? Specifically in relation to raising white teachers’ consciousness levels to the idea of white privilege and the position which they hold because of their skin tone. Cochrain-Smith (2000) in an article based on American research, explained how she developed and continually changed an academic programme, in one component of which, student-teachers need to acknowledge and come to a realisation about their thinking and understanding of race and how this in turn could or would impact on their teaching profession. Cochrain-Smith (2000) pondered various points in the development of the course

Under what conditions is it possible to examine, expand and alter long-standing (and often implicit) assumptions, attitudes, beliefs and practices about schools, teaching, students and communities? What roles do collaboration, inquiry, self-examination and story play in learning of this kind? As teacher educators, what should we say about race and racism, what should we have our students read and write? What should we tell them about who can teach whom, who can speak for whom and who has the right to speak at all about racism and teaching? (Cochrain-Smith, 2000, p. 159).

Cochrain-Smith (2000) sought to challenge the norm of what was taught in student-teacher training. The author questioned and suggested that material which was taught to student-teachers be read from a racial perspective. In this manner the content of what was overtly

taught and covertly implied in material, needed to be challenged given the society in which the student-teachers would teach in, and in which they would encounter students from various racial groups. The material, which these student-teachers were taught could influence the manner in which they tackled their teaching tasks. Cochrain-Smith (2000) aimed to disrupt and challenge the student-teachers thinking around race and racism. This was an aspect on which many were not initially keen to be challenged, as the course content made them uncomfortable and forced them to enter a space of self-reflection.

In South Africa a slightly different programme was implemented in the student-teacher programme at the University of Pretoria over a five year period. de Kock and Slabbert in Weber (2008) explain that this programme was created on the basis of the idea that

educational change has to be integrated into the theory of teacher education and teacher professional development. For successful educational change to occur, student-teachers need to extend their current belief systems to include novel educational practices, a process that is best motivated by personal transformation (de Kock & Slabbert, 2008, p. 95).

Unlike the programme discussed by Cochrain-Smith (2000), which explicitly explored race and racism in teaching, the programme at the University of Pretoria, was focused rather on self-reflection on the part of the student. These students were taken away from the university for a five day period, during which time they were expected to perform intense self-reflection. For the duration of the year in which they were studying this group of students was expected to complete various assignments, the purpose of which was to make the student-teacher “dig deep into him/herself to expose his/her true identity” (de Kock & Slabbert, 2008, p. 98). It was believed that in the process of completing the assignments, that the students would come into “conflict between what self wants to be and what the self really is” (de Kock & Slabbert, 2008, p. 98). It was through this process that those teaching the course hoped to bring the students to a level of consciousness that challenged their pre-existing beliefs; the exact nature of which was not expressed, which might impact on the manner in which they taught in a classroom.

At the end of the year students reflected back on their overall experience during the course. Comparisons between reflections written at the start of the year and those written at the end of the year, indicated that there had been a shift and growth in the thought processes of the students. It is important to note, however, that there is no mention made of race or pre-

existing ideas which students may hold about race, which in turn could impact on the manner in which they teach. It is however, interesting that the authors drew the following conclusion at the end of their study, in which the challenges which were presented to the students implied that the aspect of race was considered. de Kock and Slabbert (2008) explain

In a country with diverse peoples and cultures, with a legacy of fragmentation, prejudice and discrimination, where people are confronted with the reality of deep change, a process of transformation is needed to create a new wholeness, a community of truth and a consciousness of the necessity of interdependence and connectedness (de Kock and Slabbert, 2008, p. 110).

While there are valid truths in the above statement, the hesitancy to engage with race and racism head-on and to label it accordingly allows students to gloss over concepts and in a sense avoid calling “a spade a spade” and deal with the uncomfortable and gritty aspects of the history of South Africa and the lasting legacy which it has left. This manner of speech leans towards the rainbow nation ideology; one that in theory was lovely and idyllic, but in reality proves problematic and which needs to be challenged with honest conversation.

This creates a gap to query, then how the concepts of race and racism could be more effectively addressed, specifically in relation to student-teachers.

Tatum (1992) in American based literature, sought to address this problem through the implementation of a programme; a “course on the psychology of racism and an application of racial identity development theory” (Tatum, 1992, p. 1). Tatum (1992) realised that her students were reluctant and experienced a sense of discomfort when they were made to discuss issues around race and racism. The author noted that this was linked to the fact that these topics elicited emotional responses in the students; emotions and academia seem to be concepts divorced from one another. Tatum (1992) structured the course to run on a weekly basis and rules and guidelines as to expectations of and from the students were established. This form of contract was necessary due to the deeply emotional work which would be done during the course.

Tatum (1992, p. 18) established four strategies which were put in place to assist the students during their learning process. These included:

- The creation of a safe classroom atmosphere by establishing clear guidelines for discussion

- The creation of opportunities for self-generated knowledge
- The provision of an appropriate developmental model that students could use as a framework for understanding their own process
- The exploration of strategies to empower students as change agents

Students communicated with Tatum (1992) via journal entries and letters. In this way what they were thinking, feeling and processing through the duration of the course was made known. It is evident from the students' communications that there were aspects which they found immensely challenging and others which they found rewarding; strong emotions were clearly conveyed in the communications. In comparison to the programme discussed by de Kock and Slabbert (2008) in the South African context, it appears that the work of Tatum (1992) engaged more effectively with the issues of race and racism in the student learning context. Topics were labeled and addressed accordingly, in this manner challenging the extant vocabulary and implications thereof and making the students aware of how these terms made them feel. Tatum (1992, p. 2) perceived that "when students are given the opportunity to explore race-related material in a classroom where both their affective and intellectual responses are acknowledged and addressed, their level of understanding is greatly enhanced."

Having taken into consideration different ways in which student-teachers are taught, with the hope that they will be sufficiently equipped and self-aware to handle race diversity and complicated conversation about race and racism in the classroom, a space for engagement with the language which is used by teachers to discuss such topics, the use of a colour-blind positionality and how the concept of race is actually handled in reality is created.

3.3.2 Language, Integration and a Colour-Blind Stance

As schools in South Africa have become places of racial integration, new dynamics have emerged. Soudien (2012, p. 127) writes on this topic, raising awareness that "we forget, or perhaps are forced to forget, that what we speak and even how we speak – the ways in which we characterise fields of knowledge and the ways in which we define objects within these fields – have a direct bearing on the arena of social and political practice." Studies on the integration process in South African schools have found that there are three possible routes which such communication may take. The first is the idea that race is a social construction. From this stance people are able to assume the position that race is merely constructed and

therefore that it is unnecessary to actively engage with its implications. In relation to this and a critique of this position, Naidoo in Soudien (2012, p. 136) explains that for integration to take place it “requires fundamental changes in...personal attitudes and behaviour patterns among learners and teachers of minority and majority groups.” This aspect of change is interlinked with the language which is used in subsequent discussions. If a simplistic approach to language is held, those holding it will not see the need to actively change in order for integration to actually occur.

The second is assimilation (Soudien, 2012). This approach “values, traditions and customs of the dominant group frame the social and cultural context of the school. Everything in the school [...] is measured in relation to the dominant” (Soudien, 2012, p. 136). The danger of this approach is that all those who are not part of the majority are expected to give up aspects of themselves that do not match or conform to the dominant expectation. In a school context, where identities are forming, this is dangerous. Soudien (2012, p. 137) cautions that “processes of self-othering ensue with consequences for how young people relate to their pasts, their affiliations, their values and the assessments they make of themselves.”

The final option for integration is multiculturalism, a process found predominantly in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. In this position schools seek to acknowledge “all cultures were equally valid and had to be respected in the school context” (Soudien, 2012, p. 137). This positionality, however, allows people to acknowledge that different cultures exist, but negates a space to actively engage with how it is that cultures and different groups of people speak about and develop ideas about each other. Soudien (2012, p. 137) explains “while cultures are celebrated, the processes through which those cultures are delineated and then rank-ordered never come into view.”

Research indicates, according to Soudien (2012) that the most commonly espoused position for integration in South Africa is that of assimilation. This needs to be taken into consideration in the data analysis process of this research, as it may assist to explain possible responses which were gathered in the interview process.

How teachers engage with race was explored by Case and Hemmings (2005). In this work the authors explored how White student-teachers in America, during a course which aimed to address “both the personal and institutional nature of racism in the schooling context” (Case & Hemmings, 2005, p. 606), engaged in distancing techniques in order to avoid having to confront course content head-on. The research for this article takes note of the work

conducted by Tatum (1992). The authors are of the opinion, like Tatum (1992), that “in the absence of an antiracist curriculum, White teachers will continue to participate in the perpetuation of an educational system that reinforces White privilege and domination at the expense of people of colour” (Case & Hemmings, 2005, p. 607). It was noted that the White student-teachers distanced themselves from uncomfortable antiracist course content by employing various tactics. The option of silence (Case & Hemming, 2005), both in the classroom and within the social setting was noted. By using this tactic, White student-teachers did not engage in class discussions. When silence was used in social settings, the student teachers were challenged to voice what they had learned in their course on racism and thus call out those who were invoking racist conversations. In taking a silent position, these students avoided confrontation and further discomfort; rather they kept the discomfort at an internal level.

The use of social disassociation (Case & Hemmings, 2005) was another avoidance strategy employed by White student-teachers. In using this distancing method, students sought “to disassociate from the socially unacceptable label racist” (Case & Hemmings, 2005, p. 615) and instead embraced terms in which they were able to position themselves as being “tolerant of cultural differences and colour-blind in their social interactions” (Case & Hemmings, 2005, p. 615). Within the course, White student-teachers were brought to an awareness of the actual implications of their colour-blind position when it was explained to them that in taking this position they were stating that they were “blind to the fact that White racism is institutionalised and that there is a visible social hierarchy that privileges White people” (Case & Hemmings, 2005, p. 618). Bell (2002) also focuses on the idea of colour-blindness and its use. Bell (2002, p. 238) explains this “ideology is appealing because it appears to support the ideals of a non-racist society,” instead it creates the space for white privilege to be ignored and thus further entrenched within the society in which it is already deeply embedded. Other tactics of distancing included placing racism in the position of an event that has occurred and not one which is happening currently. Also used was the concept of victim blaming (Case & Hemming, 2005), in which the onus for the current situation was placed squarely on the shoulders of the people it affected; in this instance predominantly people of colour. The idea of reverse discrimination (Case & Hemming, 2005) was also raised.

During this course, those running it began to recognise the “distance tactics” which the White student-teachers were employing and why they were using these tactics. Case & Hemmings (2005), taking a note from the work of bell hooks in which the author cautions against

omitting men from conversations about feminism, sought ways in which to effectively engage White student-teachers. It was explained that what was presented by the silence of the White student-teachers could be explained through “what can be characterised as a metadialogic approach” (Case & Hemmings, 2005, p. 623). Using this approach may allow teachers of these students to “expose and address the discursive catalysts for White distancing” (Case & Hemmings, 2005, p. 623). Essentially this approach “aims to make implicit norms of White talk and White racial ideology explicit” (Case & Hemmings, 2005, p. 623). From this point instructors may be able to assist White students to use language effectively and to engage in conversation about race, rather than retreating into silence. The course concluded with a reminder to students that language is a powerful tool, it is through its use that ideas and prejudices are either debunked or further perpetuated (Case & Hemmings, 2005). The contents of this article and the strategies employed in the teaching process could be considered of value in the South African context. The position of silence and deflections used have been taken into consideration in the data analysis section of this research.

Having explored the implication and use of the position of colour-blindness and silence about race in the discourse of White student-teachers in the United States, the question which needs to be considered then is how White teachers can be taught then to disrupt their whiteness and how student-teachers can be prepared to teacher classes where many racial groups are represented.

Preparation, or perhaps, the under preparation of student-teachers in America, to teach in racially diverse schools was explored by Sleeter (2001). It was again noted that the position of colour-blindness was drawn upon, in order to deflect “fear and ignorance” (Sleeter, 2001, p. 95) on the part of White student-teachers. What Sleeter (2001) discovered during the research process was that there is little research which has been conducted on how what student-teachers are taught about race actually transfers into reality in the classroom situation. It was made evident that students did not have a particularly good comprehension of the implications of institutional racism and how this could impact on their teaching experience (Sleeter, 2001). Sleeter (2001) took note of work done by Cochran-Smith (1991) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992), in these works it was noted that it was important for student-teachers to be able to speak to teachers and other student-teachers about the reality of actually teaching in a classroom and being confronted by students from different racial groups. This gave the students an opportunity to “ask more complicated questions, examine themselves more deeply and to question how schools responded to student diversity” (Sleeter,

2001, p.101). Sleeter (2001) concluded that more research needs to be conducted to determine how and if what student-teachers are being taught is able to be effectively transferred into the classroom once they have graduated and become teachers.

The works of Johnson (2002), Solomon, Portelli, Daniel and Campbell (2005) and Chubbuck (2004) explore various aspects of whiteness in teacher discourse and how these are either challenged or further entrenched through the language of the teachers concerned. Solomon *et al* (2005), in a Canadian based study, explored the reactions of White teachers to the work of Peggy McIntosh in relation to the exploration of white privilege and the concept of whiteness in the context of their jobs as teachers. Evident in this study were similar findings to those of Case and Hemmings (2005), Sleeter (2001) and Soudien (2012). White teachers were quick to retreat to positions of colour-blindness. The authors found that “continued investment in liberalism amongst teachers and teacher candidates and of them entering the classrooms apart and separate from their ideological moorings and historical underpinnings, serves to reinforce technologies of marginalisation and exclusion” (Solomon *et al*, 2005, p. 150).

The exploration of racial awareness was done in the work of Johnson (2002). In this work white teachers were nominated to participate in the research on the basis that they were perceived to be racially aware. Johnson (2002) posed these questions in the research process:

How do white teachers learn to go beyond the colour-blind approach and “see” race?
What experiences in childhood and adolescence shape their views? What is the influence of their professional education? How does awareness of race influence their personal identities as teachers and their views of classroom practices? (Johnson, 2002, p. 154).

Data was gathered through the process of a series of recorded interviews in which the teachers discussed various aspects which linked to the questions Johnson (2001) had initially posed. At the end of the research Johnson (2001) determined that in order for there to be effective change in the thinking process and eventually the actions of White teachers, it is necessary not only for them to be made to engage with the story which brought them to the point at which they are currently thinking, but that they also need then, to be challenged to “critique their complicity in maintaining racial privilege” (Johnson, 2001, p. 164).

The work of Chubbuck (2004) echoed similar sentiments to that of Johnson (2001). Chubbuck (2004) however, followed two teachers in their teaching process, taking note of

ways in which they both disrupted and maintained whiteness. Chubbuck's (2004) research was based on three theories:

- To explore how these teachers' beliefs about race developed in the context of their life histories
 - To examine the ways in which their pedagogy and policy were or were not congruent with those beliefs
 - To analyse the complexity of the enactment / disruption of Whiteness
- (Chubbuck, 2004, p. 302).

Chubbuck (2004) discovered that despite the awareness of Whiteness which the participants had been selected upon, at the end of the process in order for whiteness to be truly disrupted, this disruption needs to extend beyond the individual. This disruption needed to be maintained and held accountable by external elements. Chubbuck (2004) concluded that within the teaching profession with regards to whiteness and its disruption there needed to be "scrutiny, honesty and accountability" (Chubbuck, 2004, p. 330). Such aspects which are noted to be rare.

3.3.3. School and the Adoption Discussion

The work of Gianino *et al* (2009) which was discussed previously, took the conversation further when they asked more questions of their teenage research participants. It is important to note that Gianino *et al* (2009) noted that there existed an extensive body of work on the parental experiences of interracial adoptive, same-sex families but that there was a limited body of work on the experience of the children who had been adopted into these family units. This can possibly be attributed to stringent ethical considerations that need to be taken into account when the participants in a research project are still minors.

Some of the participants who were interviewed by Gianino *et al* (2009, p. 221) explained that they had been "introduced to books about family diversity in early childhood dealing with adoption and gay – or lesbian – parented family forms, which helped them to develop the language to understand and ultimately talk about their families." From their research, Gianino *et al* (2009, p. 224) concluded "as diverse families are increasingly represented in schools, teachers and school personnel need to be proactive in creating and maintaining safe and affirming school environments by learning the skills essential to addressing homophobia,

heterosexism and racism.” The research for this particular article was conducted in the United States of America, but it is possible that the same conversation needs to take place in the South African school context, with the addition of a discussion around race.

Watson, Latter and Bellew (2015) in their discussion with adoptive parents about their child’s life story book noted the following in relation to schools and adoption and the manner in which it is approached: one parent highlighted an experience in which her child took their (gender of the child not stipulated) life story book to school and the response of the teachers who saw it was considered inappropriate – aspects of the story, which are sensitive, became general conversation over tea. In another instance a parent had created a child friendly life story book for his child, which the child took to school as part of his show and tell. The father commented that he had prepared the teacher in advance so that the teacher knew how to handle the situation. What is evident in this discussion, is that life story books need to be handled with care and those who are shown them need to handle themselves in an appropriate manner, even when the content may make them emotional. Watson *et al* (2015, p.131) noted “that there is an important role for schools in supporting adopted children to have appropriate discussions about their adoptive histories in school (if relevant) and this requires school staff having better skills and knowledge of adoption generally and life story books in particular.”

Exploration of how the school environment fits into the broader experience of the child and his or her family is undertaken in the work of Palacios (2009). Palacios, in Wrobel and Neil (2009), looks at the family that is created through adoption from the perspective of an ecosystem and the different levels of interaction which take place within the system. Palacios explains the ecosystem as follows:

- The microsystem – the immediate environment in which the child interacts, this includes interactions with peers, family and school (Palacios, 2009)
- The mesosystem – this is explained as “the relations among two or more settings in which the developing person becomes an active participant” (Palacios, 2009, p. 79). These settings take into consideration the adopted child adjusting from living in one environment to living in another – from the institution to the family for example.
- The exosystem – this system is explained as “a setting that does not ordinarily contain the developing person, but in which events occur that influence processes within the immediate setting that does contain the person” (Palacios, 2009, p. 81). This system

can include other family members with whom the adoptive family has contact; in this instance, what is said in this environment can impact the child and family,

- The macrosystem – this last system is described as one which overarches all of the others. It is changes within this system that will impact and influence changes and ideas within all of the others (Palacious, 2009).

Palacious (2009) reminds us that there is little known about the school experience of adopted children and what is known tends to be based on outcomes of academic performance in comparison to their non-adopted peers.

The work of Dalen (2008) serves to highlight the point made by Palacious (2009) and speaks to the rationale which informed this research project. There is information on the school performance of children who have been adopted, but there is limited conversation about the discourse which takes place about adoption and adopted children within the school environment.

Studies of school performance of interracial and intercountry adopted children in Norway were conducted by Dalen (2008). Children in this study had been adopted from Korea and Columbia. It was found that adopted children performed less successfully than their Norwegian born counterparts. It is important to note that despite this research being focused on the academic performance of adopted children and biological citizens of a country, there is the need to acknowledge not only that adopted children may perform less successfully, but why it is that they may perform in this manner. It is also vital to bear in mind that this is not always the case in relation to academic performance of adopted children. Dalen (2008) thus concludes on the basis of this information that

Adopted children might be susceptible to developing learning difficulties not only because of their particular start in life, but also because of the change of language and culture experienced by all of them. Parents and educators need to acquire greater understanding and more professional insight into the special learning difficulties of these children in order to provide them with a secure foundation for further opportunities of education and subsequent choice of career

(Dalen, 2008, p. 54 – 55).

Data was gathered in the United States by Taymen *et al* (2008), which focused on educators and others involved in the school environment and their perceptions about adopted children.

It was noted that research supports the idea that early developmental issues and possible adjustment obstacles can impact on the school performance of the adopted child, thus resulting in them requiring some form of intervention (Taymen *et al*, 2008). The authors, however, also highlighted that as adoptive parents are aware that there may be learning obstacles and issues relating to the early life of their adopted child, they may be more willing to seek out assistance for their child. This in turn will lead to a disproportionately high number of adopted children found in intervention therapy. This is an aspect that needs to be borne in mind by those who work with adopted children in a school environment.

A key aspect that was brought to light by Taymen *et al* (2008, p. 26) was that there “is little known information about professionals’ perceptions of working with adopted children and their families. Educational professionals’ knowledge, beliefs and attitudes may reflect the range of possibilities present in our society as a whole.” Further highlighting the validity of this research.

The work of Palacious (2009) effectively draws this discussion to a conclusion as the author states:

very few research projects on adoption can be identified as simultaneously taking into consideration person-process-context-time in the analysis of the adoptive family microsystem. The few existing studies show the viability and the interest of this approach. Critical areas have not been empirically explored from this perspective. And we know even less about what happens to the adopted child in the school microsystem

(Palacious, 2009, p. 75).

It is within this gap that this research takes its position.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Methodological Approach

The methodology for this research is qualitative. The researcher has taken a social constructionist ontological and epistemological position towards the data which was collected for the purpose of this research project. A qualitative approach, according to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006, p. 47) allows the researcher “to study selected issues in depth, openness and detail as they identify and attempt to understand the categories of information that emerge from the data.” By taking a social constructionist position towards this research, the researcher subscribes to the idea that “the human life-world is fundamentally constituted in language and that language itself should therefore be the object of study” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p. 278). Social constructionism is able to trace its origins back to the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, who explained that there is a distinct differentiation between “*langue*” (the system of language) and “*parole*” (the language use in actual situations) (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p. 279). The data which was collected for the purpose of this research project was collected through the process of semi-structured interviews; therefore social constructionism is an appropriate approach to subscribe to.

In relation to story-telling and the formation of narratives Fay (1996) ponders

Are stories lived or merely told? The best response to this question is to attack the false dichotomy it presumes: either lived or told. Stories are lived because human activity is inherently narrational in character and form: in acting we knit ‘the past and the future together’ (Fay, 1996, p. 197).

Fay (1996) instead proposes, rather than stories being either told or lived, that “our lives are enstoried and our stories are enlived” (Fay, 1996, p. 197). The researcher has taken the framework of critical diversity literacies and the idea of ‘enstoried’ and ‘enlived’ stories into consideration in the analysis process. In this process what was highlighted, what was silenced and what influenced the language choice and discourse which was generated by parents and teachers, was taken into consideration. The question being considered, how do we tell stories? How do we construct the narrative we decide to tell?

