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COLOURED SUBJECTIVITIES AND BLACK AFRICANNESS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates the broad areas of race, racial identities and racism, and how these are articulated in the subjective experiences of coloured people. I use the term racism in the sense conveyed in Bickford-Smith's (1995) definition: racism occurs when signification attached to real or imagined biological and heritable differences in human beings is predominantly negative. However, I wish to recognize the complexities characterizing definitions and uses of the concept of racism (as discussed by Michael Banton (1988) amongst others), and the tendency to inflate this concept in the social sciences (Miles, 1989). In fact, Miles (1989) presents the strongest and the most eloquent argument that for racism to be of serious analytical value, it should be more narrowly defined as an ideology. In spite of this argument, Miles holds that even though explicit expressions of belief in the existence of biologically determined racial hierarchy are less common, and 'are much less widely articulated, especially in the formal public arena, a discourse of 'race' continues, along with a signification of somatic features and attribution of negatively evaluated characteristics to groups so defined' (p. 98). More importantly for this project, Miles argues that such general significations and negative evaluations can still be defined as racism. Coming to this conclusion, in spite of a detailed discussion of complexities characterizing definitions of the concept of racism, suggests that for different purposes, one can define racism more narrowly or broadly. For this study, which focuses on subjectivities, narrowing a definition of racism would

restrict access to the conceptual reaches made possible through interpretive research methods. A broader definition, open and sensitive enough to varying nuances and inflections has been preferred. In adopting Bickford-Smith's definition for this study, specific related concepts such as racial discrimination and prejudice are included in conceptualizing racism.

This thesis focuses on the negative signification that coloured people attach to their difference with black Africans. This does not imply that all coloured-black African relations are characterized by racism. However, my interest is in focusing on ongoing racism between these two groups, in pursuit of a different angle to engage racism and its role in processes of identity formation and articulation, a different angle that is, from dominant conceptualizations of racism as occurring between whites and black Africans. Further, the focus of this thesis is on how coloured people relate to black Africanness in a context where racial identities were hierarchized and legislated for, with coloured identity being accorded higher status in the hierarchy than black African identity, and whiteness being at the top. Within the likely forms of racism that would result, I have chosen to focus on coloured racism against black Africans. This is contrary to most studies which have focused on white racism towards black Africans.

This study also proposes that in addition to the socio-historical understanding of this phenomenon, the concept of the unconscious can be usefully employed, enabling a theorization that goes beyond the manifest expressions of coloured identities, a theorization that can infer aspects of the unconscious and a psychological dimension of racialized experience where reasonable evidence exists.

Aims

This thesis seeks to elicit an understanding of what it means to be (or to be called) coloured in a context where one has a close family or intimate relationship with black Africans. In particular, it seeks to elicit an understanding of coloured subjectivities in relation to black African identity, as well as other historical racial classification categories in South Africa (e.g. whites and Indians). To elaborate further, the study aims at eliciting and examining the life histories of selected individual coloured people in these contexts in order to explore their subjectivities. I use subjectivity in a sense that is similar to Mama's (1995), which implies viewing identity as dynamic and multiple, and entails the idea that people are not always rational and can produce contradictory versions of themselves and others. In this sense, both conscious and unconscious experiences, understandings, and personal meanings attached to who one is, are included in the analysis.

Objectives

As a way into understanding what it means to be coloured in the contexts explained above, this thesis explores a number of objectives, which I have divided into primary and secondary categories. Firstly, I propose to explore personal experiences and meanings of being identified (or self-identifying) as coloured, and secondly, to examine the dynamics characterizing the interaction between coloured and black identities in African-coloured

families or couplings. With regard to the latter, I focus on the following relationships which are crucial in the development of identities particularly during one's formative years: the parental couple; parent-child relationships; sibling relationships; extended family relationships with the nuclear family and finally community relationships with the nuclear family and/or individual family members.

The objectives that I have identified as secondary for this thesis relate to the broader social preoccupations and theoretical positions in relation to which it is hoped the thesis will offer a useful commentary and some illumination. In particular, such preoccupations and positions refer to the national project of racial and socio-political transformation in South Africa. This thesis examines how being racially identified (or self-identifying) as coloured relates to this national project in an era where *de*racialization carries high currency. Theorizing racial identities from the subjective perspective of coloured people, primarily as these identities relate to black Africanness, is intended both to locate and dislocate the place of colouredness as a South African concept within the discourses of race, 'racial identities' and racism.

This thesis uses a psychodynamic frame, the chief assumption of which is that everyone has an unconscious mind which contains repressed material, some of which finds a way into consciousness, albeit in modified forms. Psychodynamics enable an explanation or interpretation of behaviour or personal experiences in terms of inner emotional forces or processes. Wherever possible, the psychodynamic frame and assumptions run through this exploration (more so in some parts than others), serving as a lens through which

coloured subjectivities, the signification of otherness, personal perceptions, kinship and other social relationships will be scrutinized. In an article that argues for new ways of reading the social in South Africa, Nuttall (2004, p. 737) rightly comments that 'the question is, therefore, how to read the social which is about mutual entanglements, some of them conscious but most of them unconscious, which occur between people who most of the time try to define themselves as different'. What this suggests is that the unconscious and its 'contents' play a significant role in how racial identities are lived and experienced. Psychodynamic theories are well placed to examine and comment on these lived experiences.

Rationale

In line with what has been written about similar groups of people elsewhere in the world, (for example the "mulattoes in the US, the creoles in Reunion Island) the group that has come to be called coloured people (or Cape Coloureds or Brown people) in South Africa represents a group on whom the complex history of this country has come to bear quite significantly. Most of what has been written about this group has focused on historical, political, anthropological and sociological perspectives. Contributions from psychology have mainly been general, and commonly from the social psychological subfield. Minimal attempts to give a depth psychological understanding of "mixed race" experience can be found in the literature. One exception is Du Pre, (1994) who makes reference to Jungian analysis of the development of the racist Afrikaner. It is to this aspect of analysis, that is, a depth psychological analysis, that this thesis seeks to

contribute. The study that follows intends to embrace and use the psychoanalytic assertion that past experiences and relationships play an important role in shaping one's current reactions, attitudes, interactions, perceptions and other intrapersonal and interpersonal behaviour. It seeks to explore the subjective experiences and perceptions of people that are part of families officially designated as coloured who also have close family or intimate relationships with black Africans. This study foregrounds families thus characterized and examines the racially inflected lived experiences of their members.

As will be shown through the literature reviewed in Chapter one and subsequent chapters, much as the psychological or more specifically the psychoanalytic approach to understanding the experience of this "colonial legacy" is imperfect, it still holds the potential to elucidate an important dimension of coloured identity experiences. To the extent that the psychodynamic approach cannot capture and explain everything that is implied in identifying or being identified as coloured, other social science approaches will be utilized. In addition, recorded experiences of similar groups from other contexts where race and racism became implicated in people's lived experiences and processes of identity formation will be drawn upon to ensure a more comprehensive analysis and understanding.

Using the vantage point of the family, couple or similarly related pair or group of people gives this exploration a certain degree of immediacy, and distinguishes it from macro studies of coloured identity, where the main objective is to make general, group-level statements about being coloured. Yet it might also provide a starting point from which

more general and nuanced statements can be initiated. This is so especially in a context where historically African*ness* (in this case black Africanness) was not a sought after signifier for most coloured people, with coloured identity signifying less than white but better than black. In this respect this study may offer some new insights on aspects of coloured identity.

The present research project can be viewed as a micro-study which will contribute to current debates about racism both in South Africa and internationally. It also bears the potential to examine a unique dimension of inter-group racial relations in South Africa (i.e. between black Africans and coloured people) which have been acknowledged to be antagonistic at times. It is an exploration that takes place within a transformative moment for South Africa, where racial identities especially are continuously being evaluated, constructed and reconstructed.

Most studies that have been done on race and identity have focused on black and white differences (see De la Rey & Boonzaaier, 2002). Very few studies have been conducted to examine subjective relations between black Africans and coloured people. One of the few studies in this area has been that conducted by Stevens (1998), who found that coloured people he interviewed constructed their identities and positions in relation to the 'other'. Specifically, this other in Steven's research was represented by black Africans, who through the years had been perceived to be an economic, physical and social threat By extension of what Stevens found through his research, the 'other' can also be whites, who unlike 'black Africans' have been viewed in a more positive light, with desire to be

or approximate whiteness being the guiding influence on this self-construction. Thus a previous gap in the archive of race studies in South Africa will begin to be filled by exploring the processes and dynamics characterizing race relations in African-coloured families or couplings, and associated subjectivities. De la Rey and Boonzaaier (2002) conclude that contributions to the South African literature on the differences amongst blacks in relation to race and identity are greatly needed. The history of race politics in South Africa evinces instances where 'black' is a concept used to refer both to coloured people and black Africans, as well as alternative instances where coloured people assert themselves as distinct from the 'black' category as associated with black African, at times declaring their closer affinity and kinship with whiteness. In part this study hopes to respond to the call that De la Rey and Boonzaier make, while also exploring the various 'meeting points' between black Africanness and coloured identities.

Specifically, this study used Cape Town as a research site because of the concentration of coloured people in this place, making close interaction primarily between coloured people and black Africans both expected and inevitable. Further, racial politics in Cape Town as observed during election times in particular (as evidenced both by the 1994 and 1999 general elections), render it exceptional to the rest of the country, where coloured identity politics are not as predominant. I introduce some of the historical dynamics of this city through a discussion of Cape Town as a research site.

Cape Town: The research site

Discussions that historicize coloured people and coloured identity usually refer to contact between European settlers, imported slaves and the natives of South Africa, which occurred along the Cape west and south coasts. Both the western and the southern coasts are emphasized as sites where the history of coloured people began in this country. Although the Western Cape cannot lay claim to being the exclusive place of origin or the 'homeland' for coloured people, given that interracial relations continued elsewhere in the country as well, it is in Cape Town in particular, with its relative economic success, coupled with the preferential treatment of coloured people in the Cape Province (to use an earlier apartheid provincial designation) in general, that one finds most of the coloured people.

Further, although other social dynamics such as miscegenation and the European settlers' preference for mixed race persons for marital or other sexual relationships, impacted on general interracial perceptions and interactions, differentiation between coloured people and black Africans played itself out more saliently in regard to economic and labour factors. This is an argument that Bickford-Smith (1995) advances quite strongly in his book *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town*. In the introduction, responding to arguments concerning whether Cape Town was exceptional in its delayed legislated racism, he asserts explicitly that 'the nature of economic activity and consequent employment patterns in Cape Town, and how this changed over time is a

crucial part of the answer (p.5)' in explanations of race relations between coloured people and black Africanness in Cape Town.

Employability for certain job levels and the quality of employment that favoured coloured people above black Africans was part of this economic activity. As such, this reflection on Cape Town as the research site will look at perceptions of Cape Town as the undeclared homeland for coloured people as well as the implications thereof for employment and labour practices. In particular, it will use the experiences related to the District Six removals to further explore Cape Town as a place with a long history of racial segregation.

An undeclared coloured 'homeland'

In the middle of the 20th century there was a perception that black Africans were not indigenous inhabitants of the Western Cape. To illustrate this point, Posel (1991, p. 220) cites Eiselen's declaration of Coloured Labor Preference Policy, one of whose aims was "the ultimate elimination of the Natives from the Western Cape, which was declared a natural home for the coloured people." A further quote by Eiselen asserts that influx control was to be applied differently to 'coloureds', taking into consideration that the Western Cape was their natural home. Eiselen asserted that coloured people had a right to be protected against competition with Africans in the labour market. In essence, this situation positioned coloured people and Africans as opponents, with the African being constructed as a threat to the economic and political well-being of coloured people. This represented fertile ground for potentially conflictual relations (this fear of the threat of the

native still exists in new and numerous ways even today, as illustrated in Wilmont James et al., 1996 & Field in Erasmus, 2001). It is reasonable then, to assume that the Western Cape has a wealth of history regarding black African-coloured relations, some of which has impacted on current personal relationships as well as at the intergroup level. The government of the Western Cape Province, particularly under the leadership of Ebrahim Rasool (ANC provincial chairman until 2005, and currently the premier of the Western Cape) has identified the apparent racial hostilities, mainly between these two groups, as one of its main challenges. It is precisely against the background of experiences of Cape Town (and not necessarily the whole Western Cape Province) as a racial enclave of some racial grouping(s) to the exclusion of others that the municipality uses slogans such as "Cape Town - Home For All" to appeal for tolerance amongst the different groups and call for unity within the city.

The fact that coloured people are largely concentrated in Cape Town, and that they constitute a critical majority both in Cape Town and its surrounding areas, made it a viable option as a research site for a project focusing on coloured subjectivities in relation to black Africanness. These facts provided the project with the opportunity to diversify the sample, given the difficulty with which the required sample was accessed. It is also a fact that relations between black Africans and coloured people are more longstanding (spanning generations) and unavoidable in Cape Town as compared to areas of this country where coloured people are a minority (e.g. Bloemfontein, Durban and Johannesburg).

