

**INTERRACIAL COUPLES WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT:  
EXPERIENCES, PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES**

**by**

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## SUMMARY

In this study the experiences, perceptions and challenges of being in a mixed-race relationship (M-R) were explored against the backdrop of previous South African pieces of legislation meant to keep the various race groups apart. The study was located within a conceptual framework predominantly informed by a constructivist approach, as well as some tenets from the social constructionist approach.

This study focused only on M-R relationships consisting of black and white partners. The couples were recruited through the use of a snowball sampling method. In-depth interviews were used as the primary tool for collecting data. All participants were interviewed by the researcher either at their own homes or in the researcher's office. The collected information was later transcribed and qualitatively analysed.

The results of the study indicate that individuals found their involvement in M-R relationships to be a positive experience, and thus resulting in a positive attitude change and a sense of personal growth. M-R couples and their extended families experienced cognitive dissonance which required them to discard their previously internalised racial stereotypes, using strategies such as cognitive differentiation, re-categorization and de-categorization, allowing shifts toward non-racial socially constructed categories. Most of the challenges of being in M-R relationships were experienced on interpersonal and inter-group levels. The losses, disadvantages, challenges, concerns and pains experienced by M-R couples were mainly related to family and social disapproval of the relationship as well as efforts to discourage race mixing.

The study concludes that the non-conformist nature of M-R relationships requires from the participants a high level of self-differentiation and individuation that challenges racial norms and cultural collectivism. Albeit being a personal or private matter, a M-R relationship carries the burden of easily being the subject of public discourse. It is in this sense that M-R

relationships cannot be understood without taking the socio-political context within which they occur into consideration.

**Key terms:** race, interracial relationships, social comparison, social category, social hierarchy, social identity, social contact, cognitive dissonance, racial stereotypes and attitudes, culture, tradition, love, marriage.

Student number: 663-204-1

I declare that ***Interracial couples within the South African context: experiences, perceptions and challenges*** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE

(E. M. Mojapelo-Batka)

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DATE

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my first promoter, Prof Johan Schoeman, who sadly passed away on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2007. Thank you for always believing in me, until the last moment. The impact you had on my academic life will remain indelible. Rest in peace, Prof. Schoeman!

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## **CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1. Introduction**

The background and context within which this study is conducted will be discussed below. This will include a personal note about the researcher, an overview of the literature approaches to mixed-race relationships (M-R), as well as the historical context and socio-political discourse on race mixing. In addition to an outline of the objectives of this study, this chapter will also provide the presentation and chapter layout of the overall study.

#### ***1.1 A personal note***

I have been involved in a mixed-race relationship since 1988. Our relationship started three years after the Immorality Act 23 of 1957 and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act 55 of 1949 were repealed. During those times mixed-race relationships and marriages were, however, still perceived as immoral and socially frowned upon in South Africa.

The reactions from our families and society made me aware of how a private issue like loving someone could turn into a public and socio-political concern. Maintaining the relationship as a secret became one of the ways of dealing with the pain of rejection and disapproval from our families and our friends, as well as the negative effect that our relationship had on my partner's business. At some stage we felt marginalised because we did not fit in any social group.

This experience made us more dependent on each other for support and inevitably become closer to each other. Our first child (son) was born in 1991; and at that stage we had become desensitised to the family and wider societal reactions to our relationship. However, having a mixed-race child also comes with its own challenges and growth.

My personal experience and challenges of being in a mixed-race relationship (M-R), as well as my exposure to the challenges that were presented by clients and patients in similar relationships during psychotherapy provided the impetus for this study. As a practising Clinical Psychologist, being exposed to

the challenges and difficulties facing mixed-race (M-R) couples, created an interest in gaining greater understanding of how other couples dealt with their experiences and challenges. The processes involved in executing this research project, as well as getting more involved with mixed-race couples in my private practice (as a Clinical Psychologist), have provided healing and a deeper understanding of the role of individuation for me and my family.

### ***1.2 An overview of the literature approaches to M-R relationships***

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences and challenges facing interracial couples living in South Africa. The focus will be on black-white couples. Available literature on interracial relationships mainly focuses on the negative motives of those who choose to marry across racial lines and the crisis related to racial identity development of bi-racial children (Chiong, 1998; Johnson & Warren, 1994). Arnold (1984) found that interracial children do not differ from the norm in self-concept but that they may experience uncertainties about racial issues; for example, ambivalence regarding the race with which to identify. In addition, he found that those children who chose to identify with being interracial had a higher self-concept score.

The focus of the previous studies might have been influenced by the dominant social discourse, which has predominantly pathologised (Davidson, 1992) and criminalised relationships between a black and white person because such relationships, within a racist society confront the society's ideas of do's and don'ts, what is desirable and what's not, and what is acceptable and what's not (Ratele & Duncan, 2003). Fanon (1986:12) states that racial contact between black and white races in post-colonial context created 'a collective form of mental illness, a massive psycho-existential complex'. Ratele and Duncan (2003) clarified Fanon's view by emphasising that he does not mean that racial contact is inherently pathological, that races should not seek contact. The authors argue that he means to emphasize how problematic, pathogenic even (in the sense of inducing psycho-pathology, inauthentic forms of identity); such racial contacts prove to be in contexts in which one racial group maintains a powerful degree of aggressive dominance over the

other. They further assert that what can be seen as desirable or undesirable, good or bad, proper or improper, moral or immoral, mixed or pure and legitimate or illegitimate relational practices are not just the results of what is here-and-now, but that these binaries are produced by particular historical, economic, political and cultural conditions.

Davidson (1992) also indicates that most of the theories about interracial marriages suggest that individuals who choose to marry interracially have ulterior motives that may be hidden or even unconscious in nature. Chiong (1998) looks at how previous theories of racially mixed marriages presented negative outcomes and portrayed the mixed race marriages as ethically deviant. Interracial couples are hypothesized as having deep-seated resentment of their parents and desire to give them pain or as having a desire for self-degradation, inferiority complex or rebelling against the rigid system (Hullum, 1982).

In addition, a number of theories about interracial couples suggest more conscious ulterior motives, such as, sexual curiosity, preoccupation or revenge on the people of the out-group, the desire for social or economic mobility and exhibitionism (Davidson, 1992). Davidson also argues that, one place to begin correcting a racist outlook on interracial marriages is to explore the negative biases of these theories about the motives of interracial couples and be aware that such theories are not supported by empirical evidence. For example, Gadberry and Dodder (1993) and Qian (1999) indicate that the majority of interracial (more especially black/white) marriages were in the same educational bracket. These authors also argue against some of the theories of interracial marriages (for example, the exchange theory, which defines interracial marriages as motivated by the exchange of a higher/white racial status for higher socio-economic status, sex or physical attractiveness) and indicate that women, irrespective of race, frequently married for economic support while men marry for physical attractiveness. Many writers have indicated that the racist formulations about mixed-race relationships are historically and socially constructed and that these formulations are an effort of the dominant culture to remain dominant (Chiong, 1998; Fanon, 1986;

Johnson & Warren, 1994; Ratele & Duncan, 2003; Rosenblatt, Karis & Powell 1995).

Rosenblatt, *et al.*, (1995) acknowledge their own bias by accepting the difficulty of avoiding biased writing in a bias-filled society. From the available literature it appears that most researchers in the subject of mixed or interracial marriages are involved in such marriages or have grandchildren that are biracial and their research findings are mostly positive, while the researchers that are not involved tend to give more negative findings. It is important to note that the social interaction in which knowledge is generated involves the researcher, the participants and the context in which meanings are constructed. All interpretations are thus temporal, located and open to new interpretations (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 2002). The depiction of the experience of mixed-race couples that participated in the above studies is thus not merely a description of their experiences, but part of it is also co-created by the researchers (Burr, 1995; Hollway, 1989). The researcher of the present study acknowledges her own bias as her personal experience of being in a M-R relationship for 20 years in South Africa might influence the perspective and focus of the present research project. As much as participating in this research project involved a co-creation of reality and meanings between the researcher and the participants, the critical questioning role of the supervisor ensured that the research focus, analysis and interpretation of the data were located in this context of awareness.

While not denying that certain motives might be the cause of intimate relationships across racial lines and the fact that identity problems may exist, the focus of the current study is not on whether or not a multiracial child has identity problems or that an individual's motives might influence him/her to marry across racial lines, but rather on understanding how the couples constructed and/or reconstructed the challenges they are facing within a specific socio-political context and how they deal or cope with their experiences.

The following themes will be explored:

- The challenges at an individual or intrapersonal level (this involves the intrapsychic processes and what the person believes in)
- The challenges at the interpersonal level (this is the perceived views or what others say or do)
- The challenges at the inter-group level (this involves inter-group processes and ideologies)
- The challenges and ways of dealing with the experience of being in a M-R relationship within the South African context.

These themes necessitate the exploration of the following key questions: What impact does the interracial relationship have on the racial identity of the partner and the children (challenges relating to identity choices and options)? How does the couple raise their children and what their identity option is: as white, non-white, mixed-race identity or multiracial identity?

Ratele and Duncan (2003) report the results of the study undertaken in 1998, among 544 students of differing 'cultural' and 'linguistic' background enrolled at a university. The study examines the challenges presented to identity by macro-level factors within the country, especially in terms of their impact on self-definition in 'cultural', 'ethnic', 'racial', 'linguistic' or national terms. In particular, the study looks at the extent to which post-apartheid society offered young adults new and different possibilities for constructing their identities, or whether 'race' still constituted a central defining feature of self and other representations.

The results of the study showed that there was a general paucity of direct references to 'racial', 'cultural' and national identity markers in the respondents' self-articulated self-conceptions. The authors argue that this finding may be indicative of the attempts to define identity beyond the narrow confines of 'racial' categorisation. The transformation of the post-apartheid South Africa may present these youths with new identity challenges and concerns which may be more prominent for self-representation, in which 'race'

no longer fulfils a salient or central function. The absence of 'racial' self-descriptors in self-articulated forms of identity amongst South African students may in fact represent what Carrim (2000) refers to as a 'silencing' of 'race'.

The research findings seem to suggest that the transformation from apartheid to democracy has implications for the identity dynamics and that identity dynamics need to be understood in the context of the socio-political and economic processes. It could be hypothesized that the same identity dynamics and re-negotiations might be observed in mixed-race couples as well as in biracial individuals. This could also be explained by the need for racial re-classifications observed after 1948 when the National Party came into power, where about 7000 people officially changed their racial classifications mostly from an inferior to a more superior racial category. The above arguments confirm the idea that 'race' is a social construction. Ratele and Duncan (2003) argue that the dynamic nature of identity, its shifting contextually defined meanings, and the political function of self-definition necessitate remaining open to new and different possibilities for self-definition, and being attentive to their shifting significance against an ever-changing subjective and socio-political landscape.

Johnson and Warren (1994) also indicate the effect that having children might have in the couples' lives. For example, parenthood puts a stop to being silent about the relationship and that society's taboos are not fully transgressed if there are no children because there is no permanent blurring of the boundaries between groups. Children destroy the racial boundaries. Their very existence challenges the system. They expose the arbitrary, and 'substancelessness' of socially constructed groups. For instance, one couple was told that its children were white in Nigeria and black in America. A mixed-race marriage without children is subjected to less social sanctions. On the other hand, within the family the couple is often subjected to more disapproval by family members, but the family members' reactions tend to change as the families become acquainted with their son-in-law and daughter-in-law and after the birth of grandchildren (Kouri & Lasswell, 1993; Kekezwa, 2000).

The current study will also focus on exploring the extent to which the identity of the couples transforms, and which factors influence the transformation: for example, class, economic, gender, racial, educational or religious factors.

When looking at the relationships within the mixed-race family it becomes important to establish whether they are determined by gender, race or economic factors. For instance, does the M-R family interaction reflect the values and norms of the dominant culture, gender and economically stronger partner or is there equality between partners in mixed-race relationships? It is thus important to determine whether Fanon's (1986) concept of 'lactification', which he refers to as the wish to be white, and to be powerful, applies to the black partner within a mixed-race relationship. He points out that lactification is a pathological desire that is forced upon Black subjects by White civilisation and European culture.

Other key issues to be explored include the advantages and disadvantages of being in an interracial relationship. In this context, it becomes worthwhile to enquire as to whether marital conflicts in such relationships are due to racial or personal differences. What patterns of adjustment does the family need to make? For example, the changes in the way of living, changes in the eating habits, change in gender roles and adjustments in the relationship with the in-laws and social contacts.

### **1.3 Historical legal overview**

Four Acts were especially significant in constructing, maintaining and enforcing racial categorization. These are:

- The Population Registration Act, Act 30 of 1950,
- The Group Areas Act, Act 41 of 1950,
- The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Act 55 of 1949 and
- The Immorality Act, Act 23 of 1957

This legislation had a great impact on the lives of all people in South Africa, especially on mixed-race couples and families. Each Act will be discussed separately in order to provide the historical, legal and contextual background for this study.

### **1.3.1 The Population Registration Act, Act 30 of 1950**

This Act provided that the entire population be classified according to racial groups which would form the basis for the National Party's policy of separate development. Since 1911 several Acts had a definition of race as their constituent part. Many of these definitions were contradictory and thus the Population Registration Act sought to clarify the confusion. Unfortunately, the legislation was not fully able to effect uniformity in the norms of racial classification (Barnard, Cronje and Olivier, 1986).

The Act defined three population groups; namely, whites, blacks and coloureds. Barnard *et al.* (1986: 142) quote the definition of a white person according to the Act:

'Someone who

- (a) In appearance obviously is a white person and who is not generally accepted as a coloured person; or
- (b) Is generally accepted as a white person and is not in appearance obviously not a white person, but does not include any person who for the purpose of his classification under this act freely and voluntarily admits that he is by descent a black or a coloured unless it is proved that the admission is not based on fact'.

The first test was thus one of visual appearance; and this was specified more precisely in another section of the Act to include the individual's habits, education, speech, deportment and demeanour, which should obviously be that of a white person (Barnard *et al.*, 1986). The respect in which the above-mentioned criteria were different from those of other race groups was, however, not specified.

The authors reported that a black was defined in the Act 'as a person who is a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa, or who is generally accepted as such' (p147). A coloured person was defined 'as a person who is neither a white nor a black' (p.148). The coloured group was subdivided into seven groups, namely: the Cape Coloured group, the Malay Group, the Griqua group, the Chinese Group, the Indian Group, the Other Asiatic Group and the Other Coloured Group. The Act made provision for an objection to be made to the Race Classification Board should an individual feel aggrieved by his/her classification. However, no clear rules were ever spelled out with regard to how far back one's ancestry had to be traced to ensure that the individual was a 'pure white' or a 'pure black' person (Barnard *et al.*, 1986).

Eades (1999) and Mandaza (1997; 2001) indicate that the Act classified groups in South Africa in such a way that caused tragic confusion among the coloureds. No physical homeland existed for this population and an absolute identity for them (as the primary working class of the Cape) was difficult to define. The Population Registration Act was finally repealed by President F.W. de Klerk in 1991 and was replaced by the Population Registration Act, Repeal Act No 114 of 1991, with the commencement date of 28 June 1991.

### **1.3.2 The Group Areas Act, Act 41 of 1950**

In 1885 the first formal group areas legislation came into existence in the form of Law 3 of 1885 of the Transvaal. The Act provided that: 'Asiatic could not become citizens and were consequently not entitled to the franchise nor could they own fixed property; they had to reside and trade in locations set aside for them; the government was empowered to set aside locations' (Omar, 1989: 515).

In 1896 the Natal legislature deprived Indians of the vote and in 1898 the Transvaal Gold Laws prevented coloured persons from becoming licensed to own shops, houses or dwellings (Omar, 1989).

Prior to the Union of South Africa in 1910, blacks were allowed to buy land in the Cape and Natal, but were prohibited from acquiring land in the Orange Free State and Transvaal. In 1910, the very first Act of the Union created a Department of Native Affairs, which was to take over the administration of the large black population.

In 1913 the Black Land Act introduced the principle of territorial division between blacks and whites and provided that blacks could only buy and sell land outside of the designated native areas, subject to the strict approval of the government (Keyter, 1990).

In 1946 the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act was introduced by General Smuts in response to mounting pressure from whites for residential segregation in Durban. This Act sought to offer representation on the one hand while, on the other, restricted Indians from owning and occupying property in certain areas (Keyter, 1990).

After coming into power in 1948 the National Party government mandated two Asiatic Land Tenure Laws Amendment Committees to investigate the issue of land in South Africa. The Committees made recommendations which formed the basis for the Group Areas Act no. 41 of 1950.

Mesthrie (1993: 179) maintains that the primary task of the Act was to provide and establish separate areas that would be used exclusively by one racial group for residential and business purposes. This implies that past patterns of residential settlement that had hitherto led to mixed areas had to be reversed and neighbourhoods had to be sorted out anew. Since this process would take time, a complementary objective of the Act was to preserve the racial purity of a particular area from further influx by other racial groups. Once an area had been proclaimed for one race, individuals belonging to any other race became 'disqualified persons' and were issued permits to remain in the area for a specific period of time, after which they had to move from that area to one designated for their own group. The Act made provision for an inspectorate who would ensure that the Act was complied with and penalties

that ranged from fines, jail sentences, to expropriation of property could be enforced. Since areas were defined and proclaimed according to racial groups, the Act provided for the definition of three main groups; namely, the white group, the native group and the coloured group. Morrall (1994) cites Hiemstra, who discusses these groups, and notes that the Act made provision for sub-groups of the native and the coloured groups, but not of the white group. The Act further placed the onus on the individual to prove that he/she did or did not belong to a group, which by appearance and general acceptance he belonged.

The position regarding women was that a woman would essentially become a member of the group of the man with whom she consorted or married if he was of a different race. She could revert to her original group should the relationship end for any reason, only if she was accepted back into that group. A white man who consorted or married a non-white woman could 'not attract that woman into the white group' but would have to become a member of the non-white group for the duration of the relationship. Therefore the white group was more exclusive than any other group (Morrall, 1994). Ratele and Duncan (2003: 97) comment on the contradiction observed in the Groups Areas Act by questioning 'how was this possible, and how did a White woman one day experience herself as White and then as Coloured or Native (African or Black) the next day?'

Morrall (1994) cites Rousseau, who indicates that children of mixed unions were not dealt with in the Act, and since in appearance they would not be the same as either parent, the general acceptance rule would have to be applied in their case. Ratele and Duncan (2003) indicate that apartheid did not have space for bi-racial individuals. A child was not allowed to be both black and white even if he/she had a white parent and a black parent.

Legislation with regard to group areas was amended over the years and the National Party government introduced the concept of Free Settlement Areas where any racial group could reside. The Group Areas Act was finally revoked

by President F.W. de Klerk of the National Party in 1991 and was replaced by the Abolition of the Racially Based Land Measure Act, No 108 of 1991.

### ***1.3.3 The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Act 55 of 1949 and The Immorality Act, Act 23 of 1957***

In the early years of the Cape Colony (in South Africa) settlers from Holland, who were mostly men, occupied the area. Through some form of slavery, they controlled Africans or people brought from India and the East Indies.

The settlers had few women with them, and as such sexual connections were inevitably formed with other races, both slaves and free women. In 1678, however, the Council (that governed the settlers) issued a proclamation forbidding the practice of taking female slaves as concubines. This was followed by legislation in 1685, which forbade marriages between slave-women and white men. This legislation was, however, not effective and interracial marriages continued.

The Cape Act 36 of 1902 and the Orange Free State Ordinance 11 of 1903 prohibited European women from having sexual relations with an 'aboriginal native' for the purposes of gain. The Natal Legislation Act 21 of 1903 is similarly phrased but uses the terms 'coloured' male which was later defined as being 'a Hottentot, Coolie, Bushman, Lascar or Kaffir'. The Transvaal Ordinance 46 of 1903 passed a law restraining European women only, that is, excluding males, from sexual relations with other race groups irrespective of whether the union was for purposes of gain or not. In 1950 the Immorality Act prohibited all sexual relations between blacks and whites.

Shortly after coming into power, the National Party government consolidated much of the earlier legislation and introduced the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Act 55 of 1949. Olivier, Barnard, Cronje & Nathan, (1980) note that the Act provided that as from the date its commencement a marriage between a European and a non-European might not be solemnized, and any such marriage solemnized in contravention of the Act would be void and of no

effect. This was not only applicable to marriages solemnized within South Africa, but also those mixed marriages which took place outside of South Africa, provided one of the parties was a South African citizen. Consequently, a couple would not be able to leave the country to get married and then return with a valid marriage. Mixed marriages between all other race groups were recognized.

In 1957 the government introduced the Immorality Act 23 of 1957, Section 16 of which prohibited all sexual interaction between white and coloured persons. The Act further placed the same restrictions on coloured females, white males and coloured males. The Act defined a coloured as a Non-European person. In effect all sexual activity between the races was strictly forbidden. Boberg (1977), comments on the 'chameleon-like' quality of definitions of race in the various Acts. This is especially because the definitions of race were not consistent; and as such an individual could be considered white for the purpose of one Act, but defined as coloured in a different Act. This emanated from the fact that certain Acts incorporated their own criteria for classification into race groups.

Ratele and Duncan, (2003) report that a total of 929 persons had been arrested, 829 charged, 733 brought to trial, 221 acquitted, and 527 found guilty in terms of section 16 of the Immorality Act of 1957 from the date of the Act's inception to the date of its repeal. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and Section 16 of the Immorality Act were finally repealed by Prime Minister P.W. Botha in 1985 and were replaced by Act No. 72 of 1985. The purpose of the Act was to amend the provisions of the Immorality Act of 1957 and to repeal the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949. Furthermore, the Act sought to legitimize interracial marriages, which had taken place in other countries or by religious ceremonies only.

The authors further report that between 1983 and 1990 about 7000 individuals had officially changed their race classification. The greatest number of reclassification applications was for being classified from Black to Coloured, and from Coloured to White. Only a small number wanted to be classified as

Black. For instance, of the 795 re-classification approved in 1984, the majority were of Coloureds who changed to white (518), followed by Africans (Blacks) who changed to Coloured (89) together making up 77 per cent of the re-classifications. Where does the problem lie? With the idea of classification or with the notion of 'race'?, or with the way we perceive ourselves?

In conclusion, the above pieces of legislation and South African laws indicate the socio-political context within which mixed-race relationships have been constructed and the way such relationships have been portrayed. The focus of this study will be on exploring the effect of the changes in the legislation and socio-political context on the challenges that mixed couples face and their ways of dealing with the experience of being in mixed-race relationships.

#### **1.4 INCIDENTS AND EXPERIENCES OF M-R COUPLES IN SA.**

Ratele and Duncan (2003) point out that mixed-race couples continued to face hardships despite the repeal of the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 in 1985. The first mixed couple to get legally married was Mr. Protas Madlala and Ms. Suzanne Leclerc. In spite of the laws being repealed, Mr. and Mrs. Madlala, like other mixed-race couples, were confronted with a set of incredible circumstances (Donaldson, 2000; Kekezwa, 2000; Khama, Le Roux, & Heunis, 1990; Leqoca & Leqoca, 1995; Mashego, 2005). A report by Cruywagen (1991) refers to how the marriage between a prominent South African politician and member of the ANC, Allan Boesak, to Elna Botha led to divisions within their families and within the ANC in Cape Town. Cruywagen quoted one of the female political leaders regarding the controversial marriage (she refused to be named), who said, *"As a politician, Mr. Boesak must know that he belongs to the people and that it is justifiable that we are upset with his actions which are not in concert with our thinking"*.

There is a recent and steady growing body of empirical and theological work being undertaken into 'mixed' relationships within the South African context (Dayile, 1998; Morrall, 1994; Mwamwenda, 1998; Ratele, 1998b; Ratele, 2002; Stacey, 1998; Woodward, 1999). This kind of research is called for and

should be seen as part and parcel of the body of investigations into the social, political, cultural, as well as economic relations between racial groups. In spite of this growing interest there is relatively little local research done on mixed-race relationships.

In this study the concept 'interracial marriage' will be used interchangeably with the following concepts: mixed-race couple, black-white couples. The focus of the study will be on both married and unmarried couples, mixed-race couples with and without children and also on the couples with the relationship being formed during the pre- and post-apartheid era. The challenges facing the different types of relationships will be explored.

The abbreviation M-R will be used to replace the word 'mixed-race' for the sake of brevity.

## **1.5 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY**

In this chapter, the literature, theoretical and historical backgrounds of the study, as well as its objectives have been presented. In order to address these objectives, chapter 2 will provide the definitions of the concepts surrounding mixed-race relationships. Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical approaches (that is, constructivism and some ideas from social constructionist theory). The methodology is discussed in chapter 4, which includes a description of the nature of a qualitative research design, the motivation for using qualitative research, a description of the participants, method of data collection and analyses, and ethical considerations pertinent to the study. In chapter 5 the results and discussion of the results are presented, with the first part presenting the profile of each partner, how the partners met as well as the empirical or clinical impressions during the interview. The second part of chapter 5 includes the criteria used to create the categories and subcategories of the themes that emerged from the interview transcripts as well as the discussion of verbatim examples from the transcripts. This is followed by discussions in which relevant literature and theory are integrated. A summary of the process of adjusting to a M-R relationship as well as

conclusions, recommendations, limitations and suggestions for follow-up investigations are presented in chapter 6.

## **CHAPTER 2: DEFINING RELEVANT CONCEPTS**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In order to come to an understanding of the complexity of M-R relationships, certain concepts need to be defined. These include: race, ethnicity, racial identity, social identity, social categorisation, social comparison and hierarchy, prejudice and discrimination, attitude change and interracial contact, marriage, family, and love.

### **2.2 RACE**

According to Casas (cited in Helms (1990a: 3) the concept race refers to ‘a sub-group of people possessing a definite combination of physical characteristics, of genetic origin, the combination of which to a varying degree distinguishes the sub-group from other sub-groups of mankind’. The emphasis is on physical differences between the groups. According to Helms (1990a), race involves more than only the biological characteristics. It has psychological implications based on thoughts, feelings and beliefs about different racial groups that eventually affect one’s intra-personal and inter-personal functioning. However, Sullivan, Thompson, Wright, Gross, & Spay, (1980) have found no known intellectual, behavioural or cultural differences resulting from physical differences between races; but considered race to be a social category that is used to distinguish people, and thus making the term ‘race’ to be a social construction.

Besanceney (1970) stresses the social significance of race that has been built on a biological base. He argues that race can be understood as the way in which individuals classify each other on the basis of certain physical characteristics. Gist and Dworkin (1972) state that ‘racial purity’ is a myth, but one which is still accepted by many individuals despite the fact that a formidable body of evidence exists which indicates that all people represent some admixture of hereditary traits from a variety of race groups. Besanceney (1970) concludes that race has important social, cultural and psychological ramifications because of the value, both negative and positive, placed on

certain racial characteristics. He further argues that these values could seriously affect minority groups; particularly people of mixed racial heritage and families. These effects may, for instance, be prejudice and discrimination.

Morner (1967) contends that although it may have been easy to categorise mankind along racial lines in the past, recent research reveals that this is no longer the case since differences are vague and difficult to establish. He maintains that today it is generally agreed that there should be no racial classification. Furthermore, he poses the question of how significant racial differences are biologically, psychologically and intellectually. Based on the various research findings, he concludes that it is extremely difficult to separate the genetic composition from the environment's socio-cultural effect and claims that contemporary research has failed to justify any racial division into intellectually 'superior' or 'inferior' races. He argues that it is likely that although human beings may differ in knowledge, generally they are probably equal in their capacity to learn.

Johnson and Warren (1994) conclude that biologically speaking there is no such category as race. Race is entirely a social construction. It is not surprising, then, that different societies have constructed different race classifications. In the United States, there is a two-tiered racial categorization system. Anybody with known black ancestry, no matter how small, is considered black and is distinguished socially from whites. As a result there are Americans with light skin, light hair, and blue eyes that are defined as 'black.' Other multi-ethnic societies have created separate social categories for people with different combinations of ancestors. Mulattoes, mestizos, creoles, coloureds, Euro-Africans, and Euro-Asians, are amongst these categories. In Brazil there may be as many as forty such racial categories. To protect the system of differential rewards, the more useful a social category is as a means of discrimination, the greater the barriers to marriage with that category.

It seems clear that despite the lengthy debate regarding the concept race, the term remains in general use as a means of punctuation even though its meaning seems to have broadened to include more than simply biological and physical differences. For the purpose of this study, the concept 'race' will be used in its broadest sense so as not to imply a particular biological definition. The term should rather be interpreted as a construct which has a sociological and historical meaning when referring to a particular population group within the South African context.

The terms 'white', 'black', 'coloured', as well as 'Asian' and 'Indian' will be used in this study only as a means of differentiation. They will be used in the same manner as generally used by individuals to classify themselves; although due note is taken that these terms originate largely from the white population group.

### **2.3 ETHNICITY**

Theoretically, it is important to distinguish race from ethnicity as there is often confusion centred around the use of the two concepts. Ethnicity, according to Cases (1984), refers to a group classification of individuals who share a unique social and cultural heritage (customs, language, religion and so on) passed from generation to generation. Whereas race is related to the biological and physical aspects of a person, ethnicity deals with the learned or acquired behavioural patterns. Thus, it is possible for people from different racial groups to belong to the same ethnic group. However, people from different ethnic groups need not belong to different racial groups. Bekker (2001: 2) indicates that 'ethnic' identities are constructed and manipulated, not given. He stresses that ethnicity is a relational concept, which has to do with insiders and outsiders. He also argues that the 'constructedness' of the so-called ethnicity in South Africa needs to be examined in the specific context of apartheid, racial oppression and the ideology of racism. The ethnic identity dynamics of the couples in the present study will be explored in the context described above. The concept 'dynamics' is used in association with 'identity' to highlight a process-driven approach to the development of identity. Process

definition of identity development highlights the process underpinning the negotiation of meanings and value for identity in a given context. They focus on the internal and external factors that influence the identity negotiation process; namely, (1) the issues at stake for self-definition in a given context and (2) considering the product of the process (that is, the particular way in which a person defines the self) as variable and relative to these issues.

## **2.4 RACIAL IDENTITY**

According to Helms (1990) racial identity refers to a black or white person's identifying or non-identifying with the racial group with which he is generally assumed to share racial heritage. Racial identity is, however, a multidimensional construct and it is possible that various dimensions of racial identity would be differentially related to collective self-concept and psychological well-being. Racial identity includes one's feelings about oneself, (that is, personal identity), the extent to which a particular racial group is used as a reference group, and one's deliberate affiliation to a particular racial group (that is, the ascribed identity). Although these dimensions interact with each other, they differ and are differentially related to the collective self-concept and well-being. According to the Social Identity Theory, acceptance of one's racial group as a positive reference group would enhance positive racial (collective) self-esteem, whilst rejecting one's racial group as a positive reference would lead to self-estrangement and maladjustments (Turner, 1982).

Arnold (1984) explores the racial self-concept of twenty eight (28) black and white children, and concludes that interracial children do not differ from the norm in self-concept, but rather that they may experience uncertainty about racial issues; for example, ambivalence regarding the race with which to identify. Tizard and Phoenix (1993) report similar findings and indicate that the racial identity challenges of M-R children are also related to loyalty towards both parents, resulting in a mixed-race or mixed-cultural identity as the most preferred racial identity.

The main focus of this study is not the development of racial identity of mixed-race couples and their children, but rather the extent and manner in which racial identity is influenced by situational processes in South Africa and the ways in which the racially mixed couples and their children construct and/or reconstruct their racial identity. The extent to which individual variability plays a role will also be explored.

## **2.5 SOCIAL IDENTITY**

The social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) postulates that self-concept has two aspects: personal identity and social identity. Personal identity includes beliefs about one's skills, abilities and attributes such as attractiveness or intelligence. Social identity on the other hand (what we call a collective identity) is defined as 'that aspect of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership in a social group or groups, together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1981: 255). While personal identity concerns one's individual characteristics, social or collective identity concerns the characteristics of one's group, which may also characterize oneself as an individual.

Helms (1990a) uses two terms related to social identity; namely, reference group orientation and ascribed identity. Reference group orientation is similar to social identity and refers to the extent to which one uses a particular racial group to guide one's feelings, thoughts or beliefs, and is reflected in value systems, racial esteem, racial ideologies and racial identity. Ascribed identity, on the other hand, pertains to the individual's deliberate affiliation or commitment to a particular racial group. Both these constructs are based on social categorization, which is a core construct of social identity theory.

## **2.6 SOCIAL CATEGORIZATION**

According to Tajfel (1981), social categorization is a tendency of individuals to divide their worlds into distinct groups or categories that enable them to locate

themselves in society. Through this process, people are categorized as either being in the in-group or out-group (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Some of the commonly used categories are race, age, class, sex, language, and religion. Turner (1982) suggests that people internalize specific social categories as part of their self-concept and the sum total of the internalized social categorization forms the individual's social identity. Social identity refers to descriptions of oneself in terms of group membership. It is possible that a person may identify with various social groups, which may or may not overlap. The focus of this study will mainly be to explore whether being in a mixed-race relationship or marriage has any effect on the social identity descriptions of the couple or their offspring.

## **2.7 SOCIAL COMPARISON AND HIERARCHY**

This social category and social identity have an evaluative component; that is, they are perceived as either positive or negative. It is through the process of social comparison that the evaluative dimension of group membership is determined. The outcome of this social comparison process is a gradation or grading of difference, called status hierarchy or social hierarchy. If the group is perceived to be relatively superior to another on a certain dimension, it has a high status, and its group members might have a positive social identity; if it is perceived as inferior, it will have a low status and its members might have a low social identity (De la Rey, 1991) .

## **2.8 IN-GROUP AND OUT-GROUP PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION**

Prejudice is an attitude, usually negative, towards the members of some group, based solely on their membership in that group. A person who is prejudiced against some social group tends to evaluate its members in a specific manner (usually negative), merely because they belong to that group. Their individual traits and behaviour play little role. They are disliked simply because they belong to a specific group. Prejudice might even be based on age, geographic origin, or occupation; and even on simply being overweight. Regardless of its form or focus, however, prejudice is real and damaging,

even when it takes a relatively subtle form (Baron & Byrne, 2003). In contrast, discrimination refers to negative actions directed at groups that are the targets of prejudice.

## **2. 9 DIRECT AND INDIRECT/SUBTLE RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Ratele and Duncan (2003) distinguish between direct and indirect or subtle racial discrimination. Direct racial discrimination refers to unequal treatment based on racial or related criteria. Indirect (or subtle) racial discrimination, on the other hand, refers to the tendency to adhere to the equal treatment of different racial groups under systematically unequal conditions, which leads to the creation or perpetuation of patterns of racial inequality.

According to Smitherman-Donaldson and Van Dijk (1988), the phenomenon of prejudice and discrimination is generally conceptualised as a set of negative cognitions and beliefs that do not remain fixed, but undergo constant change as a result of change in the broader society, and because of social pressure.

The focus of this study will be on prejudice and discrimination against mixed-race couples. That is, how the couples deal or cope with these experiences. The study will also explore the extent to which the strategies used by the couples to deal with negative attitudes and actions were effective.

## **2. 10 ATTITUDE CHANGE AND INTERRACIAL CONTACT**

Social psychologists believe that prejudice is not inevitable and that it can be reduced by several techniques. One of these techniques involves direct contact between people from different groups. The main idea behind the contact theory is that contact (especially if these contacts develop into close friendships) between members of different groups will produce positive changes, such as reduced racial discrimination and harmonious inter-racial relations. However, research has shown that contact *per se* will not necessarily improve inter-group relations. Instead, a successful outcome will only result if certain conditions are present. For example, equal social status, strong institutional support for positive inter-group relations, and co-operative

interaction aimed at the attainment of shared goals between members of the different groups within the contact situation (Ratele & Duncan, 2003).

Baron and Byrne (2003) argue that knowledge about cross-group friendship can indicate to other members of a group that contact with the out-group members is acceptable, and that the norms of the group are not so anti out-group as individuals might have initially believed. Knowledge that members of one's own group enjoyed close friendship with members of an out-group can help to reduce anxiety about interacting with them. The authors also report that the existence of cross-group friendship suggests that members of the out-group do not necessarily dislike members of the in-group. Finally, such friendships can generate increased empathy and understanding between groups. In other words, we do not necessarily have to experience close contact with persons from an out-group to feel more positively towards them; learning that members of our own in-group have had such experience may be sufficient. Research results have indicated that merely learning that some people in one's own group get along well with persons belonging to other groups can be a highly effective means for countering the detestable effect of prejudice (Wright, 1984).

The present study will explore the effect that a couple's intimate relationship or cross-group marriage has had on themselves (that is, individual attitudes) and on all the significant relations with other family members and friends (that is, social attitudes). Morrall (1994) reports on the observation she made where a cross-racial marriage in a family was followed by other family members marrying across the racial line.

## **2.11 MARRIAGE**

Marriage is a universal institution which has many manifestations. It is generally defined as a legal and socially sanctioned union between two individuals of the opposite sex which accords the status of 'legitimacy' to their offspring. However, so-called 'illegitimate children' are currently, and correctly

so, referred to as 'children born out of wedlock'. Although polygamous marriages (involving more than one spouse) are also allowed under customary laws in some societies, there is a growing tendency towards monogamy (Gwinn, Swanson and Goetz, 1986). In South Africa, today, same-sex marriages are allowed. This reality, thus, challenges the general definition of a conventional marriage.

Most of the societies shroud racially mixed marriages in veils of mystery, fascination and disapproval (Shanks-Meile & Dobratz, 1991; Wallenstein, 1995). The very idea of such unions can elicit feelings of very deep, personal opposition in people who have never even seen such a marriage. Societal reaction is often so strong that families are often torn apart, loved ones lost forever, and immeasurable hurt is inflicted on decent and gentle people (Johnson & Warren, 1994).

Despite such intense feelings, the number of mixed marriages continues to grow, or is increasing, throughout the world. Most countries are struggling to cope with the implications of culturally diverse and ethnically heterogeneous populations. Marriage, the most basic social institution, finds itself inextricably caught in the struggle. Though the nuptials are between two individuals, mixed marriages are the object of attention in every society because of their symbolic meaning. Marriage is more than a relationship between two individuals. It is a relationship between groups, and further signifies equality between those groups. In this light, however, Johnson and Warren (1994) report that every structure disadvantages some of its members, while promoting the interests of others. They indicate that for those who enjoy preferential treatment, the symbol of social equality inherent in someone else's marriage can be seen as threatening the social order.

The authors further state that social equality implicit in a mixed-race marriage violates socially sanctioned patterns of privilege and superiority. They argue that it is this characteristic, which causes the society to label it 'mixed', which might imply a mixture between two groups, which are in different positions in the social hierarchy. The further apart the groups are in their access to social

rewards, the greater the sense of 'mixture.' For instance, in South Africa there have been inter-ethnic marriages between Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking people or Europeans, as well as intermarriages between coloureds and indigenous Africans of various cultures, but these marriages were not legally prohibited. This might be due to the fact that these unions were perceived as not violating socially sanctioned patterns of privilege and superiority.

Complicating the study of mixed marriages is the fact that 'mixed' is culturally defined. Whether 'like' marries 'like' depends on which characteristics are regarded as significant. For instance, the marriage between a black American and a white American with same nationality and culture, from the same neighbourhood, same economic and educational background, religion, norms and values. In America such a marriage is regarded as mixed, not because there are important attributes of the individuals which are different, but because Americans use race as a measure of social differentiation. Race determines one's access to rewards and place in the social strata. This definition differs from society to society. For instance, in Nigeria mixture becomes problematic if it involves religious intermarriages.

Dutfield's (1990) description of the marriage of Seretse and Ruth Khama and their families' reaction to their marriage can be used as a good reflection of the challenges that mixed marriages pose to the social status and order, and also to indicate how 'mixed' is culturally defined. The Bangwato royal family reacted negatively way to the union between Seretse and Ruth (a London typist).

Seretse was found to be unfit to govern, not from any defect of character (he was in fact highly praised), but because he had been declared a prohibited immigrant in S.A on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 1949 and could therefore not conduct tribal business in the capital Mafikeng. The couple was sent to exile and it was judged safe to allow them back only in 1950. This could imply that Ruth's entry into the Bangwato royal family was feared to be threatening the social

order. In this case, it can be argued that the negative reaction to the marriage was not only based on racial differences, but also on differences in terms of membership to the royal family.

After their return from exile Seretse ruled independent Botswana for nearly twenty-five years and the Bangwato tribe had to come to terms with their initial dislike of a cross-racial marriage. Khama, *et al.*, (1990) indicate that the Bangwato tribe has changed their attitude towards mixed-raced marriages and that the marriages of Seretse's daughter and son which were also across the racial line were welcomed by the tribe.

Even though interracial marriages are not legally prohibited any more in South Africa, the social construction of marriages across racial lines might still be the same and this aspect will be explored in this study.

## **2. 12 FAMILY**

A family can be defined as a group of related persons in differentiated family positions, such as husband and wife, parent and child, or aunt and niece, who fulfil the function necessary to ensure family survival, such as reproduction, child socialization and emotional gratification. This definition is often interpreted as establishing the heterosexual nuclear family, with legally married couple living with their offspring as a norm. Cheal (1991) argues that we need to explore the root of family variation in a multitude of ethnic, racial and cultural identities. Burgess (1995) argues that we tend to see families that do not conform to the standard nuclear family as deviant. Gubrium and Holstein (1990) argue that the family should be defined by individual experiences rather than according to a particular structure and that no single family form is right for all people at all times. Ingoldsby and Smith (1995) indicate that the emerging family theories often emphasize diversity and the social influences such as gender, race and ethnicity that structure different experiences of family and society.

For instance, the symbolic interactionism theory defines a family as a unit of interacting personalities. Symbolic interactionism proposes that humans create symbolic worlds through their interactions and that these in turn shape human behaviour. The actions of human beings towards a thing or another person are greatly influenced by the meaning the said thing or person has for them. Meanings are based on cultural symbols and social values, which are communicated through verbal and non-verbal interactions. Symbolic interactionism may have the potential to examine how social factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, social class and age operate through individuals' interactions, as persons interpret symbols and share social meanings communicated in their interactions. The theory could guide research that seeks to explore and define the symbolic processes operating in black/white families or interracial families, which is the focus of this study. Since the main focus of this study is on both married and unmarried mixed-race couples, the experience of the family will be mostly from the couples' perspective.

## **2. 13 LOVE**

Baron and Byrne (2003) cite Beall and Sternberg, who indicate that the specific details of what 'love' means vary from culture to culture, but there is reason to believe that the general phenomenon is a universal one. They further assert that love is a combination of emotions, cognitions and behaviours that can be involved in intimate relationships. Sternberg's triangular model of love proposes a triangular model of love with three basic components: intimacy, passion and decision/commitment. Sternberg argues that love can be based on any one of these components, a combination of any two of them, or on all three. The main focus of this study would be to explore the challenges that racially different couples face in their experience of love and intimacy and in their reconstruction of the meaning attached to the socially constructed realities of who is a part of 'us', insider or who is the outsider, part of 'them'. Ratele and Duncan (2003) argue that identity and intimacy are closely related. Identities beg the question of difference. An individual establishes an identity in relation to other individuals and social

groups with which he/she belongs, and others from whom he/she is different, and to whom he/she does not belong. According to Ratele and Duncan (2003), relationships such as marriage or close friendships, which are supposed to be driven by love or other socially or culturally valued emotions and sentiments, are historically embedded, and culturally, economically and politically constructed. With the changing social, economic and cultural politics, the meaning attached to close relationship and sexual intimacy between racially different couples seems to challenge existing prejudices or to establish new ideas about blacks and whites.