4.2 Data Collection

4.2.1 Sites of Research

The data for this research was gathered from two sources: transracially adoptive parents and from teachers at four independent primary schools who currently (in 2017 when interviews were conducted) or have recently (in 2016) taught transracially adopted children. Parent/s were interviewed at locations which were convenient to them; mainly they were interviewed at their homes or coffee shops. Teachers were interviewed at their respective schools. All of the interviews were conducted in Johannesburg as this was the area in which the researcher chose to conduct this research project.

4.2.2 Sources

Parents (heterosexual, same-sex and single) of transracially adopted children were gathered through the process of online snow-balling via Facebook. The technique of snow-balling was used as it allows the researcher to gather “research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other actors” (Atkinson & Flint, 2004, p. unknown). This method, through the placement of a letter of invitation to participate in the research on Adoption Facebook groups, allowed the researcher access to a large group of people who shared the commonality of having adopted transracially without having to actually go out into the field and source participants based on a predetermined set of criteria. The National Adoption Coalition of South Africa agreed to post the request for interview participants on their Facebook page and from here parents contacted me directly. Some of the parents tagged other parents in the post and these parents made contact with me as well. The post was also shared on other Adoption Facebook groups, by the administrators of these groups. A total of eleven interviews with parents were conducted. Nine interviews were with just one parent either because only one parent had made contact and was willing to participate in the interview or because the participant was a single parent; at two interviews both parents were present.

The tables below indicate the ages of parent/s at the time of adoption and at then at the time which the interview was conducted.

Parent/s ages at the time of adoption (age in years)

20 – 29	30 -39	40 – 49	50+
2	6	2	1

Parent/s ages at the time of the interview (age in years)

20 - 29	30 – 39	40 - 49	50+
0	1	8	2

Of the 11 interviews conducted, three sets of parents are part of a heterosexual relationship, two sets of parents were divorced, in one instance the mother is the primary custodian of the child and in the other the father is the primary guardian. In one family the mother was the adoptive parent as she had completed the adoption process prior to getting married and due to the complexities and extensive time needed to process paperwork around adoption currently in South Africa, her husband has not applied to adopt the children. One family group had two fathers and another two mothers. Three families were headed by single mothers. At the start of the interview the participants were asked to complete a form providing basic information about themselves. The participants were asked to provide a brief description of their family unit. It is this choice of words and ‘labels’ which will be used in this research, when reference to specific participant/s is made. The decision to provide the participants with the space to define their family unit in their own terms was given so as not to enforce prescribed terminology on the participants, but rather to allow them to decide on the description which they would choose. For more general discussions and for consideration of acceptable use of terminology to use in reference to people who do not identify as heterosexual, the GLAAD website was consulted. Information gained from *An Ally’s Guide to Terminology: Talking about LGBT People & Equality* (www.glaad.org) and the preferred terminologies have been used in this research.

The transracially adopted children were not involved in this research, due to ethical considerations of working with minor children. At the time of placement in their adoptive families the children ranged in age from two days to less than 12 months old. Ten of the children were adopted under the age of six months and just three over this age, but under a year of age. Two of the families had a biological child first and then adopted a baby. One

parent had a step-child and his adopted child. Only two of the families interviewed had adopted two children. Of the children adopted, eight were girls and five were boys. The children attended both government and private schools. At the time of the research interviews being conducted, in 2017, the children ranged in age from four to 16 years old. They therefore ranged from grade 000 to grade 10 in the school system.

A total of seventeen schools were approached before the four which were selected for the purpose of this research were finalised. Initially the researcher sought to have two government schools and two independent schools; a high school and primary school of each, as the sources for teachers to participate in the research. The reality of this proved to be complicated and eventually four independent primary schools were selected. Three of these schools were co-educational and one an all-boys school. All were English-medium of instruction schools and were racially integrated. The schools were established between the early 1900s and the 2000s; a time period during which many changes took place in South Africa and its education system. Many governmental changes occurred within the country during this time as well. These aspects will be taken into consideration in the process of data analysis. Exploration of these topics has been covered in both the theoretical framework and literature review chapters.

Each of the seventeen schools which was approached was initially approached by the researcher in person. The nature of the research was explained and a contact person provided to whom further details could be sent. Four of the schools did not respond to the emails sent to them, four schools did not have families which matched the criteria needed for the research and one school was unable to accommodate any further research candidates as they were already involved in another research project at the time. The remaining schools either required documents (for example an ethics clearance certificate from the university, which was only available after submission of the proposal) from the researcher which were unavailable at the time or were unwilling to participate in the research. The schools which were unwilling to participate did not provide reasons for this. In the event that government schools had been willing to participate in the research, it would have been necessary to apply to the Department of Basic Education for the research to have been conducted. This was an aspect explored and known by the researcher. As the schools which participated were independent, application to the Department of Basic Education was not required. For three of the schools, permission was granted by the principals and from the fourth permission was granted by both the principal and the overall management board of the schools as a collective.

The four schools which did participate were interested in the research and the teachers were willing to participate. The researcher met with three of the schools' principals; at one school a Head of Department liaised with the principal. As per ethical requirements, letters from each school stating their willingness to participate in the research and containing any requirements which they stipulated, were collected and were submitted with the proposal to the university Ethics committee. The participating schools were given a copy of the ethics clearance certificate for this research. A copy of the proposal was made available to the schools on request.

Interviews were conducted at the schools at times which were convenient for the teachers. A total of ten teachers took part in the interviews. Of the ten teachers interviewed, nine were female and one was male. The teachers ranged in age from early 20s to 59 yrs (one teacher 20 – 29yrs, five teachers 30 - 39 yrs, one teacher 40 - 49yrs and three teachers 50 – 59 yrs). The number of years in the teaching profession ranged from three to 32 years. The teachers are all teaching at primary schools and therefore teach children from grade 1 to grade 7, dependent on their chosen area of teaching focus. The subjects taught were across the teaching curriculum. In the event that teachers taught from grade 4 to 7, it was usually the transracially adopted child's register class teacher who participated in the research as they tended to know the child particularly well.

The decision to conduct the research through interviews, rather than through questionnaire was to allow for an in-depth exploration of the topic under consideration and because this method of data collection aligns with the qualitative and social constructionist stance from which this research has been conducted. Newton (2010, p. unknown) explains that “the decision to interview implies a value on personal language as data. Face-to-face interviewing may be appropriate where depth of meaning is important and the research is primarily focused on gaining insight and understanding.”

4.2.3 Sample

The sample of participants for this research can be divided into two groups: transracially adoptive parents and teachers. The interviews which were conducted with the purpose of data collection for this research, have been considered in relation to each other, with the aim of highlighting gaps and overlaps in the conversations which are taking place in the homes of

transracially adopted children and those that take place in schools. The aim of this research is to establish how the language used by parents of transracially adopted children, as well as the teachers who teach them, constructs the idea of family in conversations.

Parent/s were selected on the basis that they had expressed an interest in participating in the research by responding to the information which was posted on various Facebook pages, by the page administrators. Parent/s (single, couples, heterosexual or homosexual) who are white and have adopted a black child/ren in South Africa were permitted to participate in the research. Each parent who responded was sent a copy of the parent participant letter which detailed the research and what would be required of them if they wished to participate in the research. Once parent/s had agreed to participate in the research, appointments for interviews were set up at times and places that were convenient to the participant/s.

Schools were approached initially to determine whom to contact with regard to the research. Once a positive response had been received, the school was sent a copy of the teacher participant letter so that those who were willing to take part in the research were aware of the content of the research and what would be required of them if they agreed to participate.

4.2.4 Confidentiality of Research Participants

As research participants were assured, when they signed the agreement to participate in research forms that their identity would be kept confidential in the research which was written up, the use of 'code' names was employed by the researcher. Throughout the project, the reader will note after quotes extracted from the interviews that they are labelled P or S T. Quotes labelled by P and a number are comments made by parents, while S T and a number are used to denote comments made by teachers. For the two interviews where both parents were present they are coded as P 5.1 and P 5.2, as well as P 7.1 and P 7.2. The aim of the researcher is not to reduce the research participants merely to numbers and symbols, but this method was used to capture the data and label each interview and for continuity this method was used in the body of work as well. In the event that specific names of other people or the adopted child/ren were mentioned and extracts used which contained this information, these were coded using a letter in place of a name.

4.2.5 Scope

The scope of this research is centred in Johannesburg. The different family structures which formed the basis for data collection were considered because they are representative of an array of family structures which are extant in society; but may not necessarily be representative of all family structures. As there is a time limit for this research project, the focus was limited to the experience of urban, interracial families formed through the process of adoption. Excluded from this research were families who had adopted intra-racially or who had formed families through a familial adoption. The parents had to have interracially adopted children in the school system in 2017, the time of the interviews. The adopted children were in grade 000 to grade 12. This meant that the children range in age from three to eighteen years of age.

Teachers who participated in the research were based at one of the four selected schools and were all presently teaching at primary school level. It was not the intention of the researcher to exclude pre-primary teachers or high school teachers, however, only primary schools which were willing to participate in the research.

The researcher made the decision not to interview parents whose children attended the schools which were involved in the research project, as this could possibly result in an ethical line being crossed and it was preferred that parent/s of the child/ren discussed by the teachers remained unknown to the researcher.

4.2.6 Data Analysis

The interviews which were conducted were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. On completion of the interviews, each interview was read and key points in each response were noted. On completion of individual interview analysis common themes (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012) were grouped together. It was these groups which gave rise to the headings which were applied to each section in the discussion. Codes (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012) were used as the points at which data was either included or excluded from a section (see the appendix Table 1 and Table 2 for examples of phrases which were used to create themes). In some instances interrelated conversations were explored under separate headings in order to allow the researcher to explore these interrelations in a more in-depth and coherent

manner. An example of a heading is: The decision to adopt transracially – “...*the fact that it was transracial did not enter my mind...*” P1.

This heading was created from interrelated topics within answers to different interview questions. This method of analysis and grouping of topics was applied to both sets of interviews.

4.3 Applied Thematic Analysis

Language and the narrative which its use constructs are under consideration in this research it is therefore necessary to consider these constructs emerge. Applied Thematic Analysis, according to Philips and Jorgensen (2002), means that through the use of language objects which exist in reality are given meaning according to the manner in which certain terms are applied. It is for the researcher, however, to “work with what has actually been said or written, exploring patterns in and across the statements and identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality” (Philips and Jorgensen, 2002, p. 21). It is through this process that a speaker constructs the narrative which they express. The position which the speaker holds in relation to the topic of conversation becomes apparent within this narrative, either through what is expressed or what is not.

Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012, p. 4) explain that in the use of Applied Thematic Analysis, the method of data analysis which was employed in this research, is a “form of inductive analysis of qualitative data that can involve multiple analytic techniques.” In using this method of data analysis the authors explain that the researcher “moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes” (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012, p. 10).

This method of analysis allows the researcher to explore topics which form the themes of analysis from the data which is collected. It is through this exploration that the researcher is able to draw out the content of conversations and explore the deeper meaning behind the word choices which are used by the speaker, and in this manner further explore the images and ideas which are generated through the words of the speaker.

Since discourse and the constructs within which it operates in order to develop a narrative, and specifically those about family, are under consideration in this research, brief

engagement with the concept of power and the impact that this may have on the constructs of discourse is necessary.

The idea of power, its influence on language and the manner in which it is employed, is drawn from the understandings of power introduced by Foucault and cited in the work by Philips and Jorgensen (2002). Power is explained as being “responsible both for creating our social world and for the particular ways in which the world is formed and can be talked about, ruling out alternative ways of being and talking. Power is thus both a productive and constraining force” (Philips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 14). This is an important element to consider in relation to the research question in which the construction of ideas of families formed through transracial adoption and the surrounding discourse. There are various power dynamics at play within the conversations which are held in relation to these family formations. These are considered during the discussion section of this research. This power dynamic is further explored through the work of Judith Butler (1997) at a later point in the discussion section of this research. This discussion brings to light the manner in which the power of language plays out and the implications that this has on those who are subjected to it and also on those who are constructed through it.

The analysis of data which was gathered during this research process has been analysed through the lens of critical diversity literacies, while analysis has been conducted using Applied Thematic Analysis with a focus on the narratives constructed through the word choices of the research participants. Critical diversity literacies, as explained by Steyn (2015), are understood by the researcher as a means to critically engage with social issues that exist within society, constantly asking the questions “how is it that this discourse came into being, which power dynamics are dominant and what are the implications of this dominance?” From the themes which were created during the analysis process the researcher was able to explore the narratives which were constructed and to consider the implications of these narratives. The data was considered through the lens of critical diversity literacies. Using this lens the researcher was able to employ a critical stance. By means of this approach space to question “the ideological systems put in place by and for these positionalities as well as the hegemonic discourses that reproduce them, such as whiteness, heteronormativity, patriarchy eurocentricism etc” (Steyn, 2015, p. 382) opens up.

4.3.1 Application of Applied Thematic Analysis

It is explained that in using this method as a means of analysis that the following terms are used in relation to the information that is gathered, these are as follows:

- Data – The textual representation of a conversation, observation or interaction
- Theme – A unit of meaning that is observed (noticed) in the data by a reader of the text
- Code – A textual description of the semantic boundaries of a theme or a component of a theme
- Codebook – A structured compendium of codes that includes a description of how the codes are related to each other
- Coding – The process by which a qualitative analyst links specific codes to specific data segments

(Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012, p. 50).

In using this method to analyse collected data, a researcher is able to use different methods to gather data which form the basis of the analysis which ultimately is used to address the proposed research question. Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) explain that codes are created to

represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis. Such analyses may or may not include the following: comparing code frequencies, identifying code co-occurrence, and graphically displaying relationships between codes within the data set (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012, p. 11).

It is through the application of this method of analysis and terminology that this research was analysed.

As the focus of this research is on conversation and the construction of a narrative, an in-depth exploration of the manner in which a narrative arrives at the point to at which it is the dominant one in circulation is explored.

As this research has been conducted through interviews in the form of conversations, taking into consideration the work of Fay (1996), it is necessary to consider the implications, influences and impact of these conversations and their corresponding narratives. It is for this reason that the following section has been included in this research.

4.4 The Narrative Discussion

Narrative discourse analysis is not the method of data analysis, rather the reason for exploring the stepping stones which are used in the process of telling a story are under consideration. Narrative in this context is understood as the act of telling a story. It is for this reason that this discussion has been included in the research.

“Please, please tell me a story,” the little girl begged, as she raced across the lounge and onto the waiting lap of her grandmother. Stories and story-telling are part of the human experience. It is how information is conveyed from one person to another, from one generation to the next. A story may take on a variety of forms. Who is telling the story and to whom it is being told, will influence what is recounted and what is omitted.

As interviews were the method of data collection, the concept of a narrative needs to be considered. During the interview process the participants effectively told a story in response to the questions which were posed. It is on this basis that there is a need to explore the concept and construction of the narrative process; taking time to consider this complex process and what is actually taking place during story telling. This exploration will be done through the works of various authors who have attempted to tackle the idea of story-telling and its construction; each taking a slightly different position on the matter. These will then be integrated into the content of this research.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) and Sisonke Msimang (2016), both in the form of TEDTalks, speak to different elements of the story telling process. Adichie (2009) in her talk, explored how children are impressionable and that, in relation to topics discussed, they are likely to absorb the dominant narrative which surrounds them. Adichie (2009) explained how she absorbed the dominant narrative which was presented to her through British children’s literature, noting that some of the elements within the story were foreign to her, a child living in Nigeria, but that these aspects still crept into the world of her own story telling.

Adichie (2009) reflects on a college experience, where she encountered people who had not visited Africa, yet had preconceived ideas about the continent in its entirety, not only a specific country. She comments

If I had not grown up in Nigeria and all I knew about Africa was from popular images, I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and

AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner. I would see Africans in the same way as I as a child had seen Fide's family (Fide was a servant in the Adichie's family home and all she was told about him was that he came from very poor circumstances). This single story of Africa ultimately comes, I think, from Western literature. (Adichie, 2009).

What is evident in this discussion is the power of the dominant narrative, which eventually becomes the overarching narrative in relation to a specific topic. In relation to the research this alerts both the reader and the researcher to consider and evaluate how a person arrived at the story which they chose to tell. What influenced them and what are the consequences of this influence?

Sisonke Msimang (2016), in a talk titled *If a story moves you, act on it*, explores the point which Adichie (2009) makes with regard to how a story is constructed and the potential dangers which this can present to either the listening or reading audience. Msimang (2016) comments "I worry that the most poignant stories, particularly stories about people who no one seems to care about can often get in the way of action towards social justice." In the process of explaining this idea, she presented three points for consideration. The first was that "stories can create an illusion of solidarity" (Msimang, 2016). In this manner the story which is told is used to unite a group of people, generating a sense of feeling about a situation without necessarily engaging further with the situation itself. A sense of illusion is created and the need to engage deeper with the story content can be avoided. The feelings created serve as a buffer in a sense to a deeper and possibly more complex reality. This view echoes the sentiments expressed by Oestrich (2017) in which the parent reflects on the two possible stories which can be told in response to questions about the family adoption story. The second point raised is that the readers and listeners are "drawn towards characters and protagonists who are likable and human" (Msimang, 2016). In the event that the audience is able to connect in a positive or endearing manner with the protagonist in the story, it appears that they will likely be more easily drawn into the world of the character, fictional or not, and in this manner find themselves able to care about the outcome of the narrative. On the contrary, when the audience is unable to connect with the character, or is effectively able to distance themselves from the actions of the character which they may deem abhorrent or incomprehensible within their realm of understanding, distance to caring is created and a space for an alternative narrative, one not explored any deeper, takes root.

This point can be taken into consideration in relation to the construction of the narrative around the abandoned baby and the mother who abandons her child. An audience is able to find a connection in order to care about the abandoned baby. Perhaps this is linked to the generalisation that people tend to like infants and that their care and well-being are an aspect worthy of concern, even if it does not directly relate to the specific person hearing or reading the story. Alternatively, mothers who abandon their babies are generally tarnished and lambasted in the comments section of articles and are consequently in the minds of the public. They are the villains in the story. Consideration of circumstances which resulted in the abandonment are not considered nor are in some way attributed to the actions of the mother and therefore blame is rested squarely on her shoulders.

The last point raised by Msimang (2016) is that “too often we are so invested in the personal narrative that we forget to look at the bigger picture.” In this discussion Msimang (2016) explains that too often the audience hears, reads or narrates a story in which they are a prominent character in the events, but that they are not able to expand this discussion to beyond their immediate experience and link it with wider social issues. Msimang (2016) illustrates this point, commenting that people express that they felt a sense of shame in relation to an event, but that they are unable to link it to the greater aspect of oppression within the context of which the event took place. Msimang (2016) cautions her audience that “stories need to bridge the personal to the social justice” indicating that the audience needs to engage more deeply with both the stories which they hear and those that they tell. There is more to the oration of a tale, than merely a speaker / hearer / reader relationship.

It is at this point that it is time to turn to the articles and authors who explored other aspects of narrative construction.

Brockmeier (2000) explores the construction of a narrative, taking into consideration the influence of time on the story. Taking note that there is more to the concept and influence of time, than just the usual concept which expresses a past, present and future, there is space too to take into consideration the social elements which may influence the time and telling of a story (Brockmeier, 2000). In consideration of how autobiographical stories are told, Brockmeier (2000, p. 55) comments that “what happens in the autobiographical process is an interplay of positioning possible pasts and possible beginnings in the light of an end, that is the present of the story at the time, and in the context of its telling.” This concept can be linked to the responses of the research participants: they are able to relate their experiences

and answers to past occurrences, which may be linked into or shaped by their current experience. In another time period, a different response might have been given. This idea highlights that the context and experience of the speaker influences what is said and what is essentially constructed through the choice of words used. Brockmeier (2000) highlights this, commenting in relation to the use of words that

We use a broad spectrum of linguistic devices to express the temporal dimension of our experiences, memories, intentions and imaginations. However, in doing so we not only express them but also give them shape [...] language does not only represent reality but also creates it; it not only reflects experience but also brings it into existence (Brockmeier, 2000, p. 57).

In attempting to explain how people construct their autobiographical expressions, Brockmeier (2000) suggested six possible models for a story. The one which resonates most with aspects of this research is one labelled Circular Model. In this model the speaker is telling of past events, while speaking in the present. Brockmeier (2000, p. 63) explains that “it is about the reconfiguration of the past in an act of retrospection.” The author further suggested that this form of story-telling is only possible because both the beginning and end of the story are known to the speaker. In relation to the adoptive parents and in some instances the teachers, they are able to respond on the basis of a known starting point. In the case of the parents, they were able to explain why they chose to adopt; the eventual story which will be told by their child is incomplete as life continues, but the chapter on the decision to adopt effectively has a start and an end point around which they are able to structure their story and thus their response to questions about the decision to adopt.

Taking a narrative constructionist approach to the exploration of story-telling Bruner (1987) explores how people construct stories, rather than the construction of logic or argument. Bruner (1987, p. 14) proposes that “one imposes criteria on rightness on the self-report of a life just as one imposes them on the account of a football game or the report of an event of nature.” In relation to story-telling it is possible to see how a specific format and narrative can emerge, if there are unspoken pre-existing rules as to what can and cannot be said. Whose story is heard and whose is silenced? Bruner (1987, p. 14) comments “a rousing tale of a life is not necessarily a ‘right’ account.” There are two key points which are raised by the author which tie into this research around language and its use. Bruner (1987, p. 17) notes that “language constructs what it narrates, not only semantically but also pragmatically and

stylistically.” This alerts us to the possibility of the fluidity of language and the imagery and ideas which are constructed through its use across different time spans and contexts. The implication of this is that there exists the possibility for change, a dominant narrative can be transformed or removed from its position, allowing the space for an alternative conversation to take its place. Bruner (1987) explains in relation to the construction of the life-narrative, taking into consideration aspects beyond merely putting words together in a sentence, that

The culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organise memory, to segment and purpose-build the very ‘events’ of a life. In the end we become the autobiographical narratives which we ‘tell about’ our lives (Bruner, 1987, p. 15).

