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Coloured subjectivies and black Africanness.

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APPENDIX D: THE CONTEXT AND PROCESS OF THE ANALYSIS

The methods section of this report reflects a bias towards the explication of my reactivities in regard to the research process. This bias highlights my position both as a historical as well as a racial subject. Given the centrality of both the experiences of the researcher and the researched in interpretive research methods (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999), I sought to craft an argument that fore-grounds and acknowledges my reactivities as the researcher right at the beginning of the report, to achieve the following considerations. In as much as this bias demarcated my reactivities out of the analysis, it also marked and announced their presence and ongoing influence throughout the process. Examples of these reactivities were included in my responses towards what the participants were saying; my thoughts and feelings about racial identities, and how raced subjectivities were playing themselves out in my interaction with the participants, my engagement with the history of race and racism, especially in Cape Town. I have chosen to discuss these reactivities at the beginning of the methods chapter as an acknowledgement of my having impacted on the data that I analyzed, and for the reader to take these into consideration as (s)he reads through the report.

As can be observed in the quotes that I used to illustrates points of discussion and argument, the excerpts are not always limited to what the participants were saying, it is the whole interaction (at least at the verbal level) that becomes a focus of analysis, highlighting my inextricability from the data in spite of the focus of analysis being biased towards the researched. Further, to the extent that this study focuses on subjectivities, and

not intersubjectivities, I considered the discussion of the possible role of this bias in Chapter 2 as the most prudent move to facilitate an analysis of a subject which would be too complex to engage were all the subjectivities made focal in the analysis, especially considering that it was not only the conscious manifestations of these subjectivities that were subject to analysis, but the unconscious aspects of these subjectivities too. Given all of these, it is clear then that focusing the analysis on my reactivities, was not part of the objectives for the current project, although such reactivities are acknowledged to have impacted on the process. It is reflections on 'coloured subjectivities' that I needed to put emphasis on, which emphasis potentially could be derailed if the focus was spread too widely, depriving the analysis of the depth that the focus I adopted afforded it.

It is with this in mind that I provide a further explication of the analysis process, specifically in regard to how I developed the broad themes which I have used as chapter titles.

The early stages

Given that the interviews were audio-recorded, I employed a research assistant to help transcribe most of the audiotapes, having transcribed a few of these myself. Once all of the tapes were transcribed, I checked each of them for accuracy, which I did by listening to all the tapes, while at the same time I was reading and making corrections where necessary. This stage did not involve any ordering of the information contained in the transcripts; however, it was an invaluable stage which contributed to my levels of

familiarity with the data. In addition to having conducted all the interviews myself, and having interacted with most of the participants beyond the two hours (on average) of the interview, I had gone through the tapes before the stage of transcription in preparation for subsequent interviews. The point of this description is to illustrate that I employed a data analysis approach based on Rae Sherwood's (1980) approach to analyzing life history material. Sherwood describes his approach as involving:

> 'self immersion in the interview material of one individual (the verbatim transcripts in full) staying with the material for as long as necessary for my empathy and insight to grow from within the data itself, throwing light on the patterning of that particular life' (p. 311).

Conducting the interviews, reviewing the recorded material in preparation for subsequent interviews, and conducting an accuracy check on the transcripts, all constituted aspects of the self immersion described above in the case of this research. It is apparent that part of what this process is meant to achieve is for the researcher to gain adequate familiarity with the material, a process that paves the way for the more involved process in which the development of empathy and insight and interpretation of material are the ultimate goals. This kind of self immersion in the research material provided an opportunity to see where field observations fitted in with the rest of the recorded material for each individual, and how different transcripts evinced related contents. Following a thorough reading and re-reading of the different transcripts, what emerged were the following preliminary, 'rough' themes:

- Performing race: being coloured through complicity
- Some of us are black and others are coloured: Intra-familial race relations
- The privilege of a ‘coloured identity’
- Couples in black and coloured: A child in this context
- Race and sexuality in processes of identity and identification
- Subjective relevance in the 1990’s: Sources of subjective transformation
- Shame vs pride in being coloured
- ‘Tabooization’ of interaction with blacks
- Contact in social spaces
- The coloured vote again
- The emasculization and hypermasculization of the black patriarch in coloured homes
- Home, even if it is racist

This list of possible themes came out of the process of self-immersion in the data, and as compared to the final list of chapter titles, it can be appreciated that it reflects a closer relationship with the data before interpretation. However, it cannot be denied that the data as it stood in the recordings, as well as the field observations were filtered through all that I was and all that I knew and was continuing to learn and incorporate in my experience at that point. This points resonates with Sherwood’s (1980) assertion regarding his project and the process of analysis when he says ‘naturally, all that I have learnt and thought about throughout a varied professional career in three continents has been brought into

play, but not in a consciously pre-determined way' (p. 312). The beginnings of this project were motivated by my professional experiences in Cape Town, as well as my personal experiences there. Even though this has not been fore-grounded as an aspect of analysis, its influence has been acknowledged. Further, my experiences as a raced as well as a potentially racist subject in a society that has pre-determined my relationship towards the participants inevitably played out while I tried to sift through and gain some insight into the data. For instance, for someone whose historical classification placed him in the lower rungs of the racial ladder, and who experienced the degrees of exclusion and deprivation associated with this social position, the access that a coloured name afforded one in regard to socio-economic resources was significant enough to warrant being discussed as a sub-theme in one of the chapters (Chapter 5). Possibly, this access would have been less significant for someone else whose experiences were different.