## **2.14 CONCLUSION**

The concepts presented, and analysed, in this chapter point to the complexity of a M-R relationship, and how socio-cultural, as well as political factors may pose a challenge to the existing family and social systems.

## **CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL APPROACHES**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, a composite theoretical approach, aimed at providing the framework within which the research problem, the nature of the study, and how the results can be understood, will be discussed. The constructivism approach as well as some social constructionist ideas will be used to inform the theoretical framework. First, a brief discussion of the difficulty in distinguishing between the two theoretical perspectives, as well as the explanation of each perspective will be given. This will be followed by the discussion of the epistemological and ontological views of each perspective, their view of identity and 'self' definition, as well as the limitations of each perspective. Finally, a description of how the combination of the two theoretical approaches used in this study will be presented.

### **3.2 CONSTRUCTIVISM VS SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM**

Distinguishing between the concepts constructivism and social constructionist is no simple matter. Unfortunately, the terms have become loosely used in other fields of enquiry, such that their definitions have become blurred.

Even within ostensibly social constructionist literature, ambiguities and uncertainties abound. There is a distinction made by many authors between strong or extreme social constructionism, and weak or mild constructionism (Burningham & Cooper, 1999). Other analysts of what is clearly social constructionism (for example, the work of Kenneth Gergen) inexplicably label it constructivism (Fuller, 1998; Lynch, 1998).

Hruby (2001) defines constructivism as a theory or a set of theories about how individuals fashion or construct knowledge, rather than receive it ready made, or as a psychological description of knowledge. Social constructionism, on the other hand, is defined as a sociological description of knowledge, and

deals with knowledge formation outside the head, between participants in social relationships and context.

Young and Collin (2004) indicate how constructivism is now firmly established in the field of psychology. The authors, however, acknowledge that it is taking time to agree upon definitions and usage between the two theoretical perspectives. The authors show how the material that was labelled “constructivist” in Brown and Brook (1996) is re-named “social constructionist” in Brown (2002). Raskin (2002) states that there are so many varieties of constructivist psychology that even the experts seem to have been confounded. Terms like “constructivism” and “constructionism” are employed so idiosyncratically and inconsistently that at times they defy definition. This is not because constructivism and social constructionism cannot be distinguished from each other. Constructivism focuses on the meaning making and constructing of the social and the psychological worlds through individual, cognitive processes, while social constructionism emphasizes that the social and psychological worlds are made real (constructed) through social processes and interactions.

Freedman and Combs (1996) differentiate between the two perspectives by indicating that the move from constructivism to social constructionism is from an “experiential” to a “social” epistemology. In other words, there is a shift from focusing on how an individual constructs a model of reality from his/her experience to focusing on how people interact with one another to construct, modify and maintain what their society holds to be true, real and meaningful.

The simple distinctions provided above, however, mask the variety and heterogeneity both within and between constructivism and social constructionism due, in part, to differing epistemologies (that is, the nature of the relationship between the researcher/knower and what can be known) and ontologies (that is, the nature of reality that is to be studied), which serve to weaken the distinction. Thus, in order to understand the contribution of these perspectives to the present study, a relevant definition of each perspective will be presented below.

### **3.3 DEFINING CONSTRUCTIVISM**

Constructivism is a perspective that arose in developmental and cognitive psychology, and its central figures include Bruner (1990), Kelly (1955), Piaget (1969), Von Glasertfert (1995) and Vygotsky (1978). Constructivism proposes that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes. It differs from the scientific orthodoxy of logical positivism in its contention that the world cannot be known directly, but rather by the construction imposed on it by the mind. However, it is generally considered to share positivism's commitment to a dualist epistemology and ontology. Thus, it represents an epistemological perspective concerned with how we know and, by implication, how we develop meaning. These processes are internal to the individual, integrating knowledge (or meaning) into pre-existing schemas (assimilations) or changing the schemes to fit the environment (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

Radical constructivists like Von Glasertfert (1995) argue that the individual mind constructs reality. More moderate constructivists like Kelly (1955) and Piaget (1969) acknowledge that the individual constructions take place within a systematic relationship to the external world. Finally, social constructivists, such as Bruner (1990) and Vygotsky (1978), recognize that influences on individual construction are derived from and preceded by social relationships. Although this last position has some similarity to that of social constructionist, it differs because of its dualist assumptions. However, these dualist assumptions are not central to scientists in other disciplines who take on constructivist's mantle (Young & Collin, 2002). For example, Bruner (1990), by focusing on acts of meaning, tried to overcome the dualism of mind and culture, and biology and physical resources.

### **3.3.1 The constructivist view of identity and self definition**

Mahoney (2002), who, like Kelly and Piaget, is a moderate constructivist, defines the 'self' as a complex system of active and interactive self-organizing processes directed towards self organisation and order, embedded in social and symbolic context, and seeking to achieve balance between ordering and disordering processes. Wong (1999) argues that the existence of the self is defined in a first-person experience of the self and not in the material availability of things lying out there in space. He uses the word 'experience' to refer to a variety of image impressions, behavioural expressions and physiological feelings, which are initiated by the first person via the use of language, gestures and any other system of pictorial and symbolic representation which are meaning-embedding. The author further argues that it is logically impossible for anyone to derive the meaning of a word by referring to an 'inner object' which only 'I' know and only 'I' can observe.

One of the foci of this study is to understand the identity construction of children or couples in mixed-race relationships. In the literature there is a distinction made between personal identity and social or collective identity. While personal identity concerns one's individual characteristics, social or collective identity concerns the characteristics of one's group, which may also characterize one as an individual. In this study, some of the ideas from the constructivist perspective will be used to understand and explain the challenges related to the internal or cognitive construction of mixed-race couples and/or the identities of their children.

### **3.3.2 Constructivist ontology and epistemology**

Constructivists believe that the reality to be studied consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world, which could be gained by using an interactional and interpretative approach, which aims to explain the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social actions (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Kelly (1999b) describes this approach as an 'insider' or first-person perspective, which incorporates empathic, context-bound

research, and includes less critical phenomenology. He further defines this 'insider' or first-person perspective as an approach that focuses on how the experience is lived or constructed from the perspective of the subject who has the experience. This involves the study of text (in this instance text refers to the transcribed interviews of the couples in mixed-race relationships) which is believed to reflect the subjective experiences of the people concerned.

Since the main focus of this study is on understanding the meaning, perceptions and experiences of individuals or couples in mixed-race relationships/marriages, the constructivist ontology and epistemology would be more relevant in providing the understanding of the couple's subjective experiences of the reality of being in such a (mixed-race) relationship.

According to Kelly (1999b), focusing only on 'understanding' of subjective experiences is limiting as it does not allow for a phase of 'interpreting' understanding in its context. It has been said that one of the important strengths of qualitative research is that, it is generative, in that it constructs new ways of understanding or new intelligibilities (Gergen, 1985). Understanding does not go very far if it stops at summarising the way that people construct or understand their own realities, or focusing only on the internal or subjective experience, and ignoring the interpretation of social processes that affect the individual experience.

### **3.3.3 Limitations of a constructivist approach**

Martin and Sugarman (1999) contend that the failure of constructivism lies in its reliance on 'an individual sovereign' process of cognitive construction to explain how human beings are able to share so much socially; to interpret, understand, influence and coordinate their activities with one another. This implies that constructivism adopts a highly individualistic approach without reference to the social interaction, context and discourses that make self-reflection, meaning making and autobiography possible.

According to Gergen (1989: 478), focusing only on the subjective experiences as constructed by the individuals, or what he refers to as the study of 'isolated minds', is illogical. It also ignores the social relatedness or how collectivities generate meanings often without an explicit intention to do so.

Ratela (2003) argues that relationships, more specifically mixed-race ones, are not just private matters; they bring the public and the personal together. He explains how 'race mixing' has come to be seen as dirty, impure, undesirable, pathological and criminal. This seems to reflect more a constructionist approach which seeks to interpret why certain relationships, as opposed to others, come to be viewed as 'normal', while others are thought of as 'strange' or 'unusual'. This requires us to go beyond the presented subjective experiences of the 'here-and-now' of these relationships and examine the 'how-they-come-to-be-spoken-of' in the way that they are, across times and situations.

According to Ratela (2003), a fuller understanding of the relational life is one that accounts for the historical, social, economic, political and cultural coordinates that produce some relationships as 'mixed' and others as 'pure'. For the purpose of this study, the focus will not be on discourse analyses *per se*, but rather on the interpretation of how socially-constructed discourses, as presented in the stories of the participants, and the literature (or the 'already-existing social discourse' about race mixing) affect the meaning-making process and experience of mixed-race couples living in South Africa.

According to Hruby (2001), socially constructed meanings are often taken at face value by members of the community as facts, the reality, common sense, or even as inarguably foundational meanings. This may result in the internalisation of certain meanings or socially constructed discourses about a certain event, place or phenomenon. Neuman (2006) argues that once people accept social creations as being facts or real, very real consequences follow. For example, if socially constructed reality tells one that the place called Soweto is dangerous, one will behave accordingly, whether or not one's constructed belief fits the actual physical reality.

So, the approach that will be followed in this study will not focus on the deconstruction of the discourse on race and race mixing, but rather on understanding the couple's subjective experiences of being in a mixed-race relationship and how the 'ready-made discourses' or 'social talk' about race mixing impact on the couple's subjective experience and the meanings attached to being in a mixed-race relationship. The concepts 'ready-made discourse' or 'social talk' or 'the already-existing social discourse' will be used to explain social concepts such as 'norms' and 'stereotypes'. The focus will be on interpreting how norms and stereotypes affect the process of meaning making.

By using the social cognitive theory or, more specifically, the normative theory, Hegarty and Pratto (2004) explain how norms and stereotypes shape and affect people's interpretation of group differences. The norm theory describes the cognitive or mental representations necessary to instance knowledge about categories. According to this theory, it is impossible to hold all of one's knowledge about all of the members of a given category in working memory simultaneously. People construct summary representations of categories in working memory by recruiting highly typical category members (both real and fictional) from long-term memory. These exemplars are aggregated to form a mental representation in working memory, which Kahneman and Miller (1986) call category norm. For example, the term 'women' calls to mind women perceived to be typical, and the attributes of those exemplars are aggregated to form a category norm for 'women'. Norm theory predicts that any attribute of particular women that falls outside of this constructed category norm will be perceived as unusual, surprising and abnormal. Because the attributes of a more typical subgroup are most likely to be included in a category norm, the attributes of less typical subgroups are most likely to be perceived as both changeable and abnormal.

Hegarty and Pratto (2004) argue that asymmetry leads to explanations of group differences that focus on the attributes of less typical groups. The above argument shows how norms and stereotypes affect the process of

meaning making and can thus be located within the constructivist and the social construction of knowledge. One of the foci of this study is racial stereotypes and norms; that is, that which is considered normal or abnormal within a specific racial group. The ideas from the cognitive social theory will be used to understand and explain how norms and stereotypes related to racial differences shape and affect the interpretation and attribution of meaning to racial differences at individual and social levels.

The purpose of using both constructivism and social constructionist perspective is to provide an understanding that goes beyond the subjective experience (or individual cognitive/internal process) and interpret or provide insight on how that which is private attracts so much public attention. Thus, focusing on both constructivism and some ideas from social constructionism will provide an understanding of both the individual and social processes of knowledge and meaning construction.

By combining the two theoretical orientations, this study will provide an understanding and interpretation of certain phenomena related to race mixing in South Africa. For example, Ratela (2004) asserts that, rather than being viewed as simply two people together, the existence of mixed-race relationships in racist societies becomes a larger, representative issue, and is looked upon as confronting the socially constructed views (or 'ready-made discourse') about 'us' / 'them' or 'insider/outsider' categories. Within the social constructionist worldview, the cultural and contextual stories are viewed as important. White (1991) argues that people make sense of their lives through stories: both cultural stories they are born into and personal stories they construct in relation to the cultural stories. In many cultures certain stories will come to be dominant over other stories. These dominant stories will specify the preferred and customary ways of believing and behaving within a particular culture. Some cultures have colonized and oppressed others. The stories of the dominant culture are then imposed on people of the marginalised culture.

### **3.4 DEFINING SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM**

Social constructionism on the other hand argues that ideas, beliefs and memories emerge in social exchanges through language. In accordance with this, all knowledge is seen as evolving: in the space between people, or in the realm of the 'common world' or the common dance' (Hoffman, 1990: 8). Therefore, there is no absolute truth or reality, but only co-created stories about the world. In terms of this position, 'objective knowledge is impossible since the researcher is always a part of the world he or she studies ... knowledge-making cannot be neutral and disinterested but is a political process in the service of particular purposes' (Reason & Bradbury, 2001: 6). In this process, the role of the researcher as a participant cannot be neglected. The social constructionist position holds that a problem system (or the system under analysis) is composed primarily of meanings (Hoffman, 1990; Gergen & Gergen, 1997).

#### **3.4.1 Social constructionist ontology and epistemology**

The ontological position that social constructionism invokes is generally understood as anti-essentialist and anti-realist. Language is treated by some of the social constructionists as the only reality there is, and that subjective reality is not real (Edley, 2001). Most social constructionists argue that reality is mirrored in language or talk. Talk involves the creation or construction of particular accounts or stories of what the world is like. Therefore, as soon as we begin to think or talk about the world, we necessarily begin to represent reality. In other words, reality cannot exist outside of discourse. Instead, it is the product of discourse: both the subjective and the results of what talk is all about. In contrast to the constructivist views, talk about the mind is viewed as an artefact of cultural forces, an epiphenomenon shaped by the conventions of the discourse. Discourse is real and everything else is relative to discourse.

Social constructionists believe that reality consists of a fluid and variable set of social constructions. Social constructionist research adopts a suspicious and politicised epistemological stance, which will allow them to deconstruct

versions of reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). This is characteristic of constructionist research, which aims to show how versions of the social world are produced in discourse, and to demonstrate how this construction of reality makes certain actions possible and others (like inter-racial marriages) unthinkable.

In conclusion, the epistemological and ontological views of the social constructionist and constructivist approaches have created a recurring debate between those who see knowledge and experience as socially co-created through language, and those who see knowledge and experience as, in part at least, a product of human mental functioning. Edley (2001) concludes that most social constructionists do not see language as the only reality. Their argument is not, therefore, that subjective reality does not exist, but rather that, it exists as a socially constructed reality.

#### **3.4.2 Social constructionist view of identity and self-definition**

According to Gergen (1992: 22), all knowledge-claims concerning the subject's expression of the meaning or definition of the self must be grounded in the institutional or social context of the discursive negotiations; that is, '*self experience*' as just a social construction. According to Chiong (1998), identity formation is not a result of a private, internal underlying process but of culturally appropriated modes of discourse by which individuals imbue their actions with rationality and warrantability.

Identity achievement, rather than being an individual achievement ascribed to internal processes of which the individual has no control, lies more within a social locus of control, which is not always benign. Chiong further argues that we define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. Thus, failure to or difficulty in achieving a cohesive identity does not constitute a 'moral deficit' or 'a lack of control over the process', but rather a 'failure to mesh with society's demands and rewards'. Identity formation is a difficult task for all the children, especially in a pluralistic society where race is a determining factor. How a

racially mixed child negotiates his/her racial identity is based on race that is primarily a socio-political construct rather than a biological one (Spickard, 1989).

Wong (1999) says that according to the constructionist view, the existence of the first-person self is reduced to a concern for social psychology. That is, the 'existential self' is re-defined as a 'social description' and an analysis of its meaning content needs not hinge on a study of the 'inner experience' of the subject. Since the content of the self is understood to be a 'social description', it should follow from this view that even those 'silent soliloquies' or 'internal cognitive processes' which are inwardly performed by the individual actor ought still to be classified as 'public-social discourse' when decoded in terms of their 'semantic meaning'. If the meaning content of an individual's expression can only be built on the institutionalised use of 'speech performances', this conveys the message that, the first-person owns no autonomous source and power for giving a different interpretation to his/her internalised experience of the self.

Gergen (1994: 51) asserts that 'the degree to which a given account of the world or self is sustained across time is not dependent on the objective validity of the account, but on the vicissitudes (that is a change of circumstances) of social process'. This means that 'objective knowledge' is the end result of social processes involving a coalition of subjective perspectives. The glue that holds objective knowledge together is language, which serves to bind us socially. These social constructionist views will be used to explain and understand the identity construction or challenges of mixed-race couples and their children. That is, the challenges related to social identity, collective identity, ethnic identity or racial identity.

### **3.4.3 Limitations of a social constructionist approach**

Wong (1999: 72) indicates how social constructionists refuse to engage in the investigation of the first-person private experience in their explanation of the

development of self. Social constructionists do acknowledge the importance of 'change' in an individual's process of language development; but such acknowledgement seems to be empty, as no efforts have been undertaken to explain how an individual internalises the language used. Because of this intellectual omission, the social constructionist view lacks a convincing model to account for how a conceptually different psychological individual can be produced from a group of homogeneous social actors. As a result the most common criticism of social constructionism is that it tends to construct human beings as little more than malleable objects, easily moulded by the massive, blind forces of their society and social clubs.

According to Wong (1999: 75) the first-person '*private sense of the self*' does not automatically result from a correct usage of words or language; the usage has to be accompanied by a personal experience of the meaning of the words which the subject uses for his/her self-expression. Social constructionists have suggested that our 'social selves' can be fabricated through a public show of 'role identities', but they have failed to address the issue of how individual social actors perceive the meaningfulness of their own existence.

By stating that the criteria for the creation of the self are inter-personally negotiated as 'social criteria', this social constructionist view precludes the 'absolute right' of the first-person to create a different, and hitherto unknown, set of 'conceptual criteria' for organising an autonomous sense of the self (Wong, 1999). It also undermines the moral basis for supporting a first-person judgement of the criteria for defining 'autonomy' and 'responsibility', as maintained by the subject's direct perception of the moral meaning of the situation.

By insisting that the criteria for the 'construction of the self' should be inter-personally negotiated as social criteria, social constructionism negates the meanings of all those expressive and bodily gestures which are shown and displayed by the first-person, even though these were not registered by any onlookers. This denial and negation of the 'truthful self' could be easily manipulated by a totalitarian institution (be it a religion, science, state, or

family) to license its own agenda on the meaning of social communications, and to deny an individual his/her right of self-expression and self determination. Instead of creating the right for the individuals to transform their use of the common language to open up possibilities for creating 'new forms of life', social constructionism relativises that absolute right; thereby securing a public guarantee of an unconscious repetition of 'social processes', justified in the name of 'normative development' (Wong, 2001: 80).

Wong (2001), concludes by indicating that if social constructionism hopes to incorporate the first-person into its analytical framework, new conceptual categories for transforming itself into a 'truth-oriented psychology' need to be created, by devising a new epistemological framework for enquiring into the 'inner experience' of the individual subject.

### **3.5 THE COMBINATION OF THE CONSTRUCTIVIST AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST PERSPECTIVES**

An interpretive research method which seeks to develop an understanding of a situation from the perspective of being in the context (that is, an empathy approach, which is more consistent with the constructivist perspective), and from the perspective of distancing (that is, stepping outside the context of subjective experiences, which is more consistent with the social constructionist perspective) has been decided upon. Kelly (1999b: 399) argues that understanding the phenomena from within their context, in an empathic manner, as well as from a more distance, sceptical perspective, is a combined effort which is like two hands working in unison and yet apart.

The focus of this research is, however, not the explanation of how a socially constructed reality (for example, 'race' or 'race-mixing' discourse) developed, but rather how they made particular set of practices (for example, mixed-race relationships/marriages) impossible or possible in the South African context. The focus is more on interpreting the subjective experience in the context of the socially constructed discourse and developing an understanding of patterns of experiences across time and situation. Kelly (1999b) refers to this

as using the range of resources at the researcher's disposal, including an understanding of the history, theory, society, language, politics, and so on, in understanding experience. This is not secondary interpretation applied to an experience in an add-on fashion, but fundamental to understanding of the very context of the experience, as it is revealed from outside of the experience; from the perspective of the types of questions, experience, information and concerns which we as 'readers' have. The 'reader' (or as described above, the 'outsider' or 'third person') is drawn into the apprehension of meaning, which is no longer the 'writer's domain'. Kelly (1999b: 401) refers to this as distanciation, and argues that distanciation is not only an epistemological necessity (because of the absence of the author), but it allows us to say more that can be known purely from '*within*' the author's context. No matter how thoroughly we understand a context from '*within*' or '*as it is lived in its context*'; there are certain things about the context that are only going to become evident when we look at it from the outside.

Edley (2001), in his account of how social constructionism has fuelled the development of a new set of divisions, suggests that we take account of the common sense view between representation and reality. Common sense assumes that, on the one hand, we have the 'real world', with all its distinctive qualities, and then, on the other, we have accounts or descriptions of that world. He further argues that representations are just what they are: representations or copies of something original. This is not to say that people always assume representations to be good, faithful or accurate. We know that representations can vary in terms of their fidelity. For example, a photograph is generally assumed to be an extremely good representation of the real. Nevertheless, the assumption that reality is both prior to, and independent of, its representation forms the basis of this common understanding.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

Different definitions of the two theoretical models, their epistemological and ontological positions, as well as their limitations have been provided. The combination of the two theoretical perspectives will enhance the development of an understanding based on using more empathic methods (that is, methods consistent with the constructivist approach), as well as critical methods (that is, the ones more consistent with the social constructionist approach). This will be reflected and explained further in the next chapter, more specifically in the phase of data analysis and interpretation.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter gives an overview of the methodology employed in the research. A discussion of the interpretive, qualitative research, which is the research paradigm chosen by the researcher, and the reasons for using this paradigm, will be given. A discussion of the method for gathering data as well as the method and steps for analyzing it will also be presented. Furthermore, a description of the participants, the manner in which they were chosen and their interaction with the researcher are also outlined in this chapter. The chapter will be concluded with the discussion of the trustworthiness of qualitative research.

### **4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The aim of the present study is to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, perceptions and the challenges faced by interracial couples. To achieve this aim, descriptions were gathered from couples who were in mixed-race relationships in Gauteng. It was decided to use an interpretive, qualitative research design to explore these descriptions.

#### **4.2.1 What is qualitative research?**

Qualitative research entails a set of methods aimed at uncovering an individual's or a group's social, cultural or normative pattern of behaviour and interaction. The qualitative researcher analyses social settings, motives and meanings, actions and reactions, organisations and culture (Roth, 1993: 46). According to this approach, the social context is important in understanding the social world. It is believed that the meaning of social action or an event depends on the context in which it occurs (Neuman, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the relationship between the researcher and the subject matter, the situational constraints that shape enquiry, and the value-laden nature of enquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The method used to study people inevitably affects how we view them. When we reduce people's words and acts to statistical equations, we lose sight of the human side of their social life. When we instead study people qualitatively, we get to know them personally and experience what they experience in their daily pattern of interaction. We learn about the inner life of the person, his/her moral struggles, successes and failures in securing his/her destiny in a world too often at variance with that person's needs, hopes and ideals (Taylor, 1984).

Qualitative researchers try to understand people from their own frame of reference. Central to the qualitative researcher is experiencing reality as others experience it. By observing people, listening to them talk about what is on their minds and looking at them, the qualitative researcher obtains first-hand knowledge of their social life unfiltered through concepts, operational definitions and rating scales (Becker cited in Taylor, 1984: 7).

In this study, the researcher thus ensured that the qualitative design allowed for the direct contact with couples in a mixed-race relationship. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to enter their worlds as far as possible, to hear their stories, in a bid to understand mixed-race relationships from their experiences.

In this study, the term 'interpretive research' is used to include more empathic, 'insider' or 'first-person' perspectives and context, as well as more 'distanced, skeptical understanding', 'outsider' or 'third-person' perspectives (Kelly, 1999b: 399). The empathetic perspective involves the study of a text, and is believed to reflect people's subjective experiences. When the researchers study a text, they 'absorb or get inside the viewpoint it presents as a whole, and they develop a deep understanding of how its

parts relate to the meaning of the whole' (Neuman, 1994: 61). In explaining the distanced perspective, Kelly (1999b) cites Ricoeur, who states that this perspective involves stepping outside the context of the experience and is more consistent with social constructionist ideas. Distanciation enables the researcher to make use of a range of recourses to add to his/her understanding, such as 'an understanding of the history, theory, society, language, politics and so on, in understanding experiences' (Kelly, 1999b: 401). Ricoeur therefore suggests that an understanding of a situation needs to be developed both from the perspective of being in the context (empathy), and the perspective of distanciation. In other words, a 'both-and', rather than an 'either-or' approach should be pursued.

#### **4.2.2 Strengths of qualitative data**

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), major features of well-collected qualitative data include the following strong points:

- It focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that we have a strong handle on what real life is like. The fact that data was collected through face-to-face interviews with mixed-race couples, rather than through the mail or over the phone, increases the possibility for understanding latent, underlying, or non-obvious issues, experiences and perceptions related to being in a mixed-race relationship.
- Another feature of qualitative data is its richness and holism, with strong potential for revealing complexity. Such data provides thick descriptions that are vivid, nested in a real context, and have a ring of truth that has impact on the reader.
- Qualitative data, with its emphasis on people's 'lived experience', is fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes and structures of their lives: their perceptions,

assumptions, prejudgements, presuppositions and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them.

- Qualitative data collection goes far beyond 'snapshots' of 'what' or 'how many', to how and why things happen as they do. The inherent flexibility of qualitative studies enables one to explore new themes if they arise. For example, data collection times and methods can be varied as a study proceeds.

### **4.3 THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

The participants for the study were recruited through a snowball sampling technique. When explaining this process, Kelly (1999a) points out that most often when one finds an appropriate case, that person is able to lead one to others. He is of the view that people who have similar experiences tend to seek each other out, or at least are often aware of others who have the same experience. The researcher was referred to the couples in mixed-race relationship through other mixed-race couples, mutual contact and by word of mouth. For the purpose of this study, six cases of couples in a mixed-race relationship constituted the research participants. Initially, there was a lot of reluctance on the part of the couples to participate in the study. This might have been due to the fear of being judged. Most of the participants only accepted the invitation after the researcher had indicated that she had been involved in a mixed-race relationship for many years.

#### **4.3.1 Inclusion criteria**

A number of factors influenced the experience, perception and identity construction of mixed-race couples and these factors need to be taken into consideration when selecting participants. The following criteria were set for the selection of the participants:

- The focus on both married and unmarried interracial couples. The purpose of including unmarried couples was to explore the differences in the challenges and experiences at the different phases of a mixed-race relationship. Research results indicate that family and social reactions change after the couple get married or have children (Johnson & Warren, 1994).
- In the context of this study, mixed-race or interracial couples would be used to refer to a relationship between a black (excluding coloured and Indian persons) and a white person. It is important to note that in the South African context today, Coloureds and Indians are classified as blacks only for the purposes of Employment Equity or Affirmative Action. The exclusion of Indians and Coloureds will, to a certain extent, minimize the influence of cultural and ethnic factors which would make the study very broad. Research results also show that interracial marriages in which one partner is African tend to provoke greater discrimination as opposed to marriages between a white person and a Coloured or Indian person, and least discrimination between a white person and an Asian or Hispanic person (Solsberry, 1994).
- In the case of the unmarried couples, the inclusion criteria would be: (i) sharing a household for more than a year, and (ii) commitment to the relationship. This would mean that the couple would have had enough time to be exposed to the possible reactions (on the personal, family and social level) to being in a mixed-race relationship.
- Participants would be white male and black female couples, as well as black male and white female couples. Having a balance in terms of race and gender would, to a certain extent, minimize the possible effects of racial and gender-related factors.

- The couple would, at the time, be living in Gauteng. This would reduce the influence in terms of perceptions and experiences as regards difference in the demographic areas.

#### **4.4 DATA COLLECTION**

Interpretive research is a process; and often researchers do not make a clear-cut distinction between the different phases of data collection and data analysis. The researcher may reformulate his/her research question as a result of new material (or data) they have collected or analyzed.

The data was collected by means of a research interview. All the couples were interviewed by the researcher (from August 2004 until November 2006) and the interviews were conducted at their own homes or in the researcher's office. The interviews were audio taped, and subsequently transcribed. Only one partner per couple filled in a biographic information questionnaire (See Appendix A), and a consent form (Appendix B) was signed by all participants. The individual interviews lasted between 90 to 120 minutes. Only one interview with a couple lasted about 45 minutes. The researcher experienced problems in conducting couple interviews because of time constraints. In the instances where the couples were interviewed one after the other in one day, their pattern of interaction and environment were observed. Kelly (1999a: 391) points out that an interpretive researcher should not only focus on written or spoken language as its raw material, but also on the visual environment, including complex gestural language or paralinguistic aspects.

No attempt was made to formulate hypotheses; however, certain general questions with regard to mixed-race couples were identified from the literature as relevant, and served as the basis for the study. In-depth interviewing was used as the primary tool for collecting data. A broad question, 'What is your experience of being in a mixed-race relationship?', was used as a framework for initiating the discussions with the participants.

Kelly (1999a) describes facilitating an interview as a process that requires a balance between initiating (leading) and listening. Key questions were also used to facilitate a discussion of issues of interest to the research, and pulling back to listen to what issues were most compelling to the participant.

The sub-questions below contextualize the experience of being in a mixed-race relationship as a process taking place within the intrapersonal, interpersonal, socio-cultural and political domain of functioning:

- How did the couple meet?
- After how long was the relationship disclosed to anyone?
- Was it easy talking about your relationship?
- How did the couple's family of origin and the community react initially and did their attitudes change over time? If so, in what way did it change?
- What impact does the relationship have on the racial identity of the partners and their children?
- What changes did the couple observe about themselves, which could be due to being in a racially different relationship?
- What challenges does the couple face in terms of raising their children?
- What patterns of adjustment did the couples need to make in relation to their way of living, family roles and eating habits?
- What are the positive sides and what are the negative sides of being in a mixed-race relationship?
- How do the couples feel, and what do they perceive about their differences? ('Have you ever experienced that people react to you differently due to your race difference?' 'How do you deal with that experience?')
- How do the couples cope with racial discrimination (if any) from the community?
- How did the changes in the legislation and the political environment affect the couple's experience of being with a racially different partner?

During the different interviews, the way in which these discussions were initiated varied in wording, not in content, depending on the age and the experience of the couple being interviewed, so as to make the themes clearly understood. The use of the concept 'theme' in this study does not necessarily mean that the researcher went into each interview session with prior labels and categories of themes, but rather an expectation of a new, spontaneous story to surface during the conversation.

The themes centred on the following points:

- The couple's experiences of being in a mixed-race relationship,
- Family and social reactions towards mixed-race relationships, and
- Ways of dealing with or meeting the challenges of being in a M-R relationship.

The above assigned categories of meaning will be subdivided into subcategories. The criteria adopted in creating the subcategories were listed. The criteria indicated what was included within a specific subcategory. This was followed by the description of, and examples from, the data to ensure that the results were fully grounded in that data. Some of the examples might be repeated in different categories, since the same event or experience might be related to different phenomena.

Transcripts are available if required for further analytical purposes or interest.

#### **4.5 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

A key principle of interpretive analysis is to stay close to the data, so as to interpret it from a position of empathic understanding. The purpose of interpretive analysis is to provide a 'thick description', which will result in a thorough description of the characteristics, processes, transactions and contexts that constitute the phenomenon being studied, couched in

language, as well as an account of the researcher's role in constructing this description (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Interview data is analyzed according to a certain method that illuminates the central themes in the experience and feelings of individuals (Neuman, 1997). Qualitative analysis refers to raising questions or looking for alternative points of view on social phenomena, searching for behavioural conventions regarding particular forms of action, and interpreting the actions according to the social context (Roth, 1993).

Neuman (2006) defines qualitative data analysis as a search for patterns in data (broadly termed 'themes'), recurrent behaviour, objects, phases and ideas. Once a pattern or theme is identified, it is interpreted in terms of a social theory or setting in which it occurred. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), thematic development is a kind of pattern-finding process where we identify a 'type' of occurrence by virtue of it being perceived as an underlying 'common form' found in different contexts. Thus, a theme can be said to exist both within a situation and also in other situations (that is, within and across situations). We do not understand a theme until we begin to look between situations. Therefore, the trans-situational character of themes is fundamental to understanding them. In deriving themes, we intuitively tend to look for generality or similarities and, in doing that, we necessarily overlook certain contextual differences in things we are comparing. Through this, we may bind together events in such a way that we override their uniqueness. By using the analytic comparison method of data analysis, we are most likely to arrive at an interpretation that accounts for within-and-across context, as well as similarities (generality) and differences (uniqueness) dimensions.

For the purpose of this study, the analytic comparison was used to analyse the data. Neuman (2006) defines analytic comparison as a qualitative data analysis method through which the researcher can use both method of agreement (which involves focusing on what is common across cases) and

method of difference (which involves focusing on the difference among cases) to identify themes. Once the similarities and/or differences are identified, we look (in the literature, theory, history, context or whatever resources available for the researcher) to explain or understand the common or different outcomes in those cases. At the same time, we eliminate alternative possibilities and identify a few primary factors so that we can argue that, despite the differences, the critical similarities exist.

Interpretive analysis rarely proceeds in an orderly manner as may be suggested by the step-wise presentation below. The following procedure, as presented by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), was followed with the data from each relationship for the purpose of data analysis:

Taped interviews were transcribed and integrated with field notes. The interview protocols were read through several times over a period of approximately six weeks in order for the researcher to become familiar with the information. Through reading the protocols several times, the researcher became aware of her own ideas and also became more familiar with the data.

Meaning units were identified from the data transcripts. These meaning units were presented either as phrases or as a number of sentences strung together. Meaning units are not absolute, but rather emerge in the interaction between reality and its observer. However, data that was not relevant to the aim of the study was discarded.

Meaning units were grouped into categories when these seemed to be connected. This was done by comparing units or by looking at their similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each protocol was analyzed separately, with the possible themes and interpretations presented in two columns. Thereafter, the protocols were explored together to identify common, as well as unique categories across the interviews. Despite the differences in personal, social and economic context, and the

premise that each couple is unique, shared meanings could be found among the couples. It is from these shared meanings that categories were identified and developed. Those categories common to more than one protocol and the unique differences between the protocols were included in the results. Quotations from the protocols were included in the description of these categories. Each category was assigned a psychological meaning through theoretical interpretation.

After the lapse of time the cases were re-analyzed with the aim of reaching stability in the analysis. With the assistance of the supervisor, the researcher re-checked to ensure that there were no contradictions in the interpretation, instances of over-interpretation, being carried away by her own prejudices and reflecting on her role in collecting and analyzing the data, as well as creating the interpretation. Jankowski, Clark & Ivey, (2000) refer to this process as self-reflexivity, which allows the researcher to be aware of how preconceived ideas and assumptions might influence all aspects of the research process.

In order to provide the reader with a context in terms of which the categories can be interpreted, brief descriptions were compiled of each couple's background and their experiences of being in a mixed-race relationship.

#### **4.6 THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

In qualitative research, issues of validity and reliability rely largely on the skills of the researcher in that a person more or less fallible, and thus liable to make mistakes, observes, interviews and records (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

The following measures have been used in this research to ensure the trustworthiness or credibility of the study:

#### **4.6.1 Going round the research cycle several times**

Instead of a single cycle of data collection, analysis and interpretation, there need to be multiple cycles during which the theory, concepts and categories are progressively extended and refined, differentiated and integrated, reaching towards a theoretical saturation (Kelly, 1999c). A qualitative research design implies an interactive, cyclical relation between data-collection and data-analysis, alternating continuously and influencing each other (Reason & Rowan, 1981). In this manner it was possible to select data which has relevance for analysis, and to stop gathering data when the themes related to the research problem were covered. It is important to note that qualitative analysis is never complete since each case is unique and individuals going through the same process may present themselves differently. Bateson (1979) notes that one will never be able to claim final knowledge of anything whatsoever.

For the purpose of this study, the data collection phases were alternated with the data analysis phases. During this process the categories were repeatedly extended and/or refined, differentiated and integrated until they portrayed the couple's experiences from their perspective.

#### **4.6.2 Systematic use of contradiction**

According to Reason and Rowan (1981), research should not be conducted alone. It is important to invite colleagues, peers or mentors to assume the role of robust critical friends so as to ensure that the notion of challenging, confronting, disagreeing and creating new ideas is built into the enquiry process. According to Reason and Rowan (1981), a co-researcher can attempt actively and consciously to deny, contradict, or disprove the data and the propositions about the data. For the purpose of this study, the researcher and her supervisor spent a considerable amount of time in discussions, exploring new avenues and developing new insights. In this way the supervisor assumed the role of a critical friend by questioning the researcher's analysis and interpretation of the data.

## **4.7 CONCLUSION**

A review of the research methodology followed in this project was given in this chapter. This included the description of the research paradigm and framework in which the research is located. In addition to remarks on the data gathering techniques used, the steps of qualitative analysis, which will ultimately provide the in-depth description of the results, were also presented.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter a presentation of the research findings will be given. The first part of the chapter will involve a presentation of the background and interview contexts of the couples that participated in this study. The second part will involve the description and discussion of the main categories and subcategories of the themes that have emerged, and will include verbatim examples from the collected data. These examples relate to what Neuman (1997) defines as meaning units, and will be presented either as phrases or as brief descriptions. Integrated discussions of the findings, as well as the theoretical interpretations, will be provided at the end of each subcategory.

### **5.2 RESULTS: PART ONE**

#### **5.2.1 Case study 1**

##### **5.2.1.1 *The profile of the partners***

Gabriel, a white, English-speaking man of 37 years of age was born in England. He and his family have been living in South Africa for about 22 years. Thebe, a black, Sotho-speaking woman, who is 38 years old, was born in Soweto and her family still lives there. The couple has been in the relationship for more than two years. There is no biological offspring from this couple. Thebe has two daughters aged 14 years and 2 years, who Gabriel has accepted as his own children and plays an active role in their upbringing. She works as a human resource manager; and he is unemployed. He is, however, developing his own business. The couple plans to get married once Gabriel's business is established. The two partners had never married, and they had never been involved in an interracial relationship before the present relationship.

The couple agreed to be interviewed after being approached by their friend who had heard about this research from the researcher. The couple was interviewed in their own home in Johannesburg. The interview was conducted individually, starting with the female partner, and followed by the male. After individual interviews the couple was interviewed together. During the couple interview, they clarified some of the confusing or complex points experienced during the individual interviews. They were thus able to confirm, change or challenge some of the perceptions or experiences expressed during the individual interviews.

### **5.2.1.2 *How the relationship began***

The couple met at a diversity workshop. They were attracted to each other and started communicating and visiting each other even after the workshop. After six months they decided to rent a flat together with Thebe's two daughters.

### **5.2.1.3 *Clinical impressions, discussions and comments***

Thebe seemed very relaxed and could express her views and feelings very clearly. Gabriel seemed very anxious and contradicted himself very often. He expressed views about how other people viewed and reacted to the mixed-race relationship without indicating his own viewpoint. Thebe tended to interrupt him very often and even reminded him about his racial group. For example:

*At the same time I feel black empowerment, or call it what it is, is not fair but it is not meant to be fair, I think it is right and it must happen, I hear a lot of whites complain, I just don't care they were lucky for 40 years.*

Thebe interrupted him and said, "*no you must say we were lucky*", and they both laughed.

The couple seemed physically very close during the couple interview. They could not stop holding and hugging each other.

## **5.2.2 Case study 2**

### **5.2.2.1 *The profile of the partners***

Dean, a white, French-speaking man of 64 years of age, was born in Britain and moved to South Africa in 1995. During 1970, he was married to a black Ghanaian woman for three years and they have one son. Kane is a black, Sepedi-speaking woman, who is 36 years of age. Kane was born in Limpopo and moved to Pretoria in 1995. Her parents still live in Limpopo. Kane was never married. She broke up with a black South African boyfriend, who is the biological father of her 12- year-old son, before meeting Dean.

Kane and Dean have been in the relationship for 11 years, and have one son who is 3 years old. Both partners hold master's degrees, and are both employed. At present Dean works in Zimbabwe, and Kane works in Mpumalanga but lives in Pretoria with her two sons.

The couple agreed to be interviewed after being approached by their friend who is in a M-R relationship, but was not willing to participate in the study due to the difficult phase their M-R relationship was in. The interview was conducted in their own home in Pretoria. The couple was interviewed individually, starting with the female partner and six months thereafter, the male partner was interviewed while visiting his family. After individual interviews, the couple was interviewed together. The couple interview was very brief since Dean could not remember most of the issues Kane needed to clarify or confirm.

#### **5.2.2.2. *How the relationship began***

The couple met at work, in a catholic school in Mpumalanga. Dean was a volunteer teacher for a project and Kane was one of the teachers hosting

some of the volunteer teachers from the UK. One day Kane had to prepare supper for the whole group of volunteers from the UK, of which Dean was part. Dean visited Kane even after the supper and they became friends. Sometime later, Kane injured her knee. Dean was very supportive and helpful. Kane described Dean as different from the type of men she had been exposed to, and she was very impressed by his caring and supportive nature. She said:

*He came in and started helping me with my supper. I was surprised and ask myself how can this man just come and start helping me with my supper whereas I am the one who is supposed to cook.*

After a few weeks of knowing each other Dean asked Kane to marry him. Kane refused because she was concerned about the age gap between them. Kane indicated that she felt happy about being asked to marry him, but was not ready at that time. At the time of the interview the couple was still not married.

### **5.2.2.3. Clinical impressions, discussions and comments**

Kane was very expressive and related her experiences in a very confident manner. She expressed a sense of pride in her level of confidence and her M-R family. She enquired, after the interview with her partner, if he had mentioned anything about the marriage between them. She indicated that as a Christian, she did not feel comfortable to be in a relationship for a long time without being married. Dean, on the other hand, did not recall most of his experiences of being in the relationship with Kane. During the interview he kept on diverting and avoiding issues that involved their own experiences. He related most of his experiences from the first M-R relationship and his friends' experience of the M-R relationship. At the end of the interview he indicated that they had different needs due to their differences in their age group. The couple seemed very distant throughout the interview. There was a profound closeness between Dean and his young son. At the end of the interview Dean asked whether the researcher had some time to view the video of his

first son's marriage. The couple, their two sons and the researcher then sat on the couch and watched the video as Dean explained almost every detail as the video played on. That created a very warm family context with everyone communicating and getting close to one another.

### **5.2.3 Case study 3**

#### **5.2.3.1 *The profile of the partners***

Nagel, a white, Afrikaans-speaking man who is 28 years of age was born in South Africa. He, together with his family, has always lived in Pretoria. Fikile, a black Sepedi-speaking woman is 24 years old. Fikile's mother stays in Pretoria and her grand-parents live in Limpopo. The couple (that is, Nagel and Fikile) has been in the relationship for more than two years. They do not have any offspring. Nagel has an honours degree and works in Mpumalanga. Fikile has a Bachelor of Science degree, and is unemployed. They see each other over some weekends and during long weekends due to Nagel's work in Mpumalanga. The couple is, at present, engaged and in the process of negotiating *lobola* (that is, bride price in a traditional African marriage) with Fikile's family. The couple was never married before this M-R relationship and they were never involved in an interracial relationship before the present relationship.