Through the District Six lens

In many ways the history of Cape Town is tainted by the memory of the District Six removals. These removals seem to have caricatured Cape Town's pretense of liberal racial practices. Racially inflected forced removals took place in other pockets of racially integrated areas (e.g. Mowbray, Claremont, Lansdowne, Windermere, etc.), but as McEachern (in Zegeye, 2001) asserts, the District Six removals overshadowed all others, probably because of the number of people that were removed, the degree of destruction they insisted upon social relationships and its geographical centrality and high visibility in the city. In terms of the magnitude of forced removals in District Six, McEachern states that following its proclamation as a white area in 1966, a minimum of 55000 people were removed and strewn across the Cape Flats without consideration for kin and friendship ties. This number does not include black Africans, most of whom were removed from District Six as early as 1902.

Most descriptions of life in District Six reflect a nostalgic view of its racial integration, which is a feature of other similar places like Windermere (another racially integrated settlement in Cape Town) and Sophiatown in Johannesburg. For instance Field (in Erasmus, 2001, pp. 108 – 9) quotes an interview with a coloured woman from Windermere, where she reflects on life before the impact of the Group Areas Act:

> … The people were poor, but they lived nice, nicely understood each other as well. The Bantu people and us, and the Muslim people, everyone lived nicely together. That time you could leave your house door open, you did not have to tell your next door neighbour,

> because people lived like that, in that time. And the Bantu people and us lived nicely together, there was no problem, that time, not like it is today.

This quote makes direct reference to cordial relations between black Africans and coloured people. What remains implicit in it is that this romanticized notion of relationships and neighbourliness is not conceivable in the new South Africa. Racial integration (at least in the way in which it was lived in these 'pockets of racial integration') is something of the past following the introduction of laws like the Group Areas Act of 1950 and what they left in their wake. The impact of these racist pieces of legislation and related removals has left a somewhat indelible mark on friendships and familial ties, and on the general social fabric. The process of removal showed no regard for the integrity of family life. Another interviewee in Field's study had this to say:

> But I used to feel heartsore for people like […] (sic) that coloured people used to live together with the whitey husbands and the coloured wives and then all of a sudden they had to part and they were thrown out, they mustn't live with Europeans anymore.

Removals in Windermere which the above quotes refer to elucidate enable a comment on other racially motivated removals including those of District Six, because as discussed above, removals which in some ways were similar to the one that took place in District Six were widespread in Cape Town, and the effects were far-reaching in the lives of those that were removed and some of those that stayed. In a project whose purpose is to counter perceptions that District Six was a 'sacred ground' or 'the pilgrimage' (Barnett in Heyningen, 1994) exclusively for coloured people, Ngcelwane (1998) reflects on her

family's reactions to and dealings with the Groups Areas Act and the Native Reserve Location Act until their final removal from District Six to Nyanga West (she provides this reflection) from the perspective of what she calls 'an African woman'). Ngcelwane's description of how black Africans and coloured people related in District Six is quite useful for this project, in that she echoes Rive (1990) who viewed District Six as having insulated itself against the outside world that was always threatening it. She narrates her family's last moments as residents of District Six as follows:

> Some of the Coloured neighbours helped us get the furniture on the lorry… Now I was forced to get out, simply because I was African. I wanted to cry. I quickly shut the door and ran downstairs. This was the saddest moment of our lives, having to say goodbye to our neighbours. They all came to bid us farewell. My mother was standing with Aunt Susie, Esme and Mrs. Morris. "How far is this location from here?" Esme asked. "It's quite far. From Sir Lowry's Road you have to take a bus to Claremont, then another one to Nyanga West." "It's far," Esme agreed. It means we'll never see you again." "I suppose so," my mother said sadly. (pp.133 – 4)

There are two points that a reflection on Cape Town through the lens of the District Six removals achieves. Firstly, it engages with certain perceptions that when South Africa was in the throes of racist segregation, Cape Town was an exception. Bickford-Smith (1995) also engages this conception, which was held mainly by researchers whom he argues did not scrutinize life in the city closely enough. He quotes George Frederickson who seemed to marvel at the interracial fraternization in Cape Town, calling it a 'special tradition of multiracialism'. He asserts that even behind that veil of perceived

multiculturalism Cape Town, like other parts of South Africa, ‘practised forms of segregation in the nineteenth century and generated racism’ (p. 7). So it would seem that it was not the whole city that portrayed an image of racial integration, but parts of it, such as District Six. One also finds a clue to this assertion in Rive’s (1990) reference to such places as Walmer Estate and Wittebome, suburbs lying further south of the city centre, whose ‘middle class values’ District Six residents ‘viewed with suspicion and disdain’. These ‘pockets of racially integrated areas’, which were predominantly working class, were exceptional in the midst of a city that was inclined towards segregationist practices. Bickford-Smith goes on to say that those social facilities which were not segregated, as well as social and sports clubs, were found in lower class neighbourhoods, suggesting the segregatory nature of other parts of the city. Ultimately, Cape Town, with its history of liberalism and other political imperatives (such as the fact that the English were a numerical minority, and needed ‘non-whites’ to boost their numbers during voting times against the Afrikaners), lagged behind in terms of legalizing racist practices. But the delay was in the law, rather than in practice.

It is also true, as Bickford-Smith (1995) says, that ‘segregation, and racist discourses, were situational, even if they did inform one another’ (p. 7). Cape Town has a long history of segregatory practices, even though these practices bear idiosyncratic features, particularly due to the high number of coloured people in that city and province, as compared to other areas where population dynamics are different.

Secondly, this reflection illuminates the differential treatment that coloured people and black Africans received from the authorities at the time. One of the main complaints against places like District Six was that they bred crime and disease. Conceptions of the black body in colonial settings are discussed at length in Butchart's (1998) Foucauldian analysis in his book *The Anatomy of Power: European Constructions of the African Body*. The black body was seen as prone to (sexual) impulsiveness and as the centre, or carrier, of disease. In the case of the District Six removals, black Africans were the first to be removed, following the introduction of the Native Reserve Act in 1902. The removal of coloured people only started after the proclamation of District Six and the neighbouring Woodstock as white areas in 1966, more than half a century after the removal of black Africans. Sporadic calls for the removal of black people from the 'pockets of racial integration areas' where they were in contact with poor or working class whites started as far back as 1892 (Bickford-Smith, 1995). In the case of black Africans, these removals seem to have taken place within a short space of time following these calls.

Although the concern was mainly about overcrowding and the association with the spread of disease, the pervasive pattern reflecting a tendency to mete out racist practices first against black Africans and only later against coloured people can be discerned (one can sense this in regard to the history of the franchise as well). Was it due to the prevailing feeling that the Cape was coloured people's natural home, that black Africans were treated as 'intruders' whose lot it was to be deported out of Cape Town? This sentiment about black Africans in Cape Town did not become promulgated into law as happened

with the removal of black Africans throughout the country, to the barren lands that came to be called homelands or Bantustans (exemplified by the Bantu Self-Governing Act of 1959). What this point does illustrate is the hierarchical positioning of white, coloured and black Africans on the racist race ladder. Coloured people were finally removed from District Six, and white people remained, a process which reflects the fact that the racist system, although lenient towards coloured people, had the promotion and the preservation of white benefit at heart ultimately. The fact that ideas to erect grand residential places in District Six for white people remained just ideas, shows the at times whimsical subjection of millions of people to suffering, simply to maintain the 'social distance' that apartheid required to exist between white, coloured and black (African) people.

The clue to the fact that concern was not only over overcrowding and disease but also about racial segregation is provided in the promises made by the 'Clean Party' in the 1880's. The preoccupation of this party was with the dirtiness of the slum areas of Cape Town, and their association of the spread of disease with the 'undeserving, immoral black poor' (Bickford-Smith, 1995, p. 73). The party intended to produce a 'sanitary city,' sanitized of non-whites.

The history of marginalization in the city of Cape Town predates the removals that I have referred to here. Beyond racial segregation per se, Cape Town served as the launching board for the alienation of the sick to Robben Island (Deacon, in Heyningen, 1994). It is a city that embraced the idea of separation, separation of the sick from the healthy, of

white people from coloured people, and coloured people from black Africans. More importantly, Robben Island, which can be seen from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean separating the island and the city, represented a place where the *un*free were separated from the free, the demonized black freedom fighters from the 'civilized' citizens of Cape Town. Surely some awareness of these facts and the subjection of the city to these historical and political forces suggests the need to explore what it means to grow up or live in this city? In saying that "particularly in the South African context, personal lives are in turn intimately molded by places the people have known, lost, or been forced to know and by those they have been prevented from knowing", Hart (in Jeppie & Soudien eds., 1990, p. 123) reinforces the aim of this study which is to look at coloured subjectivities in Cape Town, a city that has had to articulate itself quite strongly in favour of (in the case of the majority of white people) and against (in the case of black Africans and other non-whites) the Group Areas Act. The Group Areas Act and other similar apartheid legislation are part of the legal framework whose effects on Cape Town have, as we will see in this study, outlived the demise of apartheid and the political transformation of this country.

Current popular conceptions of Cape Town range from it being referred to as the most beautiful city in the country, the pride of South Africa (Rosenthal & Ryan, 1973), a European city in Africa, with the Mediterranean (as opposed to African) weather. It is one of the main tourist attractions in South Africa offering natural beauty that is unsurpassed. Cape Town came close to winning the right to host the Olympic Games for 2006. Yet, it is a city that is 'branded as amongst the most unequal cities in the world'

(Du Toit, www.ijr.org.za). Du Toit also states that 'Cape Town's socio-economic divisions still run largely along racial lines.' Of particular interest is the fact that after proclaiming the racist nature of the city, he says he leaves it to someone else to speak about 'alleged racial tension' between coloured and black communities. This is interesting because coloured people constitute the majority of the residents of Cape Town. How does one talk about the racism of the city through the limiting black-white frame when the history of Cape Town is as described above? Does this reflect how easy it has become to talk about racism between black and white people, and how fraught with difficulties it is to explore other indices of 'racial tensions'?

Referring to Hart (in Jeppie & Soudien, 1990, p. 123) again, she introduces the statement that I have used above by positing that "personal evidence adds credence to the philosophy that it is people who create places, endowing them with social and cultural expression". The racism of Cape Town, and the inequalities that Du Toit refers to, implicate all the people of Cape Town quite intimately in such practices, be they whites, coloured people or black Africans. To illustrate the futility of trying to hold back comment on 'race relations' between coloured people and black Africans, Du Toit identifies part of the work of the institute at which he is a leader as engaging residents of the neighbouring residential places of Langa (black Africans) and Bonteheuwel (coloured people) in finding ways 'to overcome tensions that plague many coloured and black communities on the Cape Flats'. This project takes on the task of exploring race relations in Cape Town through focusing on coloured subjectivities in relation to black Africanness.

Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of race relations in the Western Cape in general, and lays out the problematic of coloured-black African relations from colonial times, tracing these to the present Cape Town in particular. It offers a brief review of concepts such as creolization and complicity to elucidate the historical contexts and processes that have influenced coloured identities in Cape Town. The latter part of this chapter reviews different theories on race and racism, emphasizing the usefulness of psychodynamic theories in understanding racism and how it impacts on intra- and inter-group processes.

In Chapter 2 I reflect on the process and experiences that characterized data gathering for this project, focusing on psycho-historical factors that are part of a racist society. I use reflexivity to make sense of my experience of the fieldwork phase of the project. I also give an account of relevant research methods, ranging from sampling to ethical considerations. This chapter also discusses the centrality of the family in the analysis of data in this project.

In Chapter 3 I begin to analyze the interview material illustrating how taking up an identity is a process that is responsive both to socio-historical and psychological influences. This chapter introduces the concept of 'abjection', establishing a link between conscious processes that Goffman refers to and the unconscious ones that Butler adds to meanings of the notion of identity performance. Additionally, a large part of this chapter dissects family life in African-coloured house-holds, illustrating intrafamilial prejudice, the fragility of coloured identities in these contexts and demarcations between these

households and others once an African-coloured household and family has been established. It also refers to alternative ways of 'performing' coloured identities, performances which are not hostile to black Africanness.

Chapter 4 reflects a continuation of engagement with the concept of abjection. However, in this chapter focus is more on intra-familial dynamics which are influenced by factors and processes in society, while in turn such intra-familial dynamics impact on the construction of family members' racial identities. All of these are considered against changing perceptions of black African identities.

Chapter 5 uses the participants' childhood experiences to explore how racism between coloured and black Africans was maintained through different generations. It reflects on how some children were victims of racism, while at the same time it illustrates how the state and parental influence complemented one another in bringing up an adult coloured person that would be wary of black Africanness.

Chapter 6 illustrates the intertwined quality of the social and the personal in lived experiences of coloured identities, highlighting the politicization of the personal. It uses concepts of race and sexuality to reflect on the complexity of this intertwining, as well as to illustrate how pervasive race and its effects in a racist society can be, affecting personal choices and influencing the nature of intimate relationships that people entered into.