Taking this conversation into consideration in relation to this research, it is possible to observe how responses could change over time as participants live and experience different aspects which may alter, influence or impact on the story which they relate about their experience in relation to transracial adoption. It is apparent that no story is set in concrete, there is room for change to take place. The fluidity of language once again emerges.

Fay (1996), whose work has been cited previously, explores the construction of narrative, considering the factors which may need to be taken into consideration when attempting to understand what led a person to tell a story about who they are or about an aspect or event in their life. What caused them to select the words and recall those specific events, while possibly omitting others? Fay (1996, p. 186) comments “there is no one ‘definitive story’ to be told about a life. Thus, no life story can be a story ‘in itself’ because stories of lives are not self-contained: as new causal outcomes resulting from that life emerge, new stories can and will be told about it.” This observation raises the point that stories will alter as new events, which link to the original starting point, occur and therefore need to be added to the story. In relation to adoption, for the adoptive parents, the story of their family and the life of their adopted child within the family is an ongoing one. As the child grows and experiences life the story will unfold further, elements which were key may fade into the background and others may gain importance, dependent on context and audience and what it is that is sought to be conveyed in that moment of interaction. Fay (1996, p. 189) captures this stating “it follows that the intelligibility of a life will be different for different interpreters as they, with their own understandings, attempt to translate that life into terms which speak to them.”

Indicating that what may be considered a key component of one person's narrative and understanding of a situation may be entirely different for another person hearing, reading or relating the same story. This raises the point of the power of language to construct a narrative and what is said and what is not said. Taking time into consideration, like Brockmeier (2000), Fay (1996) also notes that time does not follow a linear progression in relation to narratives, rather that "the relation between the past, the present and their interpretation is not simple or unidirectional; rather it is dialectical" (Fay, 1996, p. 189). There is room for the narrator to go back in time, to relate different components of their story to aspects of the present, which may not be brought to the fore in other contexts.

The work of McAdams (2000) further explores the notion of the influence of social factors on the story which is narrated, commenting that "individual life stories reflect cultural values and norms, including assumptions about gender, race and class" (McAdams, 2000, p. 101). McAdams (2000) takes the position that through the narration of a life story the identity of the individual is conveyed to those around them, echoing similar sentiments to those of the theorist Erik Erikson, but deviating however, by taking the stance that there exists "the continuation of identity work across the adult years" (McAdams, 2000, p.106). Indicating, unlike Erikson, whose work is based on resolution of stages for progression, McAdams (2000) suggests that identity formation and the expression thereof is an ongoing process through the life of a person. As events occur which shape the individual, these become a part of the identity narrative construction. McAdams (2000) further explains this identity and its place within the narrative, through the use of the idea of an imago. This, McAdams (2000, p. 106) explains, "is an idealized personification of the self that functions as a protagonist in the narrative." It is through the use of these imagoes that the person constructing their narrative and sense of identity is able to draw together the different components which together, make up the concept of 'me' (McAdams, 2000). The work of McAdams (2000) ties into both the construction of an identity of the transracially adopted child, as well as with the different responses given by the participants in this research project. It is the use of language and its implications which are once again brought to the fore. McAdams (2000, p. 110) reflects on the idea that "to a certain degree, then, identity is a product of choice. We choose the events that we consider most important for defining who we are and providing our lives with a semblance of unity and purpose."

Lastly Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou (2006) discuss narrative research, noting that "narrative data can easily seem overwhelming: susceptible to endless interpretation, by turns

inconsequential and deeply meaningful” (Squire *et al*, 2006, p. 1). Highlighting that there are many ways in which to interpret the data which is gathered through a narrative process. It is for the researcher to locate the meaningful content and from there generate a coherent research document. Squire *et al* (2006), note in their reflections on narrative research that, through this process

we are able to investigate not just how stories are structured and the ways in which they work, but also who produces them and by what means; the mechanisms by which they are consumed; and how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted (Squire *et al*, 2006, p. 2).

These are sentiments which have been echoed by the other authors cited in this work; it is thus evident that this is a vital aspect to consider when exploring what is said and what is left unsaid.

This point essentially returns us to the start of this discussion, exploring the TEDTalks of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) and Sisonke Msimang (2016), each of whom discuss a key aspect about the story telling process and its possible outcome. Adichie (2009) reflects that “Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanise. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.” It is therefore evident that there is more to a story than merely an expression by an individual, an aspect which needs to be taken into careful consideration by the audience. Msimang (2016) speaks into this space of the audience and the implications for the recipient commenting “it is justice that makes the world a better place, not stories and so if it is justice that we are after then I think we mustn’t focus on the media or on story tellers, we must focus on the audiences.” The idea is thus conveyed that it is once a story has been heard, that its power can take shape based on the interpretation of its audience. McAdams (2000) echoes these ideas, in relation to the power and privilege which can be found embedded in a story, the telling of which determines those who are heard and those who are silenced.

Gathering together the ideas of the works of the various authors quoted above, as well as the talks by Adichie (2009) and Msimang (2016), it is perhaps the words of Adichie (2009) which most effectively capture the overall discussion when she states “When we reject the single story, when we realise that there never was a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.” If we question the stories and narratives which we hear we may find that

there is far more to be understood; it is necessary critically to engage with these narratives beyond a functionary hearing. It is for this reason that it is necessary to engage with the works explored here in relation to the research which has been conducted. In the application of this method of questioning the contents of a story and the employment of critical diversity literacies, there is scope to engage more earnestly and in a more in-depth manner. In this way asking more about the story and the underlying expressions and possible assumptions which are conveyed by the speaker to the audience.

As the data which was gathered for this research is essentially in the form of a story, in response to a set of questions, this method of questioning the narrative has been applied by the researcher.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Parent Discussion

This section of the discussion explores the verbal responses of transracially adoptive parents who participated in the research. It is through these conversations and an engagement with them on an academic level, that the conversation around how parents and teachers of transracially adopted children construct their understanding of families created through adoption, is explored. The headings which are used in each subsection of this discussion were drawn from the interview questions and grouped together. A relevant quote from a parent, is used as part of the heading as it brings a more personal aspect to the conversation. The actual words which informed the discussion are also brought to the attention of the reader and therefore provide an example of the words and phrases which were explored and grouped together by the researcher during the data analysis process.

5.1.1 The Decision to Adopt Transracially “...the fact that it was transracial did not enter my mind...” P1

The question posed was “How did you arrive at your decision to adopt transracially?” The reason that this question was asked was not just to gather another “adoption story”, but rather as indicated in literature, Jennings, Mellish, Tasker, Lamb and Golombok (2014), Malm and Welti (2010), Farr and Patterson (2009) and Potter (2013), there are different pathways through which people arrive at the decision to adopt. It is this choice that may influence the story that is told in relation to the resolution to adopt; this in turn may offer an insight into word choices that the adoptive parent/s use in conversations with their transracially adopted child/ren.

In the eleven interviews which were conducted with adoptive parent/s the following findings about the decision to adopt were made: two single, female parents chose to adopt as they had struggled with fertility issues and rather than pursue medical interventions, they chose to adopt, three of the heterosexual families (married currently or divorced) had always considered adoption to be a part of their family plan, in this instance two families had at least one biological child, as well as an adopted child; for the two – dad family, adoption proved to

be the easiest option available to become parents and for three of the parent/s (one couple and one single) circumstances played a part in altering their decision from not wanting children or being at peace with the idea that they would never be parents, to becoming parents through adoption.

The common comment made by all the parent/s, except one, was that they did not expressly seek to adopt transracially; rather it was something that was merely a component of the adoption process. The only parent not to express a sentiment in this vein, explained that in the process of deciding to adopt, that she and her partner made the conscious decision on ethical and political grounds, as well as an unwillingness to participate in the “matchy – matchy biological determinism” (P11) of a same race adoption or to have a baby through fertility treatment. This couple consciously chose to adopt transracially.

Smith, Jacobson and Juárez’s (2011) book based on transracial adoptive experiences of both adoptive parents and transracially adopted children in the United States of America, challenges the statement about the adoption being transracial as a negligible element in the story. These authors explored the response of American actress Sandra Bullock, to questions around her transracial adoption of a baby. Smith *et al* (2011) respond to the comments that race was not a factor taken into consideration in the adoption process - sentiments which echo those of the respondents in this research. Smith *et al* (2011) consider the potential irony in the response that race was not considered, stating

That race was “not thought about” in the adoption process seems to point to, and even underscore, the conclusion that race was contemplated, albeit unconsciously, in the thought process about adoption, and that race did in fact matter. Why else point out that it did not matter, unless it was considered? (Smith, *et al*, 2011, p. 4).

This raises the question: how does this relate to and reflect the South African context and responses to transracial adoption and the element of race and whether or not it was considered? As discussed above, many of the participants expressed that it was not an aspect which they took into consideration when they applied to adopt. From these comments it may be possible to infer, that given the majority population of South Africa and the number of black, African babies who are in need of adoption and that these are the stories which tend to circulate, more so than those of intra-racial adoptions, people seeking to adopt have internalised this concept and that race therefore is an unconscious consideration. One parent during the discussion about the decision to adopt and specifically in response to the

transracial component, added that "...only when I had agreed to adopt, I went "oh, ok so she's brown, therefore there are going to be some issues" (P 1). A musing of this nature reflects the unconscious ideas expressed by Smith *et al* (2011). In the case of this parent, the unconscious thoughts about race did eventually surface. The reality of the possible obstacles arose when her child (P 1) was introduced to her extended family, and the race of the baby suddenly became the primary focus of who the child was; rather than that she was now a member of the family. Dos Santos and Wagner (2017) also note that while within the framework of the home race can be minimised and therefore not at the fore of a conversation, it however may be raised again and sometimes challenged, once this space has been vacated.

This discussion and the ideas which are associated with it, open up a space to question how white parents of transracially adopted children in South Africa specifically, navigate and confront discussions about race with their children. If the race of their child at the time of adoption was not a factor and many of them had possibly not actively taken it into consideration, then it exposes a gap in the topics and the language used in the conversations about adoption. The gap needs to be explored.

In each of the adoptions, the importance of a genetic link to a child was not seen as an essential element in the formation of a family, nor was adoption considered as a second – best option to having a biological child (Potter, 2013). For these parents, adoption was primarily a means to create a family or to add new members to their existing family unit. This fact may have influenced their comments that they did not intentionally consider adopting transracially. This was evident in comments such as "it wasn't a hard decision, it was just what we were going to do" (P 7.1) and "we wanted children and couldn't have children and that sort of leads you – well not everyone – it led us to should we adopt?" (P 1). Farr and Patterson's (2009, p. 196) concept of a "child – centred approach" was evident in the answers of the parents. Parents commented "We had, even before we got married, talked about adopting and it was out of the fact that there are children who need homes" (P 4).

Malm and Welti (2010) introduced the idea that people who had prior exposure to adoption or exposure to others who had completed the adoption process, were more likely to consider this as an option to creating a family was also evident. Parents made comments such as "we have lots of adopted friends (friends with adopted children)" (P 4), "adoption is very much part of our family [...] and of our friendship circle" (P7.1 & 7.2) and "It was something that I had thought about and my sister has got a boy (also adopted), 6 months older, so I had

thought about it [...] it was what I was going to do next...” (P 8). These comments clearly reflect the idea expressed by Malm and Welti (2010). From these comments and taking the work of Malm and Welti (2010) into consideration, it appears that there is a link between people who know others who have adopted and the completion of their own adoption process. This creates a space to consider the relevance of networking with other transracial adoptive parents, allowing for open discussion with people who have completed the process. Those who are already living the reality of being a transracial family are potentially able to offer practical, lived insights that others may not.

With regard to the parents who chose to adopt transracially, contrary to suggestions in the literature that some lesbian women may have to work on reconciling the idea that motherhood and their sexual orientation are mutually exclusive, for the female same-sex parents in this research, the decision to become parents was founded on the basis that within their relationship, they decided that raising a child together was something that they wanted to do. Zeiler and Malmquist (2014) discuss the idea that through reproductive technologies there exists the ability to ‘collude’ with the concept that women desire to be mothers and that it is through this process of gestation and giving birth to a baby that this sense of self and self-fulfilment is obtained; implying that this is the ultimate form of a parent-child relationship. In contrast to this is the idea that parenting can or should focus on the relationship between the parent and the child, regardless of whether that parent-child relationship was formed through a biological process or through adoption.

Hayman *et al* (2015) explore ideas of donor babies and the way in which prospective parents may seek donor traits which may match those of the non-gestating parent, especially in the construct of a lesbian relationship. Hayman *et al* (2015, p. 13) explain that it is felt that through an apparent genetic tie, for the non-genetic parent, it is “perceived as a way of emulating a biological tie and was subsequently perceived to strengthen her mother position.” In both these articles there is a heavy inference that it is the biological connection that makes a woman feel that she is able to assume and fulfil the role of parent. It was this element of matching, as well as a complex set of ethical and political reasons, which led the female same-sex couple in this research to consider adoption.

The two – dad family, who had adopted two children, explained that adoption and specifically transracial adoption, was the only option for adoption made available to them. They explained that the social worker whom they met with, when making enquiries about

adoption, expressly stated "... if we wanted to not to do trans-race, it could take, I can't remember but about 5 to 10 years [...] if at all possible because we are gay, ...so ja in South Africa transracial adoption was available and if we wanted children soon, that was the way to go and ja for us it was not an issue" (P 5.1 & 5.2). These parents did not express that they had encountered issues around the fact that they were two men raising children; however this does not mean that they have not encountered heteronormative bias in relation to their child rearing situation, but such information was not conveyed during the course of this interview.

An aspect that this conversation does, however, highlight that intra-racial adoption, specifically when it pertains to the adoption of white babies, despite their being rare due to racial demographics of the South African population, is 'reserved' for adoption by parents who fit the fictitious, Western image of a married, heterosexual couple, who have a dog and a white picket fence, but are missing the 2.4 children to complete the picture. This is echoed by a social worker's comment, to a prospective single, female, adoptive parent, "if you are here to adopt a white baby, you are in the wrong place" (P 9). While literature does not openly discuss this topic or how these specific placements are done, from personal experience working in the adoption context, this researcher noted that white babies were rarely available for adoption and when they were, they went to white, married heterosexual couples who had been on an adoption waiting list for an extended period of time.

The concept of single parenting was raised by two mothers (one raising her son alone due to divorce, the other a single mother) as well as by a father who after his divorce parented his son alone until he remarried. The work of Mannis (2008) explores the experience of the single mother who chose to adopt. The findings of Mannis (2008) did not correspond completely with the findings in this research. The single mothers in this research made comments such as "I got to about 30 and was still single and whatever and decided that that was probably something that I wanted to add to my life was to have a child" (P 8) and "I made the decision to adopt" (P 9). They did not seem to need to explain why they were raising a child without a father-figure present, however one mother did mention that the absence of a father was noted and questioned by the children at her daughter's pre-school. Her transracial adoptive status appeared to be inconsequential to her peers.

The concept of support from a wider social and familial network (Mannis, 2008), however, was drawn upon by most of the parents. This network was used as a family structure and also as a frame of reference for the adopted child. Parents sought to expose their child to other

families who looked similar to theirs; in this manner allowing the child to learn that their family was not a social oddity or entirely unique. The single mothers did not appear to need to define their position in society; perhaps an indication that the single mother in South Africa is no longer that unusual. One mother did, however, make her family dynamic clear to her child's school. It was an aspect, of her child's background, that she felt was very important for the teachers who would teach her to be aware of.

The father who, for a time after his divorce parented as a single parent, experienced a different response to his situation, and was also subjected to a number of assumptions about his sexual orientation. This parent commented "as a single dad, it has been interesting on occasions, I've had, I've been identified as gay because I have got a black kid, just there are a whole range of different prejudices out there that emerge because you have got this situation upon which you can build a whole bunch of assumptions" (P 6). This conversation reinforces the idea that it is gay men who adopt transracially, and not something that a heterosexual man would do on his own. The idea of a divorced single parent does not emerge at the fore front of assumptions of others. This idea that adoption alone as a single, heterosexual man cannot occur, is evident in the absence of literature around this topic, particularly in the South African context. This concept of assumptions reflects the musing of De la Rey *et al* (1997, p. 100), in which the authors comment "we thus position any understanding of the child as intrinsically linked to the societal context. Childhood - and thus the child - is not only a natural object but a social and historical construction." It is evident that assumptions are brought to light when they have a framework upon which to attach themselves. In this instance the point of discussion emerges in relation to the child, who then becomes a point from which a conversation is generated; a conversation which may no longer be directly related to the child.

5.1.2 Discussions about Family and Adoption "... it's just a fruit salad, that's just the way it worked out..." – P9.

The concept of family emerged as being broad, loosely defined and not bound by a blood connection.

Parents were asked how they engaged with their children on the topic of family. Parents explained that emphasis was placed on what makes a group of people a family. The definition

of family appeared to be the people who love and care for you, who are concerned about your well-being and these are the people have your well-being at heart. The concept of a blood-tie was irrelevant, from the position that through adoption this is generally not present unless it is a familial adoption; a group which fell outside of the parameters of this research. This was evident in comments such as “family are the people who take care of you every day, who make sure you have food and who make choices about your life” (P 11) and “families are about how people live together, not about how they are related to one another” (P 4). Only one parent said that they had not formally discussed the idea of family and what makes a family with their child. The reason for this was that the parent felt that the child was presently too young to actually engage in the conversation and that it would be better to address the topic at later date. The parent did, however, openly engage with her child through her adoption story; a conversation which appears to be ongoing and developing in accordance with the maturity of the child.

Conversation about family started either prior to the child being able to vocalise their thoughts about family or from an early age and in response to questions from the child. Discussions about the biological mother and her role in the adoption triad arose for many of the parents. To explain the biological mother, especially to younger children, parents used the terms “tummy mummy” and “heart mummy” in discussions. Parents said “we spoke of his tummy mummy and that that was the lady who gave birth to him and then there was us, who are his mom and dad” (P 10), “We are both her real mother in different ways, but neither of us is a fake mother” (P 2) and “we have had a story which we have told her from when, well as soon as she could understand it, and maybe even before then” (P 11). In discussions with older children, one parent explained that talks had progressed to include the elements of rights and responsibilities within the family unit. Evident in the comment “...there are certain family obligations, so you will come to dinner with us or you will go on holiday with us...” (P 6).

The conversations above echo the ideas presented in the work of Wrobel *et al* (2008), in which the authors explored how adoptive parents and their children navigated discussions around the child/ren’s adoption. Wrobel *et al* (2008) indicated that in many instances in their research, it was the mother who initiated and supplied information about their child’s adoption. This aspect was not highlighted in the conversations which took place in this research. This does not mean that, in the event of a two parent home, one parent was not more dominant with regard to adoption conversations, but it was not divulged during the

research process. In interviews where both parents were present, neither indicated that one parent was preferred by their child as the person with whom to discuss their adoption story. What was evident in the discussions which mirror the model of discussion presented by Wrobel *et al* (2008) was that children will vacillate between stages of discussion and may revisit questions which they may have about their adoption, as they arise.

Literature around the topic of family reflected that defining this group of people is not particularly easy and that this definition tends to be broad and at times defined by the group of people who are applying the term to themselves. Stacey (1990, p. 149) perhaps best explains a family as “composed of two or more individuals who promote the health and well-being of those who live together, such a family [...], could include married or unmarried, homosexuals or heterosexuals, one parent or more, and related or unrelated people” and which accurately reflects the ideas of the parents when they discussed the family unit with their children.

This comment echoes the sentiments expressed in the fictitious work, *The Reluctant Cuckoo*, which were used in the introduction to this research. The findings in response to this however, indicate that once children are given an answer to explain that a parent and child do not have to be the same race to have a parent – child relationship, it appears that they are accepting of this dynamic.

Parent/s were asked how they equipped their child/ren to answer questions about their family. This topic arose under discussions around family as well as preparation for entering the school environment, an area where peers are likely to ask questions. Most children tend to be inquisitive and seek explanations for situations which they observe. Parent/s used a variety of methods to equip their child/ren to answer questions relating to their family including books and the child/ren’s own adoption story. The topic of adoption was openly discussed at home, one parent specifically used a network of other transracial adoptive parents and specific terminology was also used in the discussions.

Child-appropriate literature necessary to open up the space for the adoption conversation is not easily accessible in South Africa. Parents had to rely on resources which predominantly reflected adoption narratives found in the United States of America and which do not accurately reflect the South African experience. For example in the United States, adoption from China is common and books reflect this. As South Africa generally does not receive children for adoption, this narrative is inaccurate for South African transracially adopted

children. Consequently, parents had to actively search for appropriate and accurate child – friendly books for their children.

The most common vehicle used to transfer the necessary vocabulary to answer questions was through the child's personal adoption story. Parent/s explained to their child/ren where they came from in age-appropriate language.

One parent explained that she had created adoption books for each of her daughters. These books contain her daughters' adoption stories and photographs, including those of biological family members, as these were available. The parent did, however, explain that there were elements of one child's story which she had chosen not to disclose to her at present, due to the nature of its content. She feels that at present this would not be an age appropriate discussion to have with the child. This concept of life – story books is discussed by Watson, Latter and Bellew (2015) and while the use of these did not appear to be prevalent in the discussions with other parents, it is a useful way to explore and explain the child's adoption story to them, making it uniquely personal.

The other parents chose to talk to their child/ren about their adoption story and how it was they came to be in their family. Comments such as “So this is how I introduced the adoption story to her and I struggled for a long time because when you adopt they say you have to try and make it normal, make it part of your conversation – whatever, don't make it into something big and dramatic” (P 3), “He learned how to say that (he was adopted), he said it and got on with his life and the other kids got on with their lives” (P 4). In relation to an older, white sibling, the following was said: “more than anything we had prepared him and actually we had prepared his teachers for the fact that he had a sister who was a different colour” (P 7.1). The two-mom family participant said that they had explained to their daughter the words which people might use in reference to their relationship and in this way equipped her to understand what was being said, recognise its context and then stand her ground in the event that she felt that she needed to respond. The parent explained “ we have given her language [...] it is scaffolding her language almost before she deals with issues or questions [...] we sort of said to her you know there are all of these words for us – lesbians, dykes, queer – you know we sort of said as many of these words as possible, so that if someone uses them, she recognises them and we then give them a kind of positive connotation as opposed to being ... (sentence incomplete) and we have also tried to do the same with race” (P 11). This conversation indicates that the parents in this family are very

aware of possible challenges which their transracially adopted child may encounter and consequently; they are actively engaging in conversations to assist her as she navigates this space.