The couple agreed to be interviewed after being approached by their friend who had heard about the research from the researcher. The interview was conducted in the researcher's office. The couple was interviewed individually, starting with the female partner, and five months later the male partner. Nagel was interviewed during one of his visits to his family. The couple was never seen together and it was not possible to arrange a couple interview due to time pressure and Nagel's work commitments.

### **5.2.3.2 *How the relationship began***

The couple met at the university where they were both studying. They used to see each other around but were not close. One day they were in a laboratory, and Nagel was giving a presentation. After the presentation he asked Fikile to go out on lunch with him. Fikile was busy at that moment, but they arranged a date and later on went for lunch. They continued seeing each other and after about one year they got engaged. When in Pretoria the couple stays in a hotel and when in Mpumalanga they stay in Nagel's flat. They spend most of their time together in Mpumalanga, rather than in Pretoria.

### **5.2.3.3 *Clinical impressions, discussions and comments***

Nagel was very expressive and he related his experiences in an honest and positive manner. He was determined and patient in his efforts to convince everyone who questioned his M-R relationship. His main concern was Fikile's commitment to overcoming the challenges related to his family's disapproval of their relationship. At the end of the interview he enquired as to whether Fikile was coping with the challenges of all the reactions to their M-R relationship. He indicated that he could not afford to lose her.

Fikile, on the other hand, spoke softly and did not volunteer information about her experience of the M-R relationship. She responded to the questions briefly. She seemed very shy, but happy about her relationship. Her main concern was how life would be for them after the marriage, taking into consideration the level of disapproval they had faced up to that point.

## **5.2.4 Case study 4**

### **5.2.4.1 *The profile of the partners***

Nelson, a white English-speaking man who is 42 years of age was born in South Africa. He had lived in Durban with his family all his life. Ayanda is a black Nigerian woman who speaks English, and is 32 years old. Ayanda's

family lives in Nigeria, and she moved to South Africa in 1997. The couple has been in the relationship for more than five years. Three years dating and two years married. They do not have any offspring. The partners were never married before. Both had been in M-R relationships before the present one. They both have honours degrees, and are employed. Nelson was recently transferred to work in Durban. Ayanda will join him later.

The couple agreed to be interviewed after being approached by their friend (a white woman who is in a M-R relationship with an Indian man). This M-R couple was willing to participate in the study, but they did not meet the criteria. Ayanda was interviewed in the researcher's office, while an arrangement was made to interview Nelson later when he visited his family. The couple was never seen together and it was not possible to arrange for an interview with Nelson because he was transferred to work in Durban. A telephonic interview was suggested but there was no convenient place for the interview as he works in an open plan office.

#### **5.2.4.2 How the relationship began**

Ayanda indicated she had been Nelson's student and had loved him for about five years, but he did not even notice her. She said: *"I have always been attracted to different types of people and I like guys it can be black, white or Indian. I can go out with any race, as long as the guy is cute"*.

When she finished her studies she was employed by the same institution Nelson was working for. She approached him and they dated for three years and got married after two years. The couple lives in Johannesburg. Nelson was recently transferred to work in Durban and they thus see other over weekends.

#### **5.2.4.3 Clinical impressions, discussions and comments**

Ayanda was very expressive and related her previous and present experiences of being in a M-R relationship in detail. She experienced most of

the negative reaction towards the M-R relationship while she was with her white male friend from Australia than with her present husband. She referred to herself as 'a big mouth'. The reported challenges of being in a M-R relationship seemed to have had almost similar emotional effect like her challenge of being a black Nigerian in South Africa. Her context (that is, her Nigerian background), emotional experiences, way of thinking and coping brought a different perspective from that of all the black South African participants. She indicated that both she and her husband were very open-minded.

## **5.2.5 Case study 5**

### ***5.2.5.1 The profile of the partners***

Anna Marie is a white, Afrikaans-speaking woman who is 30 years old. She was born in South Africa, and she has lived in Johannesburg with her family. Duma is a black, Sotho-speaking man who is 32 years old. Duma's family stays in Soweto. The couple has been in the relationship for more than three years. They do not have any offspring. They both have diplomas, but Duma is at present, studying for his first degree. They are both employed and stay in Anna Marie's flat in Johannesburg. The couple was never married before and they were never involved in an interracial relationship before the present relationship.

The couple agreed to be interviewed after being approached by their friend who had heard about the research from the researcher. The woman was interviewed in the researcher's office in Pretoria. An arrangement was made to interview Duma later when his work schedule permitted. The couple was never seen together and it was not possible to arrange for an interview with Duma. He indicated that he did not feel ready to talk about his relationship at that time. He, however, promised that he would contact the researcher when he felt ready. He was contacted after six months and indicated that he still did not feel ready to talk about his relationship.

### **5.2.5.2 How the relationship began**

Anna Marie joined the company where Duma was employed. After working at the same company for about three years, they started spending time together and talking. Anna Marie said:

*And then after about working there for three years, we spent the one day and we started having a conversation and I saw he was studying. Then something inside of me said, 'Ooh, but you are actually very cute'. Then we started paying attention to each other and it sort of just developed from there.*

### **5.2.5.3 Clinical impressions, discussions and comments**

Anna Marie was very expressive and she related her experience of being in a M-R relationship in detail and as honestly as possible. She tried, where possible, to give Duma's reactions to being in a M-R relationship because she suspected that he might not come for the interview. Her main concern was Duma's commitment to their M-R relationship. She seemed emotionally hurt by some of the problems she had experienced in the relationship. She indicated that:

*He is not available and emotionally he has the splits of opening up and other times he just closes up, and we are in a very emotional phase in our relationship, we have been for the past year, we are in a very painful emotional space, and he is exceptionally difficult. It's very difficult for me to adjust to him, and it's not because of his Africanness, it's because of his personality.*

She was given information about the Psychological services that she could use to assist her with the emotional pain expressed during the interview.

## **5.2.6 Case study 6**

### **5.2.6.1 The profile of the partners**

Nkosi is a black, Zulu-speaking man who is 39 years old. He was born in South Africa, and he, together with his family, has always lived in Soweto. Ronelle is a white, Afrikaans-speaking woman of 32 years. Ronelle's mother and grandmother stay in Cape Town and her father lives in Pretoria. The couple has been in the relationship for more than seven years. They dated from 2000 and got married in 2003. They do not have any offspring, but Ronelle was five months pregnant with Nkosi's child during the interview. Nkosi has a diploma and, at present, works in Pretoria. Ronelle has matric and she is unemployed. The partners were never married before and they were never involved in an interracial relationship before the present relationship.

The couple agreed to be interviewed after being approached by their friend who had heard about this research from the researcher. The couple was interviewed in their own home in Pretoria. They were interviewed individually, starting with the female partner and thereafter the male one. After individual interviews the couple was interviewed briefly together. During the couple interview, the couple clarified some of the confusing aspects they experienced during the individual interviews; and confirmed, changed or challenged some of the perceptions or experiences expressed during the individual interviews.

### **5.2.6.2 How the relationship began**

Ronelle described the way she met Nkosi by saying:

*We met at a wedding, he stayed here in Pretoria and I stayed in Cape Town. I knew the bride and he knew the groom. We met through a mutual friend of ours. Nkosi said to him he would like to go out with 'that lady', meaning me, then the brother come and ask me. The background is that we all go to the same church, he went to the one in*

*Pretoria and I was attending the one in Cape town, the standards is the same and everything is the same. When we were single, the way of doing things was just to go on dates, with no expectations that you will end up being married... So when Daniel (our mutual friend) told me that there is a brother from Pretoria who wants to go on a date with you, I said OK because I didn't have a date then, and it was a normal thing to do and it wasn't funny. When I saw Nkosi coming across the parking lot, because he was not with Daniel when he asked me, then I thought this must probably be my date... We had the best time, it was so nice, and the next day he had to go back to Pretoria, so we didn't see each other again. He left me a note with Daniel... In July of the same year Nkosi came down to Cape Town for a week, to see how our friendship will be if we spend proper time together.*

Ronelle indicated that a lot of things happened in the process, with her feeling torn between being involved with her ideal white partner or being with a black partner. After a phase of confusion and considering what would be best for her, she indicated that:

*After that, I had a talk with Nkosi that it was not fair on him, that my heart is torn between the two of them, I cried, he didn't cry and we said our good bye. I kept on spending time with this other guy, then eventually I realised that I do not like him that much anymore and broke up with him. So the 1<sup>st</sup> of January when I woke up I just wanted to marry Nkosi, I decided he is a good friend, the most consistent person in my life that I ever had, regardless of all my stereotypes and other things.*

She indicated that their relationship went through stages and after ten months of dating they decided that she move to Pretoria. After three years they got married, and stayed together in Pretoria.

### **5.2.6.3 Clinical impressions, discussions and comments**

Ronelle was very expressive. She gave full details of the stages and experiences they went through in their M-R relationship. She seemed to have been through phases of conflict and confusion in her decision to marry Nkosi. She seemed sad most of the time during the interview. Nkosi, on the other hand, related his experience in a humorous manner. He indicated that he did not consider his relationship to be a M-R marriage. He related most of his experiences with his white male friends. He seemed proud of his relationship, and at the end of the interview he asked whether there were any books that could be used to learn how to raise a M-R child. During the couple interview, Ronelle seemed very submissive and quiet, while Nkosi was more talkative and joking about their experiences.

Ronelle seemed to have given up a greater part of her Afrikaner identity and was, at the same time, trying very hard to maintain it. This could lead to psychological problems in future. She was encouraged to seek professional help to deal with the sad feelings that were presented during the interview.

## **5.3 PART 2: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **5.3.1 INTRODUCTION**

From the transcribed interviews with the six couples and the field notes that were made during and after the interviews, meaning units were identified and grouped into four categories. The following categories were created in terms of the main themes that emerged from the data:

- The meaning attached to the M-R relationship
- Talking about the M-R relationship
- Perceived or expected reactions to the M-R relationship
- Ways of dealing with the emotional experience of the M-R relationship

The above assigned categories were further divided into subcategories. The criteria adopted in creating the subcategories were listed. These criteria indicated what was included in a specific subcategory. This was followed by the description of, and examples from, the data to ensure that the results were fully grounded on the data. Some of the examples were repeated in different categories, since the same event or experience might be related to different phenomena.

At the end of each subcategory, an integrated discussion and theoretical interpretation of the results were given.

#### **5.4 Category 1: The meaning attached to the M-R relationship**

The following subcategories were identified concerning the meaning the partners attached to the M-R relationship:

- Partners' definition/description of the M-R relationship
- Partner's reaction to falling in love with a racially different person
- Partner's description of difference within the M-R relationship
- The effect of the M-R relationship on partner
- Advantage, disadvantages, losses and challenges of being in a M-R relationship
- Concerns about M-R children

##### **5.4.1 Partners' definition/description of the M-R relationship**

**Criteria:** Any description, reference or definition of the M-R relationship, such as 'providing an opportunity to learn' or 'clear up or change old misconceptions', 'nice', 'happy', different and/or similar to same-race relationships is included in this subcategory.

#### **5.4.1.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are descriptions and verbatim examples of how the partners described their M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** She described her relationship as a very rich and happy relationship. She said:

*I think is a very rich relationship because mixing with people of your own culture, background or race I seem to be very comfortable with people like that but I do not learn a lot... One thing I can say is that I am happy in this relationship. I think it works and that there is hope.*

**Husband 1:** He described his relationship as fulfilling and providing a cultural growth. He said, *“I think there is a definite cultural growth as well... Yes, I think this is the one and I feel really happy. When I come home, it is like I am coming to two kids and a wife. Like a father, I actually look forward to coming home”*. He also viewed being in a M-R relationship as being able to take a risk. He said, *“I think it is about taking a risk. I just wish more people would take the risk and not always have preconceived ideas”*.

**Wife 2:** This partner described her relationship as happy and providing an opportunity to learn. She said, *“Since I have been with him I have learnt a lot... yes, I am happy now”*. She seemed happy despite the strange manner in which people looked at them, and questions about the M-R relationship. She said, *“You know people will always look at you and question you but I am happy about it.”*

**Husband 2:** He seemed to have a sense of self blame and regret. He said, *“I was still immature in many ways, maybe I still am ... to be honest with you, I don't think it was a good idea”*. He did not elaborate why he thought his decision to marry his previous wife was not a good idea. He seemed to use circumstantial reasons or factors to define his involvement in both M-R relationships rather than personal reasons. For example, this is what he said

about his first relationship: *"We got married under pressure because what I wanted was first to stay in the same town for a year... we had to act... I was also very rebellious, the very fact that people were opposed to the marriage made me want to marry her even more"*. About his second relationship he said, *"We spend Christmas together because we had no where to go. So our relationship started innocent like that"*. This could imply that he did not have any intentions of getting involved with her or was not motivated by love. As indicated in the clinical impressions in part one, he seemed uninvolved and very distant from the woman.

**Wife 3:** She seemed to value fidelity within a relationship. She said, *"Actually it is nice, I feel safe... because I know and I'm sure that I am the only one. I do not have to face all these things, like affairs that you find in many relationships"*. She indicated that she could get the same type of relationship with a black person: *"It is not that I couldn't find that from the black people, it just happen that we fell in love and find out that this is the kind of the relationship I have with him"*. The statement above also suggests that she does not relate fidelity to race.

**Husband 3:** This partner indicated that his previous contact with black people in the Cape as well as the present relationship played a role in breaking away from racist stereotypes. He said, *"This relationship made me even more aware... I also think there was a time in my life where I had to lay down my own racism, as I told you that I used to belong to the AWB when I was a teenager"*. He seemed much fulfilled about his relationship, as indicated in the following remarks: *"Yes, this is what I want... I mean everyone wants to be happy in life. To be happy in life you must be yourself... Yes, it does make me happy. It definitely does"*.

**Wife 4:** She described her M-R relationship as similar to a same-race relationship: *"I have obviously gone out with other guys, black and it's basically the same thing"*.

**Wife 5:** This participant said, “*Everything was very exciting in the beginning*”, and she also managed to break the old bondages of racism: “*Sometime, on a spiritual level, I ask myself if this didn’t happen to break the bondages from my family, bondages of racism, and hatred and all that*”. This quotation reflects a spiritual meaning which will be discussed later in the integration section. It was a liberating experience for her, to a point that if this relationship were to fail she would still fall in love with another black man. She said, “*If this relationship has to end, I might fall in love with another black man*”. There seems to be a sense of growth, as reflected in her declaration: “*I have been transformed*”.

**Wife 6:** She seemed to have a sense of uncertainty about why she was in a M-R relationship. She said, “*I struggled to admit that I love Nkosi, sometimes I ask myself if this is God’s will for me or if this is my heart’s desire*” (as with wife 5, this quotation reflects a spiritual meaning which will be discussed later in the integration section ). She seemed happy about her relationship and her pregnancy but, at the same time, concerned that the challenges of being in a M-R relationship might not end. To this end she said, “*Being in a mixed-race relationship is a process that one can never say it’s over... but I am happy for my baby and my husband*”.

**Husband 6:** He appeared to be fulfilled about his relationship. This is suggested by the following comment: “*I’m happy; I wouldn’t swap her for anything... For me going out with Ronelle was not more because of her outside appearance, I have fallen in love with a person and a best friend. It was all about that*”.

#### **5.4.1.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Most of the participants described their M-R relationships in a positive manner, and indicated that the relationship provided an opportunity to learn, grow and challenge racial stereotypes. Some of the participants also suggested that although mixing with people of one’s own group might seem comfortable, it does not provide the opportunity to grow, or challenge certain

negative beliefs about people of other groups. Previous research has indicated that the biggest problem for mixed-race marriages does not rest with the partners themselves, but with family and social reactions towards their relationship (Olofsson, 2004).

Although wives 5 and 6 also described their M-R relationships in a positive manner, they did not, at that time, consider their relationships happy. This might have been due to the state of uncertainty caused by the problems in the relationship (Wife 5), or emotional experience and/or pregnancy phase (Wife 6) that the participants might have been in, as indicated in the clinical observations of the participants. For wife 5, this was a phase of deciding whether to stop or continue with the M-R relationship, whereas for wife 6 it was a phase of coping with the emotional challenges regarding her identity, parental rejection and the concern about her unborn child.

Husband 2 used circumstantial factors such as (1) using rebelliousness to the prevailing social discourse, (2) describing the M-R relationship as unintentional, or (3) blaming external pressure. Other participants, however, mainly used personal reasons or values such as love, fidelity, happiness, and companionship to describe their relationships. Wives 5 and 6 seemed to have a feeling that their involvement in a M-R relationship might have some spiritual meaning or purpose: as pointed out above, for wife 5 the relationship was meant to break the bondage of racism, and for wife 6 as God's will and her family. Unlike in many M-R studies where factors like physical attractiveness, educational level, social class or socio-economic aspects are pivotal, the participants in this study seemed to attach more importance to the racial liberation and awareness as the reward of being in a mixed-race relationship. According to Lewis, Yancey & Bletzer, (1997) categories like learning more about other racial groups, changing racial stereotypes, breaking bondages of racism, rebelling against racial separation and guilt for the wrongs whites had perpetrated against blacks, clearly represent racial spouse selection factors that are different from the socially supported factors of mate selection (like marrying within the same group or class). The reason why racial factors might have motivated most participants in this study might be

related to the previous, and to some extent, the present South African context where racism and racial differences are still prevalent. Johnson and Warren (1994) and Kalmijn (1993) warn against the exchange theory as it tends to focus solely on the inter-group dimension to a mixed-race relationship and deliberately ignores interpersonal rewards of such unions. Davidson (1992) also warns against many theories of interracial relationships and indicates how most of these theories are biased and label the motives of interracial couples as pathological, and different to that of same-race couples. As indicated by the results of this study, most participants were motivated by both interpersonal rewards such as love, fidelity and companionship, as well as by inter-group rewards (also indicated above).

The manner in which the M-R relationship was described seemed to have an effect in the way the participants initially reacted to falling in love with a racially different person (the latter will be presented and discussed in the next sub-category).

#### **5.4.2 Partners' reaction to falling in love with a racially different person**

**Criteria:** This subcategory refers to statements regarding the reaction of partners (both positive and negative reactions) to falling in love with a person from a racially different group. Examples of such statements will include 'shock' or 'not a shock'; 'difficult' or 'not difficult to admit'; and 'happy or exciting'.

##### **5.4.2.1 Description and examples.**

The following are descriptions and verbatim examples of how the partners reacted to falling in love with a person from a different racial group:

**Wife 1:** Her attitude towards white people made her react negatively to falling in love with a white person. She said, *"I was just shocked, I just hated white people. I just could not stand white people"*. The context in which they met, which was characterized by diverse interracial contact, helped her deal with

her racial attitude, as confirmed by her statement: *“I think I was helped by the course that I attended...this is where I met my boyfriend...I think I dealt with my racial issues there”*. This idea may be related to the effect of interracial contact on racial prejudice and discrimination as indicated by contact theory. The main idea behind the contact theory is that contact (especially if these contacts develop into close friendships) between members of different groups will produce positive changes, such as reduced racial prejudice and discrimination (Baron & Byrne, 2003).

**Wife 2:** She valued the way most white men treated their partners. This influenced her initial positive reaction. She said:

*Well, I was quite happy because even when I was a child my mom told me that I said I want to be involved with a white man because it seems like black men don't know how to treat woman... I would say it was not a shock but the age was a shock to me.*

Her preconceived ideas and attitude towards being in a relationship with an older man seem to have resulted in a feeling of shock or discomfort. She took time to adjust to the reality of falling in love with a person from a different race and age group. She said, *“It took time for me to be able to kiss him because of the issue of his colour and age”*. Her difficulty in adjusting to the physical contact with him due to his colour might suggest a racial tone in her reaction. This will be discussed further in the integration section below. This reaction could be related to her feeling that she hated some whites, as indicated in the following statement: *“I do not think I would have the guts to go out with an Afrikaans-speaking person... I think it has to do with the history of our country, what they have done to Africa, our mothers and brothers. They did not like us”*. This could imply that even though she values the way most white men treat their partners, and differentiates between Afrikaans and non-Afrikaans whites, she still finds it difficult to dissolve the internalized schemas and experiences due to the past history of racism in the country.

**Wife 3:** She had no need to adjust to falling in love with a partner from a different race, because she had indirect contact with a mixed-race couple in the family. This is reflected in her statement: *“It was not a problem or a shock. I’m used to this kind of relationships. I have one of my family members who is in a mixed-race relationship so it was not difficult for me.”*

**Husband 3:** He also had no need to adjust to falling in love with a partner from a different race, owing to his religious belief system. He said:

*For me it is a thing of ‘God...God loves everybody...to fall in love with a black person, was never a problem for me... even though I grew up in a very racist family... and a country where there are beliefs that you are not to mix with people of other races.*

His exposure to a disapproving context, where mixed-race marriages are strongly discouraged, did not seem to have an influence on his reaction to falling in love with a partner from a different race. He redefined the existing racial categories and replaced them with spirituality. For him, spirituality seems to be more important than racial categorisation.

**Wife 4:** Racial difference does not seem to be an issue for her. There is, therefore, no need for her to adjust to falling in love with any person from a different race group. She said, *“I have always been attracted to different types of people and I like guys it can be black, white or Indian. I can go out with any race, as long as the guy is cute”*. This might be due to the family and community context that she grew up in. She said, *“It was probably the type of up-bringing that I had... My parents never had issues with race...We never had any issues about race”*. These statements indicate the role of the family and social context in the development and construction of racial attitudes. The indirect contact with a M-R couple in her own family might have also had an effect on her reaction to her M-R relationship. She said, *“My relationship was not the first in my family... I have cousins that are of mixed-race”*. She reacted with shock to the prevalence of race problems in South Africa, rather than to

falling in love with a white man. She stated the following: *“To come to a country where such race issues are so prevalent was a shock for me”*.

**Wife 5:** Before the M-R relationship, her preconceived ideas about blacks made her not to notice or have interest in a black man. In this respect, she said, *“I actually didn’t like him or even notice him at the beginning because he was black, and black is unfortunately not my thing because I am an Afrikaans girl”*. Her previous relationship problems and disappointments also made her to have no interest in any man at that moment. She said, *“I didn’t even notice Duma because previously I was in a relationship which was my first and it was one of those big bad relationships... so I wasn’t even interested in anyone or relationships”*. After spending time together, she was mainly attracted by his intellectual ability, and stressed, *“I didn’t notice the colour at all because his intellectual capacity was the thing that attracted me to him most ... So it wasn’t difficult for me at all”*. The context that they were both in and the indirect contact with M-R couples also made it easier for her to love him without noticing his colour at all. She said, *“I think by that time my mindset was a lot more liberal because of the kind of environment that we are working in. I am working in an environment where there are mixed-race couples”*. She reacted with shock when she went with him to his house for the first time. *“It was only when he took me to his house for the first time that I realized that ‘oh my goodness, he is actually really black’. That was when it really hit me”*, she said. She did not say what made her react the way she did in that context. It is, however, possible that the fact that they came from a diversified working context, her exposure to the black-only context might have made her more aware of his identity. The difference in the culture or way of doing things in that context might have played a role in this regard. The above argument indicates the important role played by context in the development of interracial attitudes.

**Wife 6:** She found it hard to admit and was shocked that she fell in love with a black person. In this regard, she said, *“It just hit me, the fact that I like him... It was just difficult for me to admit it that I like a black person”*. Her

preconceived ideas about who to marry made it difficult for her to admit that she had fallen in love with a racially different person, as indicated by her statement: *“What made it difficult was the ideas that I grew up with, ideas about who I was supposed to marry”*. Her exposure to the church context, where mixed-race relationships were encouraged, did not seem to help her in the reaction to this relationship. She said, *“Even though it was easy in church to build relationships with people and go on dates with them, it’s not going to influence your preference of who you are going to like”*. The indirect contact with a M-R couple within her family did not make her adjustment and admission to liking a black person easier. This is evident in her statement: *“When we started dating, I was feeling funny about holding Nkosi’s hand. I phoned my sister’s husband and asked him if he felt funny holding Amy’s hand. They are the same as us, just the other way around”*. This reaction could be related to the context she grew in, which was characterised by a lack of contact with black people, as suggested in her statement:

*I realised we never had any black people working in our house... The respect that I used to have for my granny changed because I realised she is a racist ...so it was difficult for me to get the balance ... even in the area I stayed there were no black families or black kids in our school. It was always like that.*

Rosenblatt, *et al.*, (1995) have found that some whites who grew up in all-white communities with no actual contact or experience with African people could not relate to issues of racism and racial tolerance due to the lack concrete experiences. The authors argue that statements like the one above could be interpreted as racist in a white family and community that can be completely indifferent to what goes on in the lives of African people.

#### **5.4.2.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

All the female participants expressed their initial reaction to falling in love with a racially different person as either positive, negative or ‘not an issue’. Only one male partner (husband 3) related his reaction to falling in love with a

person from a different racial group. Morris and Maisto (2003) found that most men simply inhibit the expression of their emotions, as this is considered unmanly in many cultures; whereas the women were more open about their feelings. Reacting to falling in love with a racially different person was a process characterised by changing reactions for most of the participants. Four of the female participants (wives 2, 3, 4 and 5) initially experienced positive reactions (for example, 'happy', 'not a shock', 'not an issue', 'exciting' and 'not difficult'). Wives 1 and 6 experienced negative reactions to falling in love with a racially different person, but wife 1's experience changed after a while. It is not clear why wife 1's reaction changed quicker than wife 6's. One of the reasons could be related to the emotional effect of the M-R relationship on them. This will be presented in detail below in 5.4.4.1.

Wife 1 developed a sense of pride or improved self-esteem for having broken through a higher social hierarchy, while wife 6 developed a feeling of embarrassment about what the Afrikaans-speaking people did to black people; in other words, a sense of collective guilt (Jaspers, 2001). Furthermore, she was sometimes treated as an inferior person by some of the white people. This could be related to the finding by Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995) that marrying a black person might result in being downgraded to a lower level in the social hierarchy (also indicated by her partner, husband 6 and wife 5). This feeling of being downgraded is usually accompanied by a feeling of embarrassment (also indicated by wife 5, see paragraph 5.4.4.1 below). For wife 6, as indicated above, having to grow up in an all-white community or without contact with African people might have also contributed to the difficulty in adjusting to the M-R relationship (Rosenblatt, *et al.*, 1995).

Wives 2 and 5 experienced positive reactions initially, but later on had an experience of shock due to the age difference (wife 2) and change of context from a diverse working environment to a black-only environment as indicated above (wife 5). The change in the reaction of wife 5 after being exposed to a different context could be related to the experience of most of the participants in this study (wives 1, 3, 4, and 6 as well as husband 3), which seems to suggest that the context within which the partners met or grew up have an

effect on their reaction to falling in love with a racially different person. The results of this study also indicate that within the above contexts (that is, family, church, working/professional or social context) the direct or extended contact seems to have an effect on the participant's racial attitudes (see subcategory 5.4.4.2 below), which in turn affects how they react to falling in love with a racially different person. For most of the participants (except wife 6), the more encouraging the context is, the less difficult the adjustment to falling in love with a racially different person is.

For wives 1, 2, 5 and 6, the reaction to falling in love with a racially different person was influenced by their previous preconceived ideas or attitude towards people from the other race group. The four women above (wives 1, 2, 5 and 6) also expressed strong personal interracial attitudes (wives 1 and 2) or difficulty in dissolving strong interracial attitudes shared within their social groups (wives 5 and 6). This could imply that the more negative the racial attitude is, the more difficult it becomes to dissolve the internalised schemas or preconceived ideas; and to adjust to falling in love with a racially different partner. According to the social constructionist view, attitudes are socially constructed and have meaning within a specific social context. The socially constructed interracial attitudes might be making it difficult to fall in love with a racially different person, as this might be perceived as out of the norm and unacceptable.

For husband 3 and wife 6, spirituality or religion seemed to play a role in their reaction to falling in love with a partner from a different race group. Husband 6's reaction was influenced by his religious belief system rather than his exposure to a context that was disapproving of M-R relationships. Wife 6 was also exposed to a church context that approved of the M-R relationships, but her exposure did not seem to help her in her reaction to falling in love with a racially different person. This could imply that contact within the religious context, as much as it might encourage interracial relationships, is not always effective in making such contact to lead to interracial relationship or marriages. Yancey and Yancey (2002: 87) indicate how the church

encouraged interracial contact, but there are still some unwritten rules like 'yes, you can be friends, but just don't marry one'.

For wife 2, and husband 6 the difficulty in reacting to falling in love with a racially different person was also related to difficulty in handling physical contact (see paragraph 5.4.3.4 below). Their difficulty in handling physical closeness might be related to the unfamiliarity of the M-R relationship and/or the previous socio-political context of apartheid where physical contact was prescribed and regulated through legislation that clearly prohibited interracial relationships.

With all the arguments above, there seems to be a very close relationship between falling in love and the context within which such feelings are shared. According to Ratele and Duncan (2003), relationships such as marriage or close friendships, which are supposed to be driven by love or other socially or culturally valued emotions and sentiments, are historically embedded, and culturally, economically and politically constructed.

### **5.4.3: Partners' description of difference within the M-R relationship**

#### **5.4.3.1: *Racial differences***

**Criteria:** Any comment that indicates or relates to racial difference between and/or within the M-R relationship is included in this subcategory.

##### **5.4.3.1.1 *Descriptions and examples***

The following are descriptions and verbatim examples of how the partners described the (racial) difference within the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** She said the following:

*I realized that people are human beings, they are like us... Our biggest arguments are around our individual difference rather than our racial differences. I realized that we hide behind race, because you can find two people from the same race group or social background having the same problems like we have... So it is not about race at all.*

**Husband 1:** His comment was: *“Well, in terms of being at home with her and the kids, there is no difference”*. It appears that the partners are usually reminded about their racial difference by the social reactions towards them, as suggested by husband 1’s remark: *“I am completely colour-blind. It is only when we go out to Sandton City... Sometimes I even forget that she is black”*.

**Wife 2:** Her remark was: *“To me there is no difference...No, I don’t feel the difference”*.

**Husband 2:** This partner remarked: *“We do have issues but our issues have nothing to do with us being racially different”*.

**Wife 3:** She reported that they do have different preferences that have nothing to do with them being racially different. She put it thus: *“I would prefer something to be done this way and he would prefer it differently... It wouldn’t be because of our racial difference”*.

**Husband 3:** For him, having a black partner is not different from having a white partner. He said, *“I’m going to be honest with you in this regard. All people are basically the same. Their needs are the same. So there is really no difference, if I just look at the person I am in the relationship with, there is not much difference. All people are basically the same”*.

**Wife 4:** She reported that *“within the relationship there hasn’t been much of the difference. I have obviously gone out with other guys (black), and it’s basically the same thing. I do not see any difference. Sometimes my husband acts more Nigerian than I do”*.

**Wife 5:** Her observation was that their racial difference within the relationship seemed insignificant, as they both sometimes forget about the fact that they are really different. She said, *“But there is no real difference...when I get angry It’s just Duma, the person and I’m not angry towards a black man”*. They are usually reminded about their racial difference by the social reactions towards them, as indicated by the following statement:

*When we are out in the public, or when we are with friends or when we are hearing and seeing people’s attitudes towards us, then we are reminded about our differences colourwise. Sometime we also forget about another one’s colour.*

**Wife 6:** The view of wife 6 was: *“We do not have any racial differences or issues between us”*.

**Husband 6:** He pointed out that colour was never an issue for him. He said, *“It becomes an issue because of other people and their reaction to us... people staring at us. People asking me the question of why do I marry a white lady”*. He also indicated that he felt judged by people based on his outside appearance. This is reflected in the statement:

*I feel like you are being judged because of your outside appearance. I feel that it’s a type of apartheid that you can never run away from. I feel that sometimes people don’t use their own judgement and instead they use what society puts before them.*

#### **5.4.3.1.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

All the participants acknowledge that they are different in terms of their skin colour, but seem to put less significance on racial difference. Husband 1 and wife 5 indicated that sometimes they forgot that their partners were black. This indicated a process of individuation and racial de-categorization. Husbands 1 and 6, and wife 5 indicated that they were often reminded about their racial identity difference by the people’s reactions towards them. The reaction from

the people out there might indicate the role of social values and norms in defining what is socially acceptable or unacceptable. The reaction might also suggest that M-R relationships are unfamiliar in this context. Husband 6 described it as a type of apartheid and social judgment one can never run away from. Johnson and Warren (1994) make similar observations or findings, and argue that acknowledging how much one is like one's partner from another race, is on its own a recognition that racial differences are socially constructed and that racial differences are of significance because society makes such differences significant. There seemed to exist a 'private' reaction to M-R relationships, which reaction did not emphasize the couple's racial difference; and a 'public' reaction that did.

As with the findings by Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995), most of the participants in this study defined their M-R relationship as ordinary with ordinary relationship problems, and described their difference in terms of cultural difference and different ways of doing things. The latter will be discussed in the next subcategory.

#### **5.4.3.2: Tradition and/or cultural differences**

**Criteria:** Any comment that indicates or suggests that there is or there is no cultural/traditional difference between and/or within the M-R relationship is included in this subcategory.

##### **5.4.3.2.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are verbatim examples of how the partners described the cultural/traditional difference between and/or within the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** For wife 1, *"There are a lot of differences in terms of the food we eat, the kind of entertainment... we eat more his food because he cooks... I find out that I am more into the white culture or way of doing things"*.

**Husband 1:** In this respect, he said, *“I cook pap myself and I actually end up eating it up all by myself. For us it is not a big cultural change, because she was not eating traditional food anyway. Thebe is very Western. That makes the difference non-existent”*.

**Wife 2:** She acknowledged their cultural differences but seemed committed to maintaining her culture, as indicated in the following remarks:

*I think it's because I was already transformed by the time I meet him ...there is just something we do not agree about. With my African food like papa, merogo, mogodu, maotwana, he cannot change me. He does not eat that and he sometimes complains that, 'you people eat funny things'.*

**Husband 2:** He described the difference in terms of cultural and family expectations, as indicated thus:

*I think there are differences that are related to culture between me and my wife... Maybe the family's expectation is too high. They are thinking that a white person is wealthy and expect certain things from her. This is something different from my culture.*

**Wife 3:** She indicated that she *“would prefer something to be done this way and he would prefer it differently... It would be more because of our... cultural differences like feeling like to eat with your hands... It is easier for us to accommodate them, so we eat more his food and practise more his culture”*. It is not clear whether she accommodates her partner because of his dominant culture as a white person or because of his gender. Mabokela and Mawila (2004), and Maharaj (1999) indicate that within the South African context it is difficult to deal with gender issues apart from race because the two are often intertwined.

**Husband 3:** He describes the difference in terms of the value attached to fulfilling traditional gender roles and independence of women, as indicated in

this statement: *“There is a problem with cooking and baking and all those kind of things, you know...the white ladies have problems with that...they are being brought up and taught to be independent and make sure they can live without a man”.*

**Wife 5:** She said, *“The difference is cultural and not in skin colour... I think there is, for example, the way that I cook and the way that his grandmother cooked. Fortunately, his mother is a very westernised lady, I have eaten her food, they are very white, but sometimes when I’m cooking he would jump in and suddenly start telling me how to cook rice”.*

**Wife 6:** She expected that coming from the same Christian background would result in them being the same in all respects. This is reflected in the following statement:

*I think our life revolve very much around the church. That was a decision we both made individually; so when I married him I thought we are the same, but after the marriage what I have seen in him was different from what I expected...We don’t have much traditions and things like that. For him you have to do things in a certain way...I often ask him that, when he decided to be a Christian, did he decide also to let go of all this traditional things?*

#### **5.4.3.2.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Most participants (8 out of 10) indicated that there is a difference in terms of culture and/or tradition within the M-R relationship. The difference is described more in terms of concrete things like ways of eating, food, family expectations, as well as traditional gender roles in the household. Gender roles within the M-R families seem to be the same as those of same-race families (except for couple 1 because the husband was unemployed and enjoyed things like cooking).

Most of the participants (7 out of 10) seem to accommodate each other in terms of the ways and types of food they eat. For most of the couples, the processes of accommodating each other seem to reflect cultural dominance (where the white culture dominates the black culture) and gender dominance (where women do that which pleases their husbands). Cultural dominance and gender dominance are, however, not unique to M-R couples as they reflect a pattern of social relationship that prevails within the South African context and in many societies (Ratele & Duncan, 2003).

Husband 1; and wives 1, 2, and 5 seem to suggest that the more westernized a person becomes, the more irrelevant or inconsequential the difference within the M-R relationship becomes. This statement could suggest that the process of westernization might result in the reduction of cultural diversity with regard to concrete differences like the way of eating. What is interesting to note is that the change is more from the African culture, rather than it is from the white culture. This could be due to the idea that the white cultures have more elements of the western or European ways of doing things than the African culture.

Fanon (1986), however, uses concepts like racial alienation and lactification to describe the effects of white civilization and European culture on black identity. Racial alienation refers to the sense of separation or rupture in the relationship between the self and those things, objects and people around us. This estrangement is not only that of the self from the world, but also, in a very powerful way, that of the individual person's estrangement from himself or herself. Fanon defined lactification as a desire to be white, which is forced upon black people by white civilization and European culture. He indicated that this desire to be white has resulted in black people abandoning themselves individually and collectively in the quest for white acceptance. Racial alienations and lactification have resulted in deep feelings of inferiority or socially induced inferiority complex amongst the black people (see subcategory 5.6.4 below regarding the reported inferiority complex amongst the black people as compared to the superiority complex amongst the white people).

Cultural differences were also described in terms of more abstract practices like customs, rituals, traditions and world views, which seemed more difficult to change than the above concrete aspects of culture.

#### **5.4.3.3: Different customary/traditional practices and rituals**

**Criteria:** Any comment that indicates or suggests that there are customary/traditional differences in the way of doing things between white and black families of the M-R couples will be included in this subcategory.

##### **5.4.3.3.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are verbatim examples of the reported differences in the cultural/traditional ways of doing things:

**Wife 1:** She indicated that she and her partner were different in many ways. She said, *“Being on time and structured is an issue in our family. He is very conscious of time... so, it is a western way of doing things, because we Africans are a bit flexible in terms of that”*. Difference in terms of funeral and wedding customs were described in this statement: *“Unlike us, when our grand parents die we have to pop out money for running the funeral, but they get some inheritance and the trust money... Our culture is more like a paying culture, we pay lobola and expensive funerals, and theirs is more like a receiving culture”*.

**Husband 1:** He described difference by referring to the general white cultures of individualism, with white South Africans described as more open than the British whites. He said, *“People in South Africa are more open-hearted. When I was in England I had a friend and I have never been to their house for dinner, South African whites are covered by the white, cold and closed English code”*. Black culture is described as more open and accepting as compared to the distant, non-accepting white culture. He added, *“I think in*

*South Africa blacks are more magnanimous, they are just more open-hearted and the whites are distant and not accepting*". The description of the white cultures as more cold, close, distant and not accepting might indicate an individualistic way of existence as compared to an open-hearted, welcoming and collective way of existence of the black people, commonly referred to as the culture of *ubuntu*, which means 'I am, because we are' (See wife 6's description of *ubuntu* in subcategory 5.4.4.4 below).

**Wife 2:** She was reminded about their cultural differences by her parents, who were not willing to accept a person from a different culture due to the fear of upsetting their ancestors, as indicated in the following statement: *"My mom told me that according to our culture you shouldn't do that because you are going to upset the ancestors and she will be going against the ancestors ('badimo ba tlo ema ka maoto')"*. She identifies more with the western culture; an aspect which resulted in less conflict in the M-R relationship. She said, *"If I listened to my parents this relationship would be very difficult, but I am more westernized and do not believe anymore in traditional African beliefs of ancestors, witchcraft and all that. So I do not have any conflict"*.

**Husband 2:** He seemed willing to participate in traditional marriage rituals like he did in his first M-R marriage, but the present M-R relationship was rejected by his partner's family. This is indicated in the following statement:

*In this relationship there is nothing that they asked from me because her parents wanted nothing to do with us... In my previous marriage there were some marriage rituals that I had to perform to connect her ancestors to mine and I did only the modified version of it.*

As indicated in his partner's (wife 2's) comments above, the rejection from the second family might be influenced by their belief that the ancestors would not recognise and accept a white man. They, therefore, do not accept him on that basis.

**Wife 3:** She described their different customs in the following manner: *“My family wants a full traditional marriage with all the lobola rituals and uncles from both families negotiating the lobola and thereafter we will have a western marriage in the church, in his own way”*. Her partner seems willing to participate in the traditional marriage ritual, but was concerned that his family might reject the idea, as indicated in the following statement: *“He did not have a problem with it but because it involved his parents and uncles, he was afraid to tell them or even ask them”*.

**Husband 3:** He indicated that they had a different family tradition, which he described as follows:

*I am the name carrier according to my family tradition. We have this bible or family register in the house where the name carriers of all the families from that time up to now are written... my father wanted to know who is going to get the family register...whether it was going to be given to a coloured child?*

He declined the family register and indicated that he has broken away from the family tradition. He said, *“I’m not bound to tradition. I don’t care about previous family and their traditions”*.

**Wife 4:** She indicated that there were differences in the marriage rituals but her husband was exempted from participating in the full ritual to avoid overwhelming him. She put it thus: *“Nelson was excluded from performing the full Yoruba traditional marriage because they did not want to overwhelm him. We just had the traditional family blessing and a small party because we were already married”*.

**Wife 5:** This participant acknowledged that there are differences in the way black people and white people manage death and marriage. She said, *“It was interesting and is still interesting to see how black people get buried, their rituals, I have a lot of respect for that because we don’t do it, white people do it differently...I would be happily married traditionally or the western way”*.

Poor time management creates a problem for her, as indicated in the following statement:

*There was a time when we broke up and came back again and broke up again. One of the reasons for that was the time problem. He would promise me that he will come see me at 8 o' clock and then he would come 10 o' clock, but that is the way he is... For him it doesn't matter.*

**Wife 6:** She described the way the African marriage ritual is performed to her family, but they could not identify with the traditional practice and withdrew from participating anyway. This is what she said:

*I told my mom the way the lobola ritual is done... She said don't worry about the Lobola... he doesn't have to pay Lobola...Nkosi's family said because it's not our tradition, we do not have to give blankets, but they wanted to give us blankets because it is their tradition.... no one in my family needed the blankets...They respected the fact that we said it's not our tradition and they did not force us to do anything... the Friday before we got married, his family had to give me a sheep or goat to welcome me into the family. Then someone told me later on that if I acknowledged the goat, then I acknowledge his ancestors...I'm glad I didn't say 'hi' to the goat and that part I didn't even want to know.*

Even though her family did not participate in any ritual, she did, but still maintained her own belief system by not acknowledging the ritual and its intended connection with the ancestors of her new family. During the ritual, participants are often expected to acknowledge the ancestors by saying something or welcome the connection by participating in what will be prescribed (Monning, 1988).