The last chapter, Chapter 7, discusses different contexts and factors that are implicated in a shift away from aversion to black Africanness. It traces different individuals' movement from dis-identifying with black Africanness, to recognizing human equality and embracing the course of anti-racism that was essential in order to overthrow apartheid and its racist racial hierarchy.

In the Conclusion, I summarize my main arguments and some general closing observations about the study I have undertaken.

CHAPTER 1: RELEVANT LITERATURE AND THEORY

Introduction

There are a number of historical and theoretical imperatives that help to shape the parameters of this thesis. Firstly, I have looked at coloured identity and its dynamics as implicating not only the recent past which is exemplified by the grand apartheid phenomenon of 1948 to 1994, but also earlier, including the late nineteenth century. To that extent I start off with some notes on the past and identity formations, fusing history and aspects of post-colonial studies to highlight the emergence of coloured identities in a racist context. I have titled this particular section 'formations' to emphasize that identity formation is a process and not a circumscribed event with a clear beginning and end. Following that I craft a historicization of coloured identities in a way that extends back to its colonial origins as alluded to in the notes and its relationship with (or against) black Africanness. The concept of complicity adds to the exploration of this relationship, particularly with regard to discerning the role of the collaboration of oppressed groups with the oppressing system against other oppressed people. This section only serves to introduce the concept: I devote a substantial part of Chapter 3 to elaborating it more fully.

I also discuss current debates about coloured identities, reflecting on the multiplicity of positions in this regard, while pointing out what seem to be the main arguments in relation to what it means to be coloured. Given that 'coloured' is a concept that gained most of its salience in racist classificatory discourses in South Africa, I then use this

review to explore coloured identities in discourses of race and racism. Here, I try to point out the difficulty that one encounters in engaging the notion of 'race', while at the same time I try to show how its effects are as ubiquitous as those with material reality. This point on the ubiquity of racism is further amplified in the subsequent section which gives the concept of race and the practice of racism in particular, a psychodynamic treatment. Finally, and flowing from the psychodynamic discussion of racism, this review explores psychoanalytic conceptions of racism as an inherent human condition, tied to Freud's theories of the 'death drive' and the 'life drive'. Varied as these imperatives are, they each contribute to a fuller picture of racial identities as they are lived by coloured people.

Notes on the past and the formation of identities

A situation where two or more culturally distinct groups meet and share a social and physical space, as happened with the arrival of Europeans at the Cape, home to the Khoi and the San during the 17th century, has important outcomes. Subsequent to this initial arrival, more groups arrived (black Africans from north of Limpopo, and Xhosa people from what is now called the Eastern Cape), rendering the Cape coastal belt a place of encounters between different cultures. The outcomes of these encounters may come to impact in indelible ways on such groups, as a result of acculturation, self-assertions against acculturation, assimilation, and other forms of social interaction. What then results are identities or subjectivities which are not necessarily reducible to the original group's identities. This project insists on the importance of reflecting on contexts (historical and otherwise) out of which these new identities have developed and against

which they continue to be articulated and negotiated. More specifically, it foregrounds the racist-colonial history of this country as an important, even defining context out of which 'racial identities' and interactions between these identities emerge (Du Pre, 1990).

Sean Jacobs and Herman Wasserman assert that creolization 'does not take place in a space devoid of power struggles, nor does it signify a complete break with the past' (Jacobs & Wasserman, 2004, p. 26). This quote concurs with the statement in the fore-going paragraph, positing that contexts out of which cultural (and racial) identities are formed remain imprinted on the subjective expressions of today, even though as Stuart Hall (1996) has argued, the process of subject formation is ongoing and unending. In a sense, the past exists dialogically and dialectically (to borrow Robert Young's concepts cited in Yon, 2005) with present day expressions of identity and subjectivity, calling attention to this past in any attempt to theorize racial/cultural identity or subjectivity. In addition to this, Nuttall (2002) argues that what is attractive about the concept of creolization in projects that seek to break the post-1994 cultural theoretical impasse is its suggestions of transformative fusions. Even here, although the importance of the past is acknowledged implicitly (Nuttall articulates the centrality of the past more explicitly in a later article cited below), it is important to highlight that such transformative fusions are highly context bound, temporally and socio-historically.

The way in which Nuttall (2004) argues for the continued relevance of the concept of creolization against what seems to be a reluctance to engage with this concept in the historicization of racial identities in South Africa is worth referring to at this point.

Firstly, she emphasizes that, contrary to most critics' use of the term 'creolisation carries with it a particularly vivid sense of the cruelty that processes of mixing [central to creolization] have evolved' (p. 735). The sense one gets from this is that the critics that Nuttall refers to feel the use of this concept in theorizing identity in colonial and post colonial settings de-emphasizes certain essential elements of this process, particularly the element of violence. This echoes Erasmus' point that in the case of coloured identities, creolization is best defined not just as cultural borrowing and creation, but more importantly, cultural borrowing and creation under conditions of marginality, with the implied violence characterizing these conditions. Secondly, Nuttall engages discourses on the master-slave relationship, particularly in the United States, to illustrate that even under the worst of conditions that human beings are capable of creating against fellow human beings, 'cultural traffic' occurs, leading to the emergence of new kinds of identities. The point to be emphasized here is that these 'worst conditions' do not divest people of agency, the ability to still find ways to self-determine in spite of the limitations that a given environment imposes.

I agree with the usefulness of creolization in theorizing racial identities, where it acknowledges the violence of subjugation, and recognizes that even in conditions of subjugation, human beings are not stripped of their sense of agency. My interest is specifically in examining the ongoing racism that inflects creolized cultures like colouredness in South Africa. As such, this project does not take issue with the appropriateness of creolization as a concept used in theorizing coloured identities in South Africa, even though Verges' reflection that not all cultural contact results in

creolization is cause for one to tread carefully. Rather, this study seeks to draw the past and present together in considerations of coloured subjectivities that have emerged in creolized conditions, focusing specifically on racist aspects thereof. Françoise Verges (2005) alludes to the point at hand in this project, when she states that 'creolization refers to a dynamic process which comes about by forgetting, abandoning the illusion of authenticity and of the entity of ('pure') native cultures. All that is left of them are traces.' This study interrogates perceptions that these 'traces' are passive remnants of history, playing no significant role in current processes and expressions of identity. A profound political change, as happened in South Africa since 1994, has the effect of 'unlayering' sediments of identity-forming processes, revealing connectedness with 'traces' referred to above even in how we think and read the 'now', as Nuttall (2004) puts it. Creolized identities, though identities in their own right, face the imperative to articulate themselves against and in relationship to the past, and what Verges refers to as 'the illusion of authenticity and the entity of native cultures'.

Further, even though the main racial classificatory categories of historically racist South Africa were more than just 'coloured' and 'black', this project focuses on this binary relationship from the vantage point of coloured subjectivities. In part, this is intended to dislodge coloured identities from their perceived position of 'in-betweeness'. In this sense, coloured subjective positionalities can be privileged in exploring interracial relationships, off-setting the dominant discourses on race, which privilege the master race discourses of black and white. It aims to move away from the common approach to analyzing coloured identities primarily in terms of their relationship to whiteness.

Privileging the relationship between coloured identity and whiteness in theorizing coloured identities is but one trace of the historical processes that have given rise to coloured identities as we know them today. Françoise Verges (2005) rightly comments on the suspiciousness with which post-colonial theory regards (racial) binary opposition. She goes on to say that 'the colonized person always speaks at least two languages, always knows at least two cultures, but often does not see this as a privilege since one of these two languages or cultures is marginalized, ignored, despised' (2005, p. 3). This project engages with instances when the colonized appropriates the culture of the colonizer (See Adhikari, 2003), and claims identification with the colonizer at the expense of others who are also colonized. Such has been the case, especially in the Western Cape, where, as Anglican Church Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1997) argues, the history of oppression and privilege has created differentiation and division amongst the oppressed and in some cases oppression of the oppressed by the less but similarly oppressed. In delving into the past and in exploring views that are privately held and experiences that are private in nature, this thesis does not concern itself with issues of political correctness. Subjective experiences and material that is privately held do not necessarily conform to the dictates of current political dispensations – nor need they be rational and sensible. This is why at times in this thesis I have employed a psychodynamic understanding to help make sense of the data. I will return to this theoretical point in the next chapter when discussing the research methods of relevance for this project. For now, I want to emphasize that race, though devoid of materiality, exists strongly in people's subjective self-understandings. Due to this, and also due to its bias in favour of experiences of the past, this project refers to racial identities as if their

reality goes beyond that which is socially constructed. I discuss how I use the concept of race further in another section of this review. First, I turn to the concept of complicity and how I apply it to this project.

The question of complicity

In the South African situation there are specific conditions of domination under which coloured identities have evolved. More than just describing these conditions as characterized by marginality, Erasmus (2001) also identifies these as racialized relations of power and privilege. Hendricks (in Erasmus, 2001) gives an even clearer depiction in referring to these racialized distinctions (both produced by and determining the production of racialized relations) as having boundary markers and as characterized by hierarchical valuations. Implied in this (especially in the Western Cape) is the differential access to privilege and power that were associated with these distinctions. More importantly, ordinary people became implicated in the drama of racism through holding on to this differential privilege and power, defending these where necessary, and using access to power to oppress those perceived to be 'others' or threatening. In some way, Liebman (1999) refers to the concept of hierarchies of oppression, when she makes a comparison between the experiences of Jewish and black people. In this sense, the concept of hierarchies of oppression refers to the perception that some people's sufferings are more significant than others. In the South African context Pampalis (1991) illustrates this in discussing relations between black Africans and coloured people, where he outlines some of the privileges that coloured communities enjoyed as compared to black

Africans. These privileges are seen to have militated against any significant and long-lasting collaboration between the African and coloured political groups (such as the APO, see Adhikari, 2003, and Bickford-Smith, 1995), especially at grassroots level. Coloured workers were not subjected to the same restrictions facing African workers, such as pass laws, and they benefited from job reservation laws. Further there were factors such as geographical isolation, barriers of language, custom and 'race', economic differences and inequalities of status (given the institutionalized racial hierarchy), all of which inhibited the growth of union between black Africans and coloureds and between lighter skinned coloureds and darker skinned ones to some extent. All these were factors that characterized being identified as a member of one group or another, leading to specific experiential realities. Posel (in Goldberg & Solomon, 2002) points out that racial categories, much as they are undesirable given their origin and effects, cannot be erased since "… they were also (somehow) constitutive of the lived experiences of South African people" (p. 78). This statement emphasizes the significance of these lived realities in processes of identity formation.

Erasmus offers an apt discussion of the concept of complicity concerning relations between coloured people and black Africans in stating that 'coloured identities were shaped not only by the need to survive and resist on terms dictated by slave owners and colonizers' (2001, p. 24). It was not only the *need to survive* or the dictates of the racist government at the time that shaped coloured identities during the apartheid years, but also relative opportunities compared to black Africans, and compromises that coloured people made to retain their position in the racial hierarchy, which placed them above black

Africans in the apartheid hierarchy. Clearly, these had important implications for the expression of racial identities that resulted, implications that have persisted through to the present. For instance, as recently as in 2006, there have been meetings in Cape Town called 'Social Dialogues'. The main objective of these meetings is to deal with the different racial difficulties which impede establishing harmonious relationships between citizens of that city and province.

In this sense then, I use the concept of complicity to highlight the differential racial positions that black Africans and coloured people occupied during the pre-democratic South Africa. Beyond this, this concept enables a comment on the role of *will* or choices that oppressed people were able to make in the drama of racism in this country, and therefore, a comment on degree of culpability as viewed through the lens that is positioned in the post 1994 era in South Africa. It also facilitates an engagement with the differential responses or reactions towards and against the racist system, beyond just resistance or opposition.

Further, beyond just a simple delineation of culpability in this context, complicity facilitates the production of an *ethico-political* responsibility (Sanders, 2002). In this sense, the motive of the subject is not important in the declaration of one as culpable. Rather, through social action in itself, one always carries the unavoidable risk of violating the other by the positions one takes and the meaning one makes. In assuming a particular identity, one adopts a position that articulates itself against others, carrying the potential to violate these others, simply by assuming the given position or identity (Pinatelli,

1996). Ethico-political responsibility in this case 'reminds us to care for difference … The care for difference needs a generosity that does not attempt to grasp what is other as one's own' (Cornell, 1992, p. 57). It is more in this sense, than in the juridical notion of complicity that I refer in employing the concept of complicity in this project. Privately held beliefs and subjective experiences of others implicate subject formation and conceptualizations of the other, but these do not constitute crimes. However, they have far-reaching implications for inter- and intra-group relations - for human relations.