As transracial adoption makes public the fact that the child is adopted, many of the parent/s also sought to empower their child/ren to decide how much of their story they were willing to share. Parents also made their children aware that they were allowed to decline to answer questions which were asked of them. Many felt that because an adoption is publically visible, it does not follow that scrutiny and questions by complete strangers is acceptable, no matter how curious they may be or what biases they may hold.

Reiterated below is the work of Wrobel *et al* (2008) who suggested that there were three stages through which adoptive parent /s and their child/ren navigate the process of exploring the adoption story. These three stages are:

- adoptive parents provide children with unsolicited information
- adoptive parents address children's curiosity by answering children's questions
- adopted children take control of finding their own information to satisfy their curiosity

(Wrobel *et al*, 2008, p. 69).

Each of these stages were present to a lesser or greater extent in the narratives of the adoptive parent/s. It was evident that the older the child, the more they were able to engage with their story and possessed the necessary vocabulary and understanding of their story and the various components that may have contributed to their position as a transracially adopted child. Unsolicited information was usually provided to very young children, before they had the ability to ask questions. The curiosity element appeared to emerge in children in early primary school. A mother of two girls, in grades 1 and 3 in 2017, explained that the elder daughter knew her entire story which contained some rather shocking elements. Instead of hiding these, the parent chose to role-play possible reactions of other people to this information and in this way assisted her daughter to acquire a set of responses to different scenarios in the event that she should choose to tell her story.

The work of Lubbe (2008) and Gianino *et al* (2009) did not reflect in the answers provided by the same-sex parent/s and the language which their child/ren had to discuss their family units. This may be attributed to various reasons: the children are still young - they are of

primary school age - and may not be aware of homophobic slurs and therefore do not feel the need to shield their family from peer scrutiny. Alternatively, the school environment in which these specific children are educated may not make these children feel that their family is something that they need to attempt to conceal. Lastly, as children were not part of this interview process, it is not known how they actually navigate their way through questions about their family when they are posed on the school playground.

In each interview it was evident that the children, regardless of their age were given some language tools by their parent/s to help them navigate discussions about their family beyond the confines of their immediate family structures.

This conversation links to the next component of the research, that of the school application process. This discussion yielded some interesting results, ones which reflect the unacknowledged privileges of heterosexuality within society.

5.1.3 The School Application “... we found we weren’t really new or unusual...” – P5.1

The above comment was made by a parent who was part of a family unit which did not subscribe to the imagined, ‘idyllic’ socially perpetuated prescription of a heteronormative family. A comment of this nature indicates that within that specific school environment, family units which deviate from the ‘standardised’ imaginative are not unusual and are not seen as particularly noteworthy. This was an aspect which the parents seemed to find slightly unusual, indicating that this family unit is used to being the point of discussion or finds themselves having to explain their family in other situations. The family in this particular conversation is a same-sex partnership.

Parent/s were asked whether, on application to the school which their child/ren attended they had made the school aware of any aspects of their child/ren’s adoption, including topics to which the child may be sensitive, or terminology that they which they preferred teachers to use. The reason for this was to explore how the parents interacted with the school and what they chose to reveal about their family. Were there aspects which they chose to highlight and others which they tended not to take into consideration? Discussions were omitted on the basis that the parents felt that they were not pertinent in relation to their child’s education or school experience.

What emerged from the responses to this question was a strong, yet covertly conveyed prejudice in favour of heteronormativity and the privileges that this position affords to those of this sexual orientation. It is unlikely that the parents who fall into this category of social grouping are even aware of the privileges that they receive and which they, by their position, transfer to their family unit, and which extend as far the school application process. This sense of heteronormative privilege was made evident in comments such as “No, obviously she is adopted [...] there’s been no discussion about adoption...” (P1), “You know it was always obvious [...] his buddies always knew, they just knew that he had a white mom and that was like oh ok” (P 4) and “I am afraid I was one of those get on with it and move on” (P6). These parents all belonged to a heterosexual family unit and merely filled in the application forms and sent their transracially adopted child/ren to school.

With regards to the actual paperwork required to be completed on application to the school which her child attended, one single mother raised the point that the paperwork tended not to take into consideration family units which did not conform to the heteronormative two-parent framework. The parent went on to consider the implications that forms of this nature would have for other family units - including those of same-sex parents. This conversation brings to light how deeply entrenched are heteronormativity and by extension patriarchy, in society. In the above conversation, the parent mentioned how these forms could potentially be intimidating to parents on initial application to the school. As paperwork is processed, forms which do not appear uniform or on which words such as father / mother, in the event of a same-sex parent family, have been crossed out and re-labeled to suit the family unit, will stand out in the admission process. This automatically alerts anyone who deals with the child’s paperwork to the fact that their family is ‘different’. This conversation can also be extended to child-headed households, where older siblings may be the ones to complete the forms. This particular participant concluded this section of the conversation by commenting “it is the terminology, the way things are presented that needs to change to be more inclusive of all family types” (P 9). The comment needs to be taken into consideration within this research, as it highlights a key element in the simplistic language which is extant in society at present.

One heterosexual couple, who had an older, biological child chose to equip this child, with skills to answer questions about his family and his transracially adopted sibling. The parents chose to make the teachers of the biological child aware of the fact that he had a younger,

transracially adopted sibling. On application to the school for this particular child however, no mention of details about the adoption was made. These parents said

Interestingly not for her, but for her brother we did because of the literature that we had read (kind of early on) had indicated that it is often the siblings, especially if they are older, that will field questions. So more than anything, actually, we had prepared him and we had prepared his teachers for the fact that he had a sister who was of a different race (P 7.1).

A comment of this nature indicates that the parents are aware that because their family is formed through transracial adoption, within the school environment, the biological child, due to being older than the adopted sibling, may be the person who has to field questions about the family. It is through the process of preparation of this child that parents appeared to equip both their adopted and biological children to address questions about their family. Research and information on how parents have this conversation was not found, indicating a gap in the literature which needs to be addressed.

Families who did not fit into the heteronormative ‘ideal,’ either as single mothers or same-sex parents, appeared more likely to be more selective about the school to which they chose to send their child/ren and were more inclined to provide the school and more specifically the child/ren’s teachers, with information about their family. These parent/s appeared to feel that providing a few details about their family unit to the teachers, assisted them to navigate events such as Father’s Day or Mother’s Day in the event that either one of these parents was not present within the family unit. This could result in an awkward or potentially embarrassing situation if the child had to create a card or gift for this parent specifically.

Parents explained their school choices by stating “I think you do need to inform the teacher because they are going to figure it out and the children are going to figure it out and if your kid is not confident in telling their story, the teacher may need to step in and help” (P 2), “I think you need to [...] not because it is noteworthy, other than you need teachers to have a sensitivity to stuff” (P 3). Both parents who made these comments were single mothers. Same – sex parent/s explained that at their children’s school information was conveyed to relevant people, about their family set up, about the family composition, but did not give specific details about their child/ren’s adoption story. The two-dad family explained “Ja, we would have conversations about who we are and our family – I am Papa and R is Dada” (P5.1). In this manner the terms used by the family to differentiate the parents was made known, so that

the teachers were aware of the name of the parent. The parent from the two-mom family who was interviewed, explained that “we meet with the teacher at the beginning of every year and we tell them what we are called and who we are and we try to normalise as much as possible” (P11). In both these conversations the emphasis was not on the fact that the children were transracially adopted, but rather on the fact that they were part of a family unit which lies outside of the heteronormative.

Another aspect which emerged in response to this question was the way in which parents went about selecting schools for their children. Again, it appeared that the heteronormative parents did not give extra consideration to where their child/ren went to school, or if they did, they did not feel that it was necessary to express this in response to the question. The parent/s who did not fit into this framework however, explained the thought process that went into selecting a school for their child/ren. A single mother explained “I really wanted her to be in a school that had sufficient diversity, that she wouldn’t feel any more different than any other child” (P 3), “I did ask if there were any other adoptive parents [...] It is a fairly small school, [...] but there are a few transracial adoptions so that is very handy and the teachers are very positive” (P 2) and “...we were very particular about the school that we would send her to [...] and there are loads of families at the school that are alternative structures, including lesbian moms, gay dads, mixed partners, adoption – so in her class actually, one of her best friends has two moms, and she (the child) is black and adopted” (P11). Evident in each of these comments is that these parent/s felt that it was necessary to find a school for their child/ren in which they would feel comfortable and where there would be other children whose family structures might mimic their own, or who might also have an alternative family structure. The explanations of these parents reflect the observations made by Bray *et al* (2010), who explained that within the school environment, more takes place than just learning to read and write. It is through peer interactions that the child’s sense of self and creation of an identity is further confirmed, beyond the confines of the family unit. This component also ties into the work of Palacios as cited in Neil and Wrobel (2009) in which the school is seen as part of the society in which the child interacts and which also forms part of their identity formation process.

Hence it would appear that parents who fall outside of the privileges of heteronormativity and who are therefore possibly more aware of how difference is a continually navigated space, are more likely to take into more serious consideration the type of school to which they choose to send their child/ren. It could also be the reason that they are more willing to engage

openly with the school and specifically their child/ren's teacher about their family dynamic is they are used to having to explain their family structure. Conversely, those who live within the framework of heteronormative privilege may tend to be oblivious with regard to their families. Their privilege within this family context has allowed them to blend in and not have to answer questions. This may also mean that they are not as well equipped to answer questions about their family because until such time as they decided to adopt transracially, their family relationship dynamics were not questioned, as they did not stand out socially.

Johnson (2001), whose work focuses on privilege, highlighting the manner in which this plays out in society and the dangers thereof, proposes the idea that "ignoring privilege keeps us in a state of unreality, by promoting the illusion that difference by itself is the problem" (Johnson, 2001, p. 16) Some parents who do not disclose or choose to acknowledge that their adoption is public and that their transracially adopted child is black, seem to have the idea that if difference is ignored, all other implications and associated questions will cease to exist. Johnson (2001, p. 34) goes on to explain that from the position of privilege a person "is to be allowed to move through your life without being marked in ways that identify you as an outsider, as exceptional or 'other' to be excluded or included but always with conditions." For a white heterosexual this element of privilege may remain largely unquestioned or challenged, hence they may not feel the need to explore possible aspects around their child's transracial adoption nor feel the need to make mention of it on school application forms.

5.1.4 Society and the Broader Conversation – "...the dialogue needs to start with people learning about adoption..." – P10.

Participants were asked where in broader society they felt the conversation about transracial adoption needed to be initiated or continued, followed by a very searching question by the researcher asking "Is there anything else that you feel is worth mentioning?" Responses to this question tended to link to the last formal question. It is for this reason that the analysis of these questions has been combined. This informal method of questioning also served as a means to 'check-in' with the interview participants and to allow them to voice any other topics of interest or concern which they felt were worthy of discussion.

Parents raised concerns about the perceptions and stereotypes associated with transracially adopted children and people who choose to adopt. Issues of language were raised; including

does the transracially adopted child need to learn a black, South African language and how do they navigate this space, as well as concerns about language sensitivity when speaking about adoption and adopted children. Parents also felt that there needs to be an open conversation forum: a place for both adoptive parents and their transracially adopted children to meet and interact with each other. While adoption support groups do exist, both in reality and online, the inference in these comments is that this interaction needs to move beyond these platforms or to develop into more productive and robust spaces of interaction. The concept of culture and identity were also raised but, this aspect will be explored under a separate heading. The absence of literature on adoption in South Africa, across all spectrums was raised, echoing sentiments of the earlier discussion on this point. Books for adults are slowly emerging, but these tend to be adult adoptees stories and therefore may not necessarily help to answer or reflect the questions of transracially adoptive parents of young children in South Africa.

5.1.4.1 The Perceptions and Stereotypes

Parents commented that the broader public tends to perceive their child as being “blessed”. The insinuation in such an utterance being that the child is blessed to have been adopted, specifically transracially as they, the black child, are now part of a white family and from this position is the assumption that white privilege is by virtue of this bestowed on the transracially adopted child. There is further assumption that the adopted child should be grateful for this opportunity. Comments of this nature position the adoptive parents as ‘rescuers’ of their child. It is perceived that they are essentially doing a good deed, rather than that adoption is a means through which to create a family; a choice made for a variety of reasons. These can include the choice not to procreate, when fertility issues are present, or for people who are not willing to undergo invasive medical procedures, for whatever reasons, in order to conceive a child. For them adoption is an option to create a family.

South Africa has one of the highest rates of HIV infections in the world, with an estimated 7.1 million people living with the disease in the country in 2016 (www.avert.org). Parents of transracially adopted children, particularly if the child was adopted during infancy, reported that people assumed that their child was HIV+. A parent explained that they had been warned of this presumption during an adoption workshop, but that she had rejected the idea as ridiculous, but had then experienced it herself. The parent relates an encounter in which another mother peered into her pram, as mothers tend to do, and then asked the adoptive

mother if her daughter was well. Knowing what a question of this nature inferred, having been warned at adoption seminars, the adoptive mother commented “I was furious, how dare she ask me that, because I knew what she was implying because we had been warned” (P 1). This conversation also highlights that boundaries which are seldom crossed in the case of a same-race baby, are seemingly ‘allowed’ to be crossed in the event of a transracially adopted infant.

It is at this point, due to the racial aspects of transracial adoption and the assumptions which tend to be made based on race, that the gap emerges to explore the constructs of the black and white mother. This conversation ties into the perceived idea that white women are positioned as the saviours of vulnerable or abandoned black babies through the process of adoption.

Dorothy E. Roberts (2009), based in the United States of America, wrote an article about the implications of genetic technologies and the ramifications which these technologies potentially have on those who can afford to access them and those who can’t. In this discussion Roberts (2009) brought to the fore that divisions of access fell along the lines of race. It is generally the white, privileged and financially well-off woman who makes use of these technologies during her pregnancy. In contrast the author noted that poorer women of colour were excluded from accessing such technologies. In this instance the technologies included reproductive assistance frequently resulting in high-risk, multiple births. A quick YouTube search on multiple births appears to be in agreement with this observation; the vast majority of multiples are white babies, born to white, heterosexual parents.

In relation to adoption and specifically in the South African context where the white minority adopts from the black majority, the constructs of black and white mothers needs to be considered. It should be noted that these constructs stem from deep-rooted racial ideologies and stereotypes of black and white female sexuality. This concept of sexuality along racial lines is raised by Roberts (2009, p. 785) in which she comments “stereotypes of black female sexual and reproductive irresponsibility support welfare reform and law enforcement policies that severely regulate poor black women’s sexual and childbearing decisions.” Within the South African context it is necessary to take the colonial and apartheid ideologies into consideration in relation to the constructs of sexuality and therefore of reproduction. McClintock (1995) reminds us that from the ‘ideal’ of the white male, all other groups were able to map out their position within the social hierarchy which operated largely during colonial times, through apartheid and whose ideals still linger in society. The work of

Gunkel (2011) picks up the discussion around sexuality and the expectations around women's sexuality on the basis of race. Gunkel (2011) explains that black women were perceived to be overly sexual and sexualised and positioned to be deviant in expression of their sexuality. By contrast white women were positioned to be sexually passive and obedient to the social mores which regulated their expression thereof. In this sense the race of these two groups of women contrasts their assumed expression of sexuality and sexual activity. In this sense black women are seen as deviant and white women as the epitome of sexual purity. It is at this point that the gap opens up for different constructions of mothers and motherhood to arise. Responses along the lines of irresponsibility and negligence which emerge when a baby is abandoned are able to take root in the lingering ideas about the sexuality of black women as discussed above. In this manner positioning the white adoptive mother as a saviour and the black mother, who may have abandoned her child or consented to the adoption, as irresponsible and someone who has created a social ill which needs to be taken care of.

5.1.4.2 The Language Debate

The first aspect around language raised the issue of whether a transracially adopted child should be expected to speak a black, South African language and in the event that they are not able to do so, how this space should be navigated. Parents raised the following points "I think a lot of the encounters with regards to race that he has are not so much with regards to race, it's that he doesn't speak an African language; he doesn't speak one of the indigenous languages of the country" (P9), "I want to make sure that if and when L wants to meet her birth mom that she is not alienated by her class reality or her linguistic reality, that there is a way of feeling comfortable that I haven't produced the very condition that disallows a relationship" (P 11) and "...like language becomes a barrier [...] so in Hillbrow, kids will always be surprised that J does not speak Zulu or a kind of mix of urban African languages..." (P 5.1). In these encounters the transracially adopted child will have to explain why they do not speak a language which their skin colour by assumption, indicates that they should speak. For the adoptive parents it is a process of navigating the space between skin colour and language assumptions and barriers.

Wilson and Summerhill-Coleman (2013) explored the stories of international adoptees and their visit to the country of their birth; namely Korea (the authors did not indicate whether their research was conducted in North or South Korea). In the South African context, where

the transracial adoption has taken place in the country of birth this is not necessary, however, there are sentiments uttered by the international adoptees that resound in the South African context, especially with regard to a spoken language and the assumptions made on the basis of skin colour. The authors explain that Korean adoptees, on arrival in Korea, have to negotiate “feelings of ‘otherness’ within their birth country and experience increased distress with the simultaneous identities of ‘native’ and ‘foreigner’” (Wilson & Summerhill-Coleman, 2013, p. 264). This idea of ‘native’ and ‘foreigner’ is rooted in both appearance and a language barrier. To native Koreans the adoptees looked like them and therefore they assumed that the adoptee spoke the local language. At this point the adoptee had to decide how to position themselves in the given context.

A Spanish adoptee interviewed by Angela Tucker (2016), in her *Adopted Life* series, explained that she navigated the language assumption by speaking a few simple sentences in Spanish and then hoped for a gap to explain that she was adopted, tentatively trusting that this would suffice as an explanation as to why she was unable to continue the conversation, despite looking Spanish. The same may occur in the South African context, because a child has a black skin it may be assumed that he or she will be able to speak at least one of the African languages spoken in the country. As transracial adoption is still relatively new in South Africa, the experiences of children from these families are, as yet, not well documented. This leaves a void for further research to be conducted. Research of this nature could assist future transracial adoptees and their parents to navigate the space around language and its associated implications.

During the apartheid era, language was used as a means of oppression within the education system. Since democracy, therefore, the South African education policy has sought to promote the eleven official languages of the country (Taylor & Coetzee, 2013) and to foster a sense of pride in the diversity of the nation’s languages (Olivier, 2009). Taylor and Coetzee (2013) explain that in South Africa children from grades 1 to 3, the Foundation Phase of the school system, have the opportunity to be taught in their mother tongue in the event that the child has been sent to a school where this is the language policy. The alternative is for children to attend a school where English or Afrikaans is the medium of instruction from grade one. The authors note that at the time of writing their article in 2013 and which is still relevant in 2018, non-language subjects which are studied to the level of matriculation are examined in either English or Afrikaans. Pupils are therefore required to have a sound knowledge of either one of these languages in order to perform effectively in their

examinations. In South Africa there is no prescription which of the eleven official languages are to be offered as a First Additional Language (FAL) at a school, either through legislation or education policy (Taylor & Coetzer, 2013). Rather, the decision of which language is to be offered at a particular school rests with School Governing Body. For schools where neither English nor Afrikaans is the medium of instruction from grade one, one of these languages is likely to be selected as the First Additional Language of the school. In the event that either English or Afrikaans is the medium of instruction, the additional language taught has to be selected from one of the eleven official languages of the country.

The option to learn one of the African languages at school level, especially in the case of the transracially adopted child, providing that their parents know which language the child's birth parent/s spoke, will allow the child to learn, at least initially, basic communication skills in that language. The child will then be equipped to reply to people who assume, on the basis of the colour of the child's skin that they speak a black, African language. Learning an African language is a benefit not limited to the transracially adopted child, but also extends to other racial groups in the country. However, due to the content of this research, the focus has been on the transracially adopted child. As there is little or no research around this topic, is it not known whether learning a language like this may result in similar circumstances as was described in the work of Wilson and Summerhill-Coleman (2013). What is evident is that discussions around language are complex and multifaceted and in relation to this discussion, require further investigation.

The other language issue which arose was the language which people use when they talk about transracially adopted children. In this discussion, echoes of the sentiments uttered by Park (2006) could be heard. Park (2006) commented on how the adoptive mother is somehow always positioned as to be found 'wanting' despite being found capable of parenting. In asking whether a parent would have a natural child of their own, a similar underlying assumption is expressed. This is seen in the comment "... that is why we use the words biological because there is nothing unnatural about him, even an in vitro baby is a natural child – it's not like they are produced in a machine; so that sensitivity to language is key even when people talk about adoption. And also something like, will you ever have children of your own? Well, D is my own child" (P 10). The power of words and the implications that they carry, cannot be underestimated and there is an apparent need to make the public aware that certain phrases, are often unintentionally offensive and insensitive.

5.1.4.3 A Space for Conversation

A number of the participants mentioned the need for a network of similar families, either through support groups, friendship groups or more formal programs. The idea and purpose of such networking was most aptly captured in the comment "... we also then have to find a way to have conversations around transracial adoption in which the growing number of adopted kids are able to articulate their own experiences and have a part in the conversation..." (P 11). Transracially adopted children in South Africa currently range in age from infants to early/mid-twenties, due to the changes to adoption laws since South Africa became a democracy in 1994.

Angela Tucker, a transracial, adult adoptee in the United States of America, has produced a series of video interviews with transracially adopted children in America. In one of the interview videos with child adoptees, an adoptee reflected on his response to other people's response when they found out he was adopted. The child explained that when met with a euphoric exclamation, he said "I try to kind of lower my voice, to make it seem a bit more quiet, calm and to de-escalate the positive intensity that they have" (Tucker, 2016). Another adoptee expressed that "he desired to be around other adoptees; however, he did not want to talk about adoption all the time" (Tucker, 2017). This resulted in the formation by Tucker of the Adoptee Mentorship Program; a space for adoptees to just spend time together, but not necessarily to talk about adoption. It is through networking that children in families formed through transracial adoption may feel they are more able to articulate their experiences and know that the people they are interacting with may be able to understand them in a way that other people cannot.