**Husband 6:** This participant seemed disappointed that his partner's family did not attend the traditional wedding function. He said:

*What happen was, my family prepared everything at home, and they were expecting her family to come to my home for the function. At the end we had two functions and they didn't come to my house.*

#### **5.4.3.3.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Almost all partners (9 out of 10) indicated that there is a difference in the way marriage customs and rituals are performed between the white and black cultures. Unlike with the concrete aspects of culture like food, abstract cultural practices like customs and rituals seem more difficult to change. None of the black participants offered to give up their customs, tradition or ritual to accommodate their white partner or the western way of doing things. This might be due to the values and beliefs around the performance of rituals.

Monning (1988) describes how, within most African cultures, the change in status (either through birth, marriage or death) is often accompanied by rites of passage which usually involve the performance of rituals (that is, rituals of incorporation of a new family member through birth or marriage, and rituals of separation through death). There is a belief that failure to perform the appropriate ritual might be related to ill-health of the people involved or upsetting the ancestors (Monning, 1988; Seleti & Ngubane, 2005; De Villiers, 1985). This belief or fear might explain why the participants in this study did not offer to give up their customs in order to accommodate their partners.

Most white partners accommodated their black partners by being willing to participate (either fully or in a modified way) in the prescribed African customary practices or rituals. The situation with couple 2 is different as the black family wanted nothing to do with the M-R relationship and no customs or rituals were requested. Wife 2 and husband 3 distanced themselves from their family tradition. This could be due to the realization that their family traditions (that is, the family belief that a white partner will upset the ancestors, or the family belief that a coloured child cannot be given the family register) completely disapprove of race mixing.

For all the above partners, marriage seemed to involve spirituality; be it African ancestral beliefs, the church or western wedding, as described by wives 3 and 5. Marriage within the African context is not an individual affair, involving the relationship between only a man and a woman; but it is a collective or group concern, symbolizing a relationship between two groups of relatives (Monning, 1988). For most of the participants, marriage involves the lobola ritual, which was aimed at connecting the two families, as well as connecting the new family members with the deceased family members.

In a white family, as indicated by husband 3, a sense of connection is maintained through the family register which seems to be an individualistic family existence as the ritual does not involve creating a sense of community like it is done in an African family. This could also be related to husband 1's observation that seems to imply that the white culture is more closed, distant and individualist, while the black culture is more open and welcoming.

Wives 1, 5 and 6 described the difference in terms of the management of death, with the black culture being more elaborate with the funeral ritual. The rituals performed during the funeral within most African families reflect the value attached to the deceased family member as they acquire the new existence and the altered relationships with their relatives (Seleti & Ngubane, 2005). The value attached to the dead family members could also be related to the above recognition of the ancestors during the African marriage ritual.

Wives 1 and 5 indicated the difference in terms of the management of time, with the black people described as more flexible and less conscious regarding time management. Prinzing and Prinzing (1991) described the difference in time management between M-R couples as a cultural rather than a racial difference. The authors differentiated between cyclical or linear views of time. Adherents to a cyclical view of time find that opportunity arises on a regular basis: 'If it isn't seized now, there will be another chance in the future', they say. Those who view time from a linear perspective believe that if an occasion is missed or forgotten, it cannot be retrieved. The opportunity is lost forever.

This difference could be related to the existing social discourse about 'African time'. Prozesky (2002) identifies and describes seven differences between traditional African values, and global business or western values. These differences included views that within the African worldview, time is not determined entirely quantitatively in terms of clocks; but qualitatively, and that this needs to be accommodated in interracial relationships to avoid misunderstandings and conflict. The effect of managing time in a more flexible way or qualitative way could have affected the M-R relationship for wife 5 more than for wife 1 because wife 5 was experiencing other relationship problems (for example, a lack of trust between the couple) which has more potential to destroy the relationship when combined with time management problems. Most African people do not, however, identify with being late as a reflection of their African worldview or way of doing things (Nurnberger, 1994).

#### ***5.4.3.4: Differences in the expression and/or meaning of love***

**Criteria:** Any comment that indicates or suggests that there is, or there is no, difference in the way the M-R couples express or define love will be included in this subcategory.

##### ***5.4.3.4.1 Descriptions and examples***

The following are verbatim examples of how the partners described their difference in the way they express or define love:

**Wife 1:** This participant said, *"What I also know is that being in a relationship with a white person is different in terms of how he shows affection and love. I never had this kind of experience...It is a different way of living and also a different way of being appreciated. That was a challenge for me"*. Her experience could have been influenced by growing up in the abusive home environment rather than their racial difference, as indicated in the following statement:

*I grew up with an abusive father, my mother cook, washes and does everything at our home. The relationship is about sex, so I grew up knowing that when somebody loves you is all about sex, but this one is different in that sex is not everything.*

**Wife 2:** She seemed to suggest that black men do not like physical contact and expressing affection in public, even when they are with a black woman. This is what she said:

*Blacks do not like kissing, they cannot hug in public or express love in public, whereas with the white, they don't care, whether you are in public place like shops they do not mind expressing their love... I think he is more loving, caring and very honest.*

Her experience could have been influenced by growing up in the oppressive home environment rather than their racial difference as indicated in the following statement:

*Unfortunately with our men you will never get that treatment. It means if you are a woman, you must do everything. Like when I was small my mother had to do everything and my father did nothing and I wanted to be liberated from that.*

**Husband 3:** For him, being loved meant being provided for. This is reflected in the following statement: *"She accept me and love me the way I am, she is not lazy, she is hard working. I love porridge, many white ladies cannot do that, and she often cooks that for me".*

**Wife 4:** This participant does not agree with the general stereotypes about the difference in the expression of love between a black man and a white man. She remarked as follows:

*Everybody thinks that a white man helps in the house and my husband brings me flowers regularly. There is nothing like that, my husband is as bad as my father was and my father was pure black. People have that mentality... like everybody expect a white man will bring you flowers everyday, hug and kiss you all the time. That's a stereotype and life is not like that.*

**Wife 5:** It appears that this participant expresses more affection and physical contact than her partner. To this effect she said, *"I don't know why, I cannot stop touching him, I love to touch him, I love to kiss him, I love holding his hand"*. This does not seem to be her general way of expressing love as he is the first man that she has ever reacted that way to. In this respect, she said, *"He is the first person I'm like that with"*. She also seemed to suggest that a black man feels uncomfortable with the physical contact and the expression of affection. She said, *"He is not like that at all, it was difficult for him at the beginning, it is only now that he is comfortable with it, that I can hold his hand in the shopping centre or give him a quick kiss. Sometime he will still resist a bit"*. She related his discomfort with physical closeness to his family context. She said:

*He lived with his grandmother. I do not think there was a lot of affection, he said there was love but not affection, and the love was shown in things like giving him food...When I kiss him he says I'm being silly, and for me that is love, I don't care if he wash my car, I don't care if he gives me money. He doesn't see it that way.*

**Wife 6:** She seemed to have a need for physical contact but it felt funny holding his hand in public, as indicated in the following statement: *"When we started dating, I was feeling funny about holding Nkosi's hand"*. Her sister did not seem to have any problem with physical contact, but her brother-in-law was feeling uncomfortable with physical contact. This is suggested by the following remarks:

*I phoned my sister's husband and ask him if he felt funny holding her hand? They are the same as us, just the other way around. I ask him if she told him if she felt embarrassed or something like that? He just laugh, and said no not Amy, he felt embarrassed about it. For him it was a strange experience, but she was fine.*

The feeling of embarrassment in holding someone's hand might be due to the unfamiliarity of the M-R relationship.

**Husband 6:** He seems to feel uncomfortable with physical contact and the expression of affection in public. He said the following:

*At the beginning the strange thing for me was when she liked kissing me, you know whites tend to like kissing and I used to say, 'Oh no'... like I told you, we don't hug, at the beginning, when she wanted to hug me in public, I would first look around. I was not used to that. She likes holding my hand, she tends to just pull my hand, I don't know how I do it, but it will eventually be away or pull it and scratch my head, without being aware of it.*

His wife on the other hand seemed to have a need for physical contact and the expression of love in public, as indicated in this statement:

*I couldn't understand the need to walk on the street holding hands and touching, it's ok now. I didn't take it as a racial difference, but rather as an individual way of doing things...For her kissing, is the way to express affection? For me, it's all about deeds, what you do... by doing things, if I say I do like you, I will show it by doing things, I'll clean, and I'll cook for her or wash her car.*

#### **5.4.3.4.2 Integrated discussion and interpretations**

From the participants' responses or utterances, it does not really appear that this theme (subcategory) is a racial matter as they reflect a gender, rather

than a racial discourse. In this respect most female participants, particularly wives 2, 5 and 6, and wife 6's sister, have no problem with physical contact, and other ways of expressing love, in public. On the contrary, most males, particularly husbands 5 and 6, and wife 6's brother-in-law, felt uncomfortable with physical contact and the expression of love in public. Morris and Maisto (2003) have found that most women are comfortable with expressing their feelings than men and that this gender difference in the way of handling emotions is socially constructed.

For most participants, showing love seemed to involve providing for material aspects like cooking, money, washing the car, as well as physical closeness like kissing, hugging and holding hands. Most female participants seemed to appreciate physical closeness more than being provided for materially, while love for most male participants (husbands 1, 3, 5 and 6) means and involves doing something for one's partner. This implies gender, rather than racial, difference in the expression and the meaning attached to love.

Wife 5 suggested that their differences in the way she and her partner handled physical closeness might be related to the different family contexts they grew up in, rather than their racial difference. She indicated that growing up without one's parents might affect the level of affection that one receives and may lead to inability to handle physical closeness.

#### ***5.4.3.5 Other identified differences between the M-R partners***

**Criteria:** All other factors in terms of which the partners were identified as different within the M-R relationship; for example, the level of exposure and/or knowledge, difference in upbringing and personality, will be included in this subcategory.

#### **5.4.3.5.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are verbatim examples of the other factors upon which the partners were identified as different within the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** This participant described the difference between her and her partner by saying: *“He is open-minded, he has travelled the world, [and] he has rich experiences that I learn from. They have been exposed to a lot of things, which I have never been exposed to”.*

**Wife 2:** She said, *“Since I have been with him I have learnt a lot, I think it’s because whites have been liberated, he knows a lot”.*

**Wife 3:** This partner described their differences in terms of their personalities. She said, *“I would prefer something to be done this way and he would prefer it differently... It would be more because of our different personalities”.*

**Husband 3:** He said, *“I think if we talk about difference; each person is different”.*

**Wife 4:** She described difference in terms of upbringing only. She said *“I think the only difference between people is their upbringing. I do not think there are fundamental differences between the thinking of races.”*

**Wife 5:** This participant described the difference in personality and intellectual abilities, as indicated in the following statement: *“He has got a very strong personality, he is a highly intelligent person, he challenges me intellectually on a lot of levels, which sometimes make me feel a little bit weak or inferior to him, that makes me to listen to him”.* She also described their difference in terms of power relations within the household. She said, *“He holds the power in the relationship; he has the power over me emotionally completely...even though I view myself as very independent, within the relationship I submit to him, he is the one that makes the rules, he is the one that says we are going to the movies tonight, or staying home tonight. He is completely in charge of*

*the relationship. With him I submit like a wife should be*". The context within which she grew up seems to have had an influence in her views about a woman's position in the family, as indicated by the following statement: *"It's also the way I grew up, in my house my mom was the one who listened to my father, we all had to adhere to what my father says"*.

**Wife 6:** She described difference in terms of upbringing and the value attached to different gender roles. She said, *"We grew up in different backgrounds, the gender roles have a different meaning to the two of us. I see that he follows his mom and dad's example, even though he doesn't notice it...He treats me a lot of time, the way his dad treats his mom, which is not always the best"*. She was, however, expecting that her partner would follow a certain way of relating to a woman as it was done in her own family and religious context. She said, *"The way I grew up, it was the other way around, the man is the one that takes the lead and I just follow. So in a way I thought that he was going to be like that because of the bible standards"*. This suggests that she was willing to submit to her partner's leadership as the head of the family, as prescribed by the bible.

#### **5.4.3.5.2 Integrated discussion and interpretation**

Three female participants (that is, wives 1, 2 and 5) seemed to suggest that their partners were generally more exposed or capable. Wife 5 described her partner as intellectually knowledgeable and challenging. Wife 6 described her partner as enforcing male dominance but at the same time not taking responsibility when needed. Wives 3, 5 and 6 described their families as typically patriarchal. Previous studies support the resources theory, which state that 'a spouse's relative power in a marriage is influenced by their relative resources' (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993; Galvin, 1997). According to the exchange theory the resources exchanged between the partners include socio-economic, affective and expressive resources, companionship, sex, services, and power in the relationship. Employment has been found to be an important power resource for spouses, as well as a basis for a husband's authority in a marriage (Bernard, 1981; Hood, 1983; Collins, 2003).

All the examples above seem to suggest a gender discourse where men, irrespective of their race, are viewed as more capable, knowledgeable and supposed to be heads of their families. This could imply that being a woman within the South African context might mean being at the lower end of the social hierarchy. Smith (1995) describes this as the 'apartheid of gender' and, further indicates that in many countries women are consistently disadvantaged as compared to men when it comes to resources and power.

Three of the participants (that is, wives 4, 5 and 6) indicated that one's upbringing seems to have an influence on the differences between the two gender roles. The socio-cultural factors place an important role in socializing children about gender roles.

Other participants, specifically husband 3, and wives 3 and 5, reported that there are personality differences within M-R relationships, just as we can get in any relationship.

#### **5.4.4: The effect of the M-R relationship on partners**

##### ***5.4.4.1: Emotional effect of the M-R relationship on partners***

**Criteria:** Any suggestion that there is a positive emotional experience; for example, sense of pride, courage, being respected, improved self-esteem, confidence; and negative emotional experience; for example, anger, irritation, discomfort, fear, sadness, low self-esteem, and guilt, due to being in a M-R relationship will be included in this subcategory.

##### ***5.4.4.1.1 Descriptions and examples***

The following are verbatim examples of how the partners described the emotional effect of the M-R relationship on them:

**Wife 1:** She felt respected, courageous, proud, and enjoyed the increased level of attention from people, as indicated in the following statement: *“I think there is an element of respect. I think they see it as a courageous act... Yes, I am proud, I get a lot of attention, people are interested in my relationship and it is quite interesting, even when we go out we get a lot of people looking at us”*. The improved self-esteem and sense of fulfilment might be due to the belief that she had broken through to the higher level of social hierarchy. This is reflected in the following statement:

*Just you going out with a white person, I think they look at me differently, even my own family, they said they did not know that I am so brave... I think it is our own belief that whites are superior to us, like we are an inferior race...Also when I started going out with him my self-esteem was boosted. I said to myself that I never thought I could do this.*

There is no sense of guilt because she believes that their M-R relationship is a reflection of the general social process of transformation and change, as suggested in this statement: *“So, it is happening in a good time. I am not feeling like I am doing something that is socially not acceptable. We are breaking barriers, so in this relationship is like we are going the same way”*. She also indicated that the present South African environment allowed them to live together unlike during apartheid where laws such as the Group Areas Act would make it impossible for them. In this light, she said, *“[It’s] unlike during the times of the Group Areas Act. It was difficult then”*. This indicates the importance of the socio-political context and time in understanding the experiences of M-R couples.

**Husband 1:** He indicated that a M-R relationship is a positive thing, but acknowledged that he initially felt uncomfortable about being within the relationship because of its unfamiliarity. He said, *“I think what black and white represent is unfamiliarity... I think there is an element of feeling uncomfortable initially but I think it is quite a positive thing...It brings some hope, in the sense that it proves that it is possible for one of us to live together with one of*

them". He also felt irritated and angry about the way white people behaved when in Soweto. He described their behaviour as dishonest and patronizing. He put it thus:

*I just feel uncomfortable with all the whites. I just felt it was quite insulting...Thebe talks about Soweto lovingly because that is her history, that is where she grew up and she ran the streets. When somebody who comes from a privileged background starts talking the same language it makes me really irritated. I just got angry.*

He indicated that his feeling of anger and irritation is more intense because of the M-R relationship, as reflected in this statement: *"I may act in the same way but it wouldn't be as intense as it was, it maybe because I am dating her"*.

**Wife 2:** She feels confident and has an improved self-esteem because of the M-R relationship. She said, *"I would say I feel confidence and my self-esteem has improved"*. She feels brave, strong to face any challenges and believes that it takes a brave person to survive in a M-R relationship, as indicated in the following remarks:

*I have also learnt to be strong in order to survive in this relationship and tackle any social reaction. I can say it takes a brave person to be in a mixed-race relationship. This relationship has trained me to face my fear; I can face any challenge that comes my way.*

**Wife 3:** This participant was very concerned; and feared that her culture would be lost. In this regard she said, *"The only thing that worries me sometimes is the feeling that I am losing my culture"*. She made a commitment to maintain and take pride in her cultural identity. She asserted: *"I committed myself to maintaining that and trying to be proud of my culture and be the same person"*. It is not clear why she mentioned that she needed to try to be proud of her culture. It might be due to the belief that her culture was inferior to the culture of her partner, and might be easily lost within the M-R relationship. Bodibe (1993) indicates that after the abolishment of the Group

Areas Act in South Africa, there was an increase in interracial contact and a number of black people moved to areas that were predominantly white. Most of these black people later realized that their cultural practices and ways of living were not allowed in some of these areas, and this led to a significant drop in these cultural practices. This could also be related to Fanon's idea of lactification and racial isolation, whereby black people are forced to abandon their culture in order to fit in the white or European culture.

**Husband 3:** He felt stressed by the social reaction towards their M-R relationship, as indicated by this utterance: *“Well, obviously the social side of it. The way people in your community, in your family and in your culture are accepting it, place stress on you, it does place stress on the other person in the relationship”*. He pointed out that the process is an on-going challenge, as indicated in this statement: *“The thing is...you can never be thinking to yourself that, ‘Wow! I am a winner’, because when you win one thing, a bigger thing comes up”*. He had a feeling that he had broken through his family's resistance, but also feared that his partner might not cope with his family's resistance and she might leave him. To this end he said, *“Actually the fear for my family is not so much any more. The fear for me at this stage is Fikile's reaction towards my family's disapproval...I can see it upsets her...In the beginning it was terrible for her. She said if my parents are not going to accept this, she is going to leave me”*. He described racial classification as an act of pride and dissociated himself from anybody who classified people as 'better' or 'lower'. He put it this way:

*The thing of classifying people is pride... You think you are better than the other person... I don't have time for people with pride, I don't care who they are, I don't think anything of them.*

**Wife 4:** She was saddened, and frustrated by the social reaction to their M-R relationship. She said at times she would get home so angry and would start crying. *“I used to cry almost every day out of frustration and ask myself why people are so mean. I never could understand the people's reaction”*, she said.

**Wife 5:** As regards this participant, it would seem her partner felt proud of, and had an improved ego or self-esteem due to, the M-R relationship. In one of her utterances, she said, *“I think it was like an ego boost for him. In the beginning of our relationship when he talked about us, he would emphasize on the new girlfriend being white, I’ve got a white girlfriend.”* The belief that whites are of a better social class (see 5.6.4 below) might have resulted in a feeling of pride on the part of her partner, as indicated in this statement: *“For him it was something to be proud of, he would talk about it proudly”*. She felt unsure about the M-R relationship and never felt proud to talk about it, because of the possible reactions. She said, *“For me, it was something to be doubting and I was never that much proud to talk about it because of the possible reactions”*. She was also sad about what her partner had gone through because of the previous political situation. To this effect, she said, *“He was affected by apartheid a lot ... I feel sad, I feel sad for him that he had to go through all those things as a child”*. The effect of the past political situation on the people of South Africa makes her feel irritated and regret that we have had such an unequal past. She opined:

*These political issues are irritating for me, and it’s from both sides; from the whites and from the blacks, because unfortunately we had apartheid, I wish things were different, I wish we had leaders that incorporated everybody and we had democracy since the beginning, things would be different, we wouldn’t be having this conversation about interracial relationships, everything would be the same, we would have been on the same boat right from the beginning.*

She indicated that mostly when they talked about politics or watched black theatre, she felt as if she was being blamed for what had happened in the past. Since she was not directly blamed, this feeling might have developed because she identified and categorised herself as a member of the oppressive group and developed self-blame or guilt. This feeling of guilt or self-blame for the past injustices might be related to the concept of collective guilt (Jaspers, 2001).

**Wife 6:** She expressed an intense fear of rejection from her father, as indicated in the following statement: *“I used to have these nightmares, and I would hear my dad using all these horrible words that Afrikaans people used to say about black people... and I would hear him say that about me and Nkosi in my dreams and I would literally wake up in a cold sweat”*. A feeling of being stupid or confused developed as a result of the conflict between wanting to hold on to her culture and having nothing to hold on to because she did not feel proud of her culture. She said, *“I feel stupid, because I don’t want to lose myself but there is nothing to hold on to, because even with my Afrikaans background, which I’m not proud of anyway”*. She did not feel proud of her Afrikaans culture because of the way they (Afrikaners) used to treat black people.

This sense of a lack of pride, or shame, might be due to her identification with the Afrikaans-speaking group, which might have emanated from collective guilt. She went through a phase of regret which was not triggered by the M-R relationship itself, but by being put in an uncomfortable situation. In this regard, she said:

*At first (even though I wouldn’t say it) I would feel and ask myself that ‘how can Nkosi bring me to this place, it stinks and it’s dirty’, (referring to the Soweto taxi station). I sometimes used to have thoughts about how it would have been if I married someone else, they wouldn’t have put me in a situation like this. I then decided to look at it in a different perspective, and say it’s not my territory, its not where I come from.*

The feeling of discomfort that is described above could be due to the huge difference between the context that she grew up in (which she described as a high social class in South Africa) and the context that her husband grew up in (which, relatively speaking, could be defined as a lower social class). She grew up without any contact with black people and communities (as indicated in 5.4.2 above) and that might make being in Soweto (which is a black community) an unfamiliar experience and difficult to identify with.

**Husband 6:** He expressed his anger and resentment to the fact that as a couple they were usually classified under different racial groups. He said, “*In the case of Ronelle, most people would treat her inferior because she is walking with me...The white people usually react like that*”. He seemed irritated by the social reactions (mostly from black people) that suggested that he was better, richer or of higher status than other black men since he was married to a white woman. This is suggested in these remarks:

*Most times it's like a status thing and they react as if I think I'm trying to be better ... That was actually starting to make me very angry... people think I have got a lot of money... it's like when you are with a white woman you are like a cool person and rich.*

#### **5.4.4.1.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

All the expressed emotional experiences were influenced mainly by the social reactions, or perceptions about the M-R relationship. For example, emotions such as pride, embarrassment, irritation, anger or guilt were related to the internalized racial schema or beliefs about other racial groups. It has become clear that the more negative the social reactions or perceptions are the more negative the emotional experience becomes. As indicated in subcategory 5.4.1, most participants viewed their M-R relationship in a positive manner, but the social reactions and perceptions of the M-R relationship seemed to have more influence than the partners' views.

Previous research results indicate that the main problem for mixed-race couples rests not with the partners themselves, but with the relatives, friends and society surrounding them (Johnson & Warren, 1994; Olofsson, 2004; Prinzing & Prinzing, 1991; Yancey & Yancey, 2002).

Most participants (that is, 7 out of 10) reported negative emotional experiences. It was wives 1 and 2, as well as husband 5 (as reported by his

wife), who experienced positive emotional experiences. The three participants who reported positive reactions were blacks. The perception that the white racial group is better; or even superior to the black one resulted in the development of positive emotions for the three participants. This finding could also be related to the social identity theory. This theory recognizes that identification with a higher social hierarchy may result in the development of a positive self-esteem in an individual.

Most white participants (that is, 4 out of 5) reported negative emotional experiences. The four white participants related their negative emotions (for example, anger, irritation, embarrassment, guilt or shame) to the effect of the past apartheid political context on people of other races. Rosenblatt, *et al.*, (1995), and Yancey & Yancey (2002) indicate that in any relationship partners will always learn from each other. In M-R relationships, most white partners learn about the painful effect of racism and racial prejudice on the lives of their partners and their communities. According to the authors, this realization or consciousness results in more awareness of the many ways in which the white partner (unknowingly) supported the racist system and how it has affected them. A sense of guilt and a strong desire to change normally developed from such awareness.

Wives 3 and 6 reported that they feared losing their cultural identity due to the M-R relationship. Both participants seemed to have given up important aspects of their cultural identity. Wife 3 was described by her husband as very fluent in the Afrikaans language, and wife 6 indicated that she was more in contact with the black community and was completely removed from the white community. Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995) point out that, for some of the M-R partners, being too much in the white world or too much in the black world can be an identity challenge. One sustains identity by being amongst people who are like one, and in places where one is not the only person of one's racial or language group.

#### **5.4.4.2: The effect of the past socio-political context on partners' attitudes**

**Criteria:** Any comment that suggests that the past socio-political context in which an individual grew up had an effect on his/her attitude, and racial stereotypes towards the other racial group, will be included in this subcategory.

##### **5.4.4.2.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are verbatim examples of the reported effect of the socio-political context on the racial stereotypes and attitudes of the M-R couples:

**Wife 1:** She acknowledged that, unlike her partner, she was stuck in seeing things in a racist way because of the context she grew up in. She said:

*I think I am still stuck in seeing things in terms of colour because we had our previous experience, and he grow up Ireland, he come here when he was 15 years and he did not grow up in this apartheid environment, he learnt a lot of things about how to treat black people but deep down he is not a racist.*

This implies that she viewed herself as a racist. It further indicates how prejudice and stereotypes are very resistant to change, and are mainly influenced by the social environment.

**Husband 1:** He acknowledged that the environment he grew up in had established opinion or stereotype about black people. He said, "*I think it was my own stuff, my upbringing, it was never liberal, we were never liberal, we always stayed on the right side of the political line, I come from a conservative background...I would not deny that I definitely had an opinion of black people. When I was much, much younger at school we were brain-washed through the army*". The sense of being brain-washed suggests that ideas about black

people which he did not believe in were enforced by the socio-political system in people's thinking.

**Wife 2:** This participant did not trust the Afrikaans-speaking whites because of her previous experience and abuse. She emphasized:

*I do not think I would have the guts to go out with an Afrikaans-speaking person...I thought if Afrikaans-speaking people approach me he might end up abusing me and not love me... think it has to do with the history of our country, what they have done to Africa, our mothers and brothers. They did not like us.*

**Husband 2:** He did not recall any racial attitudes, and argued that this might be because he had been living in cross-racial contexts for many years. He said, *“Living in cross racial context has been a part of my life for so long that I cannot recall any attitude or negative perceptions that I use to have about the other race or cultures”*.

**Husband 3:** He acknowledged that he had a negative attitude towards black people due to the context that he grew up in. He said, *“I grew up in a background where my family is very racist, our country is racist...I was even a member of the AWB when I was a teenager. At some point I ask myself a question, ‘why am I racist?’ .”*

**Wife 4:** She differentiated between her and her South African friend's attitudes, and said, *“As I told you before, that my one friend indicated to me how she hated whites because of the many years of apartheid...I can go out with any race, as long as the guy is cute”*. She believed that the context within which she and her husband were born played a role in their racial attitudes, as reflected in her statement: *“It was probably the type of up-bringing that I had... My parents never had issues with race... My husband and his family are more like me, very open-minded...He is South African but more from a British origin”*. This comment suggests that the South African context, as compared with other contexts, is characterised by more negative interracial attitudes.

**Wife 5:** She acknowledged that she had a negative racial attitude because of the context she grew up in. She said:

*I said to him at the beginning of our relationship that one thing he must know is that being with him is not going to all of sudden make me less of who I am, unfortunately I'm not going to be less of racist, unfortunately, it's in my blood, because that is the way we grew up. For the first 19 years of my life I was mainly exposed to white people, hearing a lot of things about black people, my perceptions are from the apartheid, where black people are seen as inferior to white people.*

**Wife 6:** This participant acknowledged that the context she grew up in exposed her to bad ideas about black people, but decided to make peace with the way she was raised. She said, *"Maybe the biggest thing for me was to make peace with who I used to be and how I was raised, which was not always right and all the ideas about black people"*. She indicated that her husband grew up in a context that made it easier for him to relate with people from other racial groups, as indicated in the statement: *"I think the way my husband grew up made it easier; if you wanted to bring your friends to the dinner table, just bring them, however they are, so that's my family in law. They are not angry about the past; they do not harbour any hatred"*. The statement above could suggest that most black people are expected to be angry and to harbour hatred against white people due to the past experiences.

**Husband 6:** He indicated that his family context played a role in the development of his racial attitudes, as indicated in her statement: *"I grew up in a very big family, we were taught not to treat people according to their outside appearance, and as such I ended up having any kind of friends. I used to have people of other colour coming to my home"*. He further pointed out that even though, in his family, people were treated as equal, racial inequality, influences from the past racial experiences and racial prejudices were still a problem in South Africa. In this respect he said, *"Now everyone*

*talks about equal South Africans but in reality it's not like that, and everyone is still tuned in with the past. So, you will still be judged by your outside appearance and not by anything else".* This statement could be used to indicate how long-term attitudes or prejudice often function as a schema (that is, cognitive frameworks for organising, interpreting and recalling information) or available heuristics, when making social judgements about people of the out-group. Baron and Byrne (1991) indicated that schemas operate like cognitive short cuts, providing structure for the interpretation and organisation of the new information we encounter.

#### **5.4.4.2.2 *Integrated discussions and interpretations***

Almost all participants (that is, 9 out of 10) indicated that their past socio-political context had an effect on their attitude towards people from the other racial group. The attitudes, both experienced and expressed, were attributed to the historical background of racism and past apartheid socio-political environment that most of the participants had found themselves in. The impression one gets after reading the examples is that, most of the participants felt like victims of the socio-political context in which they grew up, and that interracial conflict, within the described contexts, was unavoidable.

Most partners (7 of them, and wife 4's friend) reported negative attitudes towards people from the other racial group. Wife 4 and husband 6 seemed to have no negative attitudes in this regard. They attributed this to the effect of their family influence. They both acknowledged the existence of negative attitudes between different social groups; that is, between different tribes for wife 4 and different races for husband 6.

#### **5.4.4.3: The effect of the M-R relationship on partners' attitude**

**Criteria:** Any comment that suggests that a partner has a change of attitude and/or racial stereotypes towards the other racial group due to being in a M-R relationship will be included in this subcategory.

##### **5.4.4.3.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are verbatim examples of the reported racial stereotypes and/or attitude changes due to being in a M-R relationship or being in contact with people from a racially different group.

**Wife 1:** She initially had a negative attitude against, and stereotypes about white people, as indicated in the statement: *"I just hated white people. I just could not stand white people... For me I have to struggle, I have to work hard...I think they are spoilt; I just get so irritated because they are very lazy"*. Her preconceived ideas about white people made her to initially place herself at a lower level of social hierarchy in relation to white people. She said, *"I use to have preconceived ideas about white people that they are morally superior, they have high self-esteem, they have their ducks in the row, and they are organized"*. Through contact, her racial attitude, stereotypes and preconceived ideas about whites were challenged and she realized that they were not different, as indicated in the statement:

*I think I was helped by the course that I attended. I mix with a lot of white and Jewish people, and this is where I met my boyfriend... But just being in this relationship I have come to challenge those perceptions and seen that we are all human beings; we have got fears, they have got their own fears; they have moments where they have low self-esteem, they need support and they have struggled like we have struggled but in their own ways. They never had things easy like I have always thought.*

The contradiction in her perception before and after being in contact with white people indicates how attitudes and preconceived ideas about racial difference get internalized and used as available or accessible schemas without checking their validity or truth.

According to the constructivist perspective, these processes are internal to the individual, integrating knowledge (or meaning) into pre-existing schemas (assimilations) or changing the schemes to fit the environment (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

**Husband 1:** He accepted that he had a change of attitude towards white people. He said, *“I guess my own issue in our relationship is that I get very irritated at my own people; I get very irritated at whites. My tolerance is just getting less and less”*. He also acknowledged that his attitude change towards white people was more intense because of the M-R relationship. This is clear in this statement: *“I may act in the same way but it wouldn’t be as intense as it was, it maybe because I am dating her”*. His opinion about blacks also changed as he grew older and due to the contact within the M-R relationship. In this regard he said:

*I would not deny that I definitely had an opinion of black people, when I was much, much younger at school, and we were also brain-washed through the army, but it changed as I grow older, it changed at a very deep level. I did not realize it... This relationship helps me to clear up a lot of misconceptions about things that I heard in the past.*

**Wife 2:** Her attitude towards white Afrikaans-speaking people had not changed, as suggested by the statement: *“You know how some Afrikaans-speaking whites are. It is not that I am racist. You know how some of them treated blacks...Dean usually comments about my racism towards Afrikaans-speaking white people”*. She differentiated between whites in terms of being Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking. Her racial attitude to white Afrikaans-speaking people might have not been changed because she considered her partner to be different from Afrikaans-speaking whites. In this

regard she said, "Sometime some of the people speak to my child in Afrikaans and I always tell them that he is not Afrikaans-speaking, he is British ... I do not think if I was approached by an Afrikaans-speaking white I would go out with him".

**Husband 2:** He acknowledged that his perceptions about black people had been gradually changing because he had been in cross-racial contact for a long time. He said:

*My family was more in contact with African people than others...and my family use to invite lots of African people and entertain their families...I had perceptions about black people... Yes, you can't help it... So I could say my beliefs have been changing gradually and even when I was in boarding school I used to share my room mostly with black guys. It was just part of my life and that was just unusual... living in cross-racial context has been a part of my life so long that I cannot recall any attitude or negative perceptions that I use to have about the other race or cultures.*

This might suggest that the longer a person gets involved in interracial contact the more racial attitudes and negative perceptions get lesser. The interracial contact might have provided the opportunity to review previously held opinions and socially constructed ideas about racial differences.

**Husband 3:** He acknowledged that contact with black people as well as his own M-R relationship resulted in a change in his racial attitude. He said:

*This relationship made me even more aware, but my experience of the people in the Cape also played a role... I do see everybody as the same... I also think there was a time in my life where I had to lay down my own racism, as I told you that I use to belong to the AWB when I was a teenager. At some point I ask my self a question, 'why am I racist?'*

This remark indicates that the process of change was not easy as it involved a change of socially shared beliefs and perceptions, as indicated in this statement: *“I must say it was not easy for me to change that, because if it is only my perception, then I can change it, but they are also from my people”*.

**Wife 4:** She does not seem to have any racial attitudes towards other people because of the context in which she grew up. She explained the difference in terms of racial attitudes between her and her South African friends as follows:

*I am not trying to fix South Africa, I am Nigerian but this is just my own perspective... the difference is, for my South African friends, most of their experience will be explained in terms of race, but I would think differently about it... it is too easy and too quick for South Africans to blame race.*

She also indicated how black people in South Africa placed themselves at a lower level of social hierarchy:

*I don't think like that. This is a colonial mentality, to think that white is better. Maybe it is the indoctrination that we went through, maybe you more than me, because in Nigeria it was different; we had our independence way back. I think South Africans are more indoctrinated.*

**Wife 5:** She indicated that she still had racial attitudes and her partner also commented about this aspect. She said:

*I sometimes sense racism within the M-R relationship when we have relationship problems... it was not something that I say, it's something where I would think, 'Jou bliksem se' ... and he said that sometimes I'm being racist without even knowing that I am...and sometimes unconsciously that comes out when a taxi driver comes in front of me, my instinctive reaction would be around his race and mentality, nothing else.*

She also acknowledged that there was a need for breaking old racial attitudes and stereotypes; but that the process of change would not be sudden. She said:

*I said to him at the beginning of our relationship that one thing he must know is that being with him is not going to all of a sudden make me less of who I am, unfortunately I'm not going to be less of racist, unfortunately, it's in my blood... because that is the way we grew up, for the first 19 years of my life I was mainly exposed to white people, hearing a lot of things about black people... I always said to him that we've been thrown into the boat together for us to learn but also for other people to learn... because of our background, because of so much race hate... My grandfather brought a lot of hate for black people in my family, and this is something that needs to end, it's something that needs to be broken.*

The description above indicates how the process of change, and transformation, could take a long time, and that it could be a painful experience. The racial attitudes that were shared within her social context resulted from social policies where black people were placed at the lower levels of the social hierarchy. This view is corroborated by the following remark:

*My perceptions are from the apartheid, where black people are seen as inferior to white people, that your white skin allows you to be God, for some reason we are much closer to God than some people.*

**Wife 6:** She indicated that being in the M-R relationship required her to make peace with the influence her family had had on her, and abandon certain ideas about black people. This is clear from her statement: *“Maybe the biggest thing for me was to make peace with who I used to be and how I was raised, which was not always right and all the ideas about black people, I had to cut all that off, and just love someone regardless of how they look like”.*

**Husband 6:** He indicated that his preconceived ideas about whites had changed. He said, *“I used to have my own perceptions about whites, that they are lazy...I realised that it is all about the upbringing and not a racial thing...For me going out with Ronnele was not more because of her outside appearance; I have fallen in love with a person and a best friend. It was all about that”*.

#### **5.4.4.3.2 Integrated discussion and interpretation**

Most participants indicated that they developed racial attitudes and stereotypes towards people of other races due to the context they grew up in (see also 5.4.4.2 above). In this subcategory, most participants (that is, 7 out of 10) expressed deep-seated animosity, hatred or negative attitudes against people of the out-group. The same participants who were prejudiced against people from the out-group reported a positive change in their initial racial attitude towards people of other races.

For most participants, direct or extended interracial contact resulted in the positive change in their racial attitude and stereotypes. Plug and Nieuwoudt (1983) point out that the attitude of white South Africans towards blacks changed after being exposed, through the media, to the Soweto 1976 event.

During the interracial contact, more information and awareness was acquired about people from the out-group. For some participants, this new information resulted in cognitive dissonance or inconsistency between the previously internalized cognitive schema (or hatred) about people of the out-group and the observed or actual behavior, traits and habits of the people from the out-group. Most participants (that is, wives 1, 5, and 6, and husbands 3 and 6) dealt with the cognitive dissonance or inconsistency by dissolving the racial boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and replacing it with ‘we’; a process Gaertner, Rust, Dovidio, Bachman and Anastasio (1994) refers to as de-categorization.

Wife 1 dealt with the cognitive dissonance by re-categorizing or shifting the out-group boundaries and removing her partner from the white Afrikaner racial category to a British white. Husbands 1 and 2 distanced themselves from their racial group (that is, the white racial group) and developed more interest in, and empathy for, the people belonging to the out-group. Wife 4 distanced herself and her husband from the attitudes and stereotypes of most South Africans (also see subcategory 5.7.4 below).

Most participants also indicated that before the interracial contact, the expressed racial attitudes and stereotypes had affected their beliefs about, behaviour towards, people from other racial groups. This observation can be related to the constructivist views regarding how internalized mental representations (or schemas) about racial differences or stereotypes affect meaning attached to interracial experiences. According to Hruby (2001), socially constructed meanings are often taken at face value by members of the community as facts, reality, common sense, or as inarguably foundational. This may result in the internalization of certain meanings or socially constructed discourses about certain events, places or phenomena. Neuman (2006) argues that once people accept social creations as being facts or real, very real consequences like the attitude and stereotypes we have observed above will follow.

Husband 2 and wife 4 reported that they did not have any racial stereotypes or attitudes towards people from different races. Husband 2 did not have any recollection of such attitudes because he had been in cross-racial contact for a very long time. Wife 4 never had any racial stereotypes and attitudes because of the non-racial context in which she grew up. This finding confirms the value of social context in the development of racial attitudes and stereotypes.

Wife 2 seemed to have no change in her racial stereotype or attitude towards Afrikaans-speaking whites. She indicated that her partner is British and not white Afrikaans-speaking, and her attitude towards Afrikaans-speaking whites would not change. What is interesting to observe is the finding that she initially

found it difficult to handle physical contact with her partner due to his race (see subcategory 5.4.2 above). This might imply that she might be having difficulty dissolving the internalized schemas and attitudes about all white people, not just Afrikaans-speaking whites.

For most participants, the expressed racial attitudes and stereotypes resulted from the development of 'us' and 'them' categories. For wives 1, 4 and 5, the black racial category was described as a lower racial category and the white as a higher racial category. Wife 1 and husband 6 reported racial stereotypes that whites were lazy. This is a negative schema about whites; it is also a general talk or schema by most black people. This could have developed from the previous socio-political context where, unlike their white counterparts, most black workers were involved in intensive work (see subcategory 5.6.4.2 below, regarding MacCrone's finding from the study conducted during the 1930's in South Africa); and whites viewed by blacks as lazy and as bosses (Foster & Nel, 1991).

This racial comparison represents the individual's perception about racial differences. They do, however, involve and reflect the shared social attitude and stereotypes, and will be integrated with the general social comparison and stereotypes (under 5.6.4 below). The existence of such attitudes and racial stereotypes indicate the connectedness between the individual (that is, a constructivist approach to understanding human behaviour) and the social context (more specifically the already existing social discourse) in the construction of knowledge and meanings.

#### ***5.4.4.4: The effect of the M-R relationship on partners' identity***

**Criteria:** Any comment or statements that suggest that there was an identity change or no identity change due to being in a M-R relationship will be included in this subcategory.

##### ***5.4.4.4.1 Descriptions and examples***

The following are verbatim examples of the reported identity change or no identity change experienced due to the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** She was expected by her friends to change her racial identity. She said, *“Like one friend asked me if she could still visit me; they expect me to dye my hair or changing my accent, be like a white girl... it is like I am no more like the girl who grew up with them in the townships... They expect an identity change and I did not go through that; I am still the same, I don’t change easy.”*

**Wife 2:** She indicated that her cultural identity or worldview had changed. In this sense, she said, *“I would say nothing in terms of my racial identity has changed. Since I was small there was this life that I wanted. I was like a very close person. There were certain things I didn’t like about my culture... I didn’t like this thing of ancestors”*. A change to being a very closed person and not liking ancestors reflects aspects of a more western way of living which is characterised by individualism, as indicated above in 5.4.3.3.

**Wife 3:** She was concerned about sacrificing her cultural identity, but made a commitment to maintain a sense of pride in her identity, as indicated in the statement: *“The only thing that worries me sometimes is the feeling that I am losing my culture, but I committed myself to maintaining that and trying to be proud of my culture and be the same person”*.

**Wife 5:** She indicated that she observed from her friend a racial identity change. She said:

*My one friend was already in a mixed-race relationship with a black man... but they are completely different. He is very white, it seems to me that he wants to be white, he speaks with a very white accent, if you speak to him on the phone you will never know that he is black, he only dates white girls, he only goes to white restaurants, he doesn’t speak any of the black language.*

She also indicated that their racial identity is still the same and that they do not want to change. This is what she said:

*Duma is so black, he doesn't want to be white and same with me I'm white, I'm happy with who I am and I don't want to be black.*

**Wife 6:** She indicated that her cultural identity and way of doing things had changed. She said:

*I feel that my identity has changed...I had to conform to cooking pap, I had to conform to doing this and I had to conform to living in a certain way. I had to conform to wearing a skirt to the funeral... why must I speak Zulu to you as well, because why don't you speak Afrikaans to me because that's where I come from.*

There seemed to be a constant struggle for her to maintain her identity even outside the home environment, as even her friends at work expected her identity to change. She said:

*Because of ubuntu or protecting someone...they have a funny expectation from me because I'm married to Nkosi and I must become like his tradition and his culture... yes, and that is were I'm still struggling to keep my identity and to actually stand up for something that I believe, rather than just going along.*

#### **5.4.4.4.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Except for the cultural identity (as indicated in 5.4.3.2 and 5.4.3.3), none of the participants reported any racial identity change. The reason for this might be that racial identity was defined more in terms of physical differences, like skin or hair colour between people. Wife 1 was expected by her friends to change her hair colour and accent, and wife 5 observed a change in the physical identity of their black male friend who is in a M-R relationship. Such changes entailed aspects such as his accent and choice of social contacts.