Mark Sanders (2002) quotes the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, and refers to 'a *little* perpetrator' in all of us which the '*exceptional* perpetrator' has overshadowed in discourses of responsibility for acts of racism. In this study I explore the manifestation of the racist order in how coloured people mainly from African coloured family or coupling contexts have related to and conceptualized black Africanness, and I illustrate how though being victims of racism themselves, coloured people projected those same racist attitudes towards their imaginations of black Africanness and towards their encounters with black Africans. It is along these lines then, that intimate, subjective experiences that coloured people have regarding black Africans and black Africanness become an important point from which to research the manifestations of subjectivities and to look at what coloured identities mean and what family dynamics can be discerned in this context are. Further, reactions (perceived or manifest) of the extended family and the coloured communities serve as informative in this regard as well.

Current conceptions of colouredness

Coloured identities rank amongst the most contested identities in South Africa, both from within the identity group and from without (see Denis-Constant Martin in Zegeye, ed., 2001). On the one hand, coloured identity is dismissed as a social construction of the apartheid regime and an aspect of slave mentality (Hendricks, in Erasmus, 2001; Duncan, 2002; & Williams, 1996). On the other, coloured identity is seen as representing that which might have been imposed from without initially, but which has been appropriated, *re*-created and internalized over time by those who were so identified (Erasmus, 2001; and Martin, 1998). There are other conceptions as well, one of which holds that there are multiple ways of being coloured, and that "being a hybrid third world immigrant intellectual at Columbia, Yale, Harvard or Chicago universities differs radically to working class experiences of colouredness in, say, Manenberg, Cape Town" (Grunebaum & Robins in Erasmus, 2001, p. 169). In a similar way, one could say that being a coloured person where one of the parents is African, is quite different to being coloured where both parents are socially and officially signified as coloured, or where one of the parents is white. This study focuses on the coloured person one or both of whose parents, though they officially identify as coloured are (or are perceived to be) of direct black African descent. It privileges the idea that coloured identities are diverse and that coloured identity refers to a disparate group of people with a multiplicity of origins. It is not the idea of change inherent in the conception of identity formation processes as fluid that I challenge here. Rather, as Hall states in the case of black identified students in a school in Canada, 'even racialized categories – which many regard as among the most

rigid classifications - seem to generate multiple forms of belongingness' (Yon, 2000, p. xi). In spite of these multiplicities, it would seem the overarching racial identity as blacks or in the case of this study, as coloureds, remains in place.

There are other related conceptions of coloured identity, one of which is a historiographic conception, as suggested by Muhammad Adhikari (2005). Adhikari divides conceptions of coloured identity into four, ranging from an essentialist conception which emphasizes miscegenation; through to instrumentalist; social constructionist; and postmodern conceptions which view coloured identities from the vantage point of cultural creativity or creolization. All these conceptions build on and/or are a reaction to the other, but the first two mentioned in the afore-going paragraph could be said to be the main ones. Expanding on these two conceptions, Duncan (2002) states:

> I am a black person, who by the contorted logic and discourse of apartheid racism was classified coloured… However, given the manner in which these labels have traditionally been harnessed to entrench the racist order in this country, as well as the psychologically, socially and politically disruptive consequences of their imposition by the ancient regime, I find it difficult not to feel antipathetic towards them.

In terms of Adhikari's conceptual grid this would represent an instrumentalist approach. It reflects an outright rejection of the coloured signifier, and it seems to echo the sentiment of others such as Boesak (1984), Alexander (1996) and Harvey (1997). However, at least in the quote above, there is no further reflection on the reasons for such a rejection, except that it is a signifier that was imposed by the racist apartheid

government, which had deleterious outcomes for those who were classified as such. One of the aspects pertinent to such classification was the fact that those who were classified as coloured were seen as having a mixed ancestry, at least with one of the ancestors being of a European descent or a descendant of one of the non-African slaves (e.g. Asians). Duncan makes no allusion to the idea of multiple origins that was assumed to be part of coloured identities at all. He does not seem to acknowledge the personal creativity and the role of agency in processes of inhabiting this imposed racial identity. Instead, he seems to disavow all that might not be African (or black) in his descent, and he privileges his African (or black – although these should not be read a synonymous) descent. An important question would be whether by (dis)engaging with coloured identity in this way, Duncan is not doing the same thing as those coloured people who seem set on pursuing their white/European ancestral lineage, and silencing or disavowing their African one. Elsewhere, Duncan is quoted as asserting that "there is no such thing as coloured culture, coloured identity" (Erasmus, 2001). Viewed differently, Duncan's position reflects political agency, in that clearly, he refuses an identity that has been imposed by others, and in its place defines and identifies himself in a way that bears more personal resonance with who he feels he is.

Erasmus (2001) asserts, however, that renouncing coloured identity in an attempt to identify with the struggle against apartheid and its racially oppressive policies does not guarantee one's acceptance in the essentialist black category. She argues that in this context, coloureds "would always be blacks of a special type" (19). In another project where Adhikari (2003) analyses the Black Consciousness poetry of James Matthews, he

echoes this point in asserting that 'Matthews all his life nevertheless regarded himself as Coloured and his adherence to Black Consciousness did not cause him to reject this identification' (p. 179). This is another form of agency, exercised both because of and in spite of the racist racial classification that characterized apartheid. Holding onto colouredness as a racial identity is fraught with complexities. For instance, these range from the material entitlements that I have referred to above, to feelings of being excluded from the essentialized black African identity. Grunebaum and Robins (in Erasmus, 2001) provide an instructive instance of the latter complexity in relating how a coloured woman who believed herself to be African felt ostracized by black African women with whom she was incarcerated. However, Adhikari (2003) provides a more befitting example for this project when he quotes James Matthews who writes as follows:

> Let me put it this way: I don't come from a tribal background, neither do I speak and indigenous language. I'm not white, but I am not African either (Matthews, 1997, quoted in Adhikari, 2003, p. 179)

This is a quote from a later version of his novel called *The Party is Over*. Adhikari persists in an attempt to illustrate how Matthews *dis*-identified with black racial identity. He quotes an earlier version of the same novel, which contained an additional passage that clarifies the complexity that I have referred to above even better:

> I can't truthfully say that my soul is one with that of Africa. There is a gulf between me and the (African) … Culturally my outlook is most certainly European … Racially, it's

> the African who pushes me aside, labeling me as Ama-Bushman' (Matthews, 1985, quoted in Adhikari, 2003, p. 179).

These quotes are particularly relevant to what follows because they illustrate identification with whiteness, and they also reflect a pronouncement against black Africanness, albeit in ways that locate the blame on the African. More specifically in response to Duncan's position, Erasmus (2001) points out that it assumes that cultures have an irreducible core which coloured culture lacks. She speaks against an assumption that coloured identity is not a real identity given that it does not have the same 'essence' that African ethnic identities are assumed to have. She quotes Hall (1996) in positing that all cultures involve borrowing and hybridity, and in challenging the notion that identities are natural and based on pure origins or shared experiences (p. 21). According to this position, cultural identities are never completed. They are always in process, using opportunities to negotiate and recreate themselves.

Erasmus argues that colouredness should rather be seen as a creolized cultural identity, an identity that is in an infinite process of cultural transformation. She suggests that in talking about colouredness, one should emphasize its histories of multiplicity and cultural creation. She also cautions against conceptualizing colouredness as an identity caught between black and white. This last idea invokes human agency, which inevitably would find ways out of the "caught between" space, or find ways to appropriate this space in new and creative ways that render the position irreducible to the original one. When Denis-Constant Martin (2001) describes coloured people as a group of human beings defined and nominated by governmental decree, a group that invented lifestyles and

traditions which helped bond its members into a community allowing outsiders to this invented community to identify it as a singularly different entity within the mosaic of South African populations, he alludes to the factor of human agency that I am referring to here, as well as to the idea of *will* discussed in relation to complicity. The point raised earlier about conceptualizing coloured identities as irreducible to survival imperatives and to dictates of the colonizer (or the racist governments of the past) agrees with this position. Beyond binding this group of human beings together, these 'invented lifestyles and traditions' also represented active (intra-group) attempts to distinguish this group from other groups. This thesis considers what gives life to the racial category of colouredness from the vantage point of those with close relationships or interaction with the concept of black Africanness.

Both Adhikari (2005) and Martin (2005) articulate that the way in which Erasmus theorizes coloured identity holds the promise of dislodging this identity from its conceptions as purely 'aspirant towards whiteness'; or 'rejecting, through complicity, of black Africanness'; or even 'being rejected by black Africans'. This thesis relates such theorizations to ideas as articulated in Matthews' novel quoted above, where still, even when the opportunity to level the racial identity 'walls,' coloured identity is held onto because, as Adhikari says of Matthews:

> Being a member of a minority group that was generally occupying an intermediate position in the South African racial hierarchy, and in which racial characteristics were an important determinant of social status, Matthews was sensitive to these differences (Adhikari, 2003, p. 179).

Locating the coloured 'race'

The afore-going discussion emphasizes that colouredness came about both as a result of colonial and apartheid political processes. It also acknowledges that as a lived reality, colouredness goes beyond these processes, implying inventiveness on the part of coloured people. The use of this concept in South Africa today is accompanied by a certain degree of discomfort, with some writers dismissing it as completely irrelevant (Duncan et al, 2002) and others providing some explanation as to why they need to continue using this concept (Erasmus, 2001; Du Pre, 1994). Generally, this latter group holds that racial labels that were used prior to the 1994 political transformation help with the clear identification of the people referred to. This is particularly so because one's racial classification implied certain specific entitlements and disentitlements. It marked social, economic and geographical boundaries. Additionally, as this project will show, racial classification marked psychological boundaries.

In South Africa, the practice of racial classification depended on two categories: one group was white and the other non-white, conforming to the general binarization of race in colonial situations. The non-white group served as a 'waste basket', into which a disparate group of people was thrown. This kind of racial classification evinces a striking imprecision (Posel, 2001), which was even challenged successfully in court, resulting in a concession that led to the introduction of a tripartite racial classification. Given that social, economic, and political privileges depended on one's racial identity, and that racial identity 'prescribed' (and continues to prescribe) how one lead one's life, it

becomes imperative to review some of the contemporary views on the concept of race, which will reveal how racial systems of which colouredness was a component, works. Moreover, restitution efforts in the post-1994 era still use the racialization of victims to effect restitution (e.g. affirmative action, black economic empowerment, employment equity, etc.), rendering concerns about race as palpable today as they ever were in the past of this country.

The origin of the idea of race has been credited to the West (Alcoff, 2001). Alcoff states that during the era that Foucault called the Classical episteme, emerging scientific knowledge was based on ordering and classifying on the bases of essential differences. She also implies that this process of classification served as a mechanism that allayed the anxiety experienced by Europeans at the increased size and vastness of their world. Butchart (1998) provides a useful treatise on the emergence of the African body into western knowledge around the same time, where it was classified along with animals and plants of Africa in the botanical classification of Linnaeus. Because animal and plant studies were relatively advanced compared to human studies, knowledge in this regard was transposed to descriptions of the colonial subject, and specifically, to descriptions of the African body. If one follows Alcoff's assertion that race-based classification helped Europeans deal with their anxiety upon realizing the vastness of their world, then it makes sense that the relatively unknown African body would be absorbed within the animal and plant classification systems, a more familiar schema. The contradiction in this lies in the failure of the Europeans to recognize the one quality that reflected similarities between themselves and Africans: humanity. So in spite of this functional reason for the

inclusion of the 'black body', in the eyes of the European colonizer, the missing aspect of this position is what explains the process that has stripped black Africans (in particular) of the dignity that is inherent to being human (Fanon (1952) calls this a deprivation of the possibility to possess subjectivity). I expand on the discussion regarding race and subjectivity in a section below, and I also take up the point about whether this was a cause or an effect of racism later on.

In line with this historicization of race, Tobias (1972) concurs with the idea that race is a concept borrowed from biology. He holds that it refers to animals, birds and plants, which helps bring about order in otherwise meaningless human variation. Tobias emphasizes that race is a "classification of anatomies, used for anatomical purposes" (p. 19). He cautions against the use of this concept to deduce such abstract phenomena as intelligence, morality, cultural propensity, etc. However, Tobias insists that in this sense, race is a valid concept. He cautions against going to the extreme of declaring the concept of race as meaningless or false given the political atrocities and excesses committed in the name of race amongst which some of the worst have been committed in South Africa during the 20th century. In its service as 'allaying anxiety' and in helping the process of classification for anatomical purposes, race is held up as a concept that is both practical and historically useful. However, it is precisely in considering the 'atrocities and excesses' that Tobias refers to, that it becomes senseless to separate out the meanings and functions of race. This is particularly the case considering that these excesses and the adherent atrocities have come to surpass all functional purposes that the concept of race might have come to serve. It is almost an impossibility to think of race without these

latter polluting the picture. This is a point I return to in the next section. What is evident from this functional perspective regarding race however, is the insertion of the non-black African as the one who possesses the power to classify, introducing the black African body as an object intruding in the ordered life-world of Europeans, and needing to be made sense of.