By the time I conducted the analysis, I had read broadly in the area of coloured identities, and how these interacted with other racial identities in South Africa. These historical appreciations, as well as the clinical theories in which I have been schooled (e.g. developing specific sensitivities in me (for example, regarding the state of being a child, the psychodynamics of shame and the dominance of the phallus in racial and gender relations) and my personal processing of these, primed me to attach more significance to some aspects of the data, and less to others. This way of integrating previous knowledge and experiences emphasizes that this project 'stands on and within a tradition and at times moves on and beyond the confines of that same tradition in keeping with a dynamic process' (Rawson, 2002, p. 55). This was not an isolated research project, and past and

present experiences as well as the context within which it was carried out would have an impact on the final outcome, whether this impact is acknowledged or not.

The latter stages

By its very nature, the relationship of the researcher-participant is asymmetrical. It is the researcher who conducts the background literature, conceptualizes the project, analyzes the data and writes the report (Mama, 1995). Although it is desirable that the researcher-participant relationship be characterized by equality as much as possible during the data gathering phase, it is impossible to maintain this at other stages of the process. The point that is being made is that the initial stages of the analysis, where the 'bottom up' approach is employed bear the closest relationship to the interviews as conducted and recorded. However, with the refinement of analysis, there tends to be a shift away from direct similarities between the data and the abstractions made of it. The challenge as the process continues, is to ensure that such interpretations and allocations of meaning are as strongly rooted in the data as possible. It is against this then, that the initial list was refined in an attempt to link the identified themes to bodies of literature that could help with the explanation of and meaning-allocation in relation to the data. The refinement process included the reading of drafts of chapters by my supervisors, who made invaluable recommendations that were in turn discussed, elaborated and modified accordingly. I cannot overemphasize the importance of this contribution by others, especially for a research project that foregrounds subjectivity. To the extent that this project still had to adhere to the prescriptions of scientific research, checking and

validation of interpretations by more than just the researcher is a crucial aspect of the process. Subsequently, the initial themes were refined as follows:

- Complicity
- Familial difference
- Privilege
- Mixed race childhood
- Sexuality
- Subjectivity and transformation
- Shame and pride
- Taboo
- Race and the public space
- Colouredness and the State
- Patriarchy
- Belonging

During this process which is similar to theme induction, as explained in Chapter 2, theme elaboration was taking place too, as conveyed by the difference between the two lists of themes provided above. To the extent that the second list represents a refinement of the first list, setting the stage for interpretation and writing up the report, it also represents a further consideration of the data through the process of self-immersion, resulting in a map through which to navigate the data. For each of the different themes identified, the whole body of data was re-considered and nodes of significant meaning were marked using a

colour marker and making notes and connections between the different transcripts. I have attached two transcripts as Appendix E1 and Appendix E2. The first one illustrates the early stages of data analysis, where I was marking and making notes regarding any information on the transcript that sounded significant based on my experience as well as what felt like the most deeply cathected moments of reflection in the interviews. Appendix E2 illustrates the latter process of analysis, where the coding was closely related to the themes that had been identified directly from the data, and refined through considerations of associated literature and supervision.

At the end, the list was reduced to five central themes, which allowed the compression of some of the themes that were identified earlier (e.g. race and the public space, colouredness and the state) into one theme (e.g. subjective transformation) or fewer more comprehensive themes. Further, it became apparent that there was a risk of the richness of the data being lost if the data was spread across too many themes. The five themes that remained and became overarching themes for the final chapters are as follows:

- Performing colouredness, abjecting blackness
- Intrafamilial 'racial difference'
- Coloured childhood
- Race, coupling and sexuality and
- Subjective transformation

Conclusion

One of the advantages of qualitative research and its prescription that a smaller sample be used is the manageability of the data produced. In turn, this manageability ensures depth of analysis, given that such human processes as empathy can be employed to lend the analysis a quality that would otherwise be impossible. Contrastly, for quantitative methods large samples are crucial because of the common aim in quantitative research to attain results are generalizable to more than just the sample used. Consequently, in this case more rigid methods of managing data are necessary to help deal with the large amount of data, whose careful management is invaluable for purposes of generalizability.

This does not suggest that careful management of data is not critical for qualitative research. Indeed, thematic analysis comprises clear stages that can be followed in analyzing data. However, part of the strength of qualitative research resides in its (transparent) flexibility, which allows the analysis to reach the crevices of experiences which rigid analytical methods would miss or exclude. The thematic analysis that was used for and described in this study capitalized on the manageable size of the sample and the resultant data, the acknowledged role that subjectivity plays in research, and the indispensability of empathy as a research and/or analysis tool, producing a depth and complexity in the analysis not easily achievable otherwise.