According to Fanon (1986), this desire to be white is called 'lactification', which resulted from the feeling of inferiority (or inferiority complex) amongst most blacks, which was imposed by the oppressive apartheid system. Wives 1 and 5, however, indicated that the idea or expected racial identity change was undesirable or unnecessary.

Most of the literature regarding racial differences indicates that the physical difference between the different social groups is not of significance, but the meanings or social constructions of these differences, and the implications of such social constructions (that is, the resultant social categorizations or hierarchy) in an unequal society create problems. According to the social identity theory, the observations above from wives 1 and 5, indicate a situation where an identity change from a black to a white identity (that is, from a low to a high status group) might result in the development of an improved social identity.

Wives 2, 3 and 6 reported that their cultural identities had changed or were changing. For wife 2, the change was welcomed, whereas for wives 3 and 6 the change was not; and they both committed themselves to maintaining their identities. The change in identity for wives 3 and 6 is not unique to M-R couples; it could be seen as a general gender discourse rather than a racial discourse. After marriage, most women are socially expected to take the names and embrace traditions of their partners.

#### **5.4.5: Advantages, disadvantages and challenges of being in a M-R relationship**

##### **5.4.5.1: Advantages and gains due to a M-R relationship**

**Criteria:** Any comment or statements that suggest that being in a M-R relationship has advantages or gains will be included in this subcategory.

###### **5.4.5.1.1 *Descriptions and examples***

The following are verbatim examples of the reported advantages or gains, experienced due to the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** She indicated that being in a M-R relationship has resulted in a sense of pride, respect and improved self-esteem, as indicated in the statement:

*I think there is an element of respect. I think they see it as a courageous act, even my own family, they said they did not know that I am so brave; it is like something special... I think it is our own belief that whites are superior to us, like we are an inferior race. Also when I started going out with him my self-esteem was boosted. I said to myself that I never thought I could do this.*

The sense of pride and improved self-esteem could be related to the belief that she had broken through the higher levels in the social hierarchy. She also indicated that the fact that he was from a different race allowed her to get services that she would not enjoy as a black person. For example, she said:

*When we were looking for property or when we are going on holiday, we use him for that. I know that if he phone, in most instances, they will have the property or the accommodation for him but when I (a black person) phone they will say the property or accommodation is not available.*

This could be viewed as racial discrimination, which is now illegal in South Africa. This indicates that although laws have changed, attitudes of individual citizens have remained the same.

**Husband 1:** He indicated that the M-R relationship provided differences that were enriching, and thus provided opportunities for growth. He put it this way:

*I think the fact that we are of different cultures enriches the relationship. It is a cultural advantage. I think there is a definite cultural growth as well...being in a mixed-race relationship creates an*

*opportunity to clear up a lot of misconceptions about things heard in the past about other racial groups.*

He also suggested that their M-R relationship could provide people with exposure or extended contact that could change racial attitudes. To this effect he said:

*I think a lot of the whites here still think we cannot trust the black government. So when they see Thebe and me they are quite shocked and surprised that here is Gabriel, and he is one of us and he is going out with a black woman. It brings some hope, in the sense that it proves that it is possible for one of us to live together with one of them.*

**Wife 2:** This participant indicated that her level of exposure, confidence and self-esteem had improved. She said:

*More exposure ...since I have been with him I have learnt a lot, I think it's because whites have been liberated, he knows a lot. I have learnt to be more confident. In the beginning I was not confident enough... I would say I gained confidence and my self-esteem has improved and I have also learnt to be strong in order to survive in this relationship.*

The need to be strong to survive within the M-R relationship could be due to the social disapproval and unfamiliarity of M-R relationships that she experienced.

**Husband 2:** He reported that he “*felt that people can be so superficial, it's good to know where people stand...You will know who your real friends are. You will see those who accept you conditionally and those who accept you unconditionally*”. This could also be related to the idea that social acceptance is based on fulfilling certain conditions. Very often it is difficult for people to judge or accept each other unconditionally, (or individually, as husband 6 indicated in subcategory 5.4.3.1) because of the need or strong social pressure to conform to the prescribed social norms or conditions.

**Husband 3:** He indicated that their racial difference will allow them to have equal business representation. He said, *“One of the advantages which I really think is a great advantage is if I want to start my own business there is this thing that you must have a black partner. So that is the one advantage – then I can say okay, my wife is my black partner”*. This may suggest a level of trust and equality between the partners. This idea can also be related to the present government requirement or policy of BEE (black economic empowerment) which is aimed at encouraging and empowering black business partners in order to correct the imbalances of the past socio-political context.

**Wife 4:** She indicated that the M-R relationship makes them ‘stand out’, in the sense of drawing attention. She said:

*People can just find you easily. We stand out... My friend comes to visit us and she didn't know our address. So she got to the security and start describing our cars. The security man turned around and said, ‘Ooh, are you looking for that black woman who lives with a white man?’*

She reported a number of incidents where she was identified by the M-R relationship, and said, *“I think the thing that stands out is the racial difference... Like I said I'm more recognized by my relationship than for who I am. One lady stopped me one day. She was with a coloured child. She said that she knows me because she has seen me around. She probably would have not noticed me if it was not because of my relationship”*. This could be due to the unfamiliarity of the M-R relationships within the South African context.

**Wife 5:** This partner hoped that the M-R relationship would allow her to have access to employment opportunities that she would otherwise not have. She expressed this view thus: *“One thing we joke about a lot with my friend is that if we get to get married my surname would be Mabanya, so I would be able to*

go for all the affirmative action posts”. There is also a suggestion that M-R relationship challenges the existing social categories, as reflected in the following remark: “*Can you imagine people seeing ‘Mrs. A Mabanya’, and I arrive and I’m white. I wonder what that would do to the affirmative action policy and I wonder how they would react to that*”. She also indicated that their M-R relationship could provide people with the exposure or extended contact that could lead to racial attitude changes, as suggested in the following statement:

*Except for the advantage of breaking down racial borders and boundaries... having people seeing that there is no real difference, not that we want to be other people’s learning curve, but at least people can see that it is possible to live and love one another, and that the differences is cultural and not in skin colour. That it’s actually ‘ok’ to be who you are.*

**Wife 6:** She related a number of advantages, which entailed situations where her partner got access to services that would be difficult to get without her help. She said:

*Sho! There are a lot of advantages. It was better for me and my friend to go and sign the contract than it was for Nkosi and me to sign the contract... I said to the lady that day that I want to be honest with her, it’s me for now but later on I will move in with my husband. She said it’s ok. She never knew that it’s a black person. I didn’t think it was important to give her the other information... I guess it would be difficult for them to do anything about it now.*

She related other experiences where she had to intervene because of the white people’s unwillingness to provide their services or help to her husband, as suggested in the following remarks:

*The caretaker is very conservative, and he speaks to me differently than he would to Nkosi. He would rather talk to me about the garage*

*and all the problems than to speak to Nkosi...Stephan, the guy at the developers, he is white...He wouldn't speak to my husband. After some few days I phoned him again and he apologised. It didn't come across as that great...when I was phoning him even if he lied, he was answering my phone. If Nkosi phones, he wouldn't answer the phone.*

**Husband 6:** He indicated that he often got special treatment from the people in black communities when he is with his wife and/or white friends, but not when he is with his wife only. He put it thus:

*Like when we go home, or to my uncles and places like that, people tend to give her first preference simply because she is white... I used to go with this friend of mine to the townships for funerals and functions. We used to say 're ja ka yena' (meaning 'we eat because of you'). When they give him first class treatment, the whole group benefits from that, so we all went and got the first class treatment. The expression was 'just stick to the white man'; we used to joke about it like that.*

Even though this was expressed as an advantage, he felt sad that he did not get the same treatment, even from his own family when he visited them without his wife or white friends, as indicated in this statement: *"I feel bad, because I'm their child and they do not treat me like that if I go there alone"*.

#### **5.4.5.1.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Most participants (that is, 7 out of 10) reported advantages that were related to the different positions in the social hierarchy the different racial groups occupied. The above advantages indicate that social comparison results in differential treatment (that is, preferential treatment for one partner and discrimination for the other). This is an advantage because both partners gain from each other's preferential treatment when functioning within the respective in-group. These reflect normative patterns of inter-group relations between members of the in-group and the out-group. The descriptions and

examples above also indicate how M-R relationships challenge the existing social categories. For example, wives 1, 5 and 6, as well as husband 3 indicated that services and benefits that were provided in social or legal spheres, and based on one's group membership, might also be challenges for M-R relationships.

Husband 2 and wife 4 reported advantages that are not related to one belonging to any racial group or social position. An example in this regard could be knowing your true friends, or simply standing out. It could be that racial differences might have different meaning for the two participants because of the context they both grew up in. Both participants acknowledged that most South Africans react in racial terms more than they did, and indicated that it might be due to the past socio-political context (see wife 4's comment in subcategory 5.4.4.2 above, as well as husband 2's comment in subcategory 5.6.3 below). The advantages presented by the two participants could, however, be related to the unfamiliarity of M-R relationships or the perception that M-R relationships are against the prescribed social conditions or norms.

Husband 1 and wife 5 seemed hopeful that their relationships would provide exposure or extended contact that might lead to changes in racial attitudes. This idea is supported by the extended contact hypothesis, which suggests that prejudice can also be changed or reduced; not only by direct contact between different groups, but also indirect contact or observing someone from the in-group in contact with people of the out-group. Research results have indicated that merely learning that some people in one's own group get along well with persons belonging to other groups can be a highly effective means for countering the detestable effect of prejudice (Wright, 1984).

Husband 6 reported advantages of being with his wife and white friends within the black community. He felt sad that he did not get the same treatment or advantages from his own family members, including the rest of the community, when visiting them alone. This difference in the treatment that he receives could be related to the issue of social categorisation where whites

are, in most cases, perceived to belong to a higher position in the social hierarchy, and therefore deserving a special treatment, mostly when visiting black communities. This point will be discussed in detail in section 5.6.4. The negative effect that this social comparison and hierarchies have on husband 6 will be compared to that of the other participants who described the special treatment and/or reactions when visiting black communities as a disadvantage. The latter will be discussed in the next subcategory.

#### **5.4.5.2: Disadvantages due to the M-R relationship**

**Criteria:** Any comment or statements that suggest that being in a M-R relationship has disadvantages will be included in this subcategory.

##### **5.4.5.2.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are verbatim examples of the reported disadvantages experienced due to being in the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** She indicated that as much as she appreciated the respect that she got from people, she also got negative reactions. She said, *“I think the disadvantage is that the people do not treat me the same anymore, others respect me and others react differently. Like one friend asks me if she could still visit me, they expect me to dyeing my hairs or changing my accent, be like a white girl, so those are some of the disadvantage”*. This could be experienced as subtle rejection from the people of the in-group, as indicated in the statement: *“It is like I am no more like the girl who grew up with them in the townships”*.

**Husband 1:** He seemed to suggest that being in a M-R relationship is a disadvantage as it required confronting one’s personal issues about race and parental approval. He said, *“The disadvantage would be...Maybe from my parents’ point of view...it might be about me, I think I had to confront my own issues about race and the whole issue about approval from my parents”*. It is

not clear why he described confronting his issues about racism as a disadvantage, as this could be viewed as an advantage and a sign of growth. This might be due to the ambivalent feeling as indicated in the clinical presentation in part one.

**Wife 2:** She had a feeling that, at a certain instance, she and her M-R child were discriminated against. She said:

*I wanted to take Lebo to the swimming classes and when I got there I could see that when that lady looked at my child she was not willing to accept him to come and swim there because of the colour. She just said, 'no, there is no space'. I had a feeling that she is looking at me and saying this is one of those who are taking our husbands.*

**Husband 2:** During encounters such as job interviews, he observed different reactions from people because of his black wife, as indicated in the following statement: *"As I said earlier on, I could see that when you go for interviews they want to see the wife and if they see her, I could see their non-verbal reactions and I could tell that the outcome wouldn't be positive"*. This concern should be understood against the backdrop of the type of work or programme (UK volunteer) that this particular participant was engaged in. It is unusual in the normal job interviews for the panel to want to see the applicant's partner.

He also observed different reactions from people when he was looking for property with his black Nigerian girlfriend during the 1960's. He said, *"Other disadvantage is when you are looking for property. When I was a student back home...my Nigerian girlfriend was having problems with accommodation, so we went around looking for accommodation and this was in the 1960's. I often get a good response, but now that it was for her they turned us down. So I become very aware of that problem. I have not experienced that in Africa because I lived mainly in black communities"*. This indicates differential treatment (or discrimination) against people from the out-group as indicated by most participants. This discriminative behaviour, however, occurred in the 1960's within a different socio-political context. This

could suggest that racial classification or discrimination is not unique to the South African context, but rather a general human tendency. What makes South Africa's apartheid era different to segregation and racial hatred that were practised in other countries is the systematic way in which the National Party, which came into power in 1948, formalised it through legislation. An outline of the main pieces of legislation was given in chapter one above.

**Husband 3:** The main disadvantage for him was that the M-R relationship was not accepted. He said, *“Well, obviously the social side of it. How did people in your community, in your family and your culture accept it? That is quite a disadvantage. It does place stress on you and on the other person in the partnership”*.

**Wife 4:** The main disadvantage for her was being treated differently by people because she is in a M-R relationship. She said, *“People tend to think differently about us; black people tend to think that we think we are better than them... they think that I think I'm better than them because I'm married to a white man... and the white women think that we want to be like them”*. This perceived social reaction could be due to the perceptions or general tendency of classifying whites as superior or within the higher position in the social hierarchy, as indicted in subcategory 5.6.4 below. This social reaction could be experienced as a disadvantage and might result in a feeling of being marginalised.

**Wife 5:** She described how the attention she received while visiting the black community resulted in an awkward feeling. She said, *“It felt awkward... and people were looking at me, to see what I was doing and I did not know what to do. I was out of my comfort zone completely”*. She might have received the attention because as the only white person around, she stood out (as wife 4 indicated in subcategory 5.4.5.1). She described the experience as unpleasant. This is clear from her statement: *“So, that was a very difficult day for me”*.

**Wife 6:** Even though her colour might be an advantage as it allows her husband to get certain services, it however seemed to be experienced as a disadvantage on her part, as suggested in the following statement:

*The one thing that is a disadvantage was when we come to stay in this flat, the agency that runs the flat was very conservative and the owner as well... they would rather talk to me about the garage and all the problems than to speak to Nkosi. So, I do most of the phoning around.*

She related other situations where being a white person in a M-R relationship was a disadvantage. She said, *“In silly other situations, like when we go to restaurants, the waiter would ask me, ‘what are you going to have?’, then I would feel I already told him what I’m going to have and I would just look at him to tell them. They normally give the bill to me”*. The other disadvantage for her is being treated differently by people because she is in a M-R relationship. In this context she said:

*One of my friends said to me that I’m lucky to marry a black man because he treats me so nice, if it was a black woman, he wouldn’t treat her the same... black women expressed that I’m privileged because they wouldn’t be treated the same way. It’s a sense of envy... When we spend time with the people, they would treat me better than the person next to me because I’m white.*

The special treatment she received from the black community made her feel annoyed and isolated, as suggested in the following statement:

*I do not like that. If there is a function or unveiling of a tombstone, something that we go to often, the aunty and the grannies will all be sitting in the living room, they would rather let me sit there with them, and not help. That is also annoying sometimes because the only way I can learn is by being involved.*

The general social perceptions about different social hierarchy could also be used to explain this social reaction as in the case of wife 4 above. This could also be interpreted as subtle rejection, as she felt deprived of being a part of the social group or community she is married into.

**Husband 6:** The main disadvantage for him was being treated differently by people because he was in a M-R relationship. He said, *“For me a disadvantage is, as I told you, when people find out that I’m married to a white lady, they tend to treat me differently... and most times it’s like a status thing and they react as if I think I’m trying to be better... That was actually starting to make me very angry”*. He might have felt angry because the perception that he was better than his own people might make him feel marginalised from the people of the in-group as in the case of wife 1 above.

#### **5.4.5.2.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Most participants (that is, 7 out of 10) reported disadvantages that were related to the family, and social reactions to the M-R relationship. Like the reported advantages above, most of the social reactions to M-R relationships were related to the different positions in the social hierarchy of the different racial groups. The above disadvantages also indicate that social comparison results in differential treatment between members of the in-group and out-group.

The descriptions and examples from most of the participants indicated that preferential treatment between different racial groups might be experienced negatively, as it might lead to feelings of rejection, discrimination, being isolated, marginalised, or not being accepted by members of the in-group and/or the out-group.

### **5.4.5.3: Losses due to a M-R relationship**

**Criteria:** Any comment or statements that suggest that being in a M-R relationship has losses will be included in this subcategory.

#### **5.4.5.3.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are verbatim examples of the reported losses experienced due to the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** She indicated that she felt sad because she had to give up her way of eating. She said, *“I do not think I can cook mogodu (tripe) here, he does not want mogodu. He is the one who cooks in this house, so I never get a chance to do that... I think that is the sad part of it”*. She also indicated that she had to give up her way of living, as indicated in the statement: *“So, I wouldn’t say that I have a life that is township-like”*. The change in the way of living could also be due to urbanisation, as suggested in her argument: *“There is a lot of confusion around that right now, but [by] just living in suburbs already you cannot just take your township styles of putting a radio speaker outside, loud music, laughing and sitting under the tree for the whole day”*. This could suggest a loss in the sense of belonging to a community or a loss in the collective way of living, which is one of the unique elements of the African culture (Prozesky, 2002).

She also lost certain relationships and gained new ones, as reflected in the following statement: *“I also lost friends in the process because of their attitude towards our relationship, but we have also gained new friends who can relate to us. He also lost some friends and I do not know why”*. This could be related to the idea of being unconditionally accepted as expressed by husband 2 (in 5.4.5.1 above). This could further suggest that social acceptance is based on conforming to certain social standards, norms or conditions.

**Wife 2:** She was forced to give up her relationship with her parents due to the M-R relationship, as indicated in the following statement:

*At the end I had to choose between him and them, and that was very difficult for me because after all they are my parents. I had no choice but to separate from my parents for him. I packed the rest of my stuff and I left... I have lost the relationship with my parents.*

She also lost her friends because she was uncomfortable with using her mother tongue. This is because she wanted to accommodate her partner. She said:

*Somehow on the way I lost some of my friends because of this... they said that they are feeling uncomfortable if they have to, all the time, communicate in English.*

From this remark it can be clear that her decision not to use her mother tongue created a dilemma for her in that she had to choose between making her partner feel comfortable and alienating her friends.

**Husband 2:** This participant indicated that he had possibly lost opportunities for jobs due to the M-R relationship. He said, *“I could see that when you go for interviews they want to see the wife and if they see her, I could see their non-verbal reactions and I could tell that the outcome wouldn’t be positive”*. He was, however, willing to give up the job opportunity because the work context did not seem to approve of his M-R relationship and was described as an indication of possible future rejection. This is clear from the following statement:

*I didn’t care if I do not get the job because I did not want to work with people like that. That for me was like an introduction to the kind of life I would have if I take the job.*

He also reported a sense of loss and hurt due to the rejection from his partner’s family, as suggested by the following statement:

*In this relationship there was nothing that they asked from me because her parents wanted nothing to do with us. I still feel angry towards them, the way they reacted towards our relationship.*

The sense of loss and hurt could be due to the feeling that he was denied the chance to connect with her partner's family as indicated in the statement:

*In my previous marriage there were some marriage rituals that I had to perform to connect her ancestors to mine, and I did only the modified version of it.*

As indicated in subcategory 5.4.3.3 above, marriage in the African context involves a connection between families (including the dead family members) through rituals.

**Wife 3:** She described her sense of loss thus:

*I am missing the community or communal lives that we black people have, being a part of the community, the church, my friends, being at a soccer match or at a park where it's full. When he is around we spend time together in an isolated manner. I also miss eating my African food, merogo, megodu and things like that... The only thing that worries me sometimes is the feeling that I am losing my culture.*

The culture described in the examples reflects a collective African way of living which seems different from the western one, which is individualist.

**Husband 3:** He gave up the chance to inherit their family register as the family name carrier according to their family tradition (described in subcategory 5.4.3.3 above). He said, "So, I said to him: Okay, if he doesn't want me to inherit that bible he is welcome to give it to my brother one day, and then to my brother's child". For their future M-R children, this could imply a loss of the approved chance to inherit the family name. He was, however, willing to give up and defy the family tradition and give his children his family

name without the consent of his family, as reflected in this statement: *“I am going to be honest with you. I can give my children my name if I want to. It is not for anybody to decide. If I want to give my child my name I will do it”*. As much as he could decide to give his children his family name, this would not be approved by his family.

**Wife 4:** She indicated that the mother of her husband’s friend refused to meet her and completely rejected her. She recalled: *“She told her son that she does not want to meet me, [but] that my husband can come visit but not with me. She completely refused to meet me. Your son’s best friend’s wife, and she refuse to meet me”*.

**Wife 5:** She lost her relationship with some family members. She said, *“My cousin from my father’s side completely rejected me and he said I must not even come to his house”*. Her father, however, decided to maintain the relationship with her, but rejected the M-R relationship. On this point she said:

*My father on the other hand said that I am his daughter, he doesn’t want to lose me... he just wants our relationship as father and daughter to remain the same and that I must be able to confide in him. Even though when I would go visit my father he would never ask, ‘So how is Duma’?*

Even though she appreciated her father’s acceptance she hoped for some kind of acknowledgement or concern about her partner, as suggested in the following statement: *“He just acted as if he [that is, Duma] is non-existent”*. This lack of acknowledgement or acceptance of the relationship was an unpleasant experience for both of them, as suggested in the statement: *“One of the things that bothered him was the fact that he is not welcomed into my family”*.

There seemed to be a sense of loss of a valuable relationship on her part, as indicated in the statement: *“Therefore, he doesn’t take me to his house, I have never had a cup of tea at his house, even though I’m welcomed in his house”*.

She is deprived a chance to be with her family-in-law, which is something she values and wishes to have, by her partner because he was not welcome in her family.

**Wife 6:** She lost a valuable relationship with her father, a relationship which she had worked very hard to rebuild, as indicated in her statement:

*It was very difficult because before, as I told you, he is a very strange person, we did not have such a great relationship, but when all this thing with Nkosi started, we were actually getting closer to each other. That is why it was so much harder for me to lose that relationship, because I have worked hard on it.*

The rejection by her father has resulted in a feeling of emptiness, a lack of peace and a sense of disconnection. All these are suggested in the following statement:

*It is important to get your dad's approval... I miss to have a relationship with him because he is still my dad. I miss having the peace between us like it used to be. We used to have some relationship, but now it's all gone. I don't even know if I would see him in town, how I would react towards him, that is still a mystery. I have stayed here almost 4 years and I have never seen him anywhere.*

**Husband 6:** He lamented the loss of a way of living and particular ways of expressing his emotions. He said, *"I do sometimes miss that township mix, and when I go home, I would talk like that with my nephew. It's not an easy thing"*.

#### **5.4.5.3.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Most participants (6 out of 10) reported that they lost valuable relationships either with friends, or family members because of their M-R relationships. The rejection by society or family, and the subsequent loss of the valuable

relationships, was experienced as emotionally hurtful or unpleasant by most participants and their partners. Johnson and Warren (1994) indicate that social and family reactions towards M-R couples are often so strong and tend to result in families been torn apart, loved ones lost forever, and immeasurable hurt inflicted on M-R couples.

Other participants (6 out of 10) reported that they lost certain cultural ways of doing things, such as, ways of eating, talking, community, collective existence, family tradition, and so forth. Husband 3 possibly lost an inheritance to a family bible (that is, a traditional way of acknowledging the first-born sons of his family lineage). Husband 2 lost a chance to participate in the family ritual to connect with his new family, which he described as hurtful. The loss of possible job opportunities did not seem to bother him much.

All the described losses indicate, to a certain extent, the effect of not complying with the prescribed norms of the family or social group. This idea could also be related to the argument that social acceptance is based on the fulfilment of certain socially acceptable conditions like marrying within the in-group. Marrying people of the out-group, as indicated above, could result in the sense of disconnection, particularly from one's way of living, community, way of eating and communicating. This has the effect of creating a sense of not belonging with the people of the in-group, and consequently threatening one's group membership.

Sharing a certain language or way of communicating seems to be one of the ways in which group membership was expressed and defined. Louw-Potgieter and Giles (1987) identify language as a particularly important dimension of ethnic identity. Scherer and Giles (1979) indicate that our speech and language contain social markers, such as language varieties and speech styles, which are indicative of the social groups we belong to. These language challenges, differences and categorizations will be discussed in the next subcategory.

#### **5.4.5.4: Language as an important challenge for M-R couples**

**Criteria:** Any comment or statements that suggest that language is a challenge for M-R couples will be included in this subcategory.

##### **5.4.5.4.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are verbatim examples of the experienced language challenges within the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** She indicated that when her partner was with his friends, she could not relate to their language and way of doing things. She said, *“The language is the big issue for me. In terms of socializing I do not know how to socialize in English and when his friends are here, I just cannot relate to that kind of language and the way they do things”*. Being unable to relate to their language could result in feelings of discomfort and not belonging with people of the social group, as indicated by the statement: *“I just feel odd and uncomfortable. And to tell you the truth I feel like I don’t belong because I grew up in a different environment from them”*. Depending on the nature of the relationship, especially considering the element of trust, not relating to someone’s language could result in feelings of dissatisfaction, suspicions, and marginalisation, as suggested by the following statement:

*He does not feel out and he always says you can speak your language...I also speak on the phone with my friend for hours using my own language and he never complained about it. I think there is a lot of trust in this relationship, because he will never question or suspect that I was talking bad about him [with] my friend or anybody.*

**Husband 1:** His inability to understand his partner’s language seems to be the main challenge for him, as indicated in the following statement: *“The only*

*thing that irritates me is about the language. I am struggling, this language thing, the Sotho is so beyond anything I can understand and I am struggling with it. I am becoming very conscious that when her friends are here they talk Sotho, I find that irritating*". The fact that he could not speak or relate to their language is a cause for embarrassment and disappointment on his part, as indicated in the following statement:

*I mean irritating more from my point of view because I feel embarrassed that I cannot speak the language...I am actually disappointed with myself. When we went to spend Christmas with Thebe's family in Soweto, her grandparents, her sister, her mother and the teenage girl and about five or six people in the family and because of me they all had to speak English. Her grandparents are old, and their English is bad, and sometimes they will speak Afrikaans to me. Oh, that feeling is awkward.*

He seems to be in a dilemma in the sense that if people speak Sotho, he feels irritated and embarrassed that he cannot relate to what is being said, and on the other hand if efforts are made to accommodate him, he feels even more embarrassed and disappointed.

**Wife 2:** She indicated that, not being in a position to express herself in her own language was frustrating. She said:

*Sometimes you want to communicate something deeper in your own language or share a joke, that one is a disadvantage and something that can create a serious frustration... I would wish I could tell him in my language how much I love him. Sometimes I will say it because I want to say it. Just the mere fact that I said it in my language is satisfying to me but I will translate for him.*

They seem to share the same frustration with regard to their language differences, as indicated in the following statement:

*He sometimes watch[es] this programme where they make British jokes and it frustrate me sometimes... I usually tell him that this is frustrating and he usually tells me that he feels the same way when we speak in my Sotho...sometimes when we are angry at each other, I speak to him in Sotho and he would speak to me in French.*

Not relating to someone's language could result in a feeling of suspicion, as suggested by the following statement: *"When I am with my friend I compromise and speak in English, otherwise he will think we are gossiping about him"*.

**Husband 2:** He indicated that being unable to understand what was said was frustrating and that he committed himself to learning the language. He said:

*When I first met her I was willing to learn her language and it was because it was more like a lack and it was reducing the social interactions... It was frustrating not being able to understand anything that is said when she is with her friends. I tried to look for good books to learn but that was not helpful.*

The inability to speak or relate to each other's language led to serious disappointment, as indicated in the following statement: *"It's really disappointing that I couldn't learn the language. I know a few lines, like greeting and some comments"*. Depending on the nature of the relationship, failure to relate to someone's language could result in feelings of suspicion, exclusion or isolation, as suggested in this comment: *"I sensed that she didn't want me to. I think she wanted to keep that privacy when she was talking to her family"*. This feeling of being deliberately excluded or being suspicious could be due to the rejection and hurt he experienced from his partner's family. The statement above could also be used to indicate how language can be used as a tool to exclude or discriminate against people of the out-group.

**Husband 3:** His view is that failure to understand what is said is an unpleasant experience. He remarked that *"it just makes it easier if you know*

*what they are talking about... I do not like it".* Being unable to relate to their language could result in feelings of discomfort and not fitting with people of the social group. This is suggested in the following statement: *"I feel uncomfortable because I do not know, do I really fit in with the situation"*. He committed himself to learning the language, but she was not willing to teach him. He said, *"She doesn't want to teach me her language because she says I will not be able to pronounce the words"*. He indicated that his wife could speak his language and that he was willing to teach her to master it, as indicated in this statement: *"She knows Afrikaans quite well. She understands it... and I also try to teach her so that she can master it"*.

**Wife 4:** She pointed out that they did not have any challenges with regard to language because they shared the same language. She said, *"He is South African, but more from a British origin and we both speak only English"*.

**Wife 5:** She felt that she was deliberately excluded from her partner's people. She made this observation: *"They would immediately start speaking to him in their own language and I wouldn't understand"*. The exclusion and her inability to understand their language resulted in a feeling of anger. What mostly made her angry was that she made an effort to accommodate him and make sure that he did not feel left out when they were with her people. She put it thus: *"That makes me angry because if I'm amongst Afrikaans people I speak English to them so that he can hear what we are saying and he does not feel left out"*.

Her partner explained that using a different language might threaten his group membership and result in him being rejected by people of the in-group, as suggested in the following statement:

*Sometime he speaks to his people and I do not understand what is said. He explained to me that, he is doing it because he does not want them to think that he thinks that he is better than them because he is with a white girl... I think he is very scared that black people might think*

*that he is not one of them, he has a very strong partisanship, and he fears that he might be rejected by his people.*

**Wife 6:** She described the language difference as a huge barrier for her. She said, *“It feels like you are limited in a way...That was not nice at all...the language issue is a huge barrier, huge...A lot of times the kids would start speaking to me, with excitement, I often do not even hear what they are saying, and we would be in a communication gap”*. She was, however, not willing to learn her partner’s language because she did not want to lose her identity. In this context, she said, *“If I speak in English already, which is not my mother language, why must I speak Zulu to you as well, because why don’t you speak Afrikaans to me because that’s where I come from. It’s a very stubborn way of thinking about it and it’s not right...somehow I try to hold on to that for as long as I could, because I don’t want to lose myself”*. This statement indicates how language is used to define the ‘self’ or social identity as suggested by the social constructionist perspective.

**Husband 6:** He was frustrated by the language differences. This became clear when he said, *“The only thing that has changed or sometimes frustrate is my language”*. He was aware of his people’s unwillingness to accommodate other people or use another language. In this light he said, *“When we are sitting and talking, you know the Zulus, they wouldn’t want to speak English, and that frustrates me, I’ll feel like boxing someone”*. The effect of the inability to understand a language could result in one feeling uncomfortable, and not fitting with people of the social group. In respect of husband 6, he said:

*It is not comfortable when we speak in Zulu and she is there not even understanding what is said...when we had to decide where we are going to stay, it wouldn’t be easy to stay in a township, because she would feel out.*

This shows that he understands the negative feeling or difficulty of using a different language at all times, even though he is at a point where he is

already fluent in English. He is not selfish, but rather sympathetic to someone who finds himself/herself in such a situation.

#### **5.4.5.4.2 *Integrated discussions and interpretations***

Most participants (that is, 8 out of 10) described language as a frustrating challenge in their M-R relationships and social settings. What seemed frustrating for most participants was the inability to understand and relate to people from their partners' group, and also to their ways of doing things. This indicates how language was used in social contexts or settings to co-create shared meanings. The social constructionist theory argues that ideas, beliefs and memories emerge in social exchanges through language (Hoffman, 1990).

Reality, according to the social constructionist perspective, is mirrored in language or discourse. Being unable to relate, understand and/or participate in the discourse results in one being unable to share and co-create meanings within a specific social context. Wives 1 and 2 indicated how language can be used to express deeper feelings and experiences that could only be understood within a specific social context.

Language; or the inability to understand, relate or participate, was also described as having the potential to make the partner feel isolated or left out in different social settings or groups. This appeared to be the case with most participants (that is, 6 out of 10). Sharing a certain language, on the other hand, seems to bring a sense of belonging with that social group. Husband 5 and wife 6 reported that holding on to their languages gave them a sense of holding on to their group membership and their social identity. For husband 5 (as reported by his partner) giving up his language might threaten his group membership and result in him being rejected by people of the in-group.

According to Tajfel (1981), social categorization is a tendency by individuals to divide their world into distinct groups or categories that enable them to

locate themselves in society. Through this process, people are categorized as either being in the in-group or out- group (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Sharing a language is one of the commonly used categories, which include race, age, class, sex and religion.

For husbands 2 and 6, as well as wife 5, language was deliberately used in certain social contexts to exclude them or their partners, with husband 6 as the case in point. This suggests that language categorization or classification could result in discrimination between members of the in-group and out-group. Depending on the nature of the M-R relationship, being deliberately excluded could result in feelings of suspicion and mistrust between members of the in-group and out-group. Wife 1 indicated that she could speak for hours on the phone using her language, and her partner was comfortable with it, because there was trust in their relationship. Wife 2, however, accommodated her partner by using his language to avoid a feeling of suspicion that she gossiped about him. Husband 2, on the other hand, felt that he was deliberately excluded because she (his wife) wanted to maintain privacy with her family. The suspicion and possible mistrust could be due to the knowledge that her family wanted nothing to do with him (as indicated in 5.4.3.3 above).

There seems to be a relationship between the issue of trust and the use of a different language. In a relationship of trust, the use of a different language does not bring negative feelings. Dlukulu (2000) indicates that in a non-trusting relationship (for example, a relationship between black and white in the apartheid South African context) the use of a different language brings negative feelings and could be experienced as having an isolating effect.

Husbands 1 and 2 were embarrassed by the fact that efforts needed to be made to accommodate them when they were with their partners' families or friends. Husbands 1, 2 and 3 indicated the need to learn their partners' languages. For husbands 1 and 2, learning the language of their partners could be viewed as a way of coping with their feelings of embarrassment. There was no need for all the black participants to learn the languages of their partners as, to a certain extent, they could relate to, or participate in their

partners' language. Some of the language challenges for most black participants, particularly wives 1 and 2; and husbands 5 and 6, seemed to be related to the sad feelings of being disconnected from their way of expressing themselves, or their partners not being able to relate to that specific way of expressing themselves. Wives 3 and 4 did not seem to have language as a challenge because they shared the same language with their partners. Wife 3 (as reported by her husband) was very fluent in Afrikaans and was not willing to teach her husband Sotho.

The challenges and difficulty in dealing with the above language differences (or language categories) indicate how we, according to the social constructionist views, through language co-create who we are, construct our reality, where we belong and our identities. This confirms the belief that reality and identities are socially constructed through language. Except for issues of cultural identity, M-R couples do not have racial identity challenges (as indicated in 5.4.4.4 above). This might be due to the fact that by the time they get involved with each other their identities are already developed. M-R children might experience challenges relating to identity construction as they belong to both categories and still have to go through the phases of identity development. The next subcategory deals with concerns about M-R children; specifically about their identity, language, racial classification and culture, as constructed by their parents and families.

#### **5.4.6: Concerns about M-R children**

**Criteria:** Any comment or statements that suggest that it is a concern about children of M-R couples will be included in this subcategory. This will include concerns about the children's racial identity, language usage, being discriminated against and/or the effect of social reactions on their development.

#### **5.4.6.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are verbatim examples of the expressed concerns about children of M-R couples:

**Wife 1:** She hoped that her partner's family would get more involved with them (the partners) after they had children. This concern is evident in the following remark: *"Maybe it is because we do not have kids that we share, so is kind of distant, maybe that will get his parent involved with us. It is still a distant relationship with them but it is good"*.

**Husband 1:** He seemed concerned that his parents might have a problem with having coloured grandchildren, as indicated in the following statement: *"No, deep down, I think they do not have issues about race. I think maybe they might have issues if they have to have coloured grandchildren"*.

**Wife 2:** She seemed to have a problem with her child being classified as coloured; and she re-constructed the child's identity as a mixture of black and white. This is what she said in that regard: *"I wouldn't want to call my son a coloured. He is a mixture of black and white"*. It is a socially acceptable practice for children to take their father's name and cultural identity, but parents of M-R children seem to have a problem even with processes like the child's identity and name, as indicated in the following statement: *"Maybe when he grows up he might identify with his father, he has his father's name ...I want him to know my language as well as English. I want him to be raised in a mixed culture"*. This problem could be related to the present social categorisation which does not accommodate M-R children. It leaves M-R parents with the burden of constructing, reconstructing or even defending their children's racial classification and identity. She committed herself to raising her son in a way that would enable him to cope with the possible social disapproval. She expressed this commitment thus:

*I also want to raise my son in a positive way. Once he is able to talk, I want to help him to be able to answer all these questions when people ask him without feeling embarrassed or shy. He should be ready.*

**Husband 2:** He hoped that their child could be exposed to both languages equally. He said, *“I only hope that the child can be exposed to both languages because there is a belief that a child has to learn first the mother’s language and in our case I hope he learn both equally”*. According to the social constructionist perspective, reality is believed to be mirrored in language, and this parent’s wish could therefore be interpreted as a wish for their son to be exposed and be part of both realities.

**Wife 3:** This participant’s mother seemed concerned about her having M-R children. She expressed this point thus: *“My mother said ‘why are you marrying a white person, so you also don’t want to have children?’ ”*. It was not clear why her mother was concerned about her having M-R children. Wife 3, however, believes that having children with someone should depend on love, rather than on their racial category. In this respect she made the following statement:

*I said to her that I will have children and also told her that it does not mean that when you are dating a different race person you cannot have children. I told her that this is the person I love and I will have children with him.*

This discussion indicates how a M-R relationship might go against socially constructed norms.

**Husband 3:** His father was concerned about the racial classifications of his son’s M-R children. This is evident from the following statements:

*My father said to me ... ‘What if you are going to have children? Where are those children going to fit in? What are they? Are they black*

*or are they white? What are they? How are you going to explain to them that the mother is black and you are white? And things like that'.*

This indicates how M-R relationships and their M-R children challenge the existing in-group and out-group social categories. Husband 3 believed that his M-R family and the environment in which his M-R children would be growing up had the potential to change their perceptions about racism. He said, *"If it happens that I have children one day, they will grow up with the same perception that racism is wrong, and I just think that if you can grow up in a house where they can see the father and the mother love each other, I don't think that there will be any problem"*. This implies that racial categorisation and the resulting racism is socially constructed within a specific social or family context.

**Wife 4:** She wished that she could be able to enlighten her children about racial issues and identity, as indicated in the following statement: *"If I have to have children, I hope I will be able to enlighten them in such a way that they do not suffer these racial issues and identity"*. Coming from the Nigerian context, her wish to enlighten her future M-R children might have been motivated by the shock experienced from the prevalence of racism and racial issues within the South African context (as indicated in 5.4.2 above).

**Wife 5:** From what this participant said it would appear that there was a concern from both partners, and other people, about the racial classification of M-R children. This is evident from the following statements:

*One question that I get very often is, 'What if you get a child, what's is the child going to be?' Actually that's one of the discussions Duma and I had when we started this relationship, what if we have a child together, what are we going to call the child? Is it going to be black, white or coloured?*

These concerns suggest that there is no specific satisfactory category for M-R children in the South African context, and that their parents would have to decide on what classification to give their child. She added the following:

*It's is still something we often talk about. He says we are going to have a coloured and I say no we just going to have a child... It bothered me at the beginning because I thought other children would tease my child and ask him questions like, 'who are you? Are you coloured, black or white?' Of course, he would not be coloured because coloured is a race on its own in South Africa.*

She seemed concerned about the effect of social discrimination on her children, should she have any. In this respect she made this remark:

*Maybe it would worry me if I had to have a child and someone had to discriminate against my child, then it would bother me ... I think our child would have the best of both. I hope the balance will be there and I hope that the people will see my child for who he is.*

**Wife 6:** This participant's mother was concerned about the identity of her children. In this regard she (the participant) said, *"My mother was also concerned about how the kids are going to look like"*. It seems she was also concerned about the identity of her children, but being pregnant then, she was more concerned about the social reactions to her and her child. She said:

*Now that I'm pregnant, I'm wondering how life is going to be like for me walking with a coloured baby on the street. I will cross that bridge when I get to it... I have made peace with the idea of having a child. I'm just concerned, or it crosses my mind often, how the community is going to react to us now.*

**Husband 6:** He needed information that will help him in raising their child. He asked, *"Do you have information regarding bringing up the children of this kind of a marriage. You know that normally when children are born they take*

*their father's side or surname. How do you up bring your children in a mixed race marriage?"* This suggests that M-R relationships and children from such relationships are not common. Unlike in same-race marriages where children naturally take their father's name and identity, within M-R families such processes are followed by contemplation or conscious decision.

#### **5.4.6.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Almost all participants (9 out of 10) seemed concerned about the racial identity, language and effect of the society on their children. Their concerns seemed to be around the issue of racial classification of the children or grandchildren. Previous research results also indicate that the racial classification of M-R children is a concern for many M-R parents and societies (Sowards, 1993). Some parents accepted the socially constructed racial categorization or classification of their children as 'coloured', which is an automatic classification in South Africa, since there is no category for 'mixed-race'. Other parents re-constructed their children's racial classification and categorizations as 'mixed-race' or no classification at all. This indicates that social categories are unstable differentiations with blurred boundaries which do not necessarily reflect similarities of referents. Louw-Potgieter and Giles (1987) point out how people with the same social category; for instance, the Afrikaner social category, despite considerable similarities, perceived the content of that social category differently.

Some of the parents, specifically husbands 2 and 3; and wives 2 and 5, had a wish that their children could have the best of both worlds, especially in terms of both language and culture. As indicated above (in subcategory 5.4.5.4), language and social categorization seem to be related. Louw-Potgieter and Giles (1987) further make the point that language is a particularly important dimension of ethnic identity.