Further, with regard to the two ideas whether race should be understood as an essence (albeit a biological one as Tobias (1972) asserts) or imagined as a mere illusion, a purely ideological construct, Omi and Winant (2002) engage in a project that challenges, disrupts and reframes the rigidly bipolar manner in which they are debated. They start off with an assertion that there is no biological basis for distinguishing amongst the human groups along the lines of race. Indeed, even in the racial project as was found in South Africa in the early to mid 1900s, Verwoerd (one of the leading proponents of racial segregation and discrimination) is quoted as having taken a view that there were no purely biological determinants of race (quoted in Posel, 2001). Omi and Winant recommend that race be seen as an unstable, decentered complex of social meanings which are subject to constant transformation by political struggle. They propose a definition which acknowledges the role of biologically based human characteristics while they also point out that the specific features that are selected for the purposes of racial signification are embedded in social and historical processes. According to these authors,

> Race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies (p. 125).

It would seem that Alcoff (2001) agrees with and extends the position held by Omi and Winant (2002). She employs Merleau-Ponty's argument that perception represents sedimented contextual knowledges, and she states that the process by which human bodies are differentiated and categorized by type is a process preceded by racism, rather than one that causes and thus "explains" racism as a natural result. A debate on what causes racism is beyond the scope of this project, but I refer to one school of thought below that attempts to address this question. At this point, suffice to say that it would seem that racism precedes racial categorization, and that racial categorization became a means through which pre-existing racist ideas became (and continue to become) concretized or externalized.

Central to Omi and Winant's (2002) theorization of race are two concepts, namely *racial formation* and *racial project*. On the one hand they define racial formation as "the socio-historical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" (p. 124). On the other, they describe racial project as that which "connects' what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structure and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning" (p. 125). They also add that the meanings of race and the racial organization of social structure and everyday experiences exist in a definite historical context and descend from previous conflicts. The inter-link between racial formation and racial projects can be used to provide an understanding of how race works both at the macro level of state activity (for instance), and at the micro level of everyday experience. The racial formation theory holds that all members of society are subjected to racial projects, which process is

facilitated by ideology and indoctrination. Subjection to such a racialized social structure brings about the fallacy of race as being a commonsensical way of comprehending, explaining and acting in the world (e.g. apartheid ideology that falsely naturalized racial designation). Seshadri-Crooks (2000, p. 4) echoes this idea when she says that '"race" … is a system of categorization that once it has been organized shapes human difference in certain seemingly predetermined ways'.

Alcoff (2001) cites three positions which respond to whether the category of race and racial identity should still be used. She rejects, firstly, a position that foregrounds biological explanations of race, and assumes that since these have been rendered indefensible, the category of race and racial identities should be accepted as invalid (an example hereof may be deduced from the idea held by Appiah (1992) that in truth there are no races). The second position that she rejects holds that racial identities are obvious and easily demarcated, since she feels that it ignores the reality of global hybridization. She concurs with the third position that she identifies, which states that

> Race is socially constructed, historically malleable, culturally contextual, and produced through learned perceptual practice. Whether or not it is valid to use racial concepts, and whether or not their use will have positive or negative political effects, depends on the context (p. 270).

She asserts that she finds this position (which she calls 'contextualism') to be the most acceptable and useful. She rejects the concept of race as simply socially constructed as a result of her perception that the concept of *social construction* has been overused, and its

use has become infused with the risk of seeing human actors as imbued with agency that characterizes mechanical constructions of identities. Alcoff qualifies her view through acknowledging the devastating reality of race while holding open the possibility that present day racial formations may change significantly or perhaps whither away. She adds that this position also acknowledges the contingency and uncertainty of racial identities and boundaries. To quote her directly, she asserts that from the vantage point of this position

> One can hold without contradiction that racialized identities are produced, sustained, and sometimes transformed through social beliefs and practices and yet that race is real, as real as anything else in lived experience, with operative effects in the social world (p. 270).

These debates reflect that race has become reified, in spite of its dependence on human propensity to differentiate, and the biological features which this differentiation tends to appropriate in its wake. Significantly, they also point to the use and abuse of race as illustrating the uses and abuses of power in the human world. These are just some of the contents of the continuing debates on race. The salience of each position, including some of the (wholesale) biological accounts of race come and go as the debate continues and new ideas are formulated (sometimes the same old ideas are reformulated as in the case of debates on race and intelligence).

An inquiry into the subjectivities of coloured people who have been identified for this project takes these debates into consideration, especially if one considers that no two

people's dynamics can have exactly the same effect on their identity processes. One's psychodynamics, heavily loaded with socio-historical content, and their influence on one's outlook on life can be counted amongst the most salient markers of human idiosyncrasy. As Posel (2001) states, the ubiquity of racial designations in South Africa (despite the indefensibility of their basis) as well as the extent to which they meshed with lived hierarchies of class and status, meant that apartheid's racial grid was strongly imprinted in the subjective experience of race. She posits that the ways in which whiteness, blackness and colouredness were lived as racial categories used in this country are complex and hybrid. Such lived out experiences become part of the larger repertoire of experiences out of which internal psychic organization is built, which in turn impacts on how one relates to others (St. Clair, 2000). Therefore, Posel's point concurs with the one made earlier that there is no one, specific coloured experience. This thesis explores the hybridities and complexities of this experience, including the psychodynamics that could be related to these.

The psychodynamics of race

The two ideas discussed above, that is, race as a biological construct on the one hand, and race as a product(ion) of historical and social discourse on the other, as well as the compromise that Alcoff offers, seem to suggest a somewhat optimistic view of how race is conceptualized and how it works. It would seem these views overestimate the possibility that race is malleable (socially and historically), and that it can be unlearned. This flies in the face of conceptions that point to the recalcitrance of racism in spite of

different, genuine political changes (Lane, 1998). Seshadri-Crooks also states that in spite of the fact that race is historical and material, unlike similar categorizations of difference, such as caste, ethinicity and class 'it is not at all malleable'. She says we cannot change race because it is 'supposedly inscribed on the body (p. 4)'. The point here is that limiting the conceptualization of race to historical and material explanations, though valuable, is inadequate on its own. Race and its effects have the potential to go beyond these as exemplified by historical and social attempts to understand race with the intention of dissolving racism.

The impetus behind this discussion is to extend the discussion of the origins of race into the realm of the psychic. Both Lane (1998) and Seshadri-Crooks (2000) suggest that there is value in looking to psychoanalysis to provide an understanding of the resilient non-sense of race. Lane posits this view more strongly when he says that we cannot comprehend ethnic and racial disputes without considering the implications of psychic resistance; and Seshadri-Crooks provides a serious injunction against modern civil society regarding its conception of race and racism. According to her reading, race is misperceived to be a neutral description of human difference, while racism represents a misappropriation of such difference. She goes on to suggest that as a result of this understanding, racial difference seems acceptable and deserving of being celebrated, while racism should be done away with. Her injunction against this view is that 'it refuses to address the peculiar resiliency of race, the subjective investment in racial difference, and the hypervalorization of appearance' (p. 9) all because it believes in the historical inevitability of race.

Central to this way of thinking about race is what Seshadri-Crooks refers to as racial anxiety (called psychotic anxiety by others – Young, 1993, & Rustin, 2000). She describes this as evoked by associations of race with historicity, which associations threaten to compel the recognition of its origins in the symbolic: 'It is necessary for race to seem more than its historical and cultural origin in order to aim at *being'* (p. 8). In that sense, visibility (visible difference inscribed on the body) secures race, and rules out perceptions that it could simply be a discursive production.

This is where reference to psychoanalytic theories might help to expand our understanding of race and racism. If racial anxiety subtends race and its practices, it would seem that racism represents attempts to defend against this anxiety. In part, this argument illuminates the kind of anxiety referred to above, and it alludes to the 'stripping of dignity' that I have raised regarding the classification of the black African body as a functional process. Moving beyond the critique that Seshadri-Crooks (2000) levels against modern civil society's definition of racism, her own description in lieu of this is instructive. She uses Lacan's theorization of sexual difference, to come to the conclusion that the order of racial difference with its master signifier - whiteness - compensates for sex's failure in language. In the order of racial difference, whiteness represents absolute wholeness, *being* (to be). Further, the excesses of race are a result of its ability to elicit investment in its subjects, holding out a promise of superiority and wholeness. Whiteness as the master signifier, is supposed to encapsulate this, and any visual discernment that one is not 'white' represents a lack in terms of this argument.

In her work on identification, Diana Fuss (1994) takes this idea further, in that had the binary of racial categorization represented whites and 'others', it would have meant that the inequality implied therein could have been addressable through politico-legal means or by socio-political change in general. In her paper called 'Interior Colonies: Frantz Fanon and the politics of identification', she suggests that whiteness even encapsulates and monopolizes the category of 'other', because it is through being the 'other' that claim can be made to subjectivity. Interpreting Fanon, she writes:

> Forced to occupy, in a white racial phantasm, the static ontological space of the timeless 'primitive', the black man is disenfranchised of his very subjectivity. Denied entry into the alterity that underwrites subjectivity, the black man, Fanon implies, is sealed instead into a 'crushing objecthood'. Black may be a protean imaginary other for white, but for itself, it is a stationary "object"; objecthood, substituting for true alterity, blocks the migration through the Other necessary for subjectivity to take place (p. 21).

Thus described, the idea of whiteness is that which holds exclusive rights to subjectivity, and relegates all that is 'not white' to objecthood which is non-comparable to whiteness. To state this differently, Seshadri-Crooks (in Lane, 1998) posits an idea that whiteness abjects not colour per se, but 'whiteness as colour'. She quotes Goodman who says whiteness takes itself out of the brownness continuum. Whiteness represents itself as the ultimate humanity, not as one kind amongst different human beings: 'whiteness is coterminous with being human, and to be human one must basically be white' (p. 369).

Taking Seshadri-Crooks' (1998) assertion seriously, that 'race is fundamentally a regime of looking', as well as her idea of racial anxiety (discussed above), then the role of whiteness in the drama of race and racism becomes apparent. More importantly for this thesis is the role that visibility plays in this drama. Visibility provides materiality for racial difference in a context where race could have been limited to the symbolic. Given some of its irrationalities and the fact that race goes beyond historical materiality, psychodynamic theories provide an attractive avenue to pursue in exploring race and its different components. In particular, if racism is a defense against racial anxiety (not just any kind of anxiety as Tobias and Alcoff seem to suggest above), then it is important to unpack the nature of this anxiety, and that against which it defends.

In an article entitled 'Racism: Projective identification and cultural processes' Robert Young (1993) elucidates this point. Tracing the concept of race as far back as at the instance of its first appearance in the English language, Young concurs with the point made above regarding the unconscious foundations of race and racism. From the inception of this concept (i.e. race), it was linked to unconscious processes. Of psychoanalytic theories in general, Klein's theory (especially the concepts of projection and projective identification) has been used most commonly to theorize race and racism. Substantiating this point, Young says that treatises on racism are full of primitive Kleinian language. By primitive he refers to those immature, irrational tendencies and thought process that are characteristic of infancy (or relatively less socially, physically and/or psychically developed human being). More specifically, Young says:

> I think it is a particularly helpful contribution of Kleinianism that we see that the mechanism of projective identification takes us back to the cradle, where Klein describes phantasies which perfectly reflect the behaviours of the soldiers described above *(or racists*). She (*Klein*) says that projective identification is the prototype of all aggressive object relations (pp. 10 – 11; my italics)

The concept of projective identification refers to intrapsychic relational processes, which though not necessarily congruent with the external reality, contain subjective validity, and are acted upon as if they do have external validity. In the context of this study, the 'other' on whom racists visit their aggression need not have deserved this aggression in any way other than that racism's victims have corresponded to something (or some experience) in the unconscious of racists. In terms of Young's quote above, what gets projected are primitive psychic phenomena, which Young describes as diseases and malignant internal objects. A question raised by this thesis is whether the fear of 'sameness' is what compels the employment of racism as a defense mechanism on the part of whiteness. What Young refers to as psychotic anxieties (or the psychosis of racism according to Michael Rustin) echoes what Seshadri-Crooks (1998) specifies as racial anxieties – applying specifically to whiteness' exclusive claim to subjectivity, and therefore to humanity. Any recognition of the 'other' as a subject is likely to deprive whiteness of the object onto which to project 'personal diseases' and 'malignant internal objects' at one level. At another, following this sense, the recognition of the other as a subject could lead to the experience of annihilating anxiety considering what atrocities are committed against the object 'other'. Young also quotes Lillian Smith's novel where she says:

> ‘if you once let yourself believe he’s human, then you’d have to admit you’d done things to a human. You’d have to know you’d done things that God would send you to hell for doing’ (in Young 1993, p. 12).

The allusion to religion in this quote strengthens the argument regarding existential, albeit psychotic, anxiety that lies at the root of racism. Unconsidered uncovering of racism for what it is, that is, a defensive psychic phenomenon, would be akin to breaking the defenses of a patient prematurely, potentially causing irreparable harm to the patient. This is not to condone racism, but rather to illustrate the complex nature thereof, and the futility of such efforts as Racial Awareness Training which do not appeal to the unconscious foundations of racism.