5.1.5 Race, Class and the Transracially Adopted Child – "Mommy, I am a coconut!" (P 3)

The above quote is an extract from one of the parent interviews. The parent related how her daughter came home and announced "Mommy, I am a coconut!" The immediate response of the parent was to question who had used this term in reference to her child as she was ready to go to the school and confront the person. On arrival at the school the next morning, the mother learned that the theme for the week at school was 'Fruit' and that her daughter, when asked to select which fruit she would like, chose the coconut. In the words of the mother "The fruit was entirely innocent!" It was this double meaning: the juxtaposition of total

innocence and a rather derogatory slur, in which the reference is made to a black person who, while their skin colour denotes that they are black behaves in ways which are attributed to white people, which lent itself to the title for this subsection of research. Language is a powerful tool and connotations of words and phrases have far reaching implications.

Despite the amusing element to the anecdote above, the difficulties of race and class discussions in relation to the transracially adopted child, specifically in South Africa, cannot be glossed over or dismissed. Parents were asked how they engaged in discussions about race with their children. From the responses to this question, the following emerged: with very young children race was omitted from the discussion, while cultural / ethnic grouping labels used in the event this was relevant to the family group, stereotypes and prejudice were discussed. There was a tendency to focus on a glossy image of diversity, rather than tackling the topic of race head on and for some families it is an on-going conversation as and when issues pertaining to race arise. The work of Wright (1998) noted, in relation to child-rearing literature, that there is little to no mention of how to speak to children about race. Wright (1998, p. 4) places emphasis on the importance of this conversation commenting, “this oversight is lamentable because, along with gender and social class, race shapes a child’s life more than anything else.” This is an important consideration to bear in mind as the components of the race conversation in this research are explored. The components of this conversation can be grouped under the following three headings: school incidents, the class / race dynamic and issues encountered within the extended family.

5.1.5.1 School Incidents

Very few parents commented that their child had been involved in or was on the receiving end of a racially based incident in their school environment. In the event that these had taken place, the parents explained that their children were not particularly concerned about the incidents and rather that it was they as parents, who were aware of the underlying implications in the utterances of other children. In both instances, the parents attributed their child’s lack of concern to the fact that they did not possess the vocabulary to comprehend why it was that they had been singled out. Tuan and Shiao (2011) who studied, through a series of in-depth interviews, the lives of Korean adoptees who had been raised in the United States of America, noted that these adoptive parents battled to effectively handle racially based incidents involving their children which occurred at school. The parents who

participated in this research and who explained these incidents, mentioned that they themselves felt offended on their child's behalf, but that their child was not interested in discussing the incident any further. Wright (1998) offers another position on racial incidents and how parents reactions impact on the experience of the child who is involved in the situation. Wright (1998) takes note that young children, especially those who are of pre – school age (below 6 years old) usually do not possess the vocabulary or comprehension skills to fully understand what has been said to them. In instances like this the child will turn to the adult in their lives, usually a parent, to act as an 'interpreter' of the incident. Wright (1998) explained that the emotions and responses of the adult act as a cue to the child as to how they should respond. If the adult is upset or angry about the event, this is likely how the child will interpret this situation. If the adult remains calm, the child in turn will remain calm. In relation to the parents who made reference to incidents which took place at school which they interpreted as racial, the fact that they as parents did not react in a manner that their child interpreted as angry or upset; at least not in the presence of the child, allowed the children concerned to move through the situation without engaging with it in a manner that was beyond their comprehension. The responses of the South African parents mentioned above may also indicate that these parents are aware of the racial constructs in South African society and they are willing, should the need arise, to speak to their child about race and racism. No further explanations or indications of how they would address these issues in the event that they should arise again, were provided by the parents who raised this point of discussion.

5.1.5.2 Class / Race Dynamics

Tuan and Shiao (2011, p. 3) explain that "race has very real and tangible consequences in people's lives because it informs where they are located in a larger hierarchy of power, privilege and preference." This statement relates to observations made by a number of the parents who were interviewed about the concept of class / race dynamics and the transracially adopted child. One parent commented that their child made the following observations, remarking "Wow, you get white policeman!" (P 5.2) and that their child was also concerned that he would have to grow up and become a refuse collector as this was a role that he had seen being performed only by black men. The parents in this interview also commented that within the racial groups in their children's school there were class segregations between those

children who lived with an aunt or a grandparent in order to attend school in the city, but visited their mother, who lived in a rural area, during the school holidays and those children who were permanent urban residents and lived with their immediate family.

Another parent explained that a question he had often considered was where he should position himself in relation to his transracially adopted child and that there were experiences which he as a white father would not be able to comprehend. The parent mused, in discussion with a friend, in relation to this position that “another friend had a good insight, he said you know for all of your adult life and for most of your formative years you were brought up in a system that was racially biased [...] so ja, I had to perhaps understand my own bias” (P 6). Within this comment is the realisation and consideration by the parent, that due to his white skin and the associated experiences and privileges which are embodied therein, that there are aspects of his child’s life that he as a white parent will never be able to fully comprehend. An awareness of this nature may allow parents to more openly and willingly engage in this space of the unknown in response to the experiences of their child as they grow up.

A parent explained that she openly engages in the topic of race with her son. She explained that they have talked about prejudice and discussed that the comments which were made were directed at her child because of his skin colour. The comments included “You know I have had strangers make stupid comments like “oh well, perhaps you can teach him some manners, indicating that deep seated prejudice that just comes basically from ignorance, but on a day to day basis we seem to be weathering the storm” (P 9). This comment highlights that race and racism is still present and needs to be continually addressed in South Africa.

The work of Butler (1997) needs to be taken into consideration in relation to the above conversations which parent/s have had with their child/ren. Butler (1997) engages with the notion of power and the force which it is able to exert on a subject and the implications thereof. This concept of power and its presence in language links back to the earlier discussion in the work of Foucault (Philips & Jorgensen, 2002). In her work, Butler (1997, p. 2) explains that “power imposes itself on us, and, weakens us by its force, we come to internalize or accept its terms.” The question to be asked here is how does this statement link into the above discussions? In the comments of the child who observed and was surprised that white policemen existed and also discovered that when he grew up he would not have to be a refuse collector, despite his observations that it was a job which only black men appear to do, the concept of power is present. The power dynamic which has essentially been

internalised, possibly at a subconscious level of the child, until such time as it was vocalised, is that due to the nature of his skin colour he may be expected to take up certain positions in society. This reflects an idea expressed by Althusser and is explored in the work of Butler (1997); namely that of interpellation. Althusser explains this concept through the following example

A policeman hails a passerby on the street, and the passerby turns and recognizes himself as the one who is hailed. This exchange by which that recognition is proffered and accepted, interpellation – the discursive production of the social subject – takes place (Butler, 1997, p. 5).

The child in the above discussion, questions how he was expected to engage with and possibly escape the position which he felt, due to external social observations which he had made, is he to avoid becoming the subject in this position. In this sense the child may, by raising questions, unknowingly be challenging the concept which Butler (1997, p. 2) refers to as “subjection”. In this process Butler (1997, p. 2) explains that “subjection signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject.”

In relation to the discussion about comments directed at her child from outsiders, comments which were clearly of a racist nature, the work of Butler (1997) can also be taken into consideration. How does this power dynamic work in this situation? Those expressing racist sentiments can be seen to be trying to assert a sense of assumed power due to the racial category and the ideas which they choose to embody from this position, by the use of the language which they choose to express their utterances. Butler (1997, p. 3) comments that “in each case, power at first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject’s self-identity.” As the parent indicated that she was aware of the prejudice from which these comments stemmed, she could effectively engage with her child and assist him to navigate his way through this external power dynamic, in order to avoid the incident from becoming a part of his identity. This does not mean that this language does not have an impact on the child, but he is provided with the tools and an opportunity to challenge these assumptions. The child must develop the skills necessary to challenge dominant narratives and ideas within a society. It may not be easy, but the space for this conversation needs to be created. It is unacceptable for a parent merely to be “weathering the storm” in relation to the language used in discussions

about her transracially adopted child and her family unit. This language and power dynamic should not go unchallenged.

In each of the stories above which were relayed by the parent/s they explained how they responded to the comments and discussion and in this manner, sought to redirect the child to the realisation that, while the dominant narrative may cause them to feel positioned in a specific manner, an alternative does exist. Through these discussions, it is evident that the role of the parent/s in informing and assisting to construct a sense of family and belonging, is a key component in the development of the identity of the child.

The last parent explained that in the home, race is always open to discussion and that it is part of everyday conversation. This parent took the conversation to a more personal level and was able to navigate it within the framework of the relationship that she has with her daughter. She explained, with reference to her race and that of her daughter, “I want it to be really clearly articulated in the context of our relationship” (P11). It was further explained that as a parent, she is aware that her daughter may seek to develop a relationship with people who look like her. This was evident in the comment “I am very, very mindful that part of my job is to be totally ok with her having a massive dis-identification from me at some point in her life and an investment in other adult figures” (P11).

From the above comments it is evident that many of the parents are aware that the race of their adopted child is an important feature in their identity and that it is something that must be addressed directly. In this space the parent is made to directly confront their own stance on race, as well as being brought into an awareness of the dynamic which race and subsequently class positionality bring to the fore.

This concept of realisation was captured in an honestly, reflexive blog entry by Oestrich (2017), an adoptive mother of a black child, in which she juxtaposed her son’s adoption story, the one of the day she met her child – with the harsh realities of her fears for her transracially adopted son growing up in America and the prejudices and dangers which he faces because of his skin colour. Oestrich (2017, p. unknown) comments

Do you want to know how he was a twinkle in our eyes before we held him [...] Or do you want to know how I wake up with fear clawing at my stomach every morning – fear that my beautiful brown son may not come home safe today [...] My heart knows what my head refuses to admit: that I’m powerless to protect my son’s

beautiful brown body from senseless act of violence – from the systemic racism that stalks his every step

(Oestrich, 2017, p. unknown).

Tuan and Shiao (2011) perhaps capture this conundrum of race and the seemingly silent component of assumed and associated class categories stating “race has very real and tangible consequences in people’s lives because it informs where they are located in a larger hierarchy of power, privilege and preference” (Tuan & Shiao, 2011, p. 3). Returning to the comment by the transracially adopted child who thought his destiny was to be a refuse collector, it is evident that without being overtly taught about jobs and access to position, he arrived at the assumption that it was his lot in life to expect this form of employment. The child had internalised his race to mean a certain division in the job market. The power of the dominant narrative is evident.

5.1.5.3 Extended Family

Racism and racist conversation was something that parents frequently had to address with their extended family members who did not always share the excitement and joy of the adoption of a child, specifically a transracially adopted child, into the family. Parents explained “...the racism, I mean unfortunately, my sister is not part of my family – it was one of those typical family environments...they are complete racists any way” (P 1), “...at a lot of family events um there is racist talk, there is talk of the ‘other’, there are those generalised comments and J and N must overhear some of that [...] It is the unconsciousness of other family members, we had a bit of a family issue and an aunt turned around and said “But J isn’t black” [...] so they tend not to see them so, it opens that space that we can talk this way, that almost over colour-blindness...” (P5.1 & 5.2) and “My family were in the beginning quite weird about it. Interestingly my grandparents – one grandmother I thought would be most open to it, was the one who was not open to it, while the other who I thought would not be open to it, was most open to it!” (P 10).

Manifest in these comments is that race and racialised thinking is still prevalent and that the transracially adopted child can become the pivotal point on which these assumptions turn. Tuan and Shiao (2011) articulate this notion explaining

Racial hierarchy persists into the present in ways in which whites accept non-whites into their social networks, neighbourhoods and even families: primarily as individuals shorn off their groups, that is, as exceptions to unchallenged attitudes, assumptions and beliefs about their race or ethnic ancestry

(Tuan & Shiao, 2011, p. 7).

This is particularly evident in the comments by family members who took an overly colour-blind stance, giving them a space to continue talking as they felt inclined because they disregarded the race of the children. It is apparent that there are still many conversations in relation to race which need to be tackled within families, extended families and also in the broader society.

From the above conversations it is evident that there are many dynamics at play in conversations about various aspects of the adoption dialogue. As it is evident this conversation moves into the school section of the discussion, there is room to see how the conversations from within the family unit extend into the school environment and how these in turn are navigated by both the transracially adopted children and their teachers.

5.2 Teacher and Comparative Discussions

This section explores the content of the interviews which were conducted with the teachers at the schools which agreed to participate in this research. The headings used in this section, like those which were used in the discussion on the parent interviews, were generated from interview questions. Quotes taken from this set of interviews, as in the previous section, were used in each heading. In this section the exploration of commonalities and differences between the responses of the two groups of research participants, parents and teachers, will also be drawn. It is within these gaps and overlaps in the conversation that ideas form through language and from where a narrative in relation to family is generated will be explored. This will be considered in relation to the research topic in which the construction of the idea of family through language is being considered.

5.2.1 Concept of Family “...*family is family*...”- S3 T3

Teachers were asked about their understanding of the term “family” and then specifically in relation to families formed through the process of transracial adoption. The general response was a very broad understanding of the term, with little or no reference to a blood or genetic relationship being considered a vital element in what makes a family. This was evident in comments such as “a family is people who live within the same environment and spend a lot of time together” (S1 T1), “...basically just your people” (S2 T1) and “just a bunch of people that are together that help each other out” (S3 T2). These were the responses to part one of the question; the understanding on the concept of family. There was, however, a subtle change when the aspect of adoption was brought into the equation. Teachers made comments such as “So I am all for it (transracial adoption), it just takes a special kind of person who is prepared to do it” (S2 T2), “...make that child feel as part of their family as any ‘normal’ child would...” (S3 T2) and “I also just think at times people are overly sensitive to it, so they don’t necessarily assume or speak about family [...] because their family doesn’t look like everybody else’s family” (S1 T1).

The comments above reflect an understanding of family as put forward by De la Rey *et al* (1997) who provide a broad concept of family, which is not defined to exclude members on the basis of a blood connection. Once the aspect of adoption was added to the conversation, sentiments like those expressed by Bowes (2010), in which the author reflected that she tends to feel that her family is positioned as the ‘rescuers’ of their transracially adopted child, began to emerge. While this statement was not overtly conveyed by the interviewed teachers, innuendos of these sentiments are present. These innuendos may echo sentiments which position black and white mothers and the associated, yet potentially, unvoiced assumptions of each of these groups as was previously discussed.

When, at the end of the interview, teachers were asked if there was anything else that they felt was worth mentioning, an interesting trend in comments emerged. The reason that this conversation is being taken into consideration at this point in the discussion is because it relates to the conversation around family. The perception “*if it quacks like a duck,*” became apparent in each of these discussions. In the event that the transracially adoptive family is able to fit into the imagined, Western ideology of family and an aspect of familiarity emerges, namely a heteronormative family unit, teachers generally expressed sentiments that they felt that they were able to simply carry on with the teaching programme. In this instance

heteronormative privilege came into play and was conferred to the transracially adopted child as well. In the heteronormative framework, ideas that parents had done a 'good deed' for the child by adopting them emerged more strongly. In this way the parents were positioned as rescuers of the child; a positionality that parents who participated in this research sought to reject.

If a transracially adopted child was part of a same-sex family, there was an element of slight discomfort on the part of the teacher or the need to express concerns about issues which are perceived to arise in such families such as these. In conversation with S1 T1, she discussed a number of families which had come through her classroom and in these discussions it was evident that when the family dynamic was easy-going and tasks in the classroom context were not challenged, the family was fine. An aspect which a teacher found challenging was when a parent of a transracially adopted child expressed concerns that worksheets sent home did not reflect an image of his child, but rather that of a white child.

Where a complicated, difficult or non-heteronormative family was involved, a different narrative became apparent. As a follow-up to the conversation, the same teacher made the following comment, which ties together the conversation around heteronormative privilege and the negotiation of this space "... you know maybe it is more, just comfortable for the boys, because he refers to B as his mom and so it is kind of normalised..."(S1 T1). (A comment made in reference to a gay, single parent family dynamic). This family dynamic was considered 'normal' as there were role players to fulfil the given 'norms' – that of a mom and dad – despite the fact that neither of the people assigned to these roles actually fulfilled them in the traditional sense: that of a heterosexual marriage. The primary care-giver and legal guardian of the child in question and who answered to the label 'dad' was a gay man, while the woman labelled 'mom,' was actually a godparent to the child in question.

Absent from the conversation about family was mention of the single parent, specifically the single mother. Parents who occupied this position were not mentioned by the teachers at all. In the conversations with various teachers it was made evident that there were single parents whom they had encountered in their teaching careers who had adopted transracially, but this was not an aspect that they considered note-worthy or even worth raising as a point of discussion. This is contrary to the work of Mannis (2008), who explored the experiences of the single adoptive mother in the United States of America, where it was found that the mothers needed to explain their decision to parent alone or felt constantly under the public

gaze and the subject of speculation about their parenting decisions. Teachers made no mention about concerns or observations of single parent/s, and if a comment was made about a parent it was usually with reference to their sexual orientation, rather than their single-parent status.

It was the presence of same-sex parent/s that created the space for comments, concerns and reservations to be raised by the teachers. Jennings *et al* (2014) pick up on this discussion, specifically in reference to gay men who become parents, indicating that they face the challenges of parenting as men within the framework of societal expectations of a heteronormative family structure and its associated 'norms'. It is apparent that these sentiments were present in the conversations with teachers.

5.2.2.1 Is Family Really just Family?

From this discussion and those with parents, it is apparent that both parents and teachers gave very broad explanations as to what they considered to be a family. No specific definition was offered. There was, however, a point of difference which emerged. The difference was subtle, but obvious.

For the parents, the family unit in which they raise their children this is their reality. For these groups this is the label that they apply. In conversations about family, many of the parents chose to acknowledge that their adopted child/ren had biological parents; that they had been carried in the womb of another woman. The level at which this woman, was mentioned or discussed varied from parent to parent and appeared dependant on what they knew of the birth mother, combined with their child/ren's level of curiosity about her. The biological father was not someone who was discussed, he was acknowledged fleetingly as his presence was relevant only in the process of creating the child. Located in this conversation is the covert implication that it is the mother who is the primary care-giver. This concept carries over into the discussion around motherhood and the way that this identity serves to position women in society and the role that they are expected to fulfil.

Teachers were asked a two-part question with regards to the concept of family; firstly their understanding of the term and secondly its application to the transracial adoptive families. In response to the first part, teachers offered ideas which mirrored those of the parents who were interviewed. It was at the point that the adoptive family became the unit, that this term was

applied. Some teachers appeared to battle to reconcile their theoretical concept of a family with the reality of the family unit formed through transracial adoption.

It must be noted that teachers, despite possible hesitations around the concept of alternate family structures, were, especially in the Foundation Phase (grades R to 3), willing to source material which reflected a variety of family groups including those that were present in their classes.

The idea of sharing resources and information by the parent was raised in conversations with teachers. Teachers appreciated it when parents were willing to share resources which they had found to be helpful in navigating the conversation about family and various family structures. While it is note-worthy that parents who were part of alternative family structures were willing to provide teachers with general information about their family, it was evident that they did not appear to feel the need to divulge information about the manner in which they discussed how society may perceive their family or the terminology which they used to describe their family unit. The same-sex, two-mom family, used words and terminology which people in broader society may use in reference to their family and relationship in conversation with their child. The reason for this was to make the child aware of these terms and how she could possibly enter into conversations in the event that these arose. The parent who was interviewed did not indicate that this specific information was relayed to the school or the teachers who would teach their child during the course of the school year.

Evident in this comparative conversation is that the gap between the theory of a family and the reality of the family units which are present in school classrooms is beginning to blend, but that there is still a gap which needs to be broached. The resolution of this challenge lies potentially in the access to resources; private schools have the financial means to access these teaching tools, while less well-resourced and financially sound schools may not have access to these resources.

The other aspect which needs to be challenged and which may be more challenging is that of the personal stance of teachers. It is far more difficult to challenge what a person believes and thus bridge their theoretical application of a concept, than to question their response to reality when it is presented to them.

Many of the teachers appeared to be receptive to parental input in the form of resources and perhaps this could be developed into a more formal workshop-style conversation, creating a

space for other teachers to engage with parents whose lived reality is in fact this type of family structure. As was noted in the work of Lubbe (2007b) schools are places which can effectively act as a microcosm of broader society and reflect its ideas. Msila (2007) echoes the reminder that schools are in the position to challenge what have become the social norms within the society in which they operate. By creating a space for conversations about different family structures and the terminology which is applied to them, taking into consideration how parents have tackled these conversations and the vocabulary which was used, teachers may be empowered to engage in conversations in the classroom environment to more effectively and openly. The work of Robinson and McMillan (2006) reminds the reader about the manner in which teachers are taught their profession and the implications that this can have for the students who they will encounter and the manner in which they will teach them.

Conversations which could possibly address this gap in the family conversation could use the guidelines to having a complex and potentially challenging conversation presented in the work of Tatum (1992) and those of Singleton and Curtis (2005).

5.2.2 Details at the Start of the Academic Year *“I probably would want to know terminology” – S3 T3.*

Teachers were asked if at the start of the academic year they would like to be made aware of any details about a transracially adopted child in their class. Of the 10 teachers who were interviewed, eight said that they would like a few details, while two said that they would not like to know anything. One explained that if there was no need to discuss ‘normal’ families at the start of the year, there should be no difference for a family formed through transracial adoption. The other explained that she would prefer to make judgements for herself as she got to know the children in her class that year, but she was receptive to being made aware if there were concerns or issues that either the parent/s or previous teachers felt were important to convey prior to her teaching a specific child.

Teachers who wanted to be provided with additional information gained it in different ways. At two of the schools there is a handover process from the current year’s teacher to the next year’s teacher at the end of each year. In these meetings necessary information on all

children, regardless of adoption status is conveyed. The teachers said that they found this process to be particularly helpful.