Some participants, especially wives 2, 4, 5 and 6, as well as husband 6, were concerned about the possible discrimination their children could face. They made a commitment that they would enlighten, educate, protect and

encourage their children in order to prepare them for the possible negative social reactions. Survey results indicate that the greatest concern of M-R parents was how to meet the needs of their children, which involved helping the M-R child to deal with racism and racial discrimination (Prinzing & Prinzing, 1991).

The challenges and questions asked regarding the racial identity and classification of M-R children suggest that these children are not accommodated within the existing social context. Unlike in same-race marriages, where the children naturally take their father's name and identity, in M-R families such processes are followed by conscious decision and sometimes negotiation.

Wife 1 hoped to have an improved relationship with her partner's family once they had children. Johnson and Warren (1994) state that family involvement and acceptance after a child is born are common. They, however, indicate that the initial disapproval by the family seems to be motivated by the hope that the M-R relationship would not continue and thus no children would be born from such a relationship.

Previous research results indicate that the family's disapproval is more intense before the child is born and reduces thereafter, or after the marriage, because they are actually resisting the mixing of blood between a white person and a black person, as this would result in a permanent relationship between the two races (Johnson & Warren, 1994; Spickard, 1989). St Jean (1998) indicates that white people expressed strong reservations to interracial marriages and some of the negative comments towards the M-R children were intended to trigger fear in the partners once they pondered the possible penalties for disturbing the existing racial order.

## 5.5 Category 2: Talking about the M-R relationship

### 5.5.1: Level of difficulty in talking about the M-R relationship

**Criteria:** Any comment or statements that suggest that talking about the M-R relationship was difficult and/or not difficult will be included in this subcategory.

#### 5.5.1.1 *Descriptions and examples*

The following are the discussions and verbatim examples of the reported difficulty levels experienced in talking about the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** For this participant it was not difficult to talk about the relationship, but it was for her partner. She said:

*So, talking about it really makes me feel proud ...He took some time to tell them that we are going out. I remember there was a time he said that he has to rehearse how he was going to tell them ...He couldn't just imagine himself telling his parents that I am black.*

The thing that made it difficult for him to tell his parents was the knowledge about their attitude towards black people, as suggested in the following statement:

*It was very discouraging for him to tell them and he was depressed. Knowing that his father is from that old school of thought, he is a bit racist, he believes certain things about blacks, now having to tell him he is going out with a black woman was very difficult for him... He decided to tell them after 6 months of going out.*

This indicates how difficult it may be to relinquish established schema, and also to imagine a significant person having to relinquish old internalized stereotypes.

**Husband 1:** He did not keep the relationship secret. He said, *“I told all my karate friends, my colleagues... Right from the beginning or when there is an opportunity I invite Thebe to come and watch me play karate. I never kept it a secret”*. It seems as if it was easier to tell his friends than his parents, because he expected them (his parents) to disapprove of the relationship.

**Wife 2:** It took some time for her to talk about her relationship to anybody. She said:

*In the beginning nobody knew about it. I didn't even tell my sister. It was after 2 years that I told my friends... I even belonged to a women's club and it was not easy to introduce him to them... we had a get together and I told them I was going to bring my boyfriend. I told them that he is white and a little bit old but I am grateful to have him as part of my life.*

The anticipated disapproval made telling her sister and friends difficult, as indicated in the following statement: *“I thought they would be shocked or my sisters would reject me”*. It took her even much longer for her to tell her parents about the relationship and her intention to have a child, as indicated in the following statement: *“One day I went home and as I was talking to my mom, I told her that I really love this man and we are even planning to have children”*. Their child was only 3 years old when this interview took place, and they had been in the relationship for 11 years. This suggests that it took her, more or less, 7 years before telling her parents how she felt about her partner.

**Wife 3:** She took some time to tell her mother about the relationship, as indicated in the following statement: *“My brother was not that much a problem, but my mom... I was really worried about her reaction”*. The fear of rejection, as well as the concern that she might stop her from marrying him might have led to the delay in telling her about the M-R relationship and engagement. She expressed this view thus: *“I only told my mom after I was engaged with him”*.

There were, however, certain people she found easier to talk to. According to her: *“It was easier to talk to my friends, sister and aunt, but some students at campus... it was difficult to talk to them”*. Even though it was easier to talk to her friends, she took some time to tell them about the relationship. She said, *“I told my friends one month after going out with him”*. The delay in telling her friends might have been due to the fear of rejection, as indicated in the following statement: *“I explained to them my situation and asked them not to reject me or treat me somehow. I also told them that I hope we could continue with our friendship like we used to”*.

**Husband 3:** He found it difficult to tell his parents about the relationship. He said, *“Well, at first. For the first few months ... because one is uncertain, you keep it a secret... but at one point when it started to get serious I started to tell my family. I first told my mother and my father the other night”*. The difficulty in telling them was due to the knowledge that his parents were racist and he anticipated rejection. He put it thus:

*I expected the worst... I was thinking that maybe my father was going to disown me... he is extremely racist. He was far right in the political groups... he was still shouting sometimes at me. Then I just didn't say anything about the relationship. I kept it silent. When I phoned Fikile, I just go to the garage and warned her that there were some problems...I didn't tell them about the engagement, but I just knew that if I just got engaged, I will get them to get used to it.*

**Wife 4:** She did not have a problem with talking about her relationship, but indicated that her friend who was in a mixed-race relationship found it difficult to talk about their relationship due to the fear of dividing their family. She said:

*My experience is different. I hear from some of my South African friends in mixed-race relationships that their main challenge is their nuclear families, like I told you about that Afrikaans-speaking male friend of mine that is going out with the black Nigerian woman. He*

*wouldn't talk about his relationship because of the fear of dividing his family.*

The emphases on the family and fear of dividing the family might indicate how strongly a M-R relationship can affect the family. Bringing someone from a different social category threatens the stability of the family system.

**Wife 5:** It took some time for her to tell her family about their relationship. On this point, she said, *“For the first year and a half of our relationship my family didn't know about him... and I actually didn't even tell them because it was an aunt of mine, who I confided in, that phoned my father and asked him if he knew that his daughter was seeing a black man”*. It seemed she wanted to be sure about the relationship before telling her family. This is suggested by the following statement: *“I didn't want to rock the boat for something that I didn't know if we were going to be together for the rest of our lives or not. I wanted to see where this relationship was going”*. The difficulty in telling her family might have been due to the knowledge that her family was conservative and that she feared creating problems. In this regard she said the following: *“I did not want to cause an unnecessary pain... I come from a very conservative family. I did not want to create problems”*. She decided to keep the relationship secret because of the possible division that it might cause in her family. She added:

*My grandfather doesn't know. If he did, he would disinherit me... he is so strong in his feelings towards blacks that it would cause major disruption in the family. My father might stand up for me and my grandfather may even disown my father, his own son.*

It would appear that the family's reaction is influenced by prejudice towards members of the out-group.

**Wife 6:** It was difficult for her to tell her father about the M-R relationship. She said, *“I phone him to tell him that now I'm dating someone, I was afraid to tell*

*him what Nkosi's surname was or that he is black because I knew that he was going to immediately cut him off". She anticipated disapproval from her father because she observed how her father reacted to her sister's M-R relationship, as indicated in the following statement: "I knew how he felt about my sister being married to Hendrick". She nevertheless expected that her boss would accept the M-R relationship because he seemed liberal. In this context, she said:*

*The first day that I started at that work, I told my boss that I'm going out with a black man because I didn't want him to get surprised when my boyfriend came to fetch me from work, or they chase him from the premises or something like that. He seemed liberal, he could speak Zulu, and he lived in a farm with black people.*

The anticipated positive reaction from the boss might have been based on the belief that the extended contact he had with people from the other racial group might have resulted in the reduction of his prejudice towards members of that group.

### **5.5.1.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Most participants (6 out of 10, and wife 4's friend) indicated that it was difficult to tell their family members, friends and co-workers about the M-R relationship. It was more difficult to tell their parents than friends about the M-R relationship.

The expressed difficulty in telling members of their families and friends was related to the knowledge about their prejudice and/or racism towards members of the out-group; hence they expected that they would be rejected or disowned for being in a M-R relationship. Most participants felt that it was unimaginable for some of their family members, mostly their fathers, to discard their old stereotypes and schemas about people of the out-group.

Spears, Oakes, Ellemers & Haslam (1997) argue that social categorization and stereotyping are essential and inevitable features of social perception and judgment. The difficulties of the participants in talking about their M-R relationship seemed to be based on shared perceptions and beliefs about people of the out-group. According to the authors, once the 'self' is socially defined and a group is part of the self, it becomes easier to consider stereotyping as part of the shared group life, of which we ourselves are a part in the social context.

The difficulty and delay in talking about the M-R relationship was also related to the possible instability that the M-R relationship might create in the family and social system. Most participants indicated that it was initially difficult to talk about the M-R relationship as doing so might result in them being rejected, creating family problems, divisions, disruptions and pain. The introduction of the person from a different social category threatened the family relations or previously stable relationships and, to a certain extent, required dissolving or relinquishing old internalized stereotypes about the people of that social category. This emphasis on the family indicates the effect that the M-R relationship has, or might have, on the stability of the family and social system.

For some of the participants (that is, husband 1, as reported by his wife, husband 3; and wives 5 and 6), knowledge about the racial attitude and stereotype of their family members or friends seems to be related to the level of difficulty experienced in telling their families about the M-R relationship. Knowledge about a person's views or background influences the anticipated reaction from them. The knowledge that parents or friends are conservative, racist or prejudiced against members of the out-group resulted in more delay and difficulty in talking openly about the M-R relationship. On the contrary the knowledge that parents or friends are liberal resulted in less delay and difficulty in talking openly about it. For those participants who did not have a close relationship with their parents; for example husband 1 and wives 2 and 3, the inability to predict the parents' reaction resulted in the delay and difficulty in disclosing the M-R relationship.

Some of the participants, especially husband 1, and wives 2, 3 and 6, the period between preparing to disclose the M-R relationship to their parents or friends, and the actual disclosure of the relationship was characterized by constant worry about their possible reactions. This implies that even though they made individual choices, they still valued parental and/or social approval.

### **5.5.2: The effect of talking about the M-R relationship**

**Criteria:** Any comment or report of the effect of talking about the M-R relationship will be included in this subcategory.

#### **5.5.2.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are the discussions and verbatim examples of the reported effects of talking about the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** She derived a sense of pride when she talked about her relationship. She said, *“So, talking about it really makes me feel proud and it helps a lot because people have their own stereotypes about mixed-race relationships”*. The sense of pride could be due to the belief that she had broken free from the racial stereotypes, as indicated in subcategory 5.4.4.3 above.

**Husband 1:** He indicated that he did not feel the need to talk about his relationship. He argued that it was not normal for a man to talk about his love relationship. He said, *“I think women talk more about things like that and men do not talk much about girls and who they wish to go out with. I think it is a gender thing”*.

**Wife 2:** She indicated that despite the fact that other people were shocked she felt very comfortable. This is what she said:

*Everybody was shocked, but I am comfortable with him... My mom was very shocked and told me that according to our culture you shouldn't do that because you are going to upset the ancestors and she will be going against the ancestors (badimo ba tlo ema ka maoto).*

**Wife 3:** She was not certain about her mother's reaction to the M-R relationship. It was only later that she confirmed that she disapproved of the relationship. This she said in the following statement: *"I couldn't tell if she was happy or sad, but when she told my grandparents about the relationship she was against it and she was unhappy that I am marrying a white person"*. Her friends seemed supportive and accepting of the relationship, as indicated in the following statement: *"My friends did not reject me. They were also concerned about how my family will react to this"*.

**Husband 3:** For this participant talking about the relationship resulted in negative reactions from his family. He said, *"They didn't want to listen to me. My father was shouting at me, saying that I am stupid and I am busy making the mistake of my life. 'What do I see in a black woman? Why am I after black women?' "* The relationship was defined by his father as a mistake and an embarrassment for the family. To this effect, he said, *"My father said I may not tell his family that I am engaged to Fikile...he said it is an embarrassment for the family and it will be an embarrassment for the extended family [as well]"*.

**Wife 5:** She indicated that talking about the M-R relationship had negative consequences. She said, *"The whole family just collapsed... the kind of reaction I got from them was exactly what I anticipated... As I told you my mother went into total depression"*. This shows the power of social construction of categories on people, and how, when disrupted, it could affect the whole family system, as indicated in subcategory 5.5.1 above.

**Wife 6:** She indicated that talking about the relationship resulted in the termination of her relationship with her father. She said:

*My father ask me what is Nkosi's surname, I told him, he just kept quiet and he left... he disowned me as well (like he disowned her sister for being in a M-R relationship), he said I'm not welcomed at his house and I must never bring my friends there, and I must not think I will find an open door in his house and heart even if I stay here in Pretoria.*

Her mother's reaction to the M-R relationship seemed positive; and she believes the positive outcome was due to her exposure to her sister's relationship, and the quality of the relationships from the church, as observed from the sister's relationship. She said:

*The nice thing was that my older sister got married to a coloured guy, they stayed in Cape Town and my mother saw their standard and our church standards. She knew the quality of the relationships from this church, and that made a big influence on her.*

#### **5.5.2.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

For most of the participants who talked about their M-R relationships, the experienced family and/or social reactions had an effect on their emotional experience, family relationships or level of resistance towards the M-R relationship. Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995) indicate that after talking about the M-R relationships, some parent-child relationship got terminated, and families were divided, more especially in families where there was strong opposition from some family member/s and acceptance from others. The authors also indicate that rejecting the family member's choice of a different romantic partner in some instances also included 'not to allow the partner into one's house'.

Wives 2, 3, 4 and 6, and husband 3 experienced negative reactions from the family members they told about the M-R relationship. The negative family reactions were followed by comments and/or actions that discouraged the continuation of the relationship. This indicates correlation between the anticipated reaction and the observed reaction since the participants' fear of talking about their M-R relationships was based on the knowledge of the

family members' beliefs about people of the out-group. The correlation in the known prejudice on the part of the parents and the resultant discrimination indicates a strong relationship between the two processes (that is, between prejudice and discrimination).

Wives 1 and 6, and husband 1 (as reported by his wife) experienced positive reactions from their mothers. Husband 1 seemed still concerned about the acceptance of the M-R relationship by his parents and had accepted that in the end this whole matter remained his own responsibility, rather than his parents'. The difficulty in accepting the positive reaction of his parents could be explained as doubt about its sincerity in the sense that there is a discrepancy between the known parental prejudices which did not result in discriminatory reactions.

Several research findings indicate that prejudice and stereotyping do not automatically lead to discrimination due to various personal and social factors (Hogg & Cooper, 2007; Leyens, Yzerbyt & Schadron, 1994; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986 and Dijk, 1987). These authors show that, even the most prejudiced people, in their quest to act in socially desirable manner and in an effort to present a positive image of themselves and their group, will go to great lengths to avoid expressing and enacting their prejudice.

## **5.6 Category 3: Perceived or expected reactions to the M-R relationship**

### **5.6.1 Perceived or expected reactions from family**

**Criteria:** Any perceived or expected reactions from family will be included in this subcategory.

#### **5.6.1.1 *Descriptions and examples***

The following are the discussions and verbatim examples of the perceived or expected reactions from family towards the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** From what she said it seemed both families reacted positively to their M-R relationship because they could see that they were both happy. She said, *“Their initial reaction was acceptance. I think his parents are happy for him because he was never in a relationship where he was happy...My family is happy because they can also see that I am happy”*. The above reactions from the two families indicate a process of de-categorization, where the concern is no longer about the race of the partner but rather their happiness. As much as both families accepted the M-R relationship, the couple seemed to be more in contact with the black family than with the white family, as suggested by the following statement: *“I go to my mother almost every week and she comes here and looks after the kids, but we do not have that relationship with his parents”*. The reason for her not being close to the white family is not clear. It could be due to the idea that the white family is more disapproving of the M-R relationship or that their son (that is, husband 1) was not close to his parents even before the M-R relationship.

**Husband 1:** He was confounded by the fact that his parents reacted positively to the M-R relationship, as indicated in the following statement:

*I think on the other hand, my parents have issues about my relationship but the more we (Thebe and I) talk about it seems as if it is my own issues not about them, because my mom invites us for the braai and she phones and ask about Thebe and the kids. They did not ask anything about my previous girlfriend and she is white.*

The difficulty in accepting that his parents reacted positively to the M-R relationship could be due to all the schemas that he grew up listening to or observing from them, as suggested by the following statement:

*I think it was my own stuff, my upbringing...it was never liberal, we were never liberal, we always stayed on the right side of the political line, I come from a conservative background, so I guess it would be*

*understandable if my parents were involved in the struggle but they were not.*

**Wife 2:** She indicated that initially her family was quiet about the M-R relationship, because it did not affect them that much. She said, *“All along they were quiet about it because it was not affecting them much, but seeing that there was going to be a baby involved, and then they started showing how they feel about it”*. She indicated that her family reacted negatively to the M-R relationship, as clearly captured in the following statement: *“My family reacted negatively...My mom was very shocked and told me that according to our culture you shouldn’t do that because you are going to upset the ancestors and accepting this relationship would be going against the ancestors (badimo ba tlo ema ka maoto)”*. Her father seemed upset about the M-R relationship to a point that he would not even accept a present from her, as indicated in the following statement: *“Sometimes on Fathers Day I would buy something for him but I would give it to my mom. I will discover later on that he never wore the clothes I bought for him or I will see one of my brothers wearing it”*.

**Husband 2:** He indicated that his father initially disapproved of the M-R relationship but later on accepted it. He said, *“My own father accepted it in the end but he said life is difficult in its own, and ask me why would I want to bring more difficulties?”* His mother, brother and cousins, on the other hand, accepted the relationship. His mother was, however, more concerned about how he would treat his future wife, as indicated in the following statement: *“My mother was accepting, she was more worried about my future wife and how I would treat her... My brother was fine. My cousins were also ok”*.

**Wife 3:** It was difficult for her to predict her mother’s reaction, but she (the mother) later confirmed that she disapproved of the M-R relationship, as indicated in the following statement: *“I couldn’t tell if she was happy or sad, but when she told my grandparents about the relationship she said she was against it and that she was unhappy that I am marrying a white”*. She also indicated that both her mother and his (Nagels’) mother later accepted the

relationship. This is apparent from the following remarks: *“His mother is now friendly, she told me that her in-laws did not like her and she committed herself to loving her son’s wives... My mom has a small shop, so one day this guy come and finds Nagel visiting and my mom introduced my partner (that is, Nagel) as mokgonyane (son-in-law)”*. This indicates the process of de-categorisation on the part of both parents.

**Husband 3:** The participant felt that initially his parents disapproved of the M-R relationship, and said, *“My parents said they didn’t want to know anything about this relationship”*. He further indicated that his father was consistent in his rejection of the relationship, while his mother’s reaction changed. He added that his brothers also made peace with it. He put it thus: *“When we got engaged I introduced my family to Fikile. My mother was happy with her, my brothers’ side, they have made peace with it ... but my father said he doesn’t want to know anything about it...he is blocking... my grandmother also doesn’t also accept it”*. He reported that his partner’s mother welcomed him and was more concerned about his love for her daughter, as indicated in the following statement: *“Fikile’s mother has a shop that she is running. And I was sitting there in the house ... she made some apple tart, she gave me some apple tart and coffee and she came in to introduce herself, and did not talk much, she was just asking if I love her daughter”*.

**Wife 4:** As far as this participant was concerned, both families reacted positively to their relationship. She thus had this to say: *“My family loves him... his family is more like mine, very open-minded”*. She also indicated that although his family reacted with shock to the marriage, the shock was really to the idea that he got married, rather than to the race of the person he was married to. This is evident in the following statement: *“They got shocked by the fact that he got married but not that he married a black woman”*

**Wife 5:** As regards Wife 5, her family reacted negatively to the relationship. She said:

*My mother went into total depression and her first reaction was that I'm doing this to hurt her... my mother was very verbal about her feelings towards this relationship... My father on the other hand said that I am his daughter, he doesn't want to lose me, and he cannot say whether it's right or wrong and that he just wants our relationship as father and daughter to remain the same and that I must be able to confide in him.*

Although her father accepted her as his daughter, he did not regard her partner as his son-in-law. This is suggested by this statement: *"Even though when I would go visit my father he would never ask, 'So how is Duma?', and he just acted as if he is non-existent"*. She considered her brother as the only one who accepted the M-R relationship and thus reacted positively. She said, *"The only one in my family who responded positive is my brother because he would ask how he was doing, and my brother is the only one in my family who has met him up to this point"*. Her other family members also reacted negatively, as indicated by the following statement: *"My mother's sister made comments, I don't know what was it but it was not nice. My cousin, from my father's side completely rejected me and he said I must not even come to his house...The strange thing is that I thought he would be liberal and he turned out to be very conservative"*. It appears that her partner's family reacted positively. This is clear from the following comment: *"His mother and I speak on the phone on a regular basis...she loves me, the family loves me, she just wants us to get married...they all welcomed me very good... the feeling I get from the family is a very positive one"*.

**Wife 6:** Her father reacted negatively. This was owing to the fact that:

*He had a very cut-off idea [that]... black people should be with black people and white people should be with white people. So, he disowned me as well... it wasn't nice, because even though I was expecting he was going to be in a certain way, I was hoping to get a different reaction.*

She indicated that both her mother and mother-in-law accepted the M-R relationship positively. She said, *“So they [that is, her mother and sister] come down from Cape Town, they were happy to be here and for the wedding...Nkosi’s mom told me I’m her daughter and her home is also my home”*.

**Husband 6:** He felt disappointed that his future mother- and sister-in-law did not come to this house for their wedding. He said, *“What happen was, my family prepared everything at home, and they were expecting Ronelle’s family to come to my home for the function. At the end we had two functions and they didn’t come to my house...I felt... disappointed, I expected them to come”*. He indicated that the family initially reacted negatively to their M-R relationship, in which respect he remarked: *“Her mom is fine, at the beginning it was very difficult, but now it’s fine”*. It appears that his family reacted positively to his wife, because, as he said, *“When we go to my home, or to my uncles and places like that, they tend to give her first preference simply because she is white”*.

#### **5.6.1.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Most participants reported that the initial reactions of families differed. The white family reacted more negatively, or were more distant, towards the M-R relationship than the black family. Similar findings were reported from earlier South African studies (see Morrall, 2004). The different family reactions could be attributed to the social status of the respective families. Data points to the perception that the white social group was generally perceived as a high-status, while the black one was perceived as low-status. Some studies suggest that high-status groups are more likely to discriminate than low-status groups (Caddick, 1982; Crocker, Thompson, McGraw & Ingerman, 1987).

For some of the participants, specifically wives 1, 3 and 4; and husbands 1, 2 and 3, the subsequent acceptance of the M-R relationship by the parents was followed by the process of de-categorization, whereby the emphasis on the race of their daughter’s, or son’s, partner was replaced with concerns about

their happiness, which included, for example, their son-in-law's ability to love their daughter and be a good husband. This process of de-categorization resulted in both white and black parents referring to a partner from the out-group as either 'daughter-in-law' or 'son-in-law'.

Gaertner, Mann, Murrell and Dovidio (1989) argue that de-categorization and re-categorization are effective cognitive strategies to reduce cognitive dissonance and prejudice. Anastasio, Bachman, Gaertner and Dovidio (1997) assert that de-categorization and re-categorization increase the liking, and attractiveness of the former out-group member. Thus, as Tuner, *et al.* (1987) point out, the attractiveness of an individual is not constant, but varies with in-group membership.

Couple 2 made the point that the black family reacted more negatively than the white family, whereas wife 4 indicated that both her and her partner's families reacted positively. The two white families of husbands 2 and 4 were described as of British origin. The black family that reacted negatively had a strong traditional belief system. Duckitt (1991) used the theory of authoritarian personalities to describe family and social structures which are strongly attracted to authoritarian ideology and are conservative.

The South African society is described as more authoritarian and conservative. Authoritarianism has often been used to account for the high level of anti-black prejudice in South Africa. This finding could be used to explain the perception that being of British origin or liberal might result in less prejudice towards M-R relationship than being of South African origin or being conservative. Several authors have argued that prejudice in everyday life does not necessarily result from authoritarian personality or traits. Duckitt (1990) and Leyens, *et al.* (1994) reveal that high levels of social pressure to conform to social norms (rather than authoritarianism), as well as other situational and socio-cultural factors might lead to high levels of prejudice.

In respect of all the couples, the reaction of the parents' reactions also differed; with the mothers showing a change in their initial reactions faster

than the fathers. The different reactions between men and women within the families point to a system of patriarchy, which is a different form of social categorization in terms of gender. Foster and Nel (1991), postulate that various forms and sites of oppression and control over women include the assumption by males that they have the right to make decisions for women and children.

Boonzaier (2003) concludes that the position of both black and white South African women could be understood as a specific form of power domination. The author argues that patriarchy leads to power differences or hierarchies which are the same across contexts. Foster and Nel (1991) make the observation that within the South African context, black women suffer triple oppression of race, gender and class, while white women suffer gender oppression.

The question of age has brought another dimension to the whole issue of acceptance. In this study, four of the participants indicated that their brothers were the most accepting in the family. This may be attributed to the belief that age is an important determinant of attitude change. Research findings suggest that the younger the person is, the more likely he/she is to display positive attitude change. The older group of people is described as inclined to make less contact with members of out-groups (Mynhardt & Du Toit, 1991). This view may thus explain the difference between the brothers and parents and/or grandparents of the participants in this study. None of the participants reported the reactions of their sisters.

## **5.6.2. Perceived or expected reactions from the society**

**Criteria:** Any perceived or expected reactions from the society will be included in this subcategory.

### **5.6.2.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are descriptions and verbatim examples of the perceived or expected reactions from the society towards the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** She made reference to the attention that their relationship attracted from people. She said, *“I get a lot of attention, people are interested in my relationship and it is quite interesting, even when we go out we get a lot of people looking at us. Even his friends are coming and wanting to know more about me, they are learning a lot”*. She added that people expected them not to be from South Africa, as reflected in the following statement: *“We went to Durban one holiday and when we got there the waitress was asking us if we were from America? People did not expect us to be South Africans”*. The observed reaction and assumption that the M-R couple was not from South Africa could be due to the unfamiliarity of M-R relationships in the South African context, given the historical background of apartheid.

**Husband 1:** For this participant their relationship represented unfamiliarity and the sense of being outside one’s comfort zone. He captures this sentiment thus: *“I think what black and white represent is unfamiliarity, it is not my issue, and it is outside their comfort zone. They don’t understand, they are curious and wonder, a lot of them, I think they are just interested”*. The idea that a M-R relationship could result in feelings of being outside one’s comfort zone, misunderstanding, curiosity, or wonder might portray how social categories are accepted as norms, as well as the difficulties involved in dissolving the socially constructed norms or social categories. However, the participant also derived a great sense of optimism from such reactions. He thus said, *“It brings some hope, in the sense that it proves that it is possible for one of us to live together with one of them”*.

**Wife 2:** The birth of her son brought a lot of social attention and questions. This is what she said in this regard:

*Since my little one was born, when I am in the shops, especially the white people will come and ask, ‘Is this your baby?’ ...They usually ask*

*me, 'Why is he white?'...Some will just look at me and I could see that they are raising questions. I will end up saying to them, 'Look, I didn't steal this baby, he is my baby. His father is white and I am proud of it, so stop looking at me as if I am a thief.*

The reactions from the people might imply that seeing a black woman with a white child was as uncommon as it was unfamiliar. She observed almost similar reactions from black people, which view she expressed thus:

*It happens also when I take a walk with my baby in the afternoon. The black people would ask if this was my 'Mrs.'s child', and they would also ask if the 'Mrs'. allow me to take a walk with the child in the afternoon.*

These also reflect social constructions and categorisations from both racial groups that suggest that black parents should have black children, and white parents should have white children. The implied meaning from the different questions that were asked by people from the different racial groups might suggest mistrust between these racial groups (also discussed in subcategory 5.6.3 below).

**Husband 2:** He observed that people reacted negatively to his first M-R relationship. He said, *"In the first relationship it was more negative or distance ...Some friends of mine refused to come to the wedding".* Both his first and second M-R relationships attracted attention, as indicated by the following statement: *"There were problems when we went to shops and functions, people would take a second look at us or stare at us. I still see that happening again in the shops".* He added that there were different reactions in different areas, as evident in this observation: *"I think it also depends on where you are. People here in Gauteng are different from other parts of the country. People just notice us...I think Pretoria is much less than I expected".* The expectation that the reaction in Pretoria would be more negative than anywhere else might have been influenced by the belief that Pretoria is the

hometown of most Afrikaans-speaking people who are believed to be more racist than other white people living in South Africa.

**Wife 3:** She observed that their relationship attracted attention, but it was difficult to know whether the reaction was genuine or not. She put it thus: *“Sometimes you can see that people are pretending in their reactions. Some just look and say nothing; some usually say, ‘What a fuck is going on here?’ ”*. It could be suggested that, unlike during the previous political context where M-R relationships and marriages were prohibited, in the present political context people cannot openly express their disapproval of, and discrimination against, M-R couples as this could be described as illegal.

**Husband 3:** Although their relationship attracted attention, this did not bother him. He said, *“It is not such a major issue that everybody is staring at you...there was this one woman one day, when we were walking, she froze in her tracks and turned around and looked at us like this!”* These reactions support the notion that M-R relationships are unfamiliar. He went to the extent of making the point that such reactions made him feel unsafe. The following statement is revealing: *“There are some people that if they can [find you] in the street they will beat you for doing that (i.e. being in a M-R relationship)”*. His fears allude to the possibility that some people might be tempted to resist race mixing to a point that they could engage in a physical fight to prevent M-R relationships.

**Wife 4:** Her view was that M-R relationships attracted attention and that an increase in the number of these relationships has resulted in improved or better reactions from people. She said:

*I remember when we got married at the home affairs. People just stared... It is becoming better now than when I first came here, mixed-race couples are more common now, but still you go to the mall you see more couples that are same-race than mixed-race.*

In her observation, she made a general distinction between different reactions and various geographical areas or locations. In this respect, she said, *“I must say I have been lucky because of where I am staying; Johannesburg is better than Pretoria in that respect... Pretoria during about 1997 was very racist”*. She also observed different reactions in people of different educational levels, in which respect she said *“I think it has to do with the level of education of the people you are dealing with, whether black or white. It does not matter where you stay, you will always get different levels of education and that makes a difference in the way people react to you or treat you”*. An interesting point that she further made was that people reacted rather spontaneously or unconsciously to M-R relationships. She said:

*You know sometimes they are not even aware of their own reactions. For example, sometimes [when] you walk with your husband and you just smack his bum and people react with gasp and [expressions] like ‘Oh, my word!’. It’s like they cannot help themselves.*

In addition to the unfamiliarity of M-R relationships, these examples of how people react attest to the difficulty that people experience in dissolving the socially constructed categories. She also indicated that social disapproval of M-R relationships within the South African context was not done openly; and said, *“It was not that much outwardly but very subtle”*. She believed that M-R relationships attracted people’s attention even in Nigeria; but the social reactions there do not, in most cases, involve racial issues. This is articulated in the following statement:

*When I’m in Nigeria with Nelson, one or two people would look at us. The Nigerians are very stupid sometimes; they might look at you and say this woman is a prostitute. In South Africa it will be that plus the black/white issue. We do not have the black/white issue in Nigeria.*

**Wife 5:** The fact that the M-R relationship attracted a great deal of attention concerned her a lot. She said, *“We get a lot of stares and a lot of bad looks”*. As with wife 4, she observed different reactions in different areas, as

suggested by the following statement: *“It depends on the area we are in, for example, when we walk in Rosebank, which is a more multicultural kind of an environment, you have a lot of international people going to Rosebank... we usually do not get any negative reactions... but if we go to the South, we went to the Glen one day [and met], an old white man and lady, the man said to his wife go tell her to leave his hand”*. She also made the suggestion that people of different educational levels react differently, as indicated by the following statement:

*Rosebank is full of intellectual people, people who are busy with themselves, they do not give a damn, whether they see two gay men or two women holding hands, or a black and white person holding hands. So, there we usually do not get any negative reactions, no one will even blink an eye.*

**Wife 6:** She also alluded to the point that the M-R relationship attracted attention from people. She said:

*One week after we started dating, we went to the shop, I was holding his hand, and it was the most embarrassing moment of my life... I think because of the way people reacted. One woman even walked into the shopping door with her trolley because she was staring at us so much.*

The social reactions could be due to the unfamiliarity of M-R relationships. She observed similar reactions even in areas where she did not expect them. In this vein she remarked: *“It wasn’t good the way people reacted, even for Cape Town. The culture of Cape Town as compared to Pretoria is completely different, people are more liberal there than here in Pretoria, more in a happy and holiday mood and here people seem to have this political mood if I can call it that”*. This statement implies that she had anticipated more negative reactions from people in Pretoria due to the prevailing culture and political context there. She also acknowledged that people were not openly expressing their attitudes towards the M-R relationship, due to the changes in the political

context. She said, “So, in terms of the different groups, people are more subtle in their reactions because of the country changing somehow”.

**Husband 6:** A similar position was taken by husband 6 that their relationship attracted a lot of attention. He said, “*The biggest thing is the staring... People are always staring... The one time we were shopping and there was an old lady pushing a trolley but she was staring so much that she almost went through a window*”. He also related a number of incidents where people reacted in a manner that indicated how race-mixing was perceived as uncommon. He put it thus:

*Did Ronelle tell you how people treat her? One time we went to Home Affairs to change her surname. On the file they just put your surname, so the guy saw the surname and looked at her and asked her, ‘Where is your file?’ She said, ‘I gave it to you’. The guy said to her, ‘This is a black name and you are white’. So, when he looked inside he saw that it was supposed to be like that. He was so shocked and he apologised and even joked about it. Ronelle phoned the bank and gave them her ID number, then the lady at the bank said, ‘Mam, there is a problem here, someone is using your bank account, someone with an African name’. She said, ‘That’s my surname’.*

These social reactions indicate how people often use the internalised schemas and social categories to organise their worlds. These social reactions also indicate how M-R relationships challenge those internalised schemas and social categorisations.

### **5.6.2.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

All the participants asserted that their M-R relationships attracted social attention. The described social reaction towards M-R relationships is an indication that such relationships are unfamiliar or uncommon within the South African context. Some of the reactions or questions asked highlight the view

that the experiences of M-R couples cannot be understood outside the historical socio-political context. The reactions from the people also underline how social categories are accepted as norms (for example, the norm that one must marry within one's in-group or 'blacks must marry blacks' and 'whites must marry whites'), as well as the difficulties involved in dissolving the socially constructed norms or categories.

Previous research results indicate that M-R relationships are often disapproved in many societies, as they represent unfamiliarity or taboo (Johnson & Warren, 1994; Rosenblatt, *et al.*, 1995; Spickard, 1989). The results of a national survey conducted in 2004 indicate that the approval for M-R marriages in South Africa has remained relatively static over a period of time, and there is no sign of attitudes changing (Lamard, 2004).

Wives 4, 5 and 6, and husband 2, seemed to suggest that people's reactions vary according to the areas where the M-R couples are. The partners seem to conclude that the areas with more negative racial attitude and/or low levels of education expressed more negative reactions towards M-R relationships.

Previous research results support the view that persons with high education levels were significantly less prejudiced than persons with low education (Case & Greeley, 1990), and that Afrikaans-speaking whites living in large towns or metropolitan areas were less prejudiced than those living in small towns (Bornman & Mynhardt, 1990; Duckitt, 1991). The authors indicate that normative social influence might result in shared attitudes or prejudices against people of the out-group, but socio-demographic factors like educational level and living area might be used to account for differences between members of the in-group. Education and urbanization might result in less prejudice as they both lead to more exposure or contact with new knowledge, which might result in a desire to review the internalized schema or prejudice acquired if the new information does not support the belief.

The contact hypothesis is based on the same principle, that stereotypes and prejudices are learned, so through education and more exposure, these

attitudes and prejudices can be reduced. Duckitt (1991) argues that the variability in the attitudes of individual members of the in-group or a social group requires theories and approaches focusing on the individual in the interpersonal context as an appropriate level of analysis. The constructivist theory could be viewed as one of the theories providing the analysis of internal cognitive processes within a specific social context.

Wives 3, 4 and 6 made the point that the negative social reaction towards their M-R relationships was subtle. The described pretence and subtle disapproval or reaction of people towards M-R relationships could be due to the present political context which has legalised M-R relationships and marriages and prohibits any form of unfair discrimination. Since M-R relationships are legalised people in such relationships are more protected from direct or blatant discrimination than before.

De la Rey & Duncan (2003) postulate that subtle discrimination seems to be the emerging form of discrimination in South Africa. The authors indicate that subtle discrimination is often not visible and obvious (especially not to those benefiting from it). They also argue that subtle discrimination may be intentional or unintentional and, thus, is often difficult to prove.

### **5.6.3 Differences in the reactions from the society**

**Criteria:** Any perceived or expected differences in reactions from the society will be included in this subcategory.

#### **5.6.3.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are descriptions and verbatim examples of the perceived or expected different reactions from the society towards the M-R relationship:

**Wife 1:** She made an observation that white people reacted more negatively than blacks, in which regard she said, *“White people are more shocked and the black people are like, ‘wow’, and they like him. I think white people are still shocked, it is like a surprise for them and for the black people it is a status thing. Even the black man who knows that I am going out with him respects me”*. She also observed different reactions from different racial groups, which observation she expressed thus:

*Me and my partner were arguing and this white guy just bump against me so hard; I could see he was very angry. I do not know why, it might be because we were fighting or maybe he was angry because I was treating his white brother like that or I have a relationship with a white man. Gabriel went after him and asked him what was going on, but he did not talk to him.*

This could indicate that the social categories that people internalized come with certain feelings towards people of the in-group, feeling of being protective to the people of the in-group, more especially against members of the out-group.

**Husband 1:** In his case, he indicated that white South Africans initially reacted with surprise and disappointment as compared to their black counterparts. He said, *“I think my white friends do not have an issue about me being in a mixed-race relationship, but their initial reaction when they see her is of surprise; something like they did not expect her to be black”*. He found white people to be more resistant to racial integration. This is what he said in this regard: *“I wish people should stop being obsessed about the colour bars, the whites I wish they could just let go and just jump in. I wish they could engage more... I think in South Africa blacks are more magnanimous, they are just more open-hearted and the whites are distant and not accepting”*.

**Wife 2:** She noticed that white people reacted more negatively than black people. He captured this observation thus: *“Whites just look and say nothing*

*but they look with frustration and some just look. Blacks look with appreciation and they would even say to him, 'Hello swaer (brother in law)' ". Referring to someone as 'brother-in-law' is a sign of acceptance and racial de-categorization. There are, however, subtle ways of expressing dissatisfaction or disapproval of the M-R relationship. She described some of these ways as follows: "Some would even make a joke about it and say, 'you have taken our sister away from us' ". If taken seriously, this statement might suggest that even black people disapproved of interracial marriages and relationships, or rather, preferred in-group marriages.*

**Husband 2:** He indicated that both races reacted negatively to the M-R relationship. This is what he said: *"I think both blacks and whites can react strongly"*. He believed that the strong and negative reaction from both races was due to the past political context. In this light he said, *"There is a long [past] tradition of racism between blacks and whites which is so strongly influencing this reaction"*. This sentiment supports the view that one cannot look at the study outside its historical context. He also observed more negative reactions from young black men, as reflected in the following statement: *"Sometimes when you talk to people, they give you negative reactions but I cannot recall any at the moment. But it is usually from the young black males"*. The negative reaction from the young black men might be due to the sense of loss or subtle disapproval of the M-R relationship as indicated by his wife (that is, wife 2) above.

**Wife 3:** She pointed out the differences in the ways blacks and whites reacted. She said, *"I think whites are still reacting with racism... Some whites pretend to be happy for you, and some show you that they do not like it... and blacks do not trust whites"*. There also seems to be a sense of disbelief and cynicism from some of the black people. This is clear from the following statement: *"Like I told you... Black people are usually surprised that this thing is happening, some of them think that maybe his people have rejected him and that is why he is with a black person"*. This sense of disbelief and mistrust highlights the difficulty of dissolving racial categories, especially when one

considers the notion that something had to be wrong for a white man to love a black woman, as reported by this participant.

**Husband 3:** He made reference to the positive reaction he experienced from the black people he worked with, and met at his partner's house. He said, *"I've been working in those areas in the villages in the rural areas already for years now...the experience there at Fikile's house was similar"*. He also experienced positive reactions and support from most white people that he was close to. He said the following in this regard:

*Actually, on the one side, the people who are my friends, because I do have some from my culture, it is like they have accepted me more than they did about this relationship. It is interesting – they are more friendly, they are more accepting...I talked to this one guy in my church – he is a friend of mine – from the same culture as I am, and I told him about the relationship and how my parents reacted to the relationship, and he shook his head and said: 'We will just pray for you guys that parents will accept the relationship'...when we got engaged the head of the department (from same culture) came to me and shook my hand and said, 'Congratulations on your engagement' .*

He added that he experienced negative reactions from the white people that he did not know, and made a reference to the following: *"We were walking in a parking area...there were these two guys in a BMW, and they looked at us and shouted some very bad remarks... They were just shouting, 'Jou fokken meide bekruiper.' I'm speaking Afrikaans. That is my language... it means somebody who crawls behind somebody... A black woman crawler or something like that... this is very lightly put"*.

**Wife 4:** She observed that both blacks and whites reacted negatively to the M-R relationship. She made the following reference:

*My husband went to collect my passport and they asked him where did he meet me or if I was selling my body on the streets or if I'm a*

*refugee... Both black and whites... You must remember that there are nasty white people and nasty black people. There is no race that is generally bad.*

The following statement makes the conclusion that she experienced more negative reaction and discrimination from black people: *“But you must have seen how people reacted that day. They said, ‘Haai! A mulungu (that is, a white man in Zulu) and a makwerekwere (that is, a black foreigner from another African country)... That was bad and it was said by the black people”*. She also reported that there was a difference in the way black South Africans and Nigerians reacted to M-R relationships. She said, *“The types of friends I have (from Nigeria) are more like me, open-minded; they were happy that I’m getting married”*. She also observed that people’s reaction have become more subtle because of the present political changes in South Africa, which have outlawed racial discrimination. She said, *“Like I said most people are smart now, they won’t just openly tell you things like that, but you sense it”*.

This is a subtle form of racism and it might suggest that the race-related laws about M-R relationships have changed but people have not changed their attitudes.