It is through the same reference to Lillian Smith’s novel that Young provides a link between this body of theory and the specific objectives of this project. Smith refers to the gradations of oppression that are class-related within the white group. Although it is class that differentiates between the oppressing and the oppressed white, in Smith’s fantasy bargain between the rich white and the poor white it is the existence of the black ‘other’ that the poor, oppressed white is supposed to look upon and appreciate that he (as the white other) is ‘a sight better off than the black man’. It is onto this black ‘other’ that he is encouraged (or even mentored) to unleash his vengeance in exchange for being oppressed economically: ‘Let us exploit you, and we will give you the black to dominate, scapegoat, sexually exploit, and murder’ (in Young, p. 12). Common humanity between the racist (unlike in the case of a classist) and his/her victim is obliterated and if the

victim of racism exists as anything at all, then that 'anything' represents something to be kept at a distance, lest it threatens the claim to the humanity of the racist.

In South Africa, the salience of racism overshadowed most class struggles even as class oppression co-existed with racism. Similar to the poor whites in Smith's work of fiction, coloured people occupied an 'in-between' position, which protected them from experiencing the full might of racist practices in this country. As with the blacks that Young writes about in the article quoted above, the racism of South Africa has played out its worst antics on the one who was the black African. He says:

> To become a white American, with the rarest exceptions, is to become a racist … the history of North America is one of successive immigrants, each and everyone of which has been met with racist attitudes and discriminatory barriers: Germans, French, Italians, Irish, Jews, Poles, and other Central and Eastern Europeans, Chinese, Japanese, Latin Americans, Vietnamese, Koreans, Cubans – and above all and most virulently – blacks … blacks remain the most hated people (pp. 11 – 12).

This project explores the concept of race not from the perspective of the binarized master signifiers of black and white. It looks at race through its internalizations in coloured identities, or in line with the discussion above, it explores racial identity from the politico-historical position of racial in-betwee*ess*, with a specific reference to blackness. However, it is important to psycho-historicize racism, elucidating its manifestations between blacks in general, and whites given that it provides the backdrop against which other mutations of racism can be understood.

Racism and psychic defense

The Psychoanalysis of Race (Lane, 1998) represents one of the landmark readings regarding the explicatory power of psychoanalysis insofar as race is concerned. In essence, Lane's project argues that psychoanalysis provides a revision of approaches to racism that view racial prejudice only as a product of conscious beliefs and political effects. I engage Lane and other contributors to his project at length because *The Psychoanalysis of Race* offers a diverse collection of scholarship and a sustained theoretical engagement with race from a psychoanalytical perspective.

There are two main reasons that make the way Lane engages racial prejudice pertinent for this study. Firstly, Lane identifies the focus of his theorizations as the colonial setting and racism as it is played out therein. In agreement with the inextricability of racism from colonialism and by extension, the strong association between colonialism and apartheid, Lynn Huntley (2001) provides a statement which joins colonialism, race and South Africa's racism in a preface to a book entitled *Beyond Racism*. She states:

> South Africa, the newest substantive democracy in this trilogy of nations (the other two are Brazil and the United States), has had less than a decade of post-apartheid governance. But it is a nation rooted in racism and discrimination. Race in one form or another has been at centre stage since the first Europeans landed.

Further, in the discussion on the emergence of coloured people or the decree of the 'coloured nation', I have illustrated the way in which colonization played the defining

role in the racialization of South Africa. Lane's expressed objective is to provide new insights on colonialism and racism. The potential applicability to the South African setting requires no further justification than the fact that it is in South Africa where racist tendencies became enshrined into law, leading to the emergence of apartheid or what the United Nations condemned as a crime against humanity.

The second reason for engaging with Lane's take on colonialism's racism is what seems to be the drive to build a united nation out of the fragments that apartheid produced in South Africa. The atrocities committed both in preserving white supremacy on the one hand, and in the fight against it on the other, have left a legacy that gives one set of explanations as to why the national project of building one united nation is likely to be a challenging one in the long run. In this sense, Lane promises that '*The Psychoanalysis of Race*' offers a perspective on racial conflict that sheds new light on our basic assumptions about *society* and *sociality*, ideas which I discuss below. He echoes Freud in questioning the presumption that human beings are necessarily and inherently peaceful and non-destructive towards one another. Freud (1927) asserts this more strongly in *The Future of an Illusion*, where he says that both man and nature would go on a rampage against humanity and human life, causing unimaginable existential anxiety, were it not for civilization and more specifically, religion.

Lane departs from looking at groups as the primary unit of analysis in theorizing race and racism, exploring the latter through focusing on the individual as a unit of analysis. More accurately, he explores the intrapsychic processes of an individual human being to arrive

at an explication of inter-group racism. Initially, this departure is indicated in his declaration that in spite of the advances that disciplines such as anthropology, ethnography and (social) psychology have achieved, '… prejudice is cogent and palpable today because it has never left us' (p. 3). He argues that racism is not founded primarily on ignorance and false consciousness. It is clear from this point already that Lane sets out to explore the role of the unconscious in manifestations of racism. There are several arguments that he advances in this regard, which I now turn to discuss. Firstly, and in line with the criticism he levels against anthropology and social psychology, Lane points at the notion of 'foundational hope', an assumption that humankind harbours an inherent potential to be communitarian. The interventions that are founded on this 'foundational hope' assume that racism can be eradicated simply through consciousness raising, an assumption that Lane disagrees with. He seems to appeal to Freud's conceptualization of the duality of human nature, contained in his theorization of Eros and Thanatos. In this theory, Freud proposes that inherent to human nature there is both the death instinct and the life instinct. The latter refers to the instinct that underlies the tendency towards life preservation and propagation. It is Thanatos however, that is of particular interest in Lane's appeal to Freud. Although Thanatos refers to the tendency to self-destruction, the influence of its counterpart (Eros) suggests that intra-psychic conflict under the influence of both instincts is inevitable: the vampirization of human life so to speak, characterized by being caught up between two contrasting worlds of life and death (www.geocities.com). The relevance of this theorization for understanding racism lies in how the resolution of this conflict is achieved. Zurak and Klain (1999 on www.psychomedia.it/neuro-ampt/98-99-sem/zurak.htm) characterize this resolution as

reflecting a displacement of aggression towards the self, onto an expression of aggression towards the other (external object, and not the self), reflecting a core narcissistic investment in the self. Psychoanalytically this is the foundation of aggression towards the other, originating from inherent aggression towards the self (as in the death instinct or Thanatos), and diverted through displacement to avert the destruction of the self. The most revealing statement in Lane is the following:

> When people or groups are locked in conflict, they are - beyond their immediate interest in securing sovereignty over another land or people - already experiencing intangible gains … For instance, a group's 'gain' might consist of the pleasure received in depleting another's freedom (p. 5).

This quote suggests that it is not necessarily out of purely pragmatic or material concerns that man 'kills' the other. Rather, the need to 'kill' the other (instead of the self) is instinctual and it evokes 'pleasure' when satisfied. By implication then, lack of its satisfaction would lead to displeasure. This is the gist to which Freud's statement, that man is a wolf to man, refers, and this is the idea that questions the supposed natural tendency of humankind to preserve the other and strive towards peace. In acting out on the imperatives of Thanatos, humankind attains relief and experiences triumph given that the instinct gets expressed without destroying the self. Lane's quote above suggests that more than just the need to survive, the expression of Thanatos is motivated by the pleasure that results in the violation and destruction of the other. In contexts where racism is rife, both these motivations are in operation.

Thus explained the second point that Lane makes becomes clearer, being that colonial settings represent the enactment of psychic fantasies. Colonialism presents the colonizer with the opportunity to enact violence which before that had been kept inside (intrapsychic). Looking at colonial settings, and apartheid South Africa more specifically, prevailing conditions during periods and processes of colonization (being away from the governments that could call the colonizer to account, the perceived difference of the colonized, legislated racism that facilitated feelings of impunity for the colonizer, etc.) allowed the colonizer the pleasure of 'depleting another's freedom'. The problematic raised by this argument relates to how one individual becomes the object and not the subject of these destructive impulses, and vice versa. This is a complex question that is yet to be answered convincingly, at least not by an exclusive set of arguments from one theoretical orientation. What Freud's psychoanalysis does elucidate convincingly, is 'the ethical price of asking humans to substitute civilization's "palliative measures" in "auxiliary constructions" ("powerful deflections", "substitutive satisfactions", "intoxicating substances") for the libidinal "satisfaction of inclinations to aggression"' (Lane, 1998, p. 6; Freud, 1930, pp.75 and 114). This interpretation of Freud conveys the sense that while the repression and displacement of the death instinct preserves the self leading to a reduction of anxiety, it compels finding a substitute on whom the violence which is essentially intrapsychic, can be expressed.

Another aspect which Lane engages is the misguided notion that psychoanalysis is apolitical and ahistorical. One implication of this notion is the belief that psychoanalytic concepts cannot be used to understand political and historical phenomena. He criticizes

the fact that most post-colonial and post-structuralist theorists have preferred to pursue critical acclaim for their work, and in doing so have neglected engaging psychic phenomena in favour of constructionism, hybridity and mutability. He posits that many socio-political theories obscure the significance of the unconscious, and that even in those cases where the unconscious is acknowledged, it is as an unfortunate impediment that needs to be minimized or dissolved. The significance of what Lane argues for, being the defining role that psychic phenomena play in human relations, especially in (post)colonial settings, comes to bear especially in theorizations of identity. Here he comes against theorizations such as those of Judith Butler (1999), because he emphasizes the retention of some psychic core even in the midst of identities which are theorized to be in flux and susceptible to context. In this regard, he refers to Gilroy's notion of 'the continuing lure of ethnic absolutisms' (p. 6) to highlight the powerful role that fantasy and identification play in racism.

The discussion above illustrates a movement within the psychoanalytic understanding of racism, first from the emphasis on the inherent internally directed destruction to establish the state of *nirvana* (i.e. the return to the inorganic or death according to Zurak & Klain, 1999, p. 6), to the other-oriented aggression, displaced in part in the service of Eros: to preserve the self and to satisfy Thanatos through 'killing the other'. Up to this point, the other has no colour, and as such the problem of how this psychogenic aggression becomes racialized requires further explication. It would appear that close resemblance of the object of aggression to the subject of aggression would evoke feelings of discomfort related to identification, that are akin to the context where the 'other' is the same as 'self'.

Would this evoke feelings of anxiety? The answer depends on whether there can be a demonstrably different other who can serve as the recipient of this aggression. Were this not the case, it is possible that the impulse to 'kill' in the service of Thanatos would prevail or would be directed to others similar to the self. I have explained how the process of colonialism presented the colonizer with a set of 'others' who could be killed with little remorse if any. This other was sufficiently different to the self, or more precisely, it was a *dis*similar other, the 'killing' of whom would satisfy the death drive in a way that would evoke little or no anxiety.

In an article on Fanon, Fakhry Davids (1997) refers to Fanon's usage of Jung's notion of 'collective psychic experience' to describe the positions of the colonizer and the colonized. According to Davids, this concept allows Fanon to achieve two things: to theorize both "the 'collective' European prejudice that renders the black particularly suitable as a repository for unwanted detested aspects of the self; and the shared black experience of alienation – of the wish to be white (p. 67)". He adds that in spite of this usage, Fanon "rejects out of hand any idea that these shared situations derive from inherited archetypes" (p. 67), explaining instead that these shared situations are a product of "the concrete economic reality of colonialism". I have quoted Davids' work here to imply the power differential in colonial settings, which aided the perceived suitability of the colonized as a recipient of the colonizer's instinctual aggression and destruction.

To quote the United Nations' Resolution 3068 (xxviii) of November 1973 (implemented in July 1976), which addresses the crime of Apartheid specifically it reads thus:

> ‘The States Parties to the present Convention declare criminal those organizations, institutions and individuals committing the crime of apartheid’

Further on Article III states that, regardless of motive, international criminal responsibility shall apply on any individual, group or institution which :

> ‘Directly abet, encourage or co-operate in the commission of the crime of apartheid’

I will expand on the importance of these pronouncements later in this section.

To expand on these resolutions, it is important to mention that given the hierarchical racial classification, access to what David Popenoe (1986) calls ‘social desirables,’ was not uniform in apartheid South Africa. One of these social desirables is power, and more specifically for this context, power to dominate those lower down on the racial hierarchy. In an earlier section in this review I have referred to the fact that relations between black Africans and coloured people have been acknowledged to be antagonistic at times. One of the integral aspects of this antagonism has been coloured people’s apparent support for the racism that whites meted out to black Africans. This is part of complicity (discussed previously), and it elucidates the fact that apartheid racism was practised within and amongst the oppressed groupings as well, with black Africans being on the receiving end not only of white racism, but also of coloured people’s racism as well. The Resolutions referred to above include such instances where one’s participation might have only been limited to supporting (or assisting, backing up) apartheid racism in its definition of the

violence of racism, and this kind of clause might be understood to refer to this latter form of racism. Following the psychoanalytic argument above, at least in terms of legal classification, black Africans represented a different other to coloured people as well as to white people, in a context where coloured people had relatively more access to power than black Africans. According to this argument, black Africans would have represented an 'acceptable' repository of aggression for coloured people too. The task at hand for this project is how this constellation of ideas regarding human nature, in contexts characterised by 'racial' inequalities, gets played out in identity formations.