In some instances teachers spoke to the adoptive parents directly and asked them about their family structure, especially in the case of same-sex parents. In these cases teachers specifically wanted to know the name given to each parent to be able to differentiate when speaking to the child and to know who the child was referring to if they talked about one or other parent. This was an aspect which same-sex parents also felt was relevant to convey to their child/ren's teacher. In other instances parents explained their family to the teachers so that they were aware of whom the child was. Parents who visited the teacher were not limited to those in a same-sex relationship, but rather were parents who wanted their child's teacher to be made aware of specific information about their child in relation to their transracial adoption. Teachers mentioned that they found information about family dynamics, especially same-sex parents, to be useful so that days such as Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day could be approached sensitively to ensure that a child was not expected to create a card or gift for a parent who was not a part of his or her family unit. This concern indicates a level of awareness that a heteronormative family is not a given norm in society and that sensitivity is required when celebrating certain events.

5.2.2.2 More than just a School Application?

Questions by parents about the school application process and teachers seeking information about children in their class at the start of the academic year resulted in a distinct gap which pivoted around heterosexuality, although this was not overtly expressed.

As was discussed in detail in the preceding section, parents, predominantly those who were part of a heterosexual marriage, stated that they did not supply the school with any information about their transracially adopted child when they applied for their child/ren to go to school. Parents who fell outside of this relationship structure were more likely to provide the school and specifically their child/ren's teachers, with information about their family specifically, rather than to focus on the adoption aspect. Parent/s offered information about who assumed certain roles in the relationship and the names which were used for each parent. One set of same-sex parents explained that they had met with the staff of the nursery school and pre-school which their child/ren attended, but that at primary school level they had

merely said that their child/ren were part of a two-dad, same-sex family. No further information was provided. These parents commented “it’s just common knowledge at school, there is no need to answer questions – it is what it is [...] I think it is becoming more common and not such a big deal” (P5.2). The other same-sex parent offered similar observations in relation to their application to schools and discussions with teachers stating “...we meet with the teacher at the beginning of every year and we tell them what we are called and who we are and we try to normalise as much as possible...” (P 11). Contrasted to this are comments by heterosexual parents “I am afraid I was one of those get on with it and move on...” (P 6) and “I don’t think so [...] Z’s buddies also knew, they just knew that he had a white mom, you know, and that was like Oh ok” (P 4). It is evident from these contrasting comments that those whose family structures conform to the ‘norm’ of the imagined family unit, are exempt from feeling that they have to provide information about their family and who they are. In this manner a sense of heteronormal privilege appears to be invoked.

For the teachers who stated that they would like information about an adopted child in their class, information was particularly appreciated when it came from the families who did not fit the heterosexual ‘norms’. When adoptive families had a heterosexual structure, teachers wanted to be made aware of topics that the child may be sensitive to with regard to their adoption, so as to tread carefully during class conversations. When it came to alternative family structures however, teachers raised other concerns. These included (with reference to a child transracially adopted by a gay man) “...at school it might be fine, but now that I am saying that, does he go on play dates? I haven’t seen him go home with anybody. Is it easy for other people to be part of that community? I don’t know, it’s quite complicated actually” (S1 T1) and “... the child I am dealing with at the moment definitely, because it is not only an adopted child, but also the family is a, um ja like, there are two fathers and so we need to be made aware of that because of his (the adopted child) age” (S2 T2). These conversations highlighted two distinct points about alternative family structures and teachers.

The first was that teachers, when they are equipped with knowledge about a child’s family unit are able to adapt certain class activities to the needs to that specific child. The second aspect which was exposed through these interviews was the subtle discomfort which is experienced in relation to alternative family structures. While not all the teachers expressed these feelings, it was apparent that the theory of alternative family structures and the reality of dealing with the people who make up these structures differs somewhat.

This opens the space to ask how is this conversation navigated? Does the vocabulary exist and how do teachers actually navigate this space? When parents, especially those in a same-sex relationship, do not provide information regarding the language and terminology that they use within their family unit, navigating a conversation around homosexuality with children when it is raised, can be difficult. The reason for this is that teachers may be unsure of the terms the child is familiar with and precisely what the child understands by them. There is the strong possibility of broaching a conversation topic that parents would prefer not to have dealt with in the school domain and thus inadvertently causing stress and discomfort for the child. Alternatively, outright ignoring questions or actively seeking to divert such conversations may also alert children that there is possibly something taboo about the topic and thus encourage them to continue to engage with the topic. It is apparent from the teachers' comments that they are aware of various forms of family units and that they have encountered them during their teaching careers, however, there was a hint that as teachers they were not always comfortable in engaging in conversation about different families, especially with regard to sexual orientation. This discussion reflects some of the ideas expressed Taymen *et al* (2008) regarding the attitudes of teachers and other professionals who work in the school environment.

For these conversations to change and become more transparent, it is necessary for parents to be more open about the terminology which they use in their family. This was evident in one of the parent interviews, and also for teachers to become more comfortable and familiar with the language which exists for alternative family structures. The language exists however, it is necessary for it to be employed in an appropriate context.

5.2.3 Curriculum Content *"I don't think so, I think we have to go and find that out ourselves"* –S4 T1

The four primary schools which formed part of this research were all private, English medium schools, therefore unlike government schools, they are not obligated to adhere strictly to the content of the CAPS curriculum, but rather are able to use it as a guide line for teaching; an aspect which was raised by a number of the teachers interviewed. This needs to be taken into consideration during the analysis process. Not one of the teachers interviewed felt that there is adequate, if any material, on transracial adoption in the curriculum. Teachers needed to find alternative sources of information in the event that they were teaching a

transracially adopted child and if the theme of families was a topic for class discussion. Due to the financial resources available at private schools accessing these resources was not problematic, however, knowing where to source appropriate resources and which were compatible with the South African adoption context was not necessarily easy. In some instances teachers asked the adoptive parents if they had any resources which they were willing to share. In one instance, at the start of the academic year a parent offered books to the teacher which they as a family had found to be particularly helpful and which they thought she might find useful when teaching her class about families.

Gianino *et al* (2009) in their research around the experiences of adopted teenagers who had been raised by same-sex parents in the United States, found that the manner in which teachers are equipped and trained to handle broader social issues was often lacking and that opportunity existed, for further education of the school teaching and administration bodies. The schools which took part in the research were receptive to questioning. What was evident in the answers of the teachers is that there is space to learn more and thus be better equipped to handle such conversations. They need to be provided with a language toolkit and the skills to navigate these conversations in an open and honest manner; a manner that critically engages with the subject. Tayman *et al* (2008) expressed a similar idea with regards to the teachers perceptions of adopted children, of which there is little known. However, from the interviews conducted with this group of teachers it appears that they do not harbour bias towards or against transracially adopted children specifically; it is the aspects of their family structures which create the challenges which have to be addressed. The language used in these conversations may contribute to the understanding of the concept of family which the transracially adopted child may continue to form. Such conversations may also create challenges for the child and it is therefore vital that the language used is carefully considered.

5.2.4 The Abandoned Baby Conversation *“I would steer clear of the word abandonment”* – S3 T2.

Why bring up the topic of abandoned babies and what relevance does this have on the research which was conducted? The reason that this question was posed is that a high number of babies are abandoned in South Africa and these babies may be adopted locally and therefore come through the schooling system.

Of the 10 teachers interviewed, seven were willing to engage in a discussion around abandonment, while three attempted to divert the conversation and to sugar-coat the situation. A few of the teachers have taught children who have been transracially adopted and who had been abandoned as a baby. In conversations with these teachers, it was evident by their tone of voice and facial expressions, that the reality of abandonment and the fact they are able to attach a face to the story had made an impact on them. They were sensitive to conversations of this nature, but did not seek to avoid the conversation entirely.

The teachers who were willing to discuss baby abandonment explained that they would navigate the conversation by allowing the children's questions to lead the conversation and determine the content thereof. The teachers were also aware that a topic of this nature would need to be handled with sensitivity, both with regard to the topic of abandonment as well as that of adoption. This was evident in the comment "I mean obviously you would be sensitive to it, you know, you use the correct language and that, but I probably wouldn't linger on it" (S2, T1) and "I am very much one for talking about, being open and you know what, I would be aware of it and obviously I would be sensitive to that child" (S4, T1). The importance of keeping the conversation and content age-appropriate was also highlighted. The questions posed by the children in the classroom were used by the teacher as a guide to the content and direction of these sorts of conversations.

The three teachers who were not willing to engage in this conversation, explained how they would seek to deflect the conversation to more neutral territory, avoid the question or attempt to bring the conversation to a close as quickly as possible. This is evident in comments such as this one "the other little boys said K hasn't got a mother and he just said: *"I do have a mom, she just can't care for me"*. So I didn't go further, we just stopped it there" (S1, T2). This comment, while not actively engaging in the topic of conversation, highlights the teacher's sensitivity towards the child and the situation which the child finds him or herself. While the idea of using "sugar-coating" was offered as a possible strategy to navigate this conversation, comments offered such as "oh see that one is a tough one [...] you can't say well, put it in a nice way because abandonment is abandonment" (S3, T1), "I would try to steer away from the word abandonment" (S3, T2) and "we don't specifically say things like abandonment [...] mostly we focus on their new family" (S4 T2). Evident in these comments are factors which need to be taken into consideration. The first is the comfort level of the teacher to engage in a conversation of this nature. It is not an easy or pleasant topic to explore, and may challenge the teacher to address their own opinions on the topic and why it

is that they are uncomfortable with a conversation of this nature. The idea of focusing on the ‘new family,’ rather than addressing the possible causes of the abandonment, potentially ties into the conversation which positions the adoptive parent/s as the ‘rescuer’ of their transracially adopted child. It is again a space in which there is a possible need, like those mentioned earlier, for more resources and conversation workshops, to assist teachers in navigating these conversations so that they are more constructive; rather than simply aiming to bring them to an abrupt halt and moving on to the next activity.

The question about abandonment and abandoned babies was not directly asked of the adoptive parents. It is an aspect which would fall under the discussion about the child’s adoption and how they came to be placed in their forever family. None of the parents indicated that their child was an abandoned baby; rather their children had come to be available for adoption for other reasons, such as parental consent to an adoption. Parents explained the different ways in which they engaged with their children about their adoption, an aspect which was dealt with in depth in the parent discussion under the heading *Discussions about family and adoption*.

Both parents and teachers would need to be prepared to confront their own ideas and emotions in response to learning that a specific child had been abandoned as a baby. This reality is never an easy one to come to terms with and to reconcile to the child. From personal experience gained from working for an NGO which catered for the needs of abandoned and vulnerable children in need of permanent placement, in conversations with parents who had been faced with the location at which their child was found, it was evident that this was an emotional situation and one which they needed time to process. In this instance theoretical knowledge and reality collided with brutal force.

5.2.5 Are You Equipped to have this Conversation? *“I would like to think that I am, I don’t shy away from things” – S1 T1.*

Teachers were asked if they felt that they were adequately equipped to handle conversations around transracial adoption. The age and years of teaching experience of the teachers appeared to influence their responses. Those who had more than 10 years of experience tended to make comments such as “I would like to think that I am. I don’t shy away from things. I’m not one of those teachers who goes “oh well that is different, we are not going to

talk about it.” (S1, T1) and “I don’t need to mince words, it is what it is” (S2, T1). One teacher, who was fairly new to the profession, commented “I’m still learning a whole lot, taking in a whole lot of things, but I think eventually when I get a bit more experience I will feel more capable of handling it more effectively” (S3, T1). Most of the teachers who made comments similar to the sentiments uttered by S1 T1 and S2 T1, indicated that with time and experience they were able to gather the necessary vocabulary and confidence to engage in topics which were not always a part of the curriculum, but which arise as children are curious and will ask questions. In other instances, teachers chose to draw on personal experience when they were asked questions about transracial adoption. This was evident in comments such as “because I have been exposed to it, I hope that I would handle it effectively” (S3, T2) and “I am very aware of the questions that have been asked and so I feel that I am fairly well equipped” (S3, T3). In one instance the teacher was familiar with infertility and adoption being a potential option for couples wanting to create family, while another teacher had a family member who had fostered a black child. She used this experience and awareness as a point of reference in discussions around transracial adoption.

Teachers explained that in the event that they were not sure about how to respond to a situation which may arise that they were willing to ask others staff members for assistance, or to engage directly with the adoptive parent/s about how they would like a specific topic handled. This shows that teachers are willing to try to use the language which is used at home in the classroom context in order to create a bridge between these two places and exposing the transracially adopted child to a vocabulary set which is already familiar to them.

With regards to their actual training to become a teacher, none of the teachers commented that transracial adoption specifically was an aspect covered by course material. One of the more recently qualified teachers explained “When I think back to varsity, yes we discussed diversity and things like that, but not really in terms of adoption [...] I do think that it should be part of the general curriculum in terms of varsity, as well as the teachers curriculum in the classroom” (S3, T2).

The concept of teacher training which was raised, specifically that in the work of de Kock and Slabbert (2008), was conducted in a South African university and could be considered in relation to the discussion about whether or not teachers feel that they are equipped to have conversations around topics which relate to transracial adoption in the classroom context. In the event that teachers have been given space to explore their ideas, perceptions and possible

biases towards certain topics, they may perhaps feel better equipped or more knowledgeable about how to enter into conversations of this nature. These are potentially sensitive topics or ones which they may not know too much about and given that children are impressionable, it is vital that teachers feel confident to negotiate such topics.

5.2.6 Race Conversations *“I think one needs to talk about race and that there is diversity” – S4 T1.*

As race is a prevalent topic of discussion in South Africa and taking into consideration the obvious cross racial dynamics of a family formed through transracial adoption, it was necessary to discuss race during the interview process. Teachers were asked: In South Africa, race is a topic which is frequently at the forefront of discussions. How do you engage in conversations about race in the classroom, taking into consideration the position that the transracially adopted child has come to occupy?

This question elicited a variety of responses ranging from a willingness to engage in the conversation to completely colour-blind narratives.

Teachers who commented about race discussions said the following: “I am very open to talking about race. You know, because one person has got a different culture to another person, does that matter, does it mean that we have to put a divide between us? I would encourage it to be honest” (S4, T1) and “it’s extremely difficult, so you have to be open about it, you have to say exactly what happened (context of a discussion on apartheid)” (S2 T2). Evident in these comments is the willingness and ease on the part of one teacher to talk about race. The other teacher, however, appeared slightly reluctant to engage in the topic and suggested: that the origins were external to the school, but conceded that it was a topic which had now taken a position within the classroom, where it had to be addressed. Another teacher alluded to the idea that conversations about race are ones that she would prefer not engage in “I don’t necessarily talk race, more like interests and religion [...] I mean I think it is difficult” (S1, T1). This brings to light, how difficult it is for a teacher in this position, to navigate through his or her own discomfort around a topic in the event that they are in a situation when this conversation arises.

The comments made by other teachers leaned towards the position of a colour-blind narrative and therefore race was not a topic that needed to be discussed or which had arisen in their

classroom context. In some instances the age of the children, specifically in the younger grades, allowed teachers to avoid the topic. This was evident in comments such as “With the little ones it doesn’t really come up that often [...] I think it comes up a lot more in the senior phases” (S3, T2), and “in gr 1 it is not really a topic that we discuss because they are still so little, it is not an issue. It depends on what is being said or what has happened at home – that kind of conversation does come up obviously [...] I approach that kind of thing from everybody is important...” (S4, T). The construct of colour-blindness, a narrative which emerged strongly, was evident in the comments: “It doesn’t even come up. It is a non-issue [...] they are all just kids, they are happy-chappy, they are fine” (S2, T1) and “you know, funny enough, race doesn’t come up in our class [...] so for them it is not actually an issue, which is lovely” (S3, T3). The dangers of this attitude are erasure of racial identity and complexities which need to be acknowledged as real and of significance to the person who occupies the position in which such ideas manifest. Other teachers, who were willing to engage in this conversation explained that they would be sensitive to the transracially adopted child and that they would regulate conversations to ensure they did not reach levels at which the child may feel singled out. A teacher noted in relation to a transracially adopted child “...but like it is so common in society, so he doesn’t feel like he is singled out at all because he is different” (S3, T1). While transracial adoption is not an unusual practice and is fairly common in Johannesburg, as was alluded to in the above comment, there are still narratives – including those around the issue of race and culture - which emerge in relation to transracial adoption and the families formed through this process and these need to be challenged.

A concept which did emerge, was the use of food to label different racial groups in the classroom. This was especially evident in conversation with the younger children; an aspect which was raised by one of the parents who was interviewed. The teacher used the wording in a more tongue-in-cheek manner, rather than as a means to avoid using racial categories to talk about race related matters. This comment captures the conversation which took place in one of the classrooms “We have the peaches and the coffees and the caramels and the browns or chocolates” (S2, T2). The use of food as a means to refer to different racial groups raises an interesting conversation, one which creates an opening to ponder how children develop a sense of racial understanding and in turn learn to apply the labels which are used in relation to different racial groups in society. Wright (1998) explored, in research which was conducted with children in the United States of America who ranged in age from pre – school to primary school age, the different terminology which was used by the different age groups.

Wright (1998, p. 96) observes in relation to age and labels used in reference to race that older children “are less likely to use the idiosyncratic terms that pre-schoolers use, self-descriptives such as “vanilla,” “chocolate,” or “peach.” It should be noted that the children who were mentioned to use these terms by their teacher who participated in this research, had just left pre-school and would therefore have been in an appropriate age range to still be using such terminology.

Authors Quintana (1998), Wright (1998), Jordan and Hernandez-Reif (2009) Sinclair, Dunn and Lowery (2004) and Castelli, Zogmaister, and Tomelleri (2009) offer varying perspectives and research on how children possibly develop and learn a sense of racial categorisation, interpretation and then application of these concepts in the world in which they live. One of the most influential racial experiments was conducted by American psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark during the 1940s. These psychologists used black and white dolls and a series of questions in order to try to determine how children internalised racialised ideas which existed in their society about the racial category to which they belonged (Jordan and Hernandez-Reif, 2009). Since this time there have been various attempts to recreate this experiment and to fine tune it. The reason that it is mentioned here is that it is a point of reference for authors who seek to explore different aspects of how children develop an idea about race and racial categories. The work of Quintana (1998) explored how children developed a sense of understanding about race and ethnicity. Quintana (1998) drew on the concept that as children grow, age and develop so does their ability to comprehend more complex and abstract concepts matures. As race and ethnicity are considered to be more complex and abstract notions to grasp, the author suggests that very young children, those ranging in age from three to six years tended to draw on concepts of which they had a salient grasp, in order to try to comprehend more complex thoughts; in this case racial classification (Quintana, 1998). In relation to young children using food terms to refer to race, this may be an explanation. They are drawing on their knowledge of colour as a classification tool, as they are not able to effectively and comprehensively use racial categories. The work of Wright (1998, p. 29) adds to this conversation, explaining that “food is something with which they are familiar, and so it is not surprising that many of them use words related to food to describe people’s skin colour.” Quintana (1998, p. 30) highlights this concept stating “young, preschool children have been found to prefer the term “Brown” over “Black” when describing African Americans, as the former is more physically descriptive and the latter has a racial connotation of which young children seem unaware.”

The work of Castelli *et al* (2009) and Sinclair *et al* (2004) attempted to determine the sources of influence on the attitudes and understanding which children develop in relation to race and racial categorisation. The assumptions were that children were most likely to learn their attitudes from their parents; however, this did not appear to be the case in young children. Rather, the authors determined that children are more likely to learn their attitudes and vocabulary from their broader social group. In relation to children using names of food items to describe racial groups, this is an aspect they may learn in the context of their school environment. Children tend to be influenced by their peers and if a term is commonly used, it is likely to become part of the vocabulary of the child and will be expressed in the narrative which they employ when speaking about race.

However, despite the findings of the various authors, all tended to caution against presenting concrete ideas about exactly how children develop a sense of racial understanding and apply this to the world in which they live in. This would indicate that there is not a sure way in which to conclusively determine how children develop their ideas and attitudes, as both are abstract concepts and as a young child has a limited vocabulary he or she is unable to fully explain their more complicated thinking processes. Castelli *et al* (2009, p. 590) effectively draw these concepts together by stating that “the transmission of attitudes to children might be amplified any time the potential source of influence is perceived as particularly important by the children, and this leaves open the possibility that other socialisation figures, like teachers, might also take up this role.”

In relation to this research and the comment which prompted this discussion, it is important to consider the influence which teachers may have on the use of this vocabulary. While it is age appropriate for the children who are using it, it may be necessary for teachers to oversee the use of the terms in order to determine that they are not used to promote the exclusion of certain groups of children. The responsibility for the development of a more sophisticated vocabulary with regard to conversations about race and the categorisation of people into racial groups may fall to the teacher. It is at this point that the teacher may possibly be confronted with having to consider how they will address the conversations and how they will deal with their personal stance in the context of such discussions. Conversations about race and race related matters tend to be sensitive topics and they need to be handled with care. It is this vocabulary which will inform future narratives with the potential to be either constructive or harmful, dependent on the words used.

At this point in the conversation it is necessary reflect on aspects which were raised in the literature review chapter and draw on contrasts and similarities in the teachers' conversations within this research.

The first element to take into consideration is the training which the teachers underwent and the time at which such training was completed. Teachers' experience ranged from three to thirty-two years in the classroom. This time frame means that teachers were educated during different periods of the history in the country, a factor which influenced how they were taught to teach and in turn the changes which they as teachers have seen and experienced during the course of their careers. Robinson and McMillan (2006) raise this point of discussion, exploring how teachers' training programmes have changed over the years. Teachers who had taught for a period of approximately twenty-three years or more, dependent on whether they had taught in private or government schools, would have gone from teaching in a racially segregated classroom to a racially integrated one. These teachers have noticed changes in the constructs of the families of the children whom they taught. Stereotypical 'ideals' of family structures – same-race, mom, dad and children – which were previously the norm, are only one of the possible family structures which are seen in classrooms today. Teachers are hopefully becoming more familiar with, if not entirely comfortable, with discussions about such families as they are exposed to them more frequently.

What emerged in conversations with teachers across the range of experience in the profession was that there were no glaring differences in response to questions which were asked during the interview process. This indicates that these teachers were able to adapt to new ways of teaching as well as adapting to teaching children from different racial and family backgrounds. Evidently, change and adaptation is possible. The question to be considered is whether this change is merely at surface level change or whether deeper, internal and personal change is also taking place. This question was not asked of teachers during the research process.