**Wife 5:** She and her husband were both accepted by the black people and rejected by the white people. He thus said the following: *“Since we have been together, both of us have been embraced more by black people. I’ve been welcomed by black people and somehow rejected by whites... yes I completely experienced that and more especially amongst my friends and their parents. It is difficult for them to think that I could be with a black man; the concept of me being with a black man is difficult to accept”*. As much as she felt accepted by the black people, she observed differences in the way various genders in the black community reacted. This is what she said:

*The community at Soweto welcome me. I have had reactions where the black girls ignore me. We went to a party one time, some of the*

*girls were rejecting me and ignoring me completely, they would not include me in anything. I think the feeling is that you are taking one of us. Whether they know him or not... I think more a sense of resentment, because why white girl, what is wrong with them, why can't he go out with them... Duma's male friends are very excited and they are very inquisitive, some of them even ask him, 'So how does it feel to kiss and have sex with a white woman?'*

**Wife 6:** She also felt accepted by blacks more than by white people. She said, *"Blacks are more welcoming; they welcome me very well"*. She was really concerned about the very strong negative reactions from younger white males, as indicated by the following statement:

*What I often observe on the streets when I drive with Nkosi is, young white men look and look again, it's almost like they are surprised to see me in a car with a black man, somehow in an angry way. One day we were in a shop, a café, I was looking at something, there was one toilet roll that had a bunny on it. Nkosi picked up the toilet roll and pushed it in my face and said the bunny is saying 'hi' to me, the way he was joking about that, it started to irritate me, but he was fine and I was fine, I just felt annoyed by him doing this silly thing. There was a young Afrikaans guy close to us, he came running; he wanted to give Nkosi a piece of his mind.*

Like wife 4, this participant also observed that the way people reacted has become more subtle because of the changes in the political context in the country. She phrased it thus: *"In terms of the different groups, people are more subtle in their reactions because of the country changing somehow"*.

**Husband 6:** He found that white people reacted negatively towards his wife. This is evident from this remark: *"In the case of Ronelle, most people would treat her inferior because she is walking with me... The white people usually react like that"*. He observed mixed reactions from the black people, as suggested in the following expression: *"The black people... Sometimes I*

*would be in a funeral or Pick and Pay, and they would say, 'Wow, where did you get her?' ... yes, it's a comment more in an appreciative way, but some can be very nasty, others see you as an opportunity, someone who can introduce them to other white women".*

Although there is, generally, a positive reaction and appreciation from the black people, there seems to be subtle disapproval. This, he expressed thus: *"They also definitely have a reaction, they react more in the manner that implies that I'm a sell-out"*. He observed gender differences in the reaction of black people, as indicated by the following comments:

*Sometimes, more the black women, they would ask how you marry a white woman. One said, 'Out of all these black women, you just choose to marry a white woman', or they would say, 'We are around, but you just choose to go to a white woman.*

### **5.6.3.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Most participants (that is, 8 out of 10) made reference to the point that there was a difference in the way white and black people reacted to the M-R relationships. All 8 participants indicated that the white people reacted more negatively to the M-R relationships than the black people. In the same vein, the results of a national survey conducted in 2004 indicated that only 16% of white South Africans approved of mixed-race marriages, and there was no sign of attitudes changing. Approval amongst black South Africans has remained stable at 53% (Lamard, 2004). Other studies conducted in South Africa, more specifically, Morrall (1994), Dayile (1998); Ratele (1998b); Ratele (2002); Stacey (1998) and Woodward (1999), confirmed that white South Africans reacted more negatively to M-R relationships than black South Africans. Fang, Sidanius and Pratto (1998) assert that the greater the desire to maintain hierarchical group relations, the more the opposition to inter-group marriages with low status groups will be. The opposition by white South Africans to interracial marriages could be seen as a desire to establish and

maintain hierarchical and dominance between the socially constructed groups (Hyslop, 1995).

The results of the present study (see 5.6.4 below) show that the white racial group was socially constructed as a high status group as compared to the black racial group. Levin, Sidanius and Pratto (1997) argues that the difference in the social reactions to interracial marriages can be expected to be more when the difference in the social status between the in-group and the out-group is relatively great.

Most participants indicated that white people expressed reactions like shock, surprise, frustration, anger, distance, racism, pretence, bad remarks, and a level of obsession with racial boundaries. Black people, on the other hand, expressed reactions such as appreciation, respect, envy or anger for choosing a person from the out-group, and mistrust of the motives of the white partner. The negative reaction of the white people could be interpreted as a perceived threat to their superiority in terms of their social status. The positive reactions from the black people could be seen as a sense of pride for having broken through the higher level of the social hierarchy. There were also negative reactions by the black people, which could be seen as an expression of a sense of loss of a partner from the in-group as well as the mistrust of the motives of the partner from the out-group.

Husband 2 and wife 4 indicated that both racial groups reacted strongly to the M-R relationship. The two participants, who did not differentiate between the reactions of the black and white people, seemed to suggest that racism played a role in the reaction by South Africans. They (both participants) were not born in South Africa.

Most of the participants (that is, 7 out of 10) reported that there were gender differences within each racial group; with the opposite gender reacting more negatively to the M-R relationship (for example, most black men reacted negatively to a M-R relationship consisting of a black woman and a white man). Wife 5 and husband 6 indicated that black women reacted negatively

to their M-R relationship consisting of a white woman and a black man. Wife 6 (that is, a white woman married to a black man) indicated that white males reacted more negatively to her M-R relationship. The different gender reactions across both races could be explained in terms of members' attempts to enforce loyalty to the in-group. Wife 5 indicated that the pressure to remain within the in-group is enforced whether the group members know you or not.

#### **5.6.4: Perceived or expected racial stereotypes**

**Criteria:** Any social comments or statements that indicate racial stereotypes and/or racial comparison between blacks and whites will be included within this subcategory.

##### **5.6.4.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are the descriptions and verbatim examples of the perceived or expected racial stereotypes and racial comparisons between blacks and whites:

**Wife 1:** She observed that the construction of social hierarchies by black and white people differed. In this regard she said the following:

*For the black people the reaction is something like respect because they believe whites are superior and I have access to one of them. But for white people it is like he is lowering some standards... So for white people, if you are with a black person is like you are lowering the standard. For example Gabriel told one of his friends that I am black and the friend said something like 'She wouldn't be the first price'.*

She also observed that some black people were deeply mistrustful of whites. She expressed this in the following statement: *"There are black people who say I am sleeping with an enemy, white people are our enemies and they will*

*never change*". Even though she did not feel inferior in her relationship, she indicated that it was difficult to stop social categorisations and hierarchies as people did not believe that there could be genuine love between a black and a white person. She said, *"It is difficult to stop such ... comments, because they do not believe it is about love, they believe it's a 'baas' (i.e. boss) kind of a thing and I do not feel inferior in this relationship... I think it is our own belief that whites are superior [to] us, like we are an inferior race... maybe we grew up thinking that white is better"*. This observation highlights the difficulty of dissolving social categorisations and the resultant social hierarchies.

**Husband 1:** He seemed surprised by the lack of social classes or distinctions within the black communities, as indicated by the following statement: *"I never experienced anything like that, I mean such a mix of people... You wouldn't get [it] anywhere [else] where a person who is sweeping streets is living next to someone who is working as a professional"*. The description above reflects the realities of the past South African context, in which all black people lived in townships (as prescribed by the Group Areas Act), with no clear differentiation between the different classes within the black community. After 1994, the black community started to show some divisions between the rich/professional blacks and the poor/non-professional blacks.

He, however, constructed different social classes within the black community and re-classified his partner as belonging to the higher hierarchy, as indicated in the following statement: *"I also said to myself, 'Thebe is of a different class from the people living next to her mother. She is just of a different class'."* This re-classification could be his way of making himself feel better about his choice, as it reassures him of having the best out of the group of people categorized as of the lower social class.

**Wife 2:** This participant reported that she was often treated condescendingly by some white people, as if she was a 'tea girl or cleaner'. She said, *"When people come over to see Dean, more especially the Afrikaans-speaking people, they would usually say, 'Can't you ask her to pour a cup of tea for us?'"*

*Dean usually gets very angry and say to them, 'South Africans, you like classifying a black woman as cleaner, that's what you think'."*

There were some black people who also treated her as low-class in the sense that their questions suggested that she was a nanny working for 'a Mrs.' (a phrase used to refer to a white female boss in South Africa). This is captured in the following statement: *"It happens also when I take a walk with my baby in the afternoon. The black people would ask if this was my Mrs.'s child"*.

The questions that both blacks and whites asked reflected a certain level of mistrust between the two racial groups. For example: *"They would also ask if the Mrs. allows me to take a walk with the child in the afternoon... When I am in the shops, especially the white people will come and ask, 'Is this your baby?' They usually ask me why is he white"*. These two questions imply a sense of disbelief that a seemingly 'white child' could not belong to a black woman. She dealt with these reactions and insinuations by explaining that she did not steal the child. She said, *"I will end up saying to them that, 'Look, I didn't steal this baby, he is my baby, his father is white and I am proud of it, so stop looking at me as if I am a thief'."* This experience points to the unfamiliarity of M-R relationships, as well as the difficulty of dissolving social categories and the internalised schemas about racial differences from both racial groups.

**Wife 3:** She observed a general mistrust from both racial groups, when she made reference to this incident:

*His father was very angry and asked him if he was crazy to marry a Black woman, they will kill you... My ex-boyfriend heard about us... he said, 'White people do not love us, or maybe he has something wrong with him or maybe he is HIV positive and he wants to infect you with the virus. He said a white person cannot just have interest in a black person, these people do not like us and they want to kill us'.*

These statements suggest that for a white person to marry a black person, and by implication, that for a person from a higher social class to marry

someone from a lower social class, that person must be crazy, sick or that something was wrong with him/her.

**Husband 3:** He observed different reactions from white people which suggested that black people belonged to a lower social class as compared to white people. He said the following:

*My father was shouting at me, saying... what do I see in a black woman...we don't want that, those are not people... some of the things that I heard is that they are less intelligent than white people... They are not at the same level with the white people. White people are the bosses... They are not human. They are, sorry for this one also, they are actually a pest on the earth and that they don't really need to be here. That God didn't really create them.*

He also reported reactions that encouraged the view that black people should not be trusted. He made these remarks:

*There is an absolute hatred that I don't understand... my father said, 'You are going to work there with those black people, they are going to kill you. Don't trust them... they are all born criminals and they hate white people'.*

He dealt with the reported racial comparison by apologising and distancing himself from the shared social views, and declared:

*This thing of classifying people is pride... I think that is pride... You think you are better than the other person. I don't have time for people with pride.*

**Wife 4:** She observed reactions from South Africans, which suggested different classes in the social hierarchy, between blacks and whites. She said:

*I told my South African friend that this is a mentality of South African people to think that white men are better... Most people think that whites are wealthy and they think that I'm with him for his money... black women think that I think I'm better than them because I'm married to a white man... and white women think that we want to be like them.*

Racial comparison also happened within the Nigerian context, but because the social system there disapproved of such interracial relations she was able to deal with the observed preferential treatment of whites in South Africa. She said:

*I come from a very mixed community; we did not have white Nigerians but the whites living there used to get more preference than Nigerians, but being my country, if anyone ever gave me that kind of a bad treatment I would deal with them appropriately.*

She distanced herself from the observed racial comparison and acknowledged that the previous South African context contributed to the development of such racial stereotypes. She phrased it thus:

*I don't think like that. This is a colonial mentality, to think that white is better. Maybe it is the indoctrination that they went through...we cannot really blame them, this was due to many years of constant indoctrination of one race being better than the other, and this is not just going to disappear in thin air.*

This statement underscores the value of understanding this study in relation to the historical context of South Africa. The statement could also be used to understand the difficulty of removing social categorizations and the role of socio-political context in the development of racial stereotypes.

**Wife 5:** This partner observed social reactions from white people that suggested that blacks belonged to a lower level in the social hierarchy than whites. She said:

*My friend's father made a comment to her that, 'You are a common white person... that is what common poor white people do, to live with black people'... this is a perception that if you mix with black people, it's like your level of being white is going down. You are now rubbish... white people tend to think that black people are not family oriented, and soulful and intelligent; black people are seen as people who should do ironing work and work in the garden and the kitchen. The ones that got educated, they cannot say how they got educated. They would say something like, 'It's easy for them to study because they are like parrots, they can take in a lot of information, and they relay that information or repeat everything that they took in'. There is no element of independence and individuality... I was mainly exposed to white people, hearing a lot of things about black people, my perceptions are from the apartheid, where black people are seen as inferior to white people, that your white skin allows you to be God, for some reason we are much closer to God than some people.*

She observed a sense of inferiority on the part of her partner, which she stated thus: *"He feels inferior, I do not know why, but inferior not because I'm white and he is black. Inferior not towards me, but inferior towards other white men... if a white man had to come and offer me everything, I'll go to the white man"*. This feeling of inferiority might have emanated from the previously internalised schema and racial comparison where whites were perceived as wealthier than blacks. She explained the situation where the mere instance of being with a white person might result in one being perceived as socially better off.

She said, *"Sometimes he speaks to his people and I do not understand what is said. He explained to me that, he is using his language because he does not want them to think that he thinks that he is better than them because he is*

*with a white girl*". The two examples above from the black people confirm the racial comparison and social classification of whites as superior or better.

**Wife 6:** She observed reactions that suggested that whites were better than blacks, who are even lower than coloureds. She said:

*When I spoke to my father about this relationship, he said I'm going to start being unreliable, and all the ideas that he had about black people...I ask him why he is speaking to Amy and Hendrick but not to us. He said, in a very sarcastic way, 'You are one step better than Amy'... and I'm even worst off. Meaning that coloured is better than black... When we spend time with the people in Soweto, they would treat me better than the person next to me because I'm white... one of my friends said to me that I'm lucky to marry a black man because he treats me so nice, if it was a black woman, he wouldn't treat her the same [way].*

She also reported reactions where she was perceived as wealthier than her partner. She referred to the following example: *"In silly other situations, like when we go to restaurants... they normally give the bill to me"*. She also reported reactions that encouraged mistrust for black people. The following is one of such instances: *"We used to visit my dad here in Pretoria. The way he used to scare us about black people, I mean from the airport, he made us to be careful of these dangerous black people, by the time you go to your bed, you are always waiting for this black person to jump through your window and come and attack you. That was the mind-set I was brought up with"*.

**Husband 6:** He described a number of situations where he was perceived by black people as better or wealthier. For instance, he said:

*For the blacks... most times it's like a status thing and they react as if I think I'm trying to be better ... it's like when you are with a white woman you are like a cool person and rich... like when we go home, or*

*to my uncles and places like that, they tend to give her first preference simply because she is white.*

He observed a different reaction from white people, as indicated in the following statement: *“In the case of Ronelle, most people would treat her as inferior because she is walking with me in the shops, restaurants etc... The white people usually react like that”.*

He sometimes jokes about the perceived social class differences, as indicated in the following statement: *“I usually push the trolley, and when we get to the till I would deliberately call my wife ‘Mrs’.”* As indicated by wife 2 above, his usage of the term ‘Mrs’. (which is the term used to refer to a white female boss in South Africa), might imply that he is aware that he could be placed in a lower social category as compared to that of his wife.

#### **5.6.4.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

Almost all participants (that is, 9 out of 10) suggested that there was a general belief from both blacks and whites that whites were better than or superior to blacks. The distinctions made between the white and black social groups pointed to the process of social categorization. Potter and Wetherell (1992) show how social categories are flexibly articulated in certain discourses or writing to accomplish goals such as blaming or justifying one’s social position. In the present study, the process of social comparison was shown to have resulted in the white social group graded higher than, or superior to, the black social group in terms of dimensions like race, class, economic position, economic power, and intellectual ability.

The language or discourse used by the black and white racial groups to describe the above differences was respectively aimed at blaming the oppressive system or justifying the position of the oppressive group. In other words, most white people used the language that was aimed at justifying their

privileged position, while the black people used the language that was aimed at blaming the oppressive system for their disadvantaged social position.

The results also indicated a general negative social and personal identity amongst the blacks, and a positive social and personal identity amongst the whites. Fanon (1987) sees the general inferiority complex or the negative collective and personal identity amongst blacks as the long-term effect of the racist culture. Hook (2003) uses Fanon's analysis to indicate how the post-apartheid South African context and racial oppression has created and reinforced feelings of racial inferiority amongst the black people. Ratele and Duncan (2003) postulate that identity is socially constructed, always in dynamic negotiation with the world around it, always in relation to other people, structures and conditions, and remains eternally potentially changeable, despite the factitious nature of these elements.

The majority of the participants (that is, 6 out of 10; including husband 5, as reported by the wife) seems to suggest that black people who are in M-R relationships tend to be treated as better by their fellow black people, while the white people in M-R relationships tend to be treated as inferior or as commoners by their fellow white people. This could be explained by using the concept of social re-categorization of each partner (that is, both black and white partners). Baron and Byrne (2003) define re-categorization as shifting the boundaries between an individual's in-group ('us') and some out-group ('them') in such a way that persons formally viewed as out-group members may now be viewed as belonging to the in-group. Re-categorization of a black person results in him/her acquiring higher status as perceived by their fellow black; white re-categorization of a white person results in him/her acquiring a lower status as perceived by their fellow whites. This process of re-categorization indicates that social categories and the subsequent social identities are socially constructed and changeable (Fanon, 1986; Hood, 2003).

Most participants (that is, 7 out of 10) suggested that there was a general level of mistrust between the two racial groups. The mistrust developed from

the category-congruent stereotypes or schema. Beliefs such as ‘white people are our enemies’, ‘black people are dangerous, are criminals or want to kill us’ emanated from the mistrust between the two racial categories. Baron and Byrne (2003) argue that if we label or categorize an individual as belonging to a certain group, the schema for that social group may be used to suggest what traits that person might possess, and how we feel about that person.

Foster & Nel (1991) cite some of the first South African studies on attitudes of whites towards blacks. For example, MacCrone’s findings from the study conducted in the 1930’s indicated that a combination of factors such as the belief that blacks are dangerous, are criminals, are supposed to be servants or do dirty menial work, are innately inferior in intelligence and sense of responsibility, and so forth; produced a negative image of black people, which in turn influenced the attitude of whites to blacks. The findings of that study and the present results may be used to explain how attitudes between the two racial groups have remained stable over time.

As already pointed out, husband 1 seemed shocked by the lack of social classifications or hierarchies in the black communities. However, he went on to describe his partner as different from the other black people; thereby removing her from the low-class that black people generally belonged to in the social hierarchy. This is another form of shifting the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In this case the black community becomes categorized and his partner becomes re-categorized as a member of the high class in the social hierarchy.

### **5.6. 5 Ways of maintaining racial separation and/or social categories**

**Criteria:** Any comments or actions that enforce racial separation and/or encourage remaining within the social category will be included here.

#### **5.6.5.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are descriptions and verbatim examples of the comments or actions that enforce racial separation and/or encourage remaining within their social category:

**Wife 1:** This participant referred to how prices are manipulated to maintain racial separation. She said, *“In many areas, when black people buy a property, it is like the standards are going to drop. So what they try to do is increase the price so that black people cannot buy. I mean it’s a common practice and you cannot deny it”*.

Kahn (2007) points out that thirteen years after apartheid, night clubs in South Africa were still racially segregated. The author remarks that the racial segregation is never done openly and that most club owners accepted that the most common way of engineering segregation is by hugely inflating the price when someone from the ‘wrong’ group tries to get into the club.

**Husband 1:** He said, *“The whites tend to say nothing or they might say in a group of people, we never knew you love blacks, but they will never say that one on one... their initial reaction when they see her is surprise. Something like they did not expect her to be black”*. This comment might be viewed as a subtle way by the white people of discouraging interracial relationships. In other words, he was expected to have love relationships with people of the in-group only.

**Wife 2:** She indicated that her parents did not have a problem with them as friends, but used traditional reasons and ways to resist and discourage the birth of a M-R child. She said:

*All along they were quiet about it because it was not affecting them much, but seeing that there was going to be a baby involved, and then they started showing how they feel about it. They even went to an Inyanga (traditional healer) for that and it got to my ears... My mom was very shocked and told me that according to our culture you*

*shouldn't do that because you are going to upset the ancestors and she will be going against the ancestors (badimo ba tlo ema ka maoto).*

She also reported that they were initially not allowed to get into certain restaurants. She put it thus: *"Like I said at the beginning that there were restaurants that we couldn't get in, but now it is different. It's only the look in people's eyes that is still the same"*. These non-verbal reactions from people highlight the point that the laws have changed but attitudes have remained the same.

**Husband 2:** His observation was that people reacted differently when he was looking for accommodation alone and when he was with his black Nigerian female friend. He said, *"I had a very close friend of mine that was a Nigerian... She was having problems with accommodation, so we went around looking for accommodation...I often get a good response, but now that it was for her they turned us down. So I became aware of that problem"*.

He also indicated that he never had such experiences in other parts of Africa because he lived mainly in black communities. His non-acceptance by his partner's family was also shown by their not allowing him to perform the family ritual. This is indicated in the following reference: *"In this relationship there was nothing that they asked from me because her parents wanted nothing to do with us...In my previous marriage there were some marriage rituals that I had to perform to connect her ancestors to mine"*.

The different reactions from the two African families may be used to indicate how the prescribed African rituals can be used to maintain racial separation in a disapproving context, or to encourage racial integration in an approving context.

**Wife 3:** She reported a number of incidents and comments from both black and white people that were aimed at discouraging their M-R relationship. She said:

*My ex-boyfriend insisted that I leave him because there might be something wrong with the guy... Nagel's father tried to make him change his mind but he eventually gave up... There was this lecturer at the campus who knew about us, he called him in and told him that this relationship is not right, we were not supposed to do that 'please, tog', and 'beg' him to please stop with the relationship.*

She also indicated that her mother asked questions that seemed to discourage having M-R children. She said, *"My mom said, 'Your aunt does not have children, why are you marrying a white person, so you also don't want to have children?' I said to her that I will have children and also told her that it does not mean that when you are dating a person from a different race you cannot have children"*.

**Husband 3:** He acknowledged that he grew up in a socio-political context that encouraged racial separation. He said, *"I grew up in a background where my family is very racist, our country is racist and there is this thing that you are not to mix with people of other races"*.

He also reported some of the religions that strongly encouraged separation, and said, *"There is even one religion, one of the far right people, who believe and say it is a sin to marry a black lady"*. He mentioned a number of comments and incidents from his family members that were aimed at discouraging him from marrying a black person:

*My father was shouting at me, saying that I am stupid and I am busy making the mistake of my life. What do I see in a black woman... we don't want that... my grandmother said: 'What? Nagel with a maid? No ways, it cannot be, it cannot happen...It is not acceptable'.*

His father used their family tradition to discourage the M-R relationship, as indicated in the following statements:

*We have this bible in the house where the whole family names from the past up to now are written, we call it the family register. And now my father wanted to know, who is going to get it? Is it going to go to coloured children? That is not right. You must marry a lady from your colour and your tradition because we have tradition in our family.*

He also reported discouraging remarks even from people he did not know. He said, *“I was called a black women or maid crawler, something like that... this is very lightly put, there are some people that if they can fight in the street they will beat you for doing that”*. This could mean that where possible, physical force might be used to force someone to remain with his/her racial group.

**Wife 4:** She referred to a number of comments and incidents whereby racial separation was enforced (mostly by the black people). She said:

*I notice with my best friend... she kept on asking me why I go out with a mulungu (i.e. a white man in Zulu)... I remember the time when I went with Nelson to a certain section of Soweto. The people there reacted with such shock and said, ‘Why do you bring a mulungu here?... A lot of people are asking questions: ‘Why a black person? or why a white person?, what is wrong with you?, what are you looking for? Why, why, why?’*

**Wife 5:** This partner pointed out that some of her family members rejected her, and feared that her grandfather might disinherit her. In this respect she said, *“My grandfather doesn’t know. If he did, he would disinherit me... My cousin from my father’s side completely rejected me and he said I must not even come to his house”*

She believed that people would rather have her be with someone from the same race group even if that person was bad for her. This belief was expressed thus:

*The feeling I get is that they would rather have you be with a white man even if he is an alcoholic and abusive and treats you like you are absolutely nothing, than to be with a black man, who has got an education, who does not drink, who does not swear, who is an intellectual and treat you with respect.*

She referred to a number of comments and incidents from family members and friends, which were aimed at encouraging racial separation and remaining within one's racial group. She said:

*Before knowing about my relationship I used to feel welcomed in their homes and we will have conversations with the parents, but usually after hearing about the relationship they tend to keep a distance or ask a lot of questions. Questions like, 'But why are you with a black man, why not a white man?' They usually ask in a resentful kind of way... this is a perception that if you mix with black people, it's like your level of being white is going down. You are now rubbish.*

**Wife 6:** This participant indicated that he grew up in an environment that encouraged and enforced racial separation. She expressed this view thus:

*I realised that my granny did not like black people and that is the reason we did not have anyone working in our house...My father had a very cut-off idea of, 'black people should be with black people and white people should be with white people'. So, he disowned me as well, like he did my sister, when I started dating Nkosi. He said I'm not welcomed at his house and I must never bring my friends there, and I must not think I will find an open door in his house and heart even if I stay here in Pretoria.*

She quoted an incident where racial separation was indirectly enforced, when she said, "At our year-end function, my boss (white) told me no partners should come to the restaurant where the function was going to be...[but] just

*before we left to go to the function, I saw all the partners coming... I had a feeling that he planned it like that, so that Nkosi doesn't come".*

**Husband 6:** He stated that he often got questions and comments from black people that encouraged remaining within the in-group. He said:

*I noticed the same type of thing in the way I have been treated, especially with my own race. I get that constant type of reaction that questions the reasons why I married a white lady. They'll ask, 'Why did you marry a white lady?' One said, 'Out of all these black women, you just choose to marry a white woman', or they would say, 'We are around, but you just choose to go to a white woman'.*

All the questions and comments seemed to instil a feeling of guilt. This is apparent in the following statement: *"They react more in the manner that implies that I'm a sell-out... once the black people learn that I'm going out with a white lady, they tend to treat me differently. It becomes more like I'm or have betrayed the system... One even said we are bringing bad blood... I heard that from the black people and mostly from the older black people".*

Within most African cultures blood is often used in rituals as a symbolic connect between the living and dead family members. The comment about bringing bad blood might be interpreted as bringing the blood that might upset or not be recognised by the ancestors, as in the case of wife 2 above. The purpose of making such comments might be to try and maintain the purity of the social category. Shanks-Meile and Dobratz (1991) present various arguments about blood mixing or racial pollution of the white race, and how these arguments were used to discourage mixed marriages between white and non-white people, as well as the Jew-Gentile intermarriages in America.

#### **5.6.5.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

All the participants reported actions that enforced or encouraged remaining within the social category that one belonged to. Baron and Byrne (2003); and Foster and Nel (1991), define any attempt of one or more persons to alter the attitude, behaviour or feelings of the other person as social influence. The authors indicate that social influence may take subtle and direct forms. The aim of social influence is to ensure conformity to the shared social norms or group norms. Conformity to the prescribed group norms or group identity helps to ensure the uniformity of the group.

Most of the intense pressure to enforce racial separation and/or remaining within the social category is from the intimate cycle; for example, family and ex-boyfriend. This confirms that the family context plays an important role in the development, enforcement and maintenance of shared social norms and categories.

For wife 2; and husbands 2, 3, and 6, spirituality and tradition have been used to enforce racial separation. This also indicates that shared spiritual or cultural beliefs may enforce conformity to the prescribed group norms. These aspects thus create group identity, which, in turn, helps to ensure the uniformity of the group. This might explain the rationale behind previous policy decision of churches like the Nederduitse Gereformeerde (NG) Kerk (the Dutch Reformed Church) that openly described M-R marriages as 'undesirable' (Furlong, 1994; South African Institute of Race Relations, 1987). Hyslop (1995) shows how apartheid politicians like D F Malan, an ordained minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, played a large part in the invention of the 'sin' of 'mixed marriages', and made it one of the key elements of apartheid policy which he and his supporters used to attain power.

Wives 1 and 2, as well as, husbands 2 and 3, referred to the previous socio-political measures meant to enforce racial separation or to encourage remaining within one's own social category. They also acknowledged that although the laws enforcing separation are now invalid, the attitudes and reactions of some people remained the same. The previous apartheid laws

were a form of deliberate and direct socio-political influence to ensure and enforce conformity to the different racial groups.

This study also shows that there was a difference in the type of exerted pressure to comply with group norms or identity. Most whites used indirect or subtle influences such as inflating prices, indirect comments, and indirectly creating barriers to certain services or areas. On the contrary, blacks used more overt influences like directly asking questions or directly making discouraging comments, and preventing involvement or participation in family rituals. Regardless of the racial group a family belonged to, the more conservative it was described as, the more direct influence it used to enforce conformity to the prescribed group norms or identity. Wives 2, 5 and 6; and husband 3, described their families as very conservative and these families used more direct pressure to enforce conformity.

Wife 5 experienced pressure to remain within the social category (Nigerian) from both white and mostly black South Africans. The idea that other black people exerted pressure on her to conform or maintain her social category confirm the belief that social categorization is a key social phenomenon which influences other social processes such as racism and xenophobia. In other words, people naturally organize their worlds into categories, using dimensions such as race, nationality, gender, and so forth.

#### **5.6.6 The effect of the M-R relationship on people's attitude**

**Criteria:** Any perception or comment that suggests that there was change in people's attitude towards the other racial group will be included in this subcategory.

##### ***5.6.6.1 Descriptions and examples***

The following are the descriptions and verbatim examples of the reported racial stereotypes and/or attitude changes due to being in a M-R relationship or in contact with people from a racially different group.

**Wife 1:** The participant observed attitude change and interest in some of her family members. This is what she said:

*My sister is starting to tell me that she is open to anything now and I am finding a lot of people saying, 'I am open to any kind of relationship now'. My friends are asking me if he has any friend and if I could hook them up with some white guys like him?*

**Husband 1:** This participant observed that notwithstanding the challenging socio-political context, being indirectly exposed to the M-R relationship brought hope that people of different racial groups can live together. He said:

*I think a lot of white people are starting to feel that this new government is becoming intolerable, lots of whites left the county after the election, and I think a lot of the whites here still think we cannot trust the black government. So when they see Thebe and me they are quite shocked and surprised that here is Gabriel, and he is one of us and he is going out with a black woman. It brings some hope, in the sense that it proves that it is possible for one of us to live together with one of them. One of my female friends said something very sweet about our relationship that shows optimism about blacks and whites living together.*

He also reported that there were indications that their M-R relationship led to attitude change and increased interest, as implied by the following comment: *"I heard that Thebe's colleagues want to go out with white men".*

**Wife 2:** The following observation by this participant pointed to attitude change on the part of her parents:

*I phoned mom to ask if my partner and I are welcomed to come home so that my dad can see the child because he has not seen the child yet... She said no problem but my partner come with a different plan for the holiday, so we ended up not going home. But I thought that he is still hurt by their rejection.*

The observed attitude change occurred at the time when her partner was apparently still emotionally hurt. This finding brings a different element in the understanding of interracial contact and relationships. Attitude change needs to be accompanied by positive emotional status of the people involved in order to foster improved inter-group relationships.

**Wife 3:** There was an observed attitude change and acceptance of the M-R relationship by her mother. In this regard the participant said: *“My mother was against this relationship and she was unhappy that I am marrying a white person... She is ok now... she introduces my partner as ‘mokgonyana’ (i.e. son-in-law)”*.

**Husband 3:** He observed attitude change and acceptance of the relationship by some of his family members. He said the following in this respect:

*I must be honest, if you think from where we came from to where we are now, it was a huge improvement... after we got engaged I introduced my family to Fikile. My mother was happy with her, my brother’s side are – how can I say it, they have made peace with it.*

The change (which happened after their engagement) might have been due to the realisation that the M-R relationship was serious. His father’s attitude has, however, not changed. He stated it thus: *“My father said he doesn’t want to know anything about it, he is blocking”*. Nevertheless, there has been an observation of more silence from him (his father): *“There were some changes, in the sense that he is not shouting at me any more”*. The change from the father might be due to the fear of losing his son, as suggested in the following

statement: *“I said to him I’m not coming to Pretoria without her anymore, he is not shouting at me, he is not shouting any more”*. He also tried to communicate the observed change in his mother’s attitude to his partner; when he said, *“I told Fikile that my mother likes her. My mother really does like Fikile. At first she said my mother is pretending”*. Attitude change which came after intense disapproval and a lot of pressure might be perceived as pretence.

**Wife 4:** As regards wife 4, the extended contact with other black friends has resulted in their change of stereotypes and racial attitude against white people. This became evident when he stated the following:

*My best friend that I was telling you about, said at the beginning of my relationship with my husband that she would never go out with a white guy and she said that she hate whites. Now she broke-up with her boyfriend and she keeps on asking me to help her find a white man. Now she likes my husband. She comes to my house and sleeps over, and we sometimes sleep over at her place. She can just call my husband and they just talk. I think she realized that there is nothing wrong in being close to him. I think her fears have been relieved.*

**Wife 5:** Comments by wife 5 confirm that she observed attitude change and acceptance: *“Only recently, I had a conversation with my mother... she’s becoming more open in accepting the relationship... I think it is because she sees that it is not a phase and they saw that I didn’t change”*.

The initial intense disapproval of the M-R relationship might have been motivated by the hope that it was a passing phase. Previous research results; for example, Johnson and Warren (1994), indicate that family involvement and acceptance after observing that the M-R relationship is not a passing phase are common. She reported that the extended contact with a M-R couple has resulted in a change of her attitude and racial stereotypes, as indicated in the following statement:

*Maybe the exposure of seeing a black person and a white person living together intimately might have been what has influenced me or encouraged me to follow my heart when I started feeling something for Duma.*

**Wife 6:** She pointed out that even though her father's attitude to her sister's relationship has changed, he still maintained his negative attitude towards their relationship. She said:

*My dad used to send my sister money for Christmas but he would send a message that it was not for Hendrick, because he is not his son. My sister told me that dad has warmed up towards Hendrick and said I should phone him because he might change his heart towards Nkosi... He said in a very sarcastic way, you are one step better than Amy...basically he meant ... that coloured is better than black.*

His attitude towards the black partner seemed more intense than towards the coloured partner. She observed a change of attitude from her mother and believed it was due to her exposure to the sister's M-R relationship (as indicated in subcategory 5.5.2 above).

**Husband 6:** This participant made some positive observations from the general public. These included an increased hope and interest in interracial relationships. To this effect, he said: *"Others see you as an opportunity, or someone who can introduce them to other white women... for some it's like 'wow, it's possible'."*

### **5.6.6.2 Integrated discussions and interpretations**

All participants indicated that exposure to the M-R relationship has, to a certain degree, resulted in positive change of attitude, which entailed hope for blacks and whites living together, and interest in getting involved with people from different racial groups.

The positive changes that have been reported by all the participants (except husband 6) are from people within the close circle; for example, family and friends. The change of attitude observed from the participants' friends was mainly due to the realisation that it is possible for people of the in-group to live peacefully with people of the out-group. Research results have indicated that merely learning that some people in one's own group get along well with persons belonging to other groups can be a highly effective means for countering the detestable effect of prejudice (Wright, 1984; Mynhardt & Du Toit, 1991).

The attitude change observed from most parents and family members was mainly due to persuasion. This was in contrast to that of friends which happened voluntarily. Baron and Byrne (2003) refer to this type of attitude change as forced compliance; whereby individuals are forced by various circumstances to comply with ways that run counter to their own views.

The results of this study indicate that circumstances like the perceived seriousness of the M-R relationship, birth of a M-R child, marriage or engagements of the M-R couple, possible loss of valuable relationship, and so on, resulted in the change from the initial attitude by most parents. Mynhardt and Du Toit (1991) emphasised the point that one of the preconditions for optimum attitude improvement is that contact should occur voluntarily, under rewarding and pleasant conditions; and that the immediate authorities must be in favour of the contact. In this case, the authorities could, for example, include the parents of the couple, the church and the legal system.

Factors such as age, authoritarianism and conservatism are believed to be important determinants of attitude change. Research has established that younger, non-authoritarian, and liberal persons are more likely to display positive attitude change than older, authoritarian and conservative persons (see Mynhardt & Du Toit, 1991). The latter group of people is described as inclined to make less contact with members of out-groups. This could be used to explain the difference between the friends and parents and/or

grandparents of the participants of this study in terms of attitude change or lack of it.

Wife 2 and husband 3 indicated that their parents' attitude changed, but their partners were either suspicious or too hurt to appreciate the observed attitude change. The change in attitude after prolonged persuasion might not always result in improved interracial relationship.

There were indications of change in attitude on the part of Wife 6's father towards the coloured son-in-law, rather than to the black son-in-law. This different ranking between the South African coloured and blacks could be related to the previous psychometric testing which positioned the blacks at the lowest level with regard to intellectual functioning (Louw & Foster, 1991). Most of the race-related legislation of South Africa also reflected differential treatment based on the social position of the racial group. The black racial group occupied the lowest level in the social hierarchy than the coloured group. Marx (1998) indicates that the coloureds in South Africa were long able to advance socially and enjoyed more economic privileges than blacks. The author also points out that the treatment of coloureds as better than blacks was aimed at encouraging coloured loyalty and to discourage them from aligning with the African majority. Ratela (2003) refers to discourses where coloureds and blacks are viewed as same, and also as different. Within the previous political context, coloureds were treated as different from blacks in terms of privileges, and as similar to blacks in terms of also being an oppressed social group (that is, the oppression of people of colour). Ratela (2003) argues that this ambivalence in the identity of the coloured people is an indication of how identities are socially and historically constructed.

Wife 4 suggested that changed social attitude and acceptance seemed to correlate with the level of comfort of the M-R couple; that is, the more comfortable the M-R couple is the more open and accepting the people are. It might be possible that the perception of the couple is the determining factor with regard to being aware or unaware of how people react. This suggests

that the more the couple perceives its relationship positively the more they will be aware of positive social reaction, and vice versa.

The reported attitude changes were mainly from the intimate cycles. Since this study did not focus on the general social attitude change, it could be deduced from the reported social reaction toward M-R relationships (as indicated in 5.6.2 above) that the attitude at the social level might have not changed. The results of a 2004 national survey conducted in South Africa, indicate that the levels of cross-racial contact and interaction, interracial distrust, and understanding the customs and ways of the other racial group, has remained relatively static over a period of time (Lamard, 2004).

#### **5.7 Category 4: Ways of dealing with the emotional experience of the M-R relationship**

Dealing with the emotional experience of the M-R relationship involved four aspects: (1) mentally diffusing the perceived or anticipated reactions, (2) avoidance or escaping from the situation, (3) directly confronting the situation in order to reduce its painful impact, as well as (4) using cognitive differentiation and re-categorizations to reduce the emotional impact of choosing someone from the out-group.

##### **5.7.1 Mentally diffusing the perceived or anticipated reactions**

**Criteria:** Any comment or report that involved modifying, not the actual reaction or situation, but the way the person feels or thinks about it in an attempt to reduce its painful impact. Such strategies involve not noting the reaction, diverting one's attention from it, deliberately ignoring it, or reinterpreting its meaning by such means as degrading its users, treating it as a joke, or reinterpreting it as necessary and/or positive within the specific situation.

### 5.7.1.1 Descriptions and examples

The following are the descriptions and verbatim examples of the ways of coping by mentally diffusing the perceived and/or anticipated social reaction in order to reduce its emotional impact on the partners.

**Wife 1:** She said that her partner was depressed and very discouraged when he thought about the possible reaction from his parents. The partner dealt with the anticipated reaction by mentally rehearsing how he would tell his parents. She said, *“I remember there was a time he said that I just have to rehearse this”*. She, on the other hand, dealt with the anticipated social reactions by developing a level of understanding and empathy. She made this remark:

*When the white people react with shock, I do not react to that because I know that we also went through the same process of adjustment, he was shocked and I was also shocked. So I know that they need time to deal with their experience. I am more understanding.*

Her understanding and level of empathy could be seen as a way of coping, or dealing with the situation, whereby the anticipated disapproval was reinterpreted as necessary and positive within the specific situation.

**Husband 1:** He dealt with social reactions by treating them as a joke. He said, *“We only get some stare when we go out, but we joke about it.. No, we laugh it off”*. This way of coping can also be interpreted as degrading those people that react in such ways. In this way the possible impact of the social reaction becomes reduced or minimised.

**Wife 2:** She dealt with the anticipated social reactions by mentally preparing all the possible answers that she could be asked, and said, *“I am ready for all these questions”*. She also intended raising her son in a way that would enable him to deal with the experienced social reactions. This is what she said in this regard:

*I also want to raise my son in a positive way. Once he is able to talk, I want to help him to be able to answer these questions when people ask him without feeling embarrassed or shy. He should be ready.*

Being mentally ready to answer all the questions about the M-R relationship and child seems to bring a sense of control over the situation and a hope to reduce the pain of feeling embarrassed or shy. Tizard and Phoenix (1993) assert that communicating about race with M-R children is an important indirect strategy that most M-R parents use to assist their children cope with negative social reactions. There is also an idea that social reactions towards M-R couples or children could lead to feelings of embarrassment or shyness. The authors further state that the other indirect strategy to help M-R children cope with negative social reactions is to tell them to feel proud of themselves and not be embarrassed by their mixed parentage.

**Husband 2:** He dealt with negative social reactions by diverting his attention from them. In this regard, he said, “*Well sometimes when you talk to people they give you negative reactions. Sometimes I cannot be bothered*”. Another way of dealing with the negative reaction was by re-defining the situation as positive, as suggested by the following statement:

*I could see that when you go for interviews they want to see the wife and if they see her, I could see their non-verbal reactions and I could tell that the outcome wouldn't be positive. I didn't care if I do not get the job because I did not want to work with people like that. That for me was like an introduction to the kind of life I would have if I take the job.*

This shows that re-interpretation of the social rejection as avoidance of possible future problems might serve as a strategy to reduce the pain of being rejected.

**Husband 3:** What this participant did to deal with the anticipated social reactions was to mentally prepare himself, and accept the reactions. He said:

*Before I asked her to be my girlfriend, I expected things like that. So I prepared myself for that... If people are not happy about it, and they want to reject me, they are welcome to do that. It doesn't matter whether they are friends or family or just a visitor. If they want to reject me, they must do it, I don't care.*

It is apparent that this state of being mentally prepared and willing to accept the possible social rejection might diffuse the emotional impact that the negative reactions or rejection might have on him.

**Wife 4:** She pointed out that the over-exposure to negative reactions resulted in her feeling desensitized to the extent that she could divert her attention away from it. She said:

*I used to cry almost every day out of frustration and ask myself why people are so mean. I never could understand the people's reaction...Now, I am not usually bothered by the people's stares. We used to get nasty reactions. After a while I said what a heck, it's like I developed a thick skin. So, somehow that experience desensitized me... I decided there is no point in getting annoyed.*

She went on to say that most people in M-R relationships cope by developing a thick skin or just ignoring the social reactions. She phrased it thus: *"People who are in mixed-race relationships either developed a thick skin or they just do not notice people's reactions"*. This affirms the point already made that by diverting one's attention from the painful reaction, one might reduce the emotional impact that the painful reaction might have.

**Wife 5:** This partner resorted to rationalising as a strategy or means to deal with feelings of blameworthiness and guilt for the past political injustices in South Africa. This is how this emerged:

*I wish we had leaders that incorporated everybody and we had democracy since the beginning. Things would be different, we wouldn't be having this conversation about interracial relationships, everything would be the same. We would have been on the same boat right from the beginning... I was like I'm being blamed.*

In some way, by rationalising, re-defining and explaining the cause of the different social categories, the feeling of being blameworthy gets reduced, as it gets diverted to the past political system.