This forms part of the theoretical background against which the hostility and destructiveness against the other implicit in racism will be explored and discussed. Although the nature of the data gathered might not lend itself to full psychoanalytic analysis, it is against this background conceptualization of humankind that coloured subjectivities will be explored. It is important to note that following Freud, a whole array of theories have developed, some of which fall within the psychoanalytic tradition while others respond to Freud but from other disciplines. These theories have different explicatory powers regarding racism and racial identities. In particular, Freud's focus on intrapsychic processes, though important, neglected the all important relational aspect which theorists like Melanie Klein augmented in psychoanalysis. This development has increased the attractiveness of Klein's theory in discussions and explanations of racism as discussed previously in this review.

CHAPTER 2: REFLECTIONS AND METHODS

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part I provide an account of the different stages of this project, and the motivations behind changes that occurred. This account reflects on what I have called my 'personal reactivities' elsewhere (Kometsi, 2004, p. 35), and engages theoretical work relevant to the project at hand. 'Personal reactivities' refers to the susceptibility to being impacted upon and the corresponding potential to impact on others during any given interaction between two or more objects/subjects. I aim to highlight my thoughts and personal experiences regarding this project and to acknowledge the potential impact that these might have had. By exploring these at the very onset, I aim to enable an analysis of the data that is not hampered by an excessive pull towards accounting for my reactivities in the process. These remain implicit in my analysis of the data, and once again, an approach that privileges these though valid, would make of this thesis something completely different. It would detract from a focus on how the participants have subjectively experienced African blackness. As such in this section I explore concepts like self-immersion, resistance, swaart-gevaar, the construct of African-coloured families and how the project materialized in spite of the challenges detailed in this discussion.

In the second part I turn to a discussion of research methods, both ones that I considered and rejected and ones that I employed. I reflect too, on ethical considerations. Throughout

this chapter, I provide a theoretical discussion of the aspect under consideration, so as to provide an adequate grounding and to illustrate linkages with the objectives of this thesis. I also discuss the concept of 'the family' in this part, explaining its importance for the analysis, and identifying theoretical frames within which this concept is employed.

Part I

Knocking the project into place

My interest in the subject of coloured-black Africans relations emerged out of personal interactions with coloured people in Cape Town since 1995. Up to that point, I had had no interaction with coloured people, whom I had known to live in certain townships (e.g. Bronville in Welkom, Heidedal in Bloemfontein and Brent Park in Kroonstad) which were exclusive for coloured people. The boundary between black townships and coloured townships was not only geographical, but also social. There were no opportunities to socialize with coloured people in the Free State where I grew up, except for in 'town' where they worked (mainly in sales and building construction) and did their shopping. Arriving in Cape Town aged 25, I was unprepared for the inevitable close exposure to coloured communities and coloured people in general.

My professional training as a clinical psychologist required that I see patients from different backgrounds, including coloured people. These interactions raised my interest given specific cultural challenges, histories and sets of attitudes I confronted when seeing

coloured patients (for example, the unmistakable accent which they use in speaking either English or Afrikaans). The contents of counselling/therapy sessions also alerted me to ways in which black Africanness got played out in the life-stories of coloured people. Normally, reports on black people and how coloured people imagined black Africanness differed from what I had expected, particularly in terms of the antagonism, shame, indifference and what felt like feigned and excessive interest that these reports were characterized by. Further to this, my exposure to communities in the broader Cape Town area provided me with an experience where for the first time in South Africa I was accused of being an oppressor of coloured people because of my 'race'. In the socio-political context following the 1994 elections which the African National Congress (ANC) won, black Africans were seen as the advantaged group, at the expense of coloured people and other groups that were victims of racism too. This placed me in a position of perceived (political) power, which having experienced myself as a victim of racial oppression for all my life raised questions for me regarding how coloured people perceived and experienced the intersection between colouredness and black Africanness.

The data gathering period which extended over a period of twelve months marked the culmination of an engagement with these questions. I had identified Cape Town as the research site (I discuss this choice later in Part II of this chapter), believing that my stay in Cape Town would allow proximity to the people I intended to do research on. Further, I also felt it was important that I not only depended on the life-stories of the people I would come to interview, I also needed an experiential knowledge afforded by one's immersion in the context on one's study. This intention was partially a positioning of my

project in line with the criticisms that Critical Psychology and other related post-modern theories have asserted against 'traditional ways' of doing research. These criticisms encourage a closer relationship between the researcher and his/her subjects, and a recognition of the subjects' embeddedness in their contexts. Therefore, the design of this project carried a commitment to recognizing the importance of the context, including the presence of the researcher as a constituent of that context.

For the purposes of this project, self-immersion implied a close interaction with coloured people and living in what is known as coloured townships. I believed that over and above gathering the life-stories, which activity would form the basis of the project, I also needed to observe and learn about the circumstances within which these life-stories got constructed and were lived out. My assumption was that all of these would enrich a research project which could otherwise be based only on interviews, with little or no attention to other aspects as mentioned above.

Self-immersion disabled

This study can be categorized as forming part of those studies which explore the effects of racialism and a racist political order in South Africa, on the subjectivities of those who have been exposed to these socio-political conditions. It also explores the relationship between the personal and the social, exploring where possible, the psychodynamics that can be discerned from the life-stories of the participants, especially where such psychodynamics are related to South Africa's racist past. In terms of the racial classification that applied prior to the political emancipation of this country (i.e. the pre-

1994 period), this study situates me as racially different to the people I meant to conduct this study on. In that sense, I would be classified as black (African), as contrasted to the participants who would be classified as coloured (or mixed). It is precisely because in the period following 1994, racial identities have been destabilized in that the legal framework on which they were based has been dismantled, that subjective engagement with, and experiences of, racial identities require exploration.

Self-immersion as I conceptualized it, faced a number of hurdles in this context. Firstly a racial identity is a lived identity, and it contains effects that exceed its discursive context. To put this differently, the effects of a racial identity, especially one which emerged out of a racist context, outlive and *out*-affect the specific socio-historical and political contexts in which it took form. As stated earlier, my contact with coloured people in Cape Town occurred after the demise of apartheid and the onset of a democratic, non-racist order in South Africa. Yet difference between coloured people and black Africans was and continues to be emphasized by different Capetonians (this is particularly evident in conflicts surrounding the provision of housing for the different groups in Cape Town). The fact that effects of racism are not tied to a specific socio-historical period is one of the explanations proffered in engaging the hard question of the recalcitrance of racism despite the invalidation of the different foundations on which systems of racism have been built (Lane, 1998). For this study, although any kind of racial discrimination was criminalized following the demise of the National Party government, the effects of the lived racial identities that different people carried persist. What this implies, is that beyond what I came to learn about the participants as contained in their life-stories, this

project also contained a possibility of an experiment. I was interested in analyzing the life-stories within a specific context in which the participants lived. However, the fact that I was also a racial (and possibly a racist) subject too meant that the participants' engagement with black identity would get played out in my interaction with them, beyond just what was contained in their narrations. Similarly, my engagement and perceptions of coloured people were bound to play themselves out in this context.

Part of what played itself out outside the confines of gathering the life-stories is the difficulty that characterized seeking accommodation in the coloured townships for my stay in Cape Town, as had been my plan in the design of the project. To provide a more complete picture, I should add that this difficulty was also complemented by my own resistance. The wish to live in coloured townships, though the most sensible idea given the nature of my study, ignored the effects of a racist socio-political order which I have referred to above. Specifically, it ignored that residential segregation impacted both on my participants and on me, such that the forces at play in my difficulty with staying in the coloured township would engender repulsion on both sides: perceived unwelcoming nature of the coloured people of blacks in their communities, as well as my own discounting of the coloured townships as a place where a black South African should aspire to live. In line with the fact that racism between white and black South Africans was more pronounced (discussed previously in the literature review), the privilege and highly developed infrastructure of the white residential areas, generally believed to be at the expense of black Africans and the black townships became more attractive for all the disadvantaged groups following the demise of apartheid and the infamous Group Areas

Act of 1950. Although some coloured townships were better off infrastructurally, compared to most black townships (for example Bontheuwel, a coloured township and its neighbouring black African township, Langa; or Athlone and another neighbouring black African township, Gugulethu), those that could move from the poorly resourced black African township aspired to move to 'town' or white residential areas. I believe this played a role in my decision not to move to coloured townships. Further, the unwelcoming nature of the coloured townships, though mainly a perception, can also be read in my telephonic conversation with one community leader in Mitchell's Plain. In response to my enquiry whether there were any African-coloured children at a specific high school in that community, she said:

> Not in Mitchell's Plain man. This community is mainly NP [National Party], and it is very much 'pro-blank' [favors whites]. They believe that whites are the ideal people. The residents are poverty stricken and blacks do not stick here. Rather try Athlone.

This does not mean that there are no black people living in Mitchell's Plain (one of the coloured residential areas in terms of the now defunct Groups Areas Act). However, this community was mentioned again by other participants as one of the most conservative coloured townships, conservative in its tendency to denigrate black people and idealize white people. It would have been exactly in this kind of community where reading off constructions of, and responses towards, black Africanness would have been ideal. However, self-immersion was blocked firstly by my lack of familiarity with the place, as well as by the real physical violence that erupts unpredictably between the gangs and against perceived strangers, hence the perceived unwelcoming nature of coloured

townships. Mitchell's Plain is perceived to be, and was established as, a coloured residential area. A black African is likely to stand out in this context, essentially because of language difference, but also in terms of lack of other attributes that form part of the social repertoire elsewhere in non-black African residential areas. Elaine Salo refers to a number of these attributes in her work on coloured youth in the Mannenberg area, such as the clothing labels, for instance.

The perception about Mitchell's Plain is not unique to that place. My visit to Mannenberg and Elsies River (two other coloured townships/residential areas) evoked similar feelings. In particular, during the earlier stages of my stay in Cape Town, a visit to Manneberg brought about a feeling that in entering this township I was crossing an imaginary boundary, a feeling that does not get evoked in me when visiting black African townships in spite of reports that they can also be violent and pose danger to one's life. What brought about the eerie feelings in particular were men who looked like they were lined up along the exiting street, looking at the passing cars with piercing eyes, which somehow communicated that they did not recognize one as a member of that community.

The point of this discussion is to illustrate that although self-immersion as conceptualized was desirable, it missed the point that this project was *cross-racial* not only in terms of its intent to study how individuals from African coloured families or couplings inhabited their particular identities, but also insofar as I, as the researcher was culturally, if not also racially, different to the expected participants. Real and perceived differences between the lived experiences of black people and those of coloured people underlie the subject of

this project which looks at how individuals from families or couples with an African-coloured profile inhabited and negotiated living through these identities in contest with other ones that they could have inhabited, wished for or disavowed. As this picture emerged and insisted on its consideration, it became clear that a coloured township, be it an imagined place or some entity independent of one's mental constructions, is not an unproblematic space to enter, if one is not a coloured person. My preconceptions about coloured townships which developed over time in this context interacted with reports that I heard from acquaintances that are members of coloured communities and influenced the nature of the eventual immersion that resulted.

A construction called African-coloured families

As stated previously, this project was partially encouraged by the personal stories that some of my patients (for psychological services), friends and colleagues shared with me over a six year period while I lived and worked in Cape Town. These personal stories suggested that there was tension in how black people and the idea of blackness were related to by some coloured people, more so in coloured communities than in other places of contact. This tension reflected a negative relation to black Africanness as an aspect of or as it related to coloured identity. According to this, the fewer the physical attributes that were associated with blackness one had, the better for one (substantiated in the content chapters in this thesis). Additionally, the more the physical distance one kept from black people, the stronger one's claim to colouredness.

Having stated this, and given the negative consequences that could follow any acknowledgement of and close association with black people as suggested in these personal stories, I should have expected that it would not be easy to find the people that I was looking for, especially given that I had specified the sample to comprise those members of coloured families whose families had a specific mixed (African-coloured) profile. In terms of how the racist political system worked previously, such an acknowledgement would jeopardize the family's position of relative socio-economic privilege (amongst others) compared to black African families on the one hand, and it would have exposed the family to a number of traumatic impingements by the racist authorities at the time, including forced removal, reclassification (of some of the family members) and possible family break up, where some family members could find themselves removed from the family home, and forced to relocate to places which are allocated to the race they might have been perceived to be members of. To some extent even today, where a family is known to have black relatives, or where a member of the (parental) couple is known to be black, feelings of shame are likely to be part of the family response, and the community members are likely to ridicule the family.