Cochrain-Smith (2000), in research conducted in the United States, explores this concept of change and the level at which it takes place. During the interview process one of the teachers explained that the teaching staff had recently taken part in a diversity workshop which was run at the school. The teacher appeared to have found this workshop to be beneficial as it allowed teachers to ask questions about how to handle topics around difference and race, while trying to make these potentially difficult topics less frightening and more child-

friendly. In meetings with management of two of the schools prior to interviews being conducted with the teachers, the topics of race, racial integration and alternative family structures, as well as sexual orientation emerged in conversations. The management in each of these schools openly discussed how these topics were addressed and discussed within the school environment. The one school regularly holds workshops which address these questions and in this manner allows teachers to learn and become better equipped to handle conversations of this nature. Through workshops like these, teachers are able to gather vocabulary which can facilitate conversations in the classroom. Workshops also create a space for networking to take place and for teachers and other interested parties to share ideas and experiences. The other school management explained that during staff meetings, challenging topics including those of race and privilege were raised as points of discussion. The aim of these conversations, according to the school's management, is to try and create awareness within the staff of privileges and biases which it may hold, without actually being aware of doing so and the impact that these can have on their teaching.

Management noted that initially these conversations met with resistance, but that over time the teachers were generally becoming more receptive to them and therefore more willing to engage in the discussions. In the three schools where conversations of this nature were had, this attitude was reflected in the answers which the teachers gave, especially with regards to conversations around race. The teachers at the only school which did not offer workshops like those which took place in the other three schools, when asked specifically about race, tended to use distancing techniques or relied on the ethos of the school and its overall manner in which issues of race were addressed. It is evident from these conversations that once people have been made aware of ways to have conversations about race this allows them to challenge ideas about race and racial categories which they have and potentially have more well-rounded and in-depth conversations about these topics. This does not mean that conversations are easy or comfortable to have. Wright (1998) noted that prior to teachers engaging in conversations about race, not only do they need to be equipped with sufficient knowledge about that topic, but that "special skills like sensitivity, objectivity, and empathy are essential. Otherwise the teacher can botch the job and do more harm than good to children's developing awareness of race" (Wright, 1998, p. 148). Despite the work of Wright (1998) being based in the United States, the above sentiments can be transferred into the South African context. Teachers need to be equipped with adequate historical knowledge about race before they embark on a conversation about it in the classroom. There is a need to

be aware of the racial legacies which exist in the country and to be aware of their position in relation to this. Conversations such as those mentioned above by management, are a good starting point to equip teachers for more sophisticated race conversations.

With regards to learning and teaching of student teachers, who will become teachers, the work of Tatum (1992) which was conducted with university students in the United States reflects some of the resistance and discomfort which is felt during discussions around race, and possible ways in which this discomfort can be confronted. Tatum (1992) and Singleton and Curtis (2005) drew up similar guidelines, listed below, for how to facilitate such conversations. Both works highlight that in order to have difficult conversations, like those around race, there need to be some guidelines or a framework for the participants to use in order for the conversation to be beneficial. Singleton and Curtis (2005) suggest:

- Stay engaged
 - Experience discomfort
 - Speak your truth
 - Expect and accept non-closure
- (Singleton & Curtis, 2005, p. 58).

At this point it is necessary to return to the work of Cochran-Smith (2000) and consider this conversation in relation to the research undertaken in this project. Cochran-Smith (2000, p. 159) asks the question “...What roles do collaboration, inquiry, self-examination and story play in learning of this kind?” This question was actually posed to student-teacher educators, but can also be applied to the context of teachers already in the profession. This question reflects aspects which were mentioned above in relation to the responses of some of the teachers and discussions with management.

Another factor which needs to be explored, as it too may impact on conversations around race, is the process of integration and the manner in which the school may have addressed this. Three of the schools which participated were established after 1994, while the other was established long before the implementation of apartheid. Soudien (2012) explored three possible routes which the author observed were taken by schools when they had to become racially integrated. The most prevalent approach was assimilation, despite three of the schools, most probably having been racially integrated from their establishment. Assimilation is a process which is explained as “values, traditions and customs of the

dominant group frame the social and cultural context of the school. Everything in the school [...] is measured in relation to the dominant” (Soudien, 2012, p. 136). This concept was evident in the oldest of the schools and the one where no mention of workshops of any nature being offered. This does not necessarily mean, however, that this thinking style is not present in the other two schools, but it was not evident in the interviews. The fact that management was willing to have challenging conversations does tend to indicate that this approach may not be present. In the application of an assimilationist approach schools and therefore the teachers who work in them, are not expected to challenge the dominant norms through which they operate, either within their school or in their private lives. This in turn impacts on the language which teachers use and the manner in which they engage with topics in the classroom.

All of the above aspects contribute to the fashion in which teachers discuss topics and in turn these conversations will shape the ideas that the children in their classes form in relation to the world around them. It is for this reason that it is necessary to take these factors into consideration in the analysis process of this research project.

5.2.6.1 *Ready, Steady, Race?*

The topic of race was addressed with both parents and teachers and in each set of interviews two distinct positions emerged: it is something that is not discussed or it is a topic which is openly engaged with as it arises.

Bloom (2009, p. 195) raises a pertinent thought; “what are the rules of engagement when the truths about our individual selves are so fluid and yet written so indelibly on our skins?” In the South African context the colour of a person’s skin is not an aspect that can simply be overlooked. This brings into focus the discussion about transracially adopted children and the position which they occupy, as well as the manner in which they will have to negotiate conversations about race either directly or indirectly, in relation to themselves. It appears that the age of the child influenced the type of conversation which is held on the subject of race, with both parents and teachers. Thus, it is evident that parents and teachers are aware that topics of importance need to be conducted using language which is appropriate to the age and comprehension levels of the children concerned.

5.2.6.1.1. The Colour-Blind Position

The position of colour-blindness, while not labelled as such, was an aspect that arose in both the interview groups. It was, however, more prevalent in the teachers' replies. Teachers who choose the position of colour-blindness are also able to avoid engaging in meaningful and constructively-disruptive conversations about race. The use of food as a means to explain and label different racial categories, while seemingly useful, does create a space for distancing the subject and subjected within the labeling process. This may indicate that there is a hesitancy to engage with a topic which is perceived to be contentious, especially within the South African context. The topic of race is not only a point of discussion which teachers need to be equipped and encouraged to engage with, it is one which broader society also needs to be encouraged to tackle. A language base can be built which will enable them to explore areas which make them personally uncomfortable and therefore reluctant to engage in conversations on these topics.

The dangers of this position and its long term effects were explored in the work of Hübinette and Anderson (2012) in relation to transracial adoption in Sweden. Gallagher (2003) in an article based on data gathered in the United States of America, explains that by "embracing a colour-blind perspective reinforces whites' beliefs that being white or black or brown has no bearing on an individual's or a group's relative place in the socio-economic hierarchy" (Gallagher, 2003, p. 3). This statement raises valid points which can be transferred into the South African context and specifically into schools in which this research was conducted. As these are private schools, they are attended by children from across the entire racial spectrum in South Africa, because these pupils have parents who have the economic resources to access the education offered at these schools. In this context, colour-blindness is able to flourish as pupils, regardless of colour, can afford to learn in the same environment and therefore teachers are more easily able to assume the colour-blind stance as they can overlook the colour of their pupils' skin because all the pupils are able to afford the school and benefit from these opportunities. Smith, Jacobson and Juárez (2011, p. 42) remind us that merely "teaching individuals to tolerate each other and get along better with each other, obscures the continuity of race-based discrimination." This does not mean that teachers should seek to create a situation where potentially harmful conversations are had about race, but rather that as teachers they need to be made aware of the implications of the manner in which they teach children. By encouraging a glossy, superficial level of conversation, the possibility of a colour-blind ideology may be perpetuated.

Dolby (2000) brings the conversation around race and perceptions of the construct of race to light in research which was conducted in a school based in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. This particular research explored how pupils in a school which had recently become racially integrated, expressed, explored and explained various racial identities. The manner in which teachers attempted to navigate the topic of race was also raised. Dolby (2000, p. 8) explains how the concept of race “has been recast as biology, as culture, as nation and recently as ethnicity, a construction common to the discourse of the rainbow nation.” The idea of the rainbow nation has a lasting effect, however, the reality beneath the veneer is an area which is seemingly approached with a sense of fear and foreboding, or merely ignored, so the rainbow ‘legacy’ continues to exist and therefore continues to allow the space for colour-blindness to hold fast. Dolby (2000) explains further

In South Africa and elsewhere around the globe, race persists; and against the weight of history, politics and society, educators committed to multiculturalism and progressive change try to dislodge, disrupt and undercut its power to create tension and turbulence, conflict and hatred. Yet, many of the common approaches to multiculturalism are flawed, as they rely on an overly simplistic notion of race and difference, which fails to take into account race’s intricacy as a social force. For example Cameron McCarthy (1995) has argued, race cannot be adequately addressed through paradigms that assume it is fixed, stable and essential, or analyses that ignore race’s articulation to class and gender (Dolby 2000, p. 19).

It was these comments from teachers and parent/s that brought to light that colour-blindness and the understanding of race as a construct that does not need to be explored beyond the surface-level which were evident in earlier analysis.

5.2.6.1.2 Open and Willing to Talk about Race

On the other side of this conversation were parents and teachers who were willing to engage in openly and honestly with the topic of race. This openness creates a space to engage with issues pertaining to race and racial innuendos. Parents who were aware of this made comments which reflected an awareness of race, racial ideas and commentaries. One parent remarked that she is aware of racial bias which her daughter may encounter as she gets older “I don’t want to have to tell her that she is going to be judged by people before she even opens her mouth, purely because of the amount of melanin in her skin,” (P 2) she said. Another parent reflected on overt expressions of racism directed towards her son,

commenting as follows: “he has been subjected to comments by people and we speak about things very openly, so you know we will say that people have prejudices and unfortunately in this case this was directed at you, totally unjustified but directed at you” (P 10).

That model of parenting acts as a buffer between the transracially adopted children and the potential barrage of discussions that broader society may have about them, in many instances within the hearing range of the child, is raised by Smith *et al* (2011). The authors observed in their research that “parents serve as mediators of society’s racial knowledge and other forms of knowledge and become the primary interpreters of the existing social structure for their children” (Smith *et al*, 2011, p. 12). This is one of the reasons that parents of transracially adopted children need to become comfortable and be equipped with the necessary information and vocabulary to have these conversations with their children. The work Wright (1998) further contributes to this conversation, the author noted that it is usually the parent to whom the child turns to for support and guidance as to how to handle different situations therefore it is important that this space is carefully negotiated. Children need to be equipped on how to respond in the event that they are asked questions about their family. Children also need to be made aware that they have a right to refrain from answering questions which they are not comfortable responding to.

Peck (1993) continues the conversation around race, citing the work of Hall. Peck (1993, p. 92) states “we have to ‘speak through’ the ideologies which are active in our society and which provide us with a means of ‘making sense’ of social relations and our place in them.” The above statement creates an opportunity to explore the concepts of inferential racism and explicit racism (Peck, 1993). Explicit racism, the sort which was evident in the prejudicial comments mentioned by some of the parents (P 10, cited as an example above), one utterances which can easily be identified as racist and labeled accordingly. Inferential racism is evident in the language sometimes used by extended family members; who, by employing a colour-blind stance towards the transracially adopted child/ren in the family, seemed to feel that it was unnecessary to keep their language in check and therefore continued to use language which could be classified as inferentially racist. This was highlighted in one parent’s comment about a conversation which took place at a family gathering during which a family member commented “But J isn’t black” (P 5.2), in response to being challenged about a racist comment which had been made in the presence of the child.

Peck(1993) draws the discussion about language use and race together explaining the following:

As “vehicles of ideology,” discourses define participants’ contributions in terms of content (what can be spoken, what is the “topic”), relations (how speakers’ relationships and interactions are defined), and identities (what subject positions different speakers may occupy in the interaction) (Fairclough, 34, 46). The power of discourse resides in their ability to impose these constraints and win participants’ consent to abide by them. The power relations are enacted within discourse via these constraints, and are exhibited in struggles for control over discourse as a “mechanism of sustaining power” (Peck, 1993, p. 92 – 93).

This leads to the question “So, how do we engage with the issue of race?” South Africa has a long, complicated and often violent history with regard to race and conversations about it appear to be difficult. The arrival of the “rainbow nation” at the dawn of our democracy did not erase its presence or complexities. In the conversations of some of the parents and teachers it is evident that this conversation is beginning to take place, while for others it is not, or at least not in a manner that is constructive. Therefore, the gap in discourse is caused by the unwillingness of both parents and teachers, to engage actively in conversations about race. The words and language are in existence, but the fear of actively using the words appears to be the barrier to this conversation.

5.2.6.1.3 Whiteness and the Race Conversation

The contrasting positions about the conversation around race, creates an opportunity to engage with the position of being white and the implications thereof. Whether or not these are acknowledged or are even within the consciousness of the research participants, being white together with the privileges afforded to this race group are factors to be considered, especially in the South African context. There is a distinct discomfort felt by white people with regard to talking about race and also in acknowledging the deep seated prejudices and privileges which exist in relation to racial categories. This conversation about whiteness may contribute to a better understanding of how race and conversations about race are approached in relation to the responses which were given by participants in this research.

The authors Steyn (2004), Matthews (2015) and Seekings (2008) all engage in some form with the topic of whiteness in their respective articles, but none of the discussions in these

articles deal directly with transracial adoption or how conversations about race within this framework could be dealt with. The aspects which they raise about whiteness and about being white in South Africa can be transferred into conversations which occurred in during interviews for this research. The first part of this discussion, must begin with a definition of whiteness and why there is a need to understand this concept in relation to this research. Within the arguments presented by the authors, there is no single definitive definition of whiteness.

Matthews (2015, p. 115) poses the question “what is a white person?” This question is asked in order to try and determine to whom the racial tag of “white” is given. The author notes that this question may seem somewhat obscure, but in the process of answering the question Matthews (2015) raises the point that people given this label do not necessarily share a common set of cultures but “rather what white people have in common is their common position within the hierarchies set up by European colonialist expansion and conquest” (Matthews, 2015, p. 117). This idea of hierarchies and whiteness is expressed in the work of Gunkel (2011) in which the author discusses the construction of whiteness in relation to sexuality and the expansion of colonial empires. Gunkel (2011) explains, in relation to colonialism, that as “Europe was expanding the colonies and the different forms of colonialism had one important commonality: they were all based on the concept of white supremacy that constituted discourses of primitivism and exclusion” (Gunkel, 2011, p. 35). The work of Steyn (2004) picks up on the discussion of whiteness in relation to colonial rule and the implications thereof. Steyn (2004) explains that ideas about whiteness and the power associated with it are still present in society today; just because colonialism was dismantled, one should not assume that the ideas and constructs upon which it was perpetuated have simply been erased from memory.

The question now, is what does this have to do with the discussions which took place in this research? When participants were asked questions about race, it is possible that they had to consider their own position within the framework of race and pause to consider their position as a white person specifically. Whether consciously or not participants, both parents and teachers, were confronted by with their own race. This is evident in a comment made by a teacher, in response to discussions about race in the classroom, “...I think because of the nature of our beast (reference to the political situation in South Africa in 2017, the time at which the interview was conducted) at the moment in this country, um..., parents are talking a lot at home about the government and who runs it etc. and the children do bring that to

school...” (S2 T3). The teacher in this situation, was made to confront her own views on the situation in the country and then had to carefully navigate this conversation in a classroom, where potentially conflicting opinions among the children were at play.

In contrast, were comments by parents who openly engaged with the concept of race, as was evident in interview P 11. One parent, a white father expressed that at the time of his son’s adoption he paused to consider the question “How do I as a white male, understand the concept of an African child?” (P 6). In this reflection, is the realisation that being white comes with a set of experiences and privileges that do not allow the person in question to fully comprehend the reality of those who are excluded from the parameters of those perceived as white.

The work of Johnson (2001) perhaps best ties together the ideas of whiteness, the power and privilege associated with it and the implications thereof. Johnson (2001, p. 34) explains in relation to whiteness that “I have access to that privilege only when people identify me as belonging to the category ‘white’.” The author further explains that in order to be afforded the privileges associated with being white, the person in that particular position does not necessarily have to be white, but simply has to be able to convince those around them that they meet the criteria which are assumed to be a part of this identity.

The concepts of being white and actual whiteness which need to be taken into considerations in the exploration of the responses of both parents and teachers in relation to conversations about race. The work of Smith *et al* (2011, p.41) reminds us that “racial understandings are never neutral, they always have consequences, because individuals act on this knowledge and thus influence the world around them.” Language used in conversations about race and in relation to this research, about the construct of family, is informed by the experiences and understanding of the person speaking.

How do we talk about race in South Africa? This is a question which needs to be considered. With the dawn of democracy in 1994, the ideal of a rainbow nation and of a people united regardless of race, was postulated. The reality, however, is that conversations about race and more importantly, the vocabulary employed to construct these conversations needs to be considered. What is the dominant narrative at play here? The concepts of race and identity are closely allied; often the race of the person will inform an aspect of their identity, which they will either choose to embrace or from which they actively seek to distance themselves. Yuval-Davis (2010) suggests that there are two forms of identity which are at play in how

person performs an identity. Yuval-Davis (2010, p. 266) explains these identities as “identity and identity politics, describing the first as one analytical dimension in which belonging needs to be understood, and the second as a specific type of project of the politics of belonging.” In the first identity there is a sense of boundary within the idea of identity, the person essentially has a framework of inclusions and exclusions which form the parameters of their identity. Identity politics, however, tend to centre around a group’s sense of belonging, there is an assumed homogenous aspect attached to the identity, which includes “acceptance of a particular leadership as the authoritative interpreter of what it is to be a ‘real’ Black, woman, Muslim and so on” (Yuval-Davis, 2010, p. 266). The reason that identity is considered in a discussion about how we speak about race is because there tend to be ideas that ‘all people’ who appear, act and speak in a certain way share a common identity, which is often based on their perceived racial classification.

Distiller and Steyn (2004, p. 2) note that race in South Africa has been written about in two ways prior to democracy; namely it “comprised colonial and apartheid justifications on the one hand, and liberal discourses on the other.” The authors go on to note that despite these opposing stand points, neither challenged the idea of race; rather “they took ‘race’ as an unproblematised, given category, in which difference was essentialised” (Distiller & Steyn, 2004, p. 2). This idea of leaving race unproblematised, harks back to ideas of colour-blindness and the application of avoidance tactics in relation to conversations about race and racial categories. If ideas remain unchallenged, dominant ideas remain in place and a vocabulary to advance the conversations about race remains stagnant. The authors expand further to explain that in order for race and racial categories within their varied locations to be employed and brought into a conversation, certain ‘features’ need to be in place. These include “props, a social and economic script, and co-actors, before it can assume its commonsensical proportions [...] it is most obviously registered visually, which implicates an audience in the meaning of the social stage on which ‘race’ is performed” (Distiller & Steyn, 2004, p. 4).

This discussion in relation to this research and the conversations about race indicate that in order for a person to construct a conversation about race and to bring their ideas about race into the context in which they are speaking, the speaker draws on other extant elements within their environment which serve as tools or hooks upon which to fasten their ideas and the conversation that these generate. This does, however, also indicate that if the hooks are

altered or challenged, that there is a space to change how conversations about race are constructed and expressed within society.

5.2.7 Broader Society Conversation *“It should be a norm” – S3 T1*

Both parents and teachers were asked whether there are still conversations which need to take place in broader society so that transracial adoption becomes perceived as a social norm.

The above comment indicates that the space inhabited by the family formed through transracial adoption has not yet reached the point where it is simply accepted as another form of family in society. In reply to the question about where in broader society the conversation about adoption and transracially adopted children needs to take place in order for this family form to be viewed as merely another form in society, teachers raised a number of points. These points included starting the conversation about different kinds of families early in the schooling process, so that children become accustomed to these concepts early on. They will grow up to see these families as nothing more than families. The idea of parental influence in conversations about race, sexual orientation and family structures was an aspect which was raised in various conversations, but was most dominant in this section. Teachers are of the opinion that parental conversations are influential in the thinking process of their children; a case of “children live what they learn.” This is especially true, in the primary school phase where children are more likely to absorb the ideas of their parents. This in contrast to the observation made earlier about the development of a vocabulary of very young child which they use in relation to discussing race. The idea of creating a colour-blind society also emerged. Others suggested that the need for more awareness about adoption, creating more social support for teachers and encouraging them be brave enough, without fear of parental backlash, to engage in conversations about race and sexual orientation and other ‘taboo’ subjects in the school environment. These are, however, topics which need to be discussed openly in order to remove their current negative connotations.

Parents raised points around perceptions of transracially adopted children: the idea that teachers needed more information and should be offered training and support as they navigate teaching children from different family structures and steering the conversations that emerge in response to this. There is also a need to develop an appropriate and sufficiently sophisticated vocabulary to explore and address concerns raised about language and culture,

an aspect that is missing at present. Lastly, adoptive parents feel that the onus is on them to raise the conversation and to be open to discussing adoption, while still safe-guarding their child's personal adoption story. There exists a fine balance between educating and over-sharing personal details and this has to be managed appropriately.

Teachers feel that there should be more awareness about adoption and what the process actually entails, so that the general population is better informed about adoption generally. A space to build social acceptance needs to be created. This comment indicates that transracially adoptive families are yet to be perceived as a complete social norm. The idea of families which look like these is becoming more familiar to broader society, but such families have not yet attained the status of complete social normality. Teachers raised the point that there need to be more discussions, originating from open and honest positions in order to address issues which may be considered contributing factors to the reasons people choose to adopt. In this way a space for a more 'normalised' conversation will be created for alternative family structures; there is not only space for the imagined, Western ideal of a family. It is from this position that there may be shift from the idea that people who adopt transracially are performing a good deed and rescuing the child whom they adopt and to the realisation that they are simply the parents of the child they adopt.

Within these comments, the gaps which need to be bridged are highlighted. When these can be broached and discussed, it would appear that a meaningful discourse around adoption and transracially adoptive families may begin to emerge.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

“So, my precious little one, today I let you go.

You’re going to stay with other parents who will love you as if you were born from them.

I’ve never met them, but I feel in the deepest part of me that they’re right for you and you are right for them.

[...]

Don’t ever feel discarded.

Feel greatly loved, that I want what’s best for you, and at this moment that can’t be me.