**Wife 6:** This partner dealt with the deep emotional break or rejection by convincing herself to accept the situation and her father's decision. She said:

*I cried and later I thought to myself, 'OK, let me not go with my emotions, I must accept it...' So, it was a very difficult time...It is difficult to cut off those thought and feelings about him...I remembered when Nkosi and I started going out, I used to have these nightmares, and I would hear my dad using all these horrible words that Afrikaans people used to say about black people and I would literally wake up in a cold sweat, because you want your dad's approval.*

She also convinced herself to accept that she felt guilty for going against her father's will, as suggested in the following statement: *"I admitted it to myself that I feel guilty, because I still felt that I went against his wishes...but I decided that if I want to respect him, I need to respect his decisions"*.

This rationalising and self-blame could result in a general sense of dissatisfaction and possible psychological problems rather than a reduction of the actual pain experienced from being rejected, (also indicated in her clinical observations in part one above). Solsberry (1994) postulates that many persons involved in interracial marriages experience conflicting feelings regarding themselves and their families, and have guilt feelings for the "transgression" of marrying outside their own race. She dealt with these feelings by ignoring the social reactions: *"Now that I have been in this*

*relationship for so long, I don't even notice it*". This style of dealing with challenging situations develops over time.

#### **5.7.1.2 Integrated discussion and interpretations**

Wives 4 and 6, and husband 2; dealt with negative social reactions by ignoring or diverting their attention away from them. By diverting the attention away from a painful experience or simply ignoring it, the actual social reaction does not change; but its impact on the participants' emotions might be reduced or even removed. Tizard and Phoenix (1993), and Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995), conclude that people in M-R relationships use the strategy of ignoring and diverting attention as a way of shutting out negative social reactions and racism. The authors (of both works) indicate that although the strategy (of shutting out) often works, it can also leave one startled when such reactions get past the barrier one has put up.

Wife 2, as well as husbands 1 and 3, used mental and emotional preparedness to deal with perceived or anticipated negative social reactions. Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995) argue that because shutting out or ignoring might not always work, some people in M-R relationships use mental preparedness or a perceptual alertness to negative reactions and racism in order to deal with such situations more effectively.

Wives 5 and 6 used the strategy of rationalising the perceived or anticipated negative social reactions. This strategy, as used by the two participants, however, resulted, in a sense of self-blame for not conforming to her in-group in the case of wife 6. Wife 5 diverted the blame of racism to the past political context. Self blame for not conforming to one's own racial category might result in more intense emotional pain, than when the blame for different racial categories or the resultant racism is diverted to an external socio-political context.

Acceptance and understanding were also used as strategies to deal with negative social reactions. Wife 6 and husband 3 used acceptance as the last option in their efforts to convince or negotiate with people to approve the M-R relationship. The two participants also experienced intense family disapproval of their relationship. The acceptance of the negative family or social reactions might be the only option they have. Wife 1 used understanding and empathy as a strategy to deal with the perceived or anticipated negative reactions. This could be seen as a form of acceptance of the negative social reactions. What makes her different in her ways of dealing with the perceived and/or anticipated negative reaction is that she used empathy in order to understand or easily accept the social reactions.

Couple 1 dealt with negative social reactions by 'laughing it off'. Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995), assert that people in M-R relationships minimize negative social reactions and racism by trivialising them. The authors indicate that this may be a way of keeping pain to the minimum.

The above ways of dealing or coping with negative social reactions are more internal to the self, and thus are, intra-psychic defence mechanisms. As much as these ways of coping are internal to the self they are, however, derived from and preceded by social relationships. This finding is in line with the beliefs of radical constructivist theorists like Bruner (1990) and Vygotsky (1978), who argue that the mind constructs reality. Though these authors believe that reality is constructed within the mind, or is internal to the self, they also argue that individual constructions are derived from, and are preceded by, social relationships. The findings of this study indicate how internal individual processes are interrelated and influenced by the shared social context.

### **5.7.2 Avoidance or escaping from the situation**

**Criteria:** These include any comment or report that involved avoiding, hiding and/or escaping from the external situation in order to reduce emotional

impact. This will also include behaviours such as deliberately avoiding to tell the truth (that is, secrecy or lying about the M-R relationship) in order to avoid social rejection.

### **5.7.2.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are the descriptions and verbatim examples of the ways of coping by avoiding, and/or escaping from the external situation in order to reduce its emotional impact on the partners.

**Wife 2:** The participant remarked that social reactions towards her family were so intense to an extent that her first son 'copes' by hiding his little brother in order to avoid the stares and questions. She said, *"Sometimes the impression that I stole the baby is worse when I am with my other son. He sometimes even gets to the point of covering the little one with a blanket to avoid the staring and the people to go away"*.

**Wife 3:** This participant dealt with the anticipated social reaction by staying in the house all the time when they were visiting her home, in order to avoid negative social reactions. She said, *"I did not feel comfortable outside because people talk and criticize me"*.

**Husband 3:** He dealt with his parents' reaction by not telling them that the relationship was still continuing, in order to avoid the shouting. He said, *"My parents said they didn't want to know anything about this relationship... he was still shouting at me sometimes, you know. Then I just didn't say anything about the relationship. I kept it a secret... So, my father thought it's over with us"*.

**Wife 5:** She indicated that her partner dealt with the fear of rejection by avoiding contact with white people. She said, *"He is still very afraid of being with my white friends... I think it's because he might be afraid to hear the things that might be said or being judged"*.

She also dealt with the possible rejection from her grandfather by deciding not to tell him about the M-R relationship in order to avoid being disinherited and causing family disruptions. She stated the following as regards this aspect:

*My grandfather doesn't know. If he did, he would disinherit me... He is so strong in his feelings towards blacks that it would cause major disruption in the family. My father might stand up for me and my grandfather may even disown my father (his own son).*

She also indicated that they both dealt with the negative social reaction by avoiding physical closeness when in public. In this respect she said, *"We tried to provoke as little attention as possible... we will walk into a restaurant and go sit at the back, we will walk in the shopping centre not holding hands"*.

**Wife 6:** She dealt with the expected reaction from her father by deliberately not mentioning her partner's surname. She said, *"When I phone him to tell him that now I'm dating someone, I was afraid to tell him what Nkosi's surname was or that he is black because I knew that was going to immediately put him off"*.

**Husband 6:** This partner dealt with the frustrating situation by avoiding physical confrontations and fights; and escaping or leaving from the situation. He said, *"When we are sitting and talking, you know the Zulus, they wouldn't want to speak English, and that frustrate me, I'll feel like boxing someone... I usually just stand up and go"*.

### **5.7.2.2 Integrated discussion and interpretation**

Most of the participants used avoidance as a way of dealing or coping with the perceived or anticipated negative reactions. Most of the participants, specifically wives 2, 3 and 5, as well as husbands 5 and 6, dealt with negative reactions by avoiding publicity or physical contact with people that might react, or have reacted negatively. Strategies used for avoidance included the

following: avoiding physical fights; and avoiding physical contact in public (like walking whilst holding hands or avoiding sitting together in environments where the negative reactions might occur).

Wife 2's son and wife 3 also avoided physical contact by hiding. Tizard and Phoenix (1993), and Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995), confirm that most people in M-R relationships use avoidance as a way of dealing with negative social reactions and racism. These authors indicate that avoidance of physical fights and situations where negative social reactions might occur were reported to be the safe and effective way of dealing with negative reactions. Previous research results have indicated that parents in M-R relationships mostly encouraged ignoring or avoidance strategy for their (M-R) children (see Tizard & Phoenix, 1993).

### **5.7.3 Directly confronting the situation.**

**Criteria:** Any comment or report that involved directly confronting or tackling the situation in order to reduce or remove its impact will be included in this subcategory. This will involve using verbal skills like negotiations, persuasion, communicating with someone or praying to God. This will also include strategies like threats to cut family ties in order to reduce or remove the impact of the rejection.

#### **5.7.3.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are the descriptions and verbatim examples of the ways of coping by directly confronting or tackling the external situation in order to reduce its emotional impact on the partners.

**Wife 2:** She resorted to prayer in order to cope with the perceived reaction and fears. She said:

*Yes my family reacted negatively and I think it was through God that I coped with the situation...In one of my dreams my mom was like digging in my tummy as if she wants to kill the baby but I prayed.*

She also coped by communicating with others and asking for help and support, as indicated in the following statement: *“I ask[ed] the church to help me pray before the child was born”*. Through prayer, people confront or deal with difficult situations, and communicate difficult situations to God in order to reduce the emotional impact of such situations. She also resorted to using threats to cut ties with her family in order to change their negative reaction toward the white partner. She said, *“I told them that I am not going to change. I really love this man; if they do not want to accept him, then it means I am also not accepted”*. This could be seen as a way to persuade her parents to change their negative reaction towards the white partner or face losing her.

**Wife 3:** She dealt with the anticipated social rejection by negotiating with her friends and convincing them to accept her. She said, *“I told my friends one month after going out with him. I explained to them my situation and ask them not to reject me or treat me somehow. I also told them that I hope we could continue with our friendship like we use to”*.

**Husband 3:** He dealt with his parents' rejection of the M-R relationship initially by negotiating with them. He said to his girlfriend, *“I will talk to them. Each one of them separately and maybe their perception will change. If I talk to them and I explain to them, as they change I tell her”*. After negotiations had failed, he gave them no option by getting engaged to her, and persuading them to accept her, as indicated in the following statement:

*My parents said they didn't want to know anything about this relationship.. They don't want to hear anything about it; they don't want to see anything about it. So, I didn't tell them, but I just knew that if I just got engaged, I'd get them to get used to it. I had to stick with that.*

The persuasion did not seem to work with his father. He then resorted to using threats to cut ties with his family in order to change his father's stance of rejecting him. He said, *"There were some changes, in the sense that he is not shouting at me any more. Because I said to him I'm not coming to Pretoria without her anymore"*. He also coped by talking to people at church about the family's negative reaction. In this regard, he said, *"I talked to this one guy in my church... I told him about the relationship and how my parents reacted to the relationship, and he shook his head and said: 'We will just pray for you guys, and that your parents accept this relationship.' "* This could be viewed as a form of social support.

**Wife 6:** This partner could not cope with the father's rejection, but still hoped to be accepted. She then decided to confront him, as indicated in the following statement:

*I phoned and ask him why he is speaking to Amy and Hendrick but not to us. He said in a very sarcastic way, you are one step better than Amy... I think when he said that sentence, he meant that Amy made her choices and he is not happy with that, and I'm even worst off. Meaning that coloured is better than black.*

Her efforts in confronting her father resulted in the rejection becoming more intensified, emotional pain and strife.

### **5.7.3.2 Integrated discussion and interpretation**

Wives 2, 3 and 6, together with husband 3, used negotiation as a direct strategy to change the experienced negative reactions. Negotiating or convincing people to change their initial reaction towards the M-R relationship did not result in the desired effect (except for wife 3). A failed negotiation attempt for wives 2 and 6, as well as husband 3, was followed by attempts to persuade people to accept their M-R partners or relationships. For all the three participants, persuading their families to accept their partners did not

work, and all efforts resulted in the cutting of ties between the family members. Negotiation and persuasion are some of the non-violent strategies of confronting negative social reaction. Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995), make the point that most people in M-R relationships avoid using confrontation in dealing with negative social reactions. Confrontation with people who disapproved or who were discriminatory was avoided because it carried a high risk of physical and emotional hurt for the partners and their children.

Wife 2 and husband 3 dealt with the negative reactions from their families by communicating with people at church. Church people might have been approached for support because of their perceived or anticipated positive and supportive position on M-R relationships. Tizard and Phoenix (1993) indicate that confronting negative reactions might involve combining with others to tackle the issue, or for support. Submitting the negative reactions to the authorities or God through prayers was also used by the two participants and the people they communicated with about the negative reactions. Praying could be seen as communicating or referring the difficulty to the highest authority within a specific social context.

#### **5.7. 4 Differentiating and social re-categorization**

**Criteria:** These include any comment or statements that could result in one feeling good or better about choosing a partner from the out-group, more especially in cases of direct social disapproval of the M-R relationship. This entails strategies like differentiating, re-categorising, justifying and defending.

##### **5.7.4.1 Descriptions and examples**

The following are the descriptions and verbatim examples of the ways of coping by directly confronting or tackling the external situation through the use of differentiating, justifying and/or defending, in order to reduce its emotional impact on the partners.

**Wife 1:** She differentiated between her partner and other white South Africans. This is evident in this comment:

*Yes. I think I am still stuck seeing things in terms of colour, because we had our previous experience, and he grew up in Ireland, he came here when he was 15 years and he did not grow up in this apartheid environment, he learnt a lot of things about how to treat black people but deep down he is not a racist.*

This differentiation was made in the context where she was commenting on how racist white South Africans were. Differentiating between the two groups of whites and re-categorising her partner as non-racist might result in the reduction of the negative effect of being in the M-R relationship, as indicated in 5.4.2 above. Defending and re-categorising him as someone who is not a racist might result in a positive feeling about being with him and not any other white South African.

**Husband 1:** He differentiated between low class and high class black people when he explained his discomfort of being in a black community. He said:

*I mean small things like Thebe drops off the kids at Soweto, I feel very uncomfortable in Soweto. I never experienced anything like that, I mean such a mix of people, and I also said to myself, 'Thebe is of a different class from the people living next to her mother. She is just of a different class. You wouldn't get anywhere where a person who is sweeping streets is living next to someone who is working as a professional. I struggle with the whole thing... When I am in Soweto I do not have a sense of safety for her or for me and for the children. I often get these panic attacks'.*

It can be argued that by re-classifying his partner as belonging to a different class might result in the development of a better feeling about his choice of a partner from the out-group.

**Wife 2:** This participant differentiated between Afrikaans-speaking and British white South Africans when explaining why she thought her partner was not a racist. She said:

*Sometime some of the people speak to my child in Afrikaans and I always tell them that he is not Afrikaans-speaking, he is British. Not that I am against them but I do not think if I was approached by an Afrikaans-speaking white I would go out with him... I do not think I would have the guts to go out with an Afrikaans-speaking person.*

The differentiation between the two groups might be a way of reducing or minimizing the negative feeling (as described in subcategory 5.4.2 above).

**Husband 2:** He differentiated black people in terms of their educational levels, when he mentioned the type of black people he had been in contact with. He said, *“And you see I have been in contact mostly with educated people, and even in my previous relationship, her family members were mostly educated”*. It could be suggested that being with educated black might result in feeling better about the choice of the person of the out-group.

**Wife 4:** This partner differentiated between white South Africans of British origin and other white South Africans, when explaining his family’s (her partner’s families’) acceptance of the M-R relationship. She said *“He is South African, but more from a British origin... [he] and his family are more like me, very open-minded.”* It might be that distancing herself and her partner from the attitude and mentality of most South Africans (as indicated above in 5.6.4) might result in the reduction of the shock she experienced about the prevalence of racism in South Africa.

#### **5.7.4.2 Integrated discussion and interpretations**

The strategies used by the five participants above to deal with the way they felt about being in a M-R relationship involved the cognitive re-categorization

of their partners. The partners are re-categorized in terms of category-congruent behaviours on stereotyped dimensions such as, being racist, educational level, social class, non-South African origin, and so forth. This process is similar to the process used in social categorization, whereby similarities within the group are accentuated or exaggerated, and differences between the groups are not. Tajfel (1999) defines this as a cognitive process known as categorical differentiation. The participants of this study differentiated and compared between the in-group and the out-group. After such social comparison and differentiation, they used justification and defending to accentuate similarities between themselves and their partners even if the partner was from the out-group. They identified positive aspects (or category-congruent behaviours such as not being racist, educated, higher class, and so on) about their partners (as compared to other members of their group). There were also subtle suggestions that their re-categorized partners were more similar to them than to the other members of their group. Baron and Byrne (2003) describe re-categorization as shifting the boundaries between an individual's in-group ('us') and some out-group ('them') in such a way that persons formally viewed as out-group members may now be viewed as belonging to the in-group. Spears, *et al.* (1997) assert that re-categorization leads to changes in the perceptions of the inter-group boundaries and reduces bias by increasing liking for the former out-group members.

## **5.8 CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter the results of the study were discussed. The first part provided the background information and profiles of the participants. The second part involved the discussion of the meaning the participants attached to their respective M-R relationships, the perceived or anticipated reactions from others, and the ways the participants dealt with the experience of being in a M-R relationship. In the discussion the results were integrated with the relevant literature, and interpreted in terms of the relevant theoretical constructs. The cross references made between the main categories during the discussion and interpretation of the results indicated that there is a

recursive relationship between the meaning attached to the M-R relationship, perceived and/or anticipated reactions from others and the strategies used to deal with the experience of being in a M-R relationship. In the next chapter a summary of the main aspects that provide the essence of these categories, will be given, and their interconnectedness will be presented. Conclusions based on the presented summaries will be discussed and integrated with the objectives of this study.

## **CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

A summary of the findings, and conclusions drawn from this study, will be presented in this chapter. Furthermore, recommendations for strengthening the well-being of M-R couples, their families and communities will be made. It is through good structures, such as wholesome families or communities, that a higher level of multi-cultural awareness and integration can be effected. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the most important limitations of the overall study as well as suggestions for follow-up investigations.

By adopting a qualitative methodological approach, certain patterns in the collected information were found. The analyses and interpretations of the data or information were presented on three levels: (1) the intra-personal level, that focused on the couple's internal motivation sources, psychodynamic processes or cognitive mechanisms, (2) interpersonal level, focusing on processes between individuals (rather than groups) within a given situation, and (3) the inter-group level, focusing on processes between groups, differences in social positions, as well as values and practices which served to legitimise and maintain the existing social order. Summaries of the experiences, challenges and processes at all three levels of analyses will be discussed. Conclusions based on the presented summary will be discussed and integrated with the overall objective of this study.

#### **6.1.1 The intrapersonal level**

This level provides summaries of a partner's internal psychological processes, descriptions, perceptions, challenges and emotional experiences.

As is the case with any intimate relationship, a M-R relationship goes through processes and phases of adjustment. On an individual level the M-R relationships were mainly defined and described in a positive manner by most of the participants. In contrast to many theories of interracial relationships that

typify the motives of interracial couples as pathological and different to that of same-race couples (see Davidson, 1992; Hulum, 1982, & Kalmijn, 1993), most of the participants were motivated by both interpersonal rewards (like love, fidelity, companionship, and so forth) as well as by inter-group rewards, like learning more about other racial groups, changing racial stereotypes, breaking bondages of racism, rebelling against racial separation and dealing with the guilt of past oppressive race relations. When interpersonal reasons were used as motivation for being involved in a M-R relationship, the relationship tended to be described in a more positive manner as compared to the case where more extended socio-cultural reasons, such as rebelling against social pressure or spiritual factors, were primarily used as justification for the relationship.

Most of the participants acknowledged the negative effect that the socio-political context of apartheid and racism had on their perceptions about people of the out-group. These perceptions were tied to painful experiences and awareness of, for example, deep-seated animosity, hatred, mistrust and negative attitudes towards people of the out-group, followed by a need to let go of racist ideas and beliefs about people of the out-group along with a positive attitude change. The need to let go of a racist mindset was clearly linked to the experience of the intimate contact with a person from the out-group (Morrall, 1994). This contact dissolved internalized negative schemata about people of the out-group (Baron & Byrne, 2003). Most of the participants experienced this phase as an advantage, a phase of growth, and also as a process of individuation rather than a crisis. This conclusion is also in line with the views of a number of authors and researchers (see Johnson & Warren, 1994; Rosenblatt, *et al.*, 1995; Huber, 1976; Yancey & Yancey, 2002).

The initial reactions to falling in love with a racially different person was, therefore, characterised by the challenge of reconciling that which an individual chose or decided to do (that is, loving or being involved with a person from the out-group) and dissolving negative attitudes and preconceived ideas about people of the out-group. For some of the participants, the process of self-evaluation (in relation to the people of the out-

group) and conciliation started before they could even commit themselves to the M-R relationship.

In other words, the more racist the socio-political context was, the more difficult it was to dissolve racist attitude and stereotypes about people of the out-group. The context in which the couple met seemed to play a crucial role in this regard.

During the process of self-evaluation and re-viewing old internalised racial stereotypes and attitudes about people of the out-group, most of the participants experienced conflict or what Baron and Byrne (2003) refer to as cognitive dissonance. Various cognitive strategies, such as differentiation and social re-categorization were used to deal with the dissonance. This allowed most of the partners to re-configure or reshape previously constructed racial categories. The use of differentiation and re-categorisation were effective in dealing with the conflict or dissonances that the partners experienced about the M-R relationships. However, these strategies did not result in the complete re-construction of racial stereotypes or cognitive schema about people of the out-group, but rather contributed to the re-categorisation of the individual partner as a member of the in-group. Ratele (2003) refers to similar ways of adjusting within the post-apartheid era where labels like a “hard working black man” or a “non-racist Afrikaner boss” were used instead of relating to each other beyond race or physical appearance. In this way racial stereotypes related to all the people of that racial group may remain unchanged, but some members are removed or shifted to a different category. Some white participants distanced their self-definition from the white racial group and developed more interest in and empathy for black people. In some instances, cognitive dissonance was resolved by one distancing oneself from the general South African racial identifications.

Strong emotional experiences (both positive and negative) of the participants were related to family and social reactions towards the M-R relationship. If the out-group was perceived as belonging to a higher social level, the participants generally reported positive emotions such as a sense of pride or improved

self-esteem. In cases where the out-group was perceived as belonging to a lower social level, the participants reported negative emotions such as guilt, irritation, shame and embarrassment about past injustices of the apartheid era. This view was also expressed in Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995) and, Yancey and Yancey (2002). This may also be regarded as a coping strategy, since accepting that one feels embarrassed or guilty about the M-R relationship itself might result in a sense of cognitive dissonance again.

Most black participants reported more positive emotions such as a sense of pride for having broken through a higher social level, while some white participants reported more negative emotions for being tied to a lower level of social functioning or being treated by people of the white community as inferior.

This negative social reaction towards the white partner also suggests that the coping strategy of relating the feeling of guilt and embarrassment to the past apartheid era is effective only to the extent of reducing the experienced cognitive dissonance, but not in altering social reaction towards the white partner. This dilemma highlights the finding that, although the process of adjusting to being in a M-R relationship is a private and intra-psychic process, it cannot be understood without acknowledging the interpersonal and inter-group contexts and processes.

This finding confirms the interpretive value of integrating a constructivist approach with some aspects of social constructionist approach in the development of an understanding of patterns and processes across time and context (Kelly, 1999).

### **6.1.2. Interpersonal and inter-group level**

These levels of interpretation are directed at integrating interpersonal processes, perceptions and challenges between the partners of the M-R couples as well as their families. They (the levels) also highlight the issues of

race, socio-economic status, gender, as well as the values and practices which inform and maintain the existing social order.

Through the process of social comparison and categorization (perceived in both white and black participants' social groups) the white social group was regarded as higher or superior than the black social group on dimensions like race, class, economic position or economic power, and intellectual ability. This resulted in white people regarded as having a positive social collective identity and black people with a negative one (see De la Rey, 1991; Fanon, 1986; Hook, 2003; Tajfel, 1981; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Ratele & Duncan, 2003).

Except for previously used legislation, various strategies and actions were employed, especially by family members, to enforce or encourage remaining within the social category that one belongs in. Most white people, as reported in this study, used indirect or subtle influences, such as inflating prices or creating barriers to certain services or areas, to enforce racial separation. On the contrary, black people used direct influences like saying discouraging comments or preventing the white partner from participating in family rituals. In this way the resolve of the M-R relationship met with challenges from both racial groups. The more racist and conservative the family was described as, the more direct influence was used to enforce conformity to the prescribed social category and norms, as well as to discourage the continuation of the M-R relationships.

Some studies suggest that high-status groups are more likely to discriminate than low-status groups (Caddick, 1982; Fang, *et al.*, 1998; Crocker, *et al.*, 1987). This finding was confirmed by the different reactions from the participants' families and communities. Black families and communities were described as more accepting and approving of race mixing than white families and communities. Some participants indicated that the more racist and lower the level of education of the social context was, the more negative were the social reactions towards the M-R couples (Case & Greeley, 1990). Reactions such as frustration, anger, distancing, obsessing about racial boundaries and racism from the white people could be related to a perceived threatened

social status. On the other hand, reactions of appreciation and respect from the black people could be linked to the sense of pride and the need to gain a higher social status. Black participants were better treated by their fellow black people, while white participants were treated as inferior or holding a lower social status by their fellow white people.

Despite the observation that the black community was described as more accepting of the M-R relationships, some of the younger black males and female friends of the participants in this study directly expressed a sense of envy or loss of a possible partner to the out-group. Similar findings were reported in most of American literature. An example in this regard is Bernard (1981). Different gender reactions (from both races) also indicated social efforts in maintaining and enforcing loyalty to the in-group.

In most instances, the implications of social comparison were preferential treatment for members of the in-group and discrimination against those belonging to the out-group. One of the advantages or gains of M-R relationships was described as the gaining of more access, through the other partner, to privileges of people of the in-group. On the other hand, the disadvantages, losses, or challenges expressed by most of the participants indicate a price one pays for making an individual choice (that is, difference) rather than a group choice (that is, conforming to the group norm). The experience of M-R couples is that they do not belong to any racial category, and thus feelings of being marginalised are inevitable. Their experience of disadvantages, losses or challenges was mostly related to feelings of rejection. This aspect was expressed even though none of the participants experienced direct discrimination or racism when they publicly presented themselves as a couple. The discrimination was thus very subtle.

Reported family and social reactions towards the M-R relationships pointed to a general level of mistrust between the two racial groups. These reactions were mainly aimed at enforcing collectiveness rather than difference or individualism. The language used in enforcing racial separation reflected racial stereotypes or category congruent stereotypes towards people of the

out-group. This language was articulated in certain conversations or discourses with the aim of blaming or justifying their perceived social position. This aspect was also echoed by Potter and Wetherell (1992). The discourse used by most whites was that of justification of their perceived dominant social position, while most blacks used the language of blaming the dominant social group for their lower social position.

White families of the participants in this study initially reacted more negatively, or were more distant, to M-R couples than black families did. This finding was also confirmed in other South African research reports such as found in Donaldson (2000); Kekezwa, (2000); Khama, *et al.* (1990), Leqoca & Leqoca (1995); Mashego (2005) and Morrall (1994). Fang, *et al.* (1998) is an example of a non-South African study which has also confirmed this finding.

Hyslop (1995) defines the white South Africans' opposition to M-R relationships as a desire to maintain dominance. Fathers and older family members were reported as more disapproving of the M-R relationship. Most of the initial negative family reactions were followed by comments or actions that were aimed at discouraging the continuation of the M-R relationship. This illustrates some of the difficulties involved in relinquishing old, internalised racial stereotypes.

Most participants found it difficult to talk to their parents or friends about the M-R relationship. The difficulty was mainly due to the knowledge that either a family member or friend was racist or held conservative attitudes, the possible instability or division that the M-R relationship could cause within the family or social system, the fear of being rejected, and so on. These expectations resulted in more delays and difficulties in talking about the M-R relationship with their families. Knowing that parents or friends held liberal values resulted in fewer delays and difficulties in informing them about the M-R relationship.

Apprehension in disclosing the M-R relationship affirms the view that even if the participants have made individual choices, they still valued parental or societal approval. This finding is also supported by authors such as Almonte

and Desmond (1992), Donaldson (2000), Kekezwa (2000), Khama, *et al.* (1990), Leqoca and Leqoca (1995), Mashego (2005), and Prinzing and Prinzing (1991).

On an interpersonal level, the participants' M-R relationships seemed to threaten group membership, the stability of the family and social system. The introduction of a person from a different racial group threatened family stability as it resulted in family divisions, disruptions and pain. Most parents were reportedly faced with the challenge of having to review their stereotypes about people of the out-group. Adjusting to, or reaching the phase of, accepting a son- or daughter- in- law from a different race, to a certain extent, required the dissolution of old stereotypes about people from a different race. This assertion was also made by Spears, *et al.* (1997). Similar experiences were reported in the stories of parents of M-R couples presented by Almonte and Desmond (1992), Prinzing and Prinzing (1991), and Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995).

Processes like negotiation, convincing, persuasion, threatening to terminate the relationship with the disapproving parent, using available social support or praying, were used by the M-R couples as strategies to deal with their families' negative reactions. The subsequent acceptance of the M-R relationship by some of the parents was effected by a process of de-categorisation, where different racial categories were dissolved, and both the white and black parents started referring to a partner from the out-group as either 'daughter-in-law' or 'son-in-law'. The attitude change of some of the parents was mainly due to persuasion, whereas positive attitude changes observed from some of the couples' friends was voluntary and mainly due to contact or observation that it was possible for people of the out-group to live with people of the in-group, the point made by Baron and Byrne (2003).

Circumstances such as the seriousness of the M-R relationship, as expressed through an engagement, marriage or the birth of a M-R child, and the risk of losing a valuable relationship with their son or daughter, caused some of the parents to change their attitude and react positively towards the M-R

relationship. This was affirmed by authors like Johnson and Warren (1994), Kouri and Lasswell (1993), Kekezwe, (2000) and Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995).

As regards the M-R relationships considered in this study, the intimate contact between the partners resulted in the de-valuation of their racial differences; a finding which Carrim (2000) describes as the 'silencing of race'. This process of individuation and cognitive de-categorization involved completely dissolving the previously constructed black/white racial category (that is, the 'us' and 'them' category) and replacing it with the 'we' category, (Anastasio, *et al.*, 1997).

General social reactions, however, constantly reminded the couples about their racial differences. This finding confirmed previous research results indicating that the biggest problem for mixed-race marriages rests not with the partners themselves, but with family, friends and social reactions towards their relationship (Johnson & Warren, 1994; Olofsson, 2004). This finding could also be related to Fanon's (1986) views about how racial contact between black and white races proves to be problematic, and even pathogenic (in the sense of inducing psycho-pathological, inauthentic forms of identity) in contexts where one racial group maintains a powerful degree of aggressive dominance over the other.

Although a M-R relationship in this study group was perceived as an advantage on a personal level (for example, receiving preferential treatment, breaking bondages of racism and racial prejudice, developing unconditional friendships and/or standing out), the M-R couples in this investigation initially experienced negative family and social reactions or disapproval which resulted in the loss of valuable relationships, and other disadvantages or challenges. This observation is also reflected in the works of Johnson and Warren (1994), Olofsson (2004), Prinzing, (1991), Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995), and Yancey and Yancey (2002).

Receiving preferential treatment might be perceived as an advantage of being with a racially different partner. However, this essentially reflects general inter-

group patterns where services and benefits are socially or legally provided on the basis of group membership. Whereas these racially discriminating patterns of social and organisational behaviour can be exploited by M-R couples, it lies at the very heart of the interactive problems experienced by them. This inter-group pattern could account for the discrimination experienced by all people perceived as members of the out-group (Tajfel, 1981; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Baron & Byrne, 2003). Some of the participants indicated that preferential treatment between different racial groups was experienced negatively or as a disadvantage because it resulted in feelings of being rejected, isolated, and marginalised. By partaking in racially preferential patterns of social behaviour, dissonance was experienced and racially biased stereotypes were re-validated.

Most of the participants indicated that there were differences in cultural or traditional practices, and appear to have accommodated each other in terms of cultural expressions. Examples of these are: types and ways of processing food, family expectations and traditional gender roles. These processes of accommodating each other seem to relate primarily to cultural and gender dominance. Cultural and gender dominance is not, however, unique to M-R relationships. Such patterns of social relationships prevail within the South African context and in many societies (Bernard, 1981; Hood, 1983; Collins, 2003; Ingoldsby & Smith, 1995). Adopting a western culture or life style (such as food, socializing and living) resulted in a sense of loss or disconnection for some of the black participants. Ratele (2003) refers to this sense of disconnection as racial alienation and estrangement. Unlike day-to-day cultural lifestyles, abstract cultural practices like customs and rituals seem more difficult to change because of their strong connection to the ancestral belief systems (Monning, 1988; Seleti & Ngubane, 2005; De Villiers, 1985).

Language differences reflected another aspect of culture (Fanon, 1986; Louw-Potgieter & Giles, 1987; Scherer & Giles, 1979), and were described by most of the participants as a frustrating challenge. Within the M-R relationships considered in the present study, the use of different mother tongues was

experienced as a barrier when it came to expressing deep emotions or relating one's childhood experiences to one's partner. Outside the M-R family, the primary challenge for most partners was the inability to understand and relate to members of their partner's group. Being unable to understand or participate in the conversations resulted in their being unable to share and co-create meaning (Hoffman, 1990). This further resulted in feeling of isolation and not belonging to that specific social group.

In some instances, language differences were experienced by the participants as a tool used to discriminate against, and exclude, people of the out-group. This was done either intentionally or unintentionally. In cases where unstable or non-trusting M-R relationships were documented, being excluded, through the use of a different language, resulted in feelings of suspicion and mistrust. The use of language as a tool to exclude members of the out-group was mostly reported within black social settings. This could be related to the finding that the M-R couples who participated in this study were mainly accepted and exposed to the black communities rather than to the white communities.

Similar ideas were enforced by Group Areas Act, which had stipulated that a white person marrying a non-white person could not attract that person into the white group, but would have to become a member of the non-white group for the duration of the relationship (Ratele & Duncan, 2003). The Group Areas Act was repealed, but its suggested practices are still continuing in a more subtle way. Manzo (1996) suggests that this old piece of South African legislation, to some extent, gave expression to the fear of racial boundary crossing amongst the dominant social group.

Gender differences within the M-R relationship were expressed in two main areas of functioning; namely, (i) the expression of feelings, and (ii) the socio-economic hierarchy or status of the partners. Fundamentally, this seems to be a gender issue, as most females, irrespective of race, were more able to express their emotions than their male partners; and most females, irrespective of their race, seemed to be of a lower socio-economic hierarchy.

In most instances, the participants' racial identity was related to physical appearance and, consequently some black participants were expected to change their physical appearance to that of a white person. This expectation could be related to Fanon's (1986) concept of laccification and the collective inferiority complex amongst blacks imposed by the oppressive apartheid system.

Nevertheless, most of the participants indicated that, except for certain aspects of their cultural identity, there was no need or consideration to change their physical identity. Their main concern, however, centred on the racial identity or classification of their children, which concern was also confirmed by the findings of Sowards' (1993). This aspect resulted in some parents accepting the automatic racial classification of their children (or future children) as coloured, while other parents re-constructed their children's racial classification and categorization as 'mixed-race' or 'no classification' at all. In this way they dissolved the racial boundaries that were used to define their children.

Some participants expressed the wish that their children could integrate the best of both parents' cultural backgrounds. This point confirms the assertions by authors such as Fanon (1986) and Hood (2003), that the social categories and the subsequent social identities are socially constructed and changeable.

For some of the participants, the idea that none of them was coloured, and having their children automatically labelled 'coloured' seemed difficult to accept. Initially, some prospective grandparents tried to discourage the continuation of the M-R relationship by raising concerns and questions about the racial classification of the grandchild. Similar findings were also reported by Johnson and Warren (1994), Shanks-Meile and Dobratz (1991), and Spickard (1989). Johnson and Warren (1994) point out that society's taboos are ostensibly not fully transgressed if no children are born from the relationship because there is no permanent blurring of boundaries between the groups. In essence, M-R children render the racial boundaries insignificant; their (the children's) very existence challenges the system.

Some participants were also concerned about the effects that social processes may have on their M-R children's racial identity and sense of relatedness. Tizard and Phoenix (1993) state that they found the majority of M-R children in their study did not experience the feelings of social isolation and rejection by both the white and black groups, which the marginalisation theories described as 'their fate'. These authors, however, also found that incidents of racism and discrimination were reported by most M-R children. Participants who expressed concern about the possible discrimination that their M-R children could face committed themselves to enlightening, educating, protecting and encouraging their children in ways that would equip them with skills to deal with such experiences.

Similar commitments were expressed by the M-R parents in a survey conducted by Prinzing and Prinzing (1991). The authors suggest that M-R children have the same need as all other children, but their needs are also unique, in the sense that they need conscious guidance for handling difficult racially-defined socio-cultural situations, as well as accurate in age-appropriate information about racism and how it might affect them.

## **6.2 CONCLUSION.**

Being in a M-R relationship involves a process of individuation, whereby individuals are required to review their collective socio-cultural existence and make a choice based on what they need or feel at that moment, rather than comply with prescribed group norms. M-R relationships represent an individuated choice or difference, as they go against what is socially prescribed as common or desirable.

A unique aspect of M-R relationships is that they attract huge social attention. Unlike same-race relationships, they carry the burden of being the subject of a continuous public discourse, despite being a private affair between two people who love each other (Donnan, 1990, and Sue, 2000). Continued social

comments on, and reactions towards, M-R relationships confirm their unfamiliarity or uncommonness. It is this non-conformist nature of M-R relationships that requires from the participants a high level of self-differentiation and individuation that challenges racial norms and cultural collectivism.

The difficulties that the M-R couples in this study, and some of their parents, to a certain extent, overcame in their quest to dissolve internalised racial stereotypes may also provide more insight in grasping the complex challenges involved in general processes of reconciliation. This is especially so when considering that reconciliation might entail dealing with complex issues such as nationality, ethnicity, culture and religion.

Being in a M-R relationship or having a M-R grandchild does not provide the couples and their extended family members with any option but to resolve possible racist mindsets and stereotypes. This observation was also made by a number of authors such as Johnson and Warren (1994), Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995), and Yancey and Yancey (2002). This is a challenge because other members of society might not understand or accept the existence of these relationships.

As was the conclusion in the works of Spears, *et al.* (1997); Tajfel (1981) and Taylor and Brown (1988), it was evident that social comparison and categorisation are inevitable social processes, leading to a stratified society, wherein members from different social groups either blame or justify their respective social positions. The choice made by some of the participants of this study to dissolve racial categories suggests the possibility of a united society. The reported social resistance and disapproval of M-R relationships, however, suggest that the environment is not yet completely conducive for a non-racial way of life in South Africa. This view also finds resonance in Kahn (2007). This will continue to pose a challenge to M-R couples, their offspring, as well as to the society at large.

Voluntary social contact that was observed on the personal and interpersonal levels, mainly from the participants' friends, resulted in positive attitude change, as well as hope for general racial attitude change, as suggested by the contact hypothesis (Baron & Byrne, 2003; Mynhardt & Du Toit, 1991).

M-R relationships cannot be understood without understanding the socio-political context within which they occur. The challenges of being an individual or 'unique', as compared to being viewed as part of a group or a 'collective', reflect the conflict that lies between individual and social levels of psychological functioning. This dualistic view or approach has resulted in the development of theories like social identity theory which is aimed at indicating the inevitable interconnection between the individual and social areas of functioning (Louw-Potgieter & Giles, 1999). The interpretive application of a constructivist approach, which is distinctly empathic, provided a deeper understanding of the internal cognitive processes and experiences of being in a M-R relationship. Combining constructivism with guidelines from a social constructionist approach also provided more in-depth understanding of racial difference; and how difference within an equalised socio-political context is constructed to maintain the prevailing socio-cultural order.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The challenges faced by M-R relations seem to require high levels of individuation, which may empower them and their children to be more effective in dealing with their extended families, negative social reactions and general disapproval. Professional counselling based on sound knowledge and insight might be of value in assisting the couples, their children and families in dealing with the experienced emotions.

In the light that M-R relationships cannot be understood without taking into account the prevailing socio-political processes, more emphasis should thus be placed on policies encouraging non-racial living and racial reconciliation which might be beneficial to M-R couples and their children.

It has been evident that present equality rights, policies and legislation for all South Africans are not adequately expressed in civil society. South Africa is still racially stratified and is culturally not integrated enough to accommodate M-R children and couples.

As indicated by authors such as Fanon (1986), Kerwin, *et al.* (1993), Labov and Jacobs (1998), Ratele and Duncan (2003), and Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995), the issue of racial classification or labels, however, seems to be a problem. The ideal social status for a united South Africa would be an environment where racial categories, classifications and hierarchies are completely dissolved, a phase hoped for and effectively demonstrated by M-R couples and M-R children. See also M-R studies by Kerwin, *et al.* (1993) and Rosenblatt, *et al.* (1995).

#### **6.4 LIMITATIONS**

Difficulties in identifying M-R couples that fitted the criteria of the present study resulted in the use of a small sample size. Qualitative research, on the other hand, does not easily offer the opportunity for replication and generalization of the results. The intention of qualitative research is to search for meaning rather than to prove a scientific fact or phenomenon.

The snow ball sampling technique used in recruiting participants for this study might have led to participants who were overly optimistic, which may have resulted in presenting a more positive expression of their life worlds, with the negative effects of being in the M-R relationship minimised.

Interviewer bias (Neuman, 2006) may have unconsciously played a role, with the researcher being a black female within the M-R relationship. Despite attempts made in avoiding leading comments and providing feedback during the interviews, researcher effects cannot be ruled out. In addition, the fact that the participant were of the researcher's relationship may have influenced their response.

Although the interview questions were as broad and open as possible, participants' responses may have been restricted to some extent.

## 6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FOLLOW UP STUDIES

One of the primary goals of a research, particularly a qualitative study, is to identify directions for future research. Enquiry into issues relating to mixed-race marriages, and children born from such relations, more especially in the South African context where few studies on this subject have yet to be undertaken

The issues raised in the summary, concluding comments and recommendations of this study serve as a basis for further investigations. Such investigations might include these fields:

- ❖ Exploring the experiences, perceptions and challenges facing M-R couples using a much bigger sample size. This might provide insight, more especially on broader social processes like family and social reactions to race mixing.
- ❖ Exploring the experiences, perceptions and challenges from the perspective of the parents and families of people who have decided to be in a M-R relationship.
- ❖ Comparing the effect of authoritative *vis-a-vis* non-authoritative or liberal attitudes and/or world views of parents or families.
- ❖ Exploring the experiences, perceptions and identity challenges and development of M-R children.
- ❖ Exploring the general social perceptions and attitudes towards M-R relationships from a social perspective.
- ❖ Comparing the experiences, perceptions and challenges of black/white couples with other racially mixed couples; for example, coloured/white, Indian/white or black/Indian couples.
- ❖ Exploring the life worlds of M-R couples who have attained high social status through their economically, politically and socially successful

careers (such as in the entertainment industry or politically or financially).

- ❖ Exploring social reactions towards M-R relations throughout South Africa.

It is hoped that this study will stimulate interest and further research in this field, leading to a greater understanding of the experiences and challenges of mixed-race couples and their children in the South African context.

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**APPENDIX A:**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

- 1.1 Name Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
Wife: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.2 Date of Birth Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
Wife: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.3 Nationality Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
Wife: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.4 Race Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
Wife: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.5 First Language Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
Wife: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.6 Date of Marriage/Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.7 Previous Marital Status Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
Wife: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.8 Previous M-R Marriage/Relationship Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
Wife: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.9 Occupation Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
Wife: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.10 Highest Educational Qualifications Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
Wife: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.11 Joint Monthly Income : +-R \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.12 Number of Biological Offspring: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.13 My/Our residential area is predominantly: black – white – mixed-race.  
(delete which ever is not applicable)

## APPENDIX B

### Informed consent form

#### For the participant

I hereby confirm that the interviewer has informed me about the nature, purpose and benefits of the study. I have been informed and was aware that the interview would be audio-taped. I understood that names and places will be changed when reporting the findings of the study to protect my identity. I have had enough opportunity to ask questions. I declare myself willing to participate in the study.

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### For the interviewer:

I hereby confirm that I have informed the above participant about the nature, purpose and benefits of this study.

Interviewer's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_