Be brave.

Do great things – greater than me.

I set you free.”

(Donald, 2016, p. 100).

It is at this point that the research has returns the voices of the adoption triad. In this extract the birthmother says good bye to the baby she will place for adoption. Despite this being a work of fiction, this extract allows a possible glimpse into the mind of a birthmother when the decision to place her baby for adoption has been made. It is however, important to remember that no story or journey to the point of adoption is ever the same as any other. It is a personal narrative; a story told by its owner. The words which are highlighted, the words omitted and the reflections are all the work of the narrator.

This research at its outset to establish how the language used by parents of children who have been adopted transracially, as well as the teachers who teach them, construct an idea of family through language which is used in conversations around this topic.

As transracial adoption is still relatively new, research in different areas which relate to adoption is seemingly limited at present. The thesis of Romanini in 2017 is one of the newest projects to be added to this area of study. The researcher in this work undertook to explore, through a phenomenological study, using interviews which were conducted with couples who had completed the process of transracial adoption in South Africa, discussing their

experiences of this process. Each of the studies which has been conducted, in the form of a thesis, has taken on a different aspect of the adoption conversation, but none had explored the area which was chosen for this research. Research on the topic of adoption in South Africa highlights its unique position, in relation other countries, this was noted in the comment by Wilson, recorded in the work of Brown (2014). Wilson noted that South Africa is possibly the only country in the world where the minority adopt from the majority; creating a space for many possible conversations to take place. A gap in many areas of the adoption narrative further indicates that this needs to be addressed. There are many components of this vast topic, each deserving of engagement and exploration.

The changes which have taken place in the adoption field both internationally and here in South Africa revealed that there has been a shift in the reasons which motivated people to adopt children as well as the perception which society holds in relation to children who are adoptable and those who are adopted. The shift has been from the position that these vulnerable children, who either had no parents or were removed from what was perceived to be unsuitable conditions or who were placed in care because they could not be cared for by their biological parent/s. Children who had previously been seen as dispensable and available to boost a family's work force, are today considered a part of the family into which they are adopted. Today, adoption has a more child-centred approach. Its primary aim is to create families; children who are adopted become members of the family into which they are adopted, as if they had been born into that family. The primary concern is for the long term welfare of the child. This is an element which is highlighted in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, which is still in effect in 2018, and states that a child may be adopted in the event that this is in the child's best interests. These interests are determined on the basis that adoption would allow the child to grow up in a healthy, stable environment with a sense of permanency (Children's Act 38 of 2005) - all aspects which are vital in the development and well-being of a child.

People who adopt are motivated by a number of factors; these factors which were recorded in readings were also reflected in comments made by parent/s who took part in this research to a greater or lesser extent. At the root of each response was an idea of what constitutes a family and the language used to explain this: it was through adoption that parents sought either to create a family or to add to an existing family. It appears that the term "family" is most frequently used in relation to a group of people when there are children present in the group.

This was alluded to in comments by both parents and teachers, when they discussed the concept of family.

Through discussions about adoption and specifically transracial adoption, the intersections of race, class, identity formation and the transracially adopted child were explored in different sections of the research as they arose. While the idea of adoption may be uncomplicated, there are many aspects which need to be taken into consideration once the process has been finalised. At the time of adoption parents may not even be aware of certain aspects that they then need to confront and address as they arise.

As schools were a site in which research was conducted and because they formed part of the initial reason that this research was undertaken, it was necessary to explore them from a historical perspective, especially in the context of South Africa with its apartheid legacy and its attendant implications. This included, among many things, the school systems and the manner in which children of different racial categories were taught. As teachers are the primary point of information dissemination to children in the school environment it was necessary to consider how teachers are taught and the implications that this may have on their teaching style. Through work conducted both in South Africa and internationally, it was possible to see how student-teachers during their training process, are brought to an awareness of the possible bias which they may harbour and the impact that this may have when they enter the classroom and teach children a curriculum which may challenge their personal belief system.

The data for this research was gathered through the process of semi-structured interviews which were conducted with parents of transracially adopted children and with teachers who had recently or were currently teaching transracially adopted children. The data which was collected was analysed through the process of Applied Thematic Analysis as presented in the work of Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012).

In discussions with parents the decision to adopt transracially was explored and from this point family discussions were explored. For many of the parents the fact that their children were adopted transracially was not an aspect that they appeared to have consciously considered. Family and discussions about it centred on a sense of togetherness, not on blood-ties. There was no fixed definition or idea of what a family should look like. Conversations about school and information which was shared with teachers and on application forms varied. This seemed to be largely determined by heteronormative privileges.

With teachers similar conversations about family emerged. However, there were slight hesitations or concerns expressed in relation to families which did not subscribe to a heteronormative form, indicating a possible point at which teachers are forced to either confront their own stance on this matter or in which they appear to find the language which they feel comfortable enough to use in engagement with children in relation to this topic. Absent from any conversation was the single mother; no mention was made in the event that the child was being raised by a single mother. Teachers also commented that they felt that there is a dearth of information in the curriculum which is currently taught about adoption and specifically transracial adoption.

Race conversations with both parents and teachers tended to be divided along the lines of willingness to engage and the employment of evasion tactics to a greater or lesser extent. This indicates that there is still a long way to go with this conversation within South Africa. It is a conversation which needs to take place and which over time needs to be unpacked and explored. The discomfort which it generates must be examined, understood and confronted. This conversation does not need to be limited to transracially adoptive families, but rather needs to extend to preconceptions in society generally. The veneer of the rainbow nation needs to be shattered and confronted, in order to generate a narrative from which robust conversation is able to stem.

As this research was conducted in an urban area, it may not be applicable to the rural and possibly less cosmopolitan areas of South Africa. To determine possible similarities and differences in conversations, further research in these areas would need to be undertaken. This research was done in four private primary schools in Johannesburg; therefore it is necessary to consider that conversations in government schools may be different. High school conversations may also differ, as in this setting teachers and students have a different relationship and students may be more willing to engage and possibly challenge teachers during discussions around families and transracial adoption.

At this point the question which emerges is “So where to next?” This research brought to light that there are many conversations which take place in relation to transracial adoption; conversations which are both positive and negative in their nature and content. It is evident that the language which is used in these conversations does contribute to the ideas which are employed in discussion about families and specifically families formed through transracial adoption. It is apparent that these conversations need to be ongoing and should also become

more sophisticated. A constructive and informative space needs to be created in which all parties involved in the adoption process are able to openly and honestly engage in topics which include race, racial identity and ideas about the concept of family. It is through conversation that ideas, perceptions and stereotypes about transracial adoption can be challenged, informed and changed. Language is not a static element; rather it is in continual motion and is thus able to change. Changes in this conversation remain vital, as there are many children in need of permanent placement in South Africa and adoption is one solution. In the event that conversations remain silenced or unexplored, ideas which may be harmful and result in children in need of care remaining unnecessarily in institutional care, continue to remain in place. Up to date statistics for how many children are currently in need of placement in permanent care in South Africa were not available. There are many estimates or outdated figures; none of which appear to actually be able to conclusively determine the extent of the need. A project entitled Babies Matter (www.facebook.com/BabiesMatter), discussed by Bega (2018) in a newspaper article, has estimated that one in three abandoned babies will be found alive. Active engagement with the societal issues which result in babies being abandoned is limited and conversations which are had tend to recycle ideas; there is limited active involvement to address the presenting problems directly. Simply ignoring abandoned babies will not make them disappear, nor will this approach address the circumstances which have resulted in mothers abandoning their babies.

As transracial adoption in South Africa is still relatively new, children who have reached the age of majority are few in number at this point. For this conversation to advance and become more comprehensive, these voices need to be added. If these individuals voiced their experiences and perceptions of their adoption experience the vocabulary which is currently in circulation and could potentially expand it and add to its further development. Literature around these topics in the South African context is limited and needs to be generated. It is possible to draw parallels and contrasts on adoption with what is observed in South Africa from international literature, which has been cited in this research. As the South African research, is still essentially in its infancy, the information which was drawn on from other countries may serve as both a guideline and a warning as to how to navigate conversation about transracial adoption. It is in this gap that future research is able to find its focus. This is a conversation which needs to be ongoing; it will contribute to the development of the adoption narrative in South Africa.

These conversations and changes need to start with the concept of family; they need to move beyond the Western, ideal of a stereotypical family – mom, dad, children and a dog – the ideas of family also need to extend beyond notions which consider that a child must remain within the culture into which he or she were born. This does not mean that culture and heritage must be disregarded as they are aspects which inform the identity formation of a child and where possible, definitively this information should be shared with the adopted child. Culture however, must not be the stumbling block which results in children growing up in institutional care, rather than within a family unit in the event that this is an option available for long term care of the child. In order to move this conversation about family forward for the benefit of all parties involved in the process of transracial adoption, it is necessary for all the key role players (Social workers, adoptive parents, adopted children, birth parents and the Department of Social Development) in this process to actively engage with one another and to generate a new, encompassing vocabulary for discussions about family. It is through the generation of a common, considered and understood vocabulary that new narratives are able to emerge and the story is able to be altered. Within the framework of schools, there changes need to be effected as well. These changes need to include adding information, specifically about transracial adoption, to the content which is taught. The application forms at both school level and at the Education Department at provincial level need to be adjusted to reflect more accurately the landscape of family units which are found. There needs to be a move away from a patriarchal and heteronormative position to one that is more encompassing and less prescriptive in nature. History indicates, as does the literature which was used in this research, that change is possible. Ideas are able to develop, challenge the status quo and result in change. History also serves to remind us of the consequences of decisions and that it is possible to avoid repeating past mistakes. Literature from countries with longer transracial adoption history can be used as guiding points on to how to navigate conversations about families within this dynamic. They may offer direction and advice on pitfalls to avoid. It is for all parties involved in adoption to generate, and where necessary, change ideas and narratives about adoption and the concept of family.

As this research approaches its conclusion it is perhaps the words of Sisonke Msimang's TEDtalk (2016) title which effectively draws together all aspects explored and discussed in this research: *If the story moves you, act on it*. This research emerged from overhearing a story; it was constructed on the narratives of both parents and teachers around a topic which was considered of importance to the researcher on both a personal level and that of social

justice. This conversation needs to be moved forward, bearing in mind that at the heart of it are those who comprise the adoption triad. Each member of the triad has a part to play and a story to tell. Each is the narrator of his or her own experience and this in turn contributes to the broader conversation.

Taking the words of Msimang (2016) quoted above; there is space to reflect on my own process in this work. It was an overheard conversation which moved me to create a research topic. This was a topic which encompassed both my personal interest in adoption and the interest in exploring the story after the day of placement. An aspect which I came to clearly realise is that the conversation of family runs far deeper and is more complicated than its surface level appearance. Family becomes the pivotal point from which other conversations take their point of departure. As a researcher, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that being able to intellectually engage with this topic and the reality of living it may vary vastly.

This is however, an area of research which has subsequently opened up many avenues for future discussions. These are discussions which demand exploration through the narratives of the owners of these stories. It is for each person involved in the adoption process to weave their story into the overarching story. In this manner potentially creating a more rounded and therefore a better understanding of the process of creating a family and specifically one created through transracial adoption.

At the end of the day we need to be able to realise, there is no definitive definition of who is allowed or not allowed to be considered a part of a family. If the adoption conversation is allowed to develop and concepts of family are broadened, creating a space for further social acceptability, the place to truly celebrate the family which is formed through transracial adoption, will be created and the associated narratives challenged and changed.

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Appendix

Table 1: Parent Interviews

Heading	Example
The decision to adopt transracially	“The fact that it was transracial didn’t even enter my head” –P 1. “So transracially it was just a...ja...it was there was little chance of getting a white child and it made no difference to me what colour my child was, so why wait?” – P 3. “So ja in South Africa transracial adoption was available and if we wanted children soon that was the way to go and ja for us that was not an issue” – P 5.1.
Discussions about Family and Adoption	“It’s like it’s natural” – P 7.2. “Families are made as opposed to just being born for us” – P 8. “Family is not about blood, but about how people live together” – P 4.
The School Application	“...loads of families at the school that have alternative structures...” P 11. “I am afraid I was one of those get on with it and move on...” P6. “I really, really wanted her to have school that had sufficient diversity...” P 3.
Society and the broader conversation	“...the dialogue needs to start with people learning about adoption...” – P10. “...it needs to start...in families, discussions need to be in schools” – P 3. “If people are the tiniest bit inquisitive I want to have a conversation with them...” – P 9.
Race, class and the transracially adopted child	“...at least once a day there is a conversation and reference to race in our household” – P 11. “...when we see things that are unfair we say it and have a discussion about it...” – P 8. “So, questions of class and race come up a lot” – P 5.1.

Table 2: Teacher Interviews

Heading	Example
Concept of family	“...family is who lives within the same environment and spends lots of time together” – S1 T1. “Basically just your people” – S2 T1. “...basically people who you spend time with and love...” – S4 T2. “..a bunch of people that are together that help each other out” – S3 T2
The start of the academic year details	“I probably would want to know terminology” – S3 T3. “I don’t think it is, unless there are problems” – S4 T1. “I think it would, especially same-sex parents, I think...” S3 T2.
The abandoned baby conversation	“...more of a positive than the other side [...] we don’t play so much on the fact that they didn’t want them..” – S4 T2. “the little boy was an abandoned baby, but we haven’t had that conversation yet...” – S1 T2. “I would steer clear of the word abandonment” – S3 T2.
Race conversations	“...we’re more sort of at surface level, well everything is happy at the moment...” S1 T1. “it is something that unfortunately we have to bring up” S2 T2. “I think one needs to talk about race and that there is diversity” – S4 T1.
Curriculum content	“...we are all the time looking for resources...” S1 T2. “No I don’t. I feel it is possibly something we never discuss” – S2 T3. “No I don’t think so. I think we have to go out and find that ourselves” – S4 T1.
Are you equipped to have this conversation?	“I teach from a personal point of view [...] believing like that and then the school point of view” – S4 T2. “I think I am very aware of how they feel” S3 T3. “I would like to think that I am, I don’t shy away from things” – S1 T1.
Broader society conversation	“I don’t think there needs to be a conversation” S2 T1. “Ja I think to say no would be ridiculous, so yes definitely, where do we start?” – S2 T3.

	“You know what, I think it all has to do with education” – S4 T1.
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Participant Information Sheet (Parent)

Families created through transracial adoption: Parents' and teachers' discourses at selected Gauteng schools.

Dear Adoptive Parent/s

My name is Kelly Robinson. I am conducting research as part of a PhD requirement through the University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Diversity Studies.

I would like to invite you, as adoptive parent/s, to participate in my research.

The aim of this research is to explore how parents of transracially adopted children and the teachers who teach them, construct their understanding of families created through adoption.

The objective of this research is to explore how families created through transracial adoption are spoken about and what shifts, if any, need to occur within this discourse. The benefit of this research will be a greater understanding of the experience of the family created through transracial adoption. This study, unlike many which are represented in extant literature, does not focus on the school performance of adopted children, but rather aims to look at the experience that these children have within an environment in which they spend a vast amount of their day: an environment that extends beyond that of their nuclear family.

Research participants were selected on the criteria that they had adopted transracially and that their child/ren were in the school system from gr 000 – gr 12. Participants were sourced through online sources and through word of mouth.

As a participant in my research, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one, face-to-face interview for the duration of 45 – 60 minutes at a time and place which is convenient to you. At no point will your child/ren be asked to participate in the interview. The interview will be recorded as an audio-tape. This data will be transcribed by the researcher and stored in a secure location.

As a participant in this research, your identity, that of the school which your child/ren attend and your expressed opinion, will be kept confidential. Your participation in this research is voluntary and at any point in the research process you are permitted to withdraw. If there are questions which you would prefer not to answer, you are permitted not to answer them. As a participant, you may request a summary copy of my research findings. Please note that Wits theses are available online after the research has been completed.

Tertia de Klerk (082 952 8583), a clinical psychologist, has agreed to be available to consult with participants, in the event that something during the interview process emerges which they feel they need to discuss in-depth with a psychologist.

The contact details of both my supervisor and me are listed below. Should you wish to contact me at any time, please feel free to do so.

Kelly Robinson

Supervisor: Prof. Melissa Steyn

Cell: 0725400674

Tel: 011 – 717 4418

Email: prettybudgie@gmail.com

Email: Melissa.Steyn@wits.ac.za

Parent interview questions

Age: 30 - 39yrs _____ 40 - 49yrs _____ 50 - 59yrs _____

Brief description of your family unit: _____

Age at time of adoption: 20-29yrs _____ 30-39yrs _____ 40-49yrs _____

50+yrs _____

Age of child at time of adoption: > 6mth _____ > 12mths _____

> 18mth _____ > 24mths _____ 24+mths _____

Number of children adopted _____

1. How did you arrive at the decision to adopt?
2. The term family has many ideas and connotations attached to it. How do engage with the topic of family with your children?
3. In South Africa the topic of race is prevalent. How do you engage with the topic of race in discussions with your child/ren?
4. When you applied to schools for your child, did you provide the school with any additional information about your child relating to their adoption? Information which you may have felt was necessary for the teachers who would teach your child to be made aware of.
5. How do you equip your child to explain their family when they enter the school environment, where questions may be asked of them?
6. Do you feel that in society, there are conversations that still need to be had about families created through adoption, in order for them to become completely perceived as a social norm?

Participant Consent Form (Parent)

Interview # _____

I _____(name) am voluntarily participating in an interview for the purpose of research with Kelly Robinson.

I know that the research which is being conducted through the interview is being done as a requirement for a PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The focus of this research, its aims and objectives has been clearly explained to me. I am aware of the role that my participation will play in the research process.

I am aware that I am allowed to withdraw from the research process at any point, should I wish to.

I am aware that the interview will be recorded and transcribed for the purpose of the research. I am aware that my commentary will not be shared with others outside of the interview.

I understand that my identity will be kept confidential. (This includes the school which my child/ren attend, my children and references to teachers or other key role players within the school environment).

I understand that I am permitted not to answer any question should I not wish to do so.

I agree to the above terms and conditions.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

I agree to participate in an interview which is recorded.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

I agree to allow my words to be used as examples within the thesis.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

Participant Information Sheet (Teacher)

Families created through transracial adoption: Parents' and teachers' discourses at selected Gauteng schools.

Dear Teacher

My name is Kelly Robinson. I am conducting research as part of a PhD requirement through the University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Diversity Studies.

I would like to invite you, as a teacher, to participate in my research.

The aim of this research is to explore how parents of transracially adopted children and the teachers who teach them, construct their understanding of families created through adoption.

The objective of this research is to explore how families created through transracial adoption are spoken about and what shifts, if any, need to occur within this discourse. The benefit of this research will be a greater understanding of the experience of the family created through transracial adoption. This study, unlike many which are represented in extant literature, does not focus on the school performance of adopted children, but rather aims to look at the experience that these children have within an environment in which they spend a vast amount of their day: an environment that extends beyond that of their nuclear family.

Research participants were selected from various schools in Gauteng. The criterion for participation in this research was teachers who currently teach children from families formed through transracial adoption.

As a participant in my research, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one, face-to-face interview for the duration of 45 – 60 minutes at a time and place which is convenient to you. The interview will be recorded as an audio-tape. This data will be transcribed by the researcher and stored in a secure location.

As a participant, in this research your identity, that of the school for which you work and your expressed opinion, will be kept confidential. Your participation in this research is voluntary and at any point in the research process you are permitted to withdraw. If there are questions which you would prefer not to answer, you are permitted not to answer them. As a participant you may request a summary copy of my research findings. Please note that Wits theses are available online after the research has been completed.

Tertia de Klerk (082 952 8583), a clinical psychologist, has agreed to be available to consult with participants, in the event that something during the interview process emerges which they feel they need to discuss in-depth with a psychologist.

The contact details of both my supervisor and me are listed below. Should you wish to contact me at any time, please feel free to do so.

Kelly Robinson

Cell: 0725400674

Email: prettybudgie@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof. Melissa Steyn

Tel: 011 – 717 4418

Email: Melissa.Steyn@wits.ac.za

Teacher interview questions

Gender: Male: _____ Female: _____

Age: 20 -29yrs _____ 30-39yrs _____ 40-49yrs _____ 50-59yrs _____ 60+yrs _____

Years in teaching profession: _____

Subject/s taught: _____

Grade currently teaching: _____

1. There are different groupings of people to which the term family is applied. What is your understanding of the term family, specifically in relation to families formed through transracial adoption?
2. At the start of the academic year, do you feel that it is necessary for you to be made aware of information about a transracially adopted child in your class (i.e. topics which they are sensitive to, or terminology which parents would like you to use when addressing the child in relation to their family e.g. if they have homosexual parents. What terms does the child use to address each parent – Dad and Papa? What vocabulary does the child have to refer to their family unit?)
3. In the classroom environment conversations take place around different topics. How do you or would you approach a discussion around child abandonment, considering a transracially adopted child may have been an abandoned baby.
4. In South Africa, race is a topic which is frequently at the fore of discussions. How do you engage with conversations about race in the classroom, taking into consideration the position that a transracially adopted child has come to occupy.
5. Within the school curriculum is there sufficient material and knowledge to effectively engage in conversations relating to different family units and specifically those from which transracially adopted children come.
6. Do you feel that you are adequately equipped to handle discussions about transracial adoption both from a personal stance and that of a teacher in a classroom?
7. Do feel that within broader society that there are conversations that still need to be had about families formed through transracial adoption?

Participant Consent Form (Teacher)

Interview # _____

I _____(name) am voluntarily participating in an interview for the purpose of research with Kelly Robinson.

I know that the research which is being conducted through the interview is being done as a requirement for a PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The focus of this research, its aims and objectives has been clearly explained to me. I am aware of the role that my participation will play in the research process.

I am aware that I am allowed to withdraw from the research process at any point, should I wish to.

I am aware that the interview will be recorded and transcribed for the purpose of the research. I am aware that my commentary will not be shared with others outside of the interview.

I understand that my identity will be kept confidential. (This includes the school in which I for work and the children in my classes).

I understand that I am permitted not to answer any question should I not wish to do so.

I agree to the above terms and conditions.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

I agree to participate in an interview which is recorded.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

I agree to allow my words to be used as examples within the thesis.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____