I have painted this background to illustrate the social dynamics that came to impact on my ability to access the people that I had constructed as African-coloureds. In addition to all of this, it is important to note that in South Africa, there is no social category that identifies people as African-coloureds. This is a concept that I have employed as a shorthand for a description of the people I was interested in researching (Zimitri Erasmus (2000) uses 'coloured-africans' in an article entitled 'Hair Politics'). I needed the

shorthand because providing a full description of the intended research participants each time I tried to explain the project would have been cumbersome. However, it is shorthand that had no direct resonance with indices of racial categories that people identified with. Further, even with those that could understand what the shorthand stood for, I was still faced with the hurdle that these families have generally identified exclusively as coloured (or mixed), throughout their lives. An attempt to extricate Africanness or blackness as part of their identities might not have been part of what they would do ordinarily, notwithstanding the shame and ridicule this could evoke potentially.

Another obstacle was that given the social dynamics that adhered to this constructed category, it was not a description that people were willing and/or able to attribute to either themselves or others, at least not in front of a stranger, which I was to them at the beginning of this project. The process of searching for the relevant participants was akin to an encouragement that they 'come out', with all the adherent dynamics that one finds associated with this process in queer studies. Related to this, is the assertion that Christopher Lane (1995) makes in saying that political emancipation does not necessarily lead to psychic emancipation. Lane's thesis applies specifically to those situations where political emancipation marks a break with a dehumanizing past as is the case with South Africa, the United States and Germany to mention a few. Following this argument, the impact of the dehumanizing past does not end with the demise of an unjust political order and its atrocities. Similarly to what I have stated above regarding racial identities, the effects live on in various ways and are reflected in people's lives even in the post emancipation era. The crux of the previous political order in South Africa was the

separation of ‘races’ all in an attempt to maintain white supremacy, particularly through the oppression and exploitation of black people (in the broad sense, meaning non-whites).

However, according to this racial classification system, the white race and the black race constituted opposites, where whiteness approximated purity (holiness) and civilization, and blackness was associated with evil and primitivity. According to the racist racial classification, being classified as coloured implied that one was neither black nor white. It is a racial category that positioned those that were classified as such, somewhere in the middle of the two opposites, at once with claims to black ancestry and an acknowledged kinship to whiteness, as well as different-ness from black Africanness – and this differentiation from black Africanness was crucial. What is interesting is that some coloured people (or those classified as of mixed race) had no blood relation with whites or with African blacks (e.g. slaves from Madagascar, St Helena and Mauritius). From this it would seem the most important objective of the racist classification system in South Africa was to differentiate between whites and black Africans, with very little attention to the facts of what defined what lay between and outside of these specific designations.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see that this conceptualization of ‘race’ was employed to further the very project of elevating the white race as supreme above all other races, and more importantly, above black Africans. Du Pre (1994) and Venter (1974) make reference to how the white authorities flirted with the inclusion of coloured people as part of the white race. The invitation to participate in a research project that required confronting a part of their identity that might have been disavowed, hidden,

defended against or that remained unengaged with in other ways up to that point posed a threat to the stability of the identities of my participants at the time. Field in Erasmus (2001) writes about the tendency of coloured people to talk about their white ancestry and to be silent about their African ancestry. The context in which coloured identity gets constructed is hostile towards, or at least it is not welcoming of the idea of black Africanness (Mohamed Adhikari (2005) refers to aspects of this hostility in evaluating Erasmus' (2004) book on coloured identities). In spite of the political emancipation that South Africa has experienced, this is the context out of which I wanted to extract research participants, and get them to engage a subject that would be anxiety and pain evoking.

'Resistance'

Overall, I met both structural and personal resistance in accessing the people of interest in this regard. Institutionally, there was no database that would yield the names and the whereabouts of the people I wanted to talk to. This institutional inadequacy, at least from the perspective of my project, would suggest lack of recognition of this aspect of personal identity, precisely because it would reflect how the different racial groupings are 'welded together' (to use Du Pre's (1994) concept), black to white and coloured and other permutations of this connectedness. The racial 'identities' constructed through racial classification were expected to be mutually exclusive, and the meeting point of the categories represented the most unstable, unpredictable and uncertain space in the processes of identity formation.

The director of one of the organizations that I approached, which operated in a predominantly coloured area, expressed what seems to represent another dimension of resistance that emanated from the current political climate and the historical moment. From 1990 when the political changes started in earnest, and more so following the first democratic election in South Africa, the emphasis was on building a harmonious rainbow nation. Despite the colourfulness of the metaphor invoked, racial identification was not part of the emphasis of this drive. Togetherness and being part of one nation were the most emphasized aspects in the ethos of the rainbow nation. To return to the encounter with the director that I have referred to above, this was her response after I described my research project to her:

> I only came to Cape Town in 1991. At that point this was a non-issue. So as a student, if you are looking for marks, you shouldn't choose a topic that is so difficult. I could say those people (blacks playing coloured) are no longer around, because of the political changes.

In spite of the apparent misunderstanding of the project contained in this response, the question that still remains would be what happened to those black people that did 'play coloured'? If this was something that happened, do these people just vanish following the political changes that the director refers to? In part, such a statement discounts various processes in which identities get constructed, which processes do not suddenly become discounted when political changes take place. Further, the nature of racial identity itself, which can be described as a process of sendimented experiences, would not support a statement that political changes necessarily erase aspects of personal identity. At the very

least, such changes affect (not erase) processes of identity construction, and open new ways of self-identifying.

More importantly, this statement suggests that a project that emphasizes racial identities could be out of tune when viewed from the post-apartheid vantage point. Racial identities in South Africa are fraught with complications of the 'pre-emancipation' political order. Given that this is a political order that most people would like to put in the past and leave there, explorations of what has come about mainly because of this order do not come without difficulties, and – resistance. The atrocities committed both by the oppressor and by the freedom fighters generally (Truth and Reconcilliation Commission of South Africa Report, 2003), and the performances of identities as they related to abjections of other 'racial identities' render the past an unpalatable place to explore in this regard. Following the argument I wish to proffer in this discussion, it follows that there would be resistance to exploring the past, as this is likely to evoke feelings of shame in the current socio-political climate. Looking across one's race is likely to evoke feelings of shame given the antagonistic relations that developed between the races, especially in regard to competition for scarce resources, for instance jobs, infrastructural provisions, etc. Evoking these feelings is likely particularly in a context where inter-ethnic and especially cross-racial (and intra-racial) reconciliation and forgiveness have grown in currency. Part of racial identity performance in that political climate (before the advent of the rainbow nation mentality) included a denigration of blackness and a valorization of whiteness. This is a performance that, I hypothesized, each of the participants might have come across to a greater or lesser extent, and it bore the potential to raise some anxiety. Shame

is an emotion that has been linked to coloured identities on a number of occasions, including what I regard as the latest contribution to discussions on coloured identities that Adhikari (2005) offers through his book called '*Not White enough, Not Black enough*'. I refer back to this and explore it more fully in Chapter 7.

In the psychoanalytic sense, resistance refers to a defence mechanism in which the 'patient is fighting against becoming aware of painful feelings in the therapy' (Malan, 1994). In a related but more general sense, resistance results from an expectation that there could be negative repercussions to engaging a particular behaviour. At a personal level, resistance can be explored in two ways in the case of this project. Firstly, I met resistance in the sense that I have described above, where I experienced some of the potential research subjects as unwilling to engage the subject. In one instance, a close colleague, whom through our contact in the past had confided in me parts of her family history, was unable to even meet me or call me telephonically when she was told of the study that I intended conducting. Several attempts to reach her all failed, which was unusual given the kind of relationship we had in the past. Finally she sent me a message through the receptionist of her organization, saying that their (therapy) centre did not admit the kind of people that I was looking for. At once, she communicated her self-exclusion from becoming a potential participant and also a 'misunderstanding' of what was required. Admittedly, there is more than just one way in which this can be interpreted. However, given that this was not the first time that I had communicated with her, this response represented a deviation from the norm – an occurrence that I could not understand. This is why I see this as possibly representing an instance of resistance.

Secondly, I detected a resistance that was internally generated, i.e. from inside my own person. In terms of the racial categories that I have discussed above, where whiteness occupied a socio-political position of supremacy and blackness the one of relative inferiority (requiring interventions such as the Black Consciousness Movement), and coloured people occupying the middle-ground between these, I was *researching upwards* (Amina Mama's concept – 1995), or across my racial group. Each time I had to go to coloured residential areas, where I assumed I would be able to meet potential participants or people that would put me in contact with the participants, I was aware of a feeling that resembled having to cross a boundary of sorts. This is common when one has to make contact with strangers in general, but it is significant that this was a feeling that I experienced in having to meet coloured people or going to coloured residential areas specifically for the project at hand. It is the same feeling that I experienced in having to explain the project to the potential participants. It led to a re-wording of the subject of my research and a redefinition of who would be the relevant people to participate. The initial topic was 'The subjective experiences of coloured people from African-coloured families: A psychodynamic analysis'. Despite the fact that 'coloured' was an official racial classification category in South Africa, the political changes that I referred to above affected the way in which this category operated. There was a discomfort and a feeling of awkwardness both on my part and on the part of the participants when referring to them as 'coloureds'. The burden of this racial identity as a contested 'reality' came to bear in those instances. On the one hand, this contest maintains that coloured identity might have been imposed by the racist government of the past on the disparate group of people that

are referred to as coloureds. However, this side of the argument insists that coloured people have appropriated this identity in unique ways that bear little or no resemblance to what the racist order of the past might have meant for this identity to be. On the other hand, coloured identity is seen as an aspect of the racist past of this country, and as valueless and non-essential in a democratic political order, where artifacts of that system should be disposed of.

In most cases these are academic debates, and it is rare that one sees them lived out in daily interactions between people. As the analysis that follows below illustrates, however, the tensions reflected by these debates are not restricted to the academic realm, neither are they restricted to being an issue of significance exclusively to coloured people. They also surfaced in my interactions with potential participants. According to the description that I have given regarding how coloured identities related to the idea of blackness (or to black ancestry for others), the racial descriptors in the title of the project were emotionally loaded. This was particularly the case in a context where racial (and racist) subjects from different dimensions of racial identifications interacted. I felt compelled to modify the topic of the project, and had to find ways of justifying this. In the place of the initial topic, I chose: "A psychodynamic and psychohistorical analysis of Capetonians with an 'African-coloured' family profile". This worked somewhat better, partly because the African-coloured qualification was less definitive and immediate. Further, 'Capetonians' is a concept that is easier to relate to in the post-apartheid era, especially in 'interracial' contexts. It is less emotive than coloured and more inclusive. It achieved the intended objective of lessening the perception that the participants were being picked up

on. The expression of one of the participants when they heard about the project, and in attempting to discourage another participant (his wife), reflects this achievement:

> This is just going to cause trouble for us. What if this guy has been sent by the government, and what if we end up being reclassified as black?

Finally, the title changed to ‘Coloured subjectivities and black Africanness’. This enabled a theorization of coloured identities in a more personal way. It captures the intended sense that the titles I considered before suggested, while it also responded to data that was beginning to emerge, and the relevant literature.

The roots of resistance as encountered in carrying out this research are numerous and variable. Some are structural and institutional, while others are personal. In all instances, these feed into each other, resulting into a complex net of obstacles in doing research that is interracial, and one that focuses on racial identities as read from lived personal experiences. It is precisely this net of obstacles that should be disentangled, mostly because the effects of those experiences that have not been explored remain both potent and active in everyday interactions. Lack of this exploration leaves interactors both vulnerable and potentially harmful.

The project in spite of …

> I can give you a list of 'anti-black men' coloured women. I've got nothing against them, but it was tough (Ms Russels – participant).

Part of what I have sketched above reflects what made this project a difficult task to carry out. Indeed, there were no scores of people that eagerly awaited an opportunity to engage in the kind of discussion this project required. Those that could, were few and far between. As such, I spent a lot of time in Cape Town waiting patiently, and sometimes impatiently, for the right people to come along. My perceptions, of the potential participants, of myself, and all the roles and indices of my identity were at constant interplay in relationship to what it meant to carry out this research. This ranged from questioning my way of making contact with the people of interest, through to feeling persecuted by what I saw as the unyielding lack of cooperation on the part of coloured people (note the slip to coloured people from people with the African coloured family/couple profile), and to questioning the relevance of this topic of interest. It is mainly this process of waiting that knocked the project into the shape that it took eventually. I now turn to a description of how I felt affected by this process, and how that carried the potential to affect the way this project turned out.

One of the things that I have done in the paragraphs that precede this part, has been to locate myself as identifiably different from the people that I described as suitable for inclusion in this project. On the one hand, I have referred to this factor as a process of 'researching upwards', where a member of one racial group or class carries out research

on members of another racial group or class, where the latter perceives itself or is perceived to be (or to have been) superior to the former, meaning the racial grouping or class of the researcher. In a similar way (using Christopher Lane's formulation), I have also differentiated between political emancipation with its adherent socio-legal implications, and psychological emancipation. This premise holds that the one is no guarantee for the other, and that particularly in contexts where there is a history of racism, the effects hereof outlive the moment of political emancipation by years or even centuries if one looks at the US and its yet incomplete process of psychological emancipation following the demise of slavery, as well as the impact thereof on the intergroup relations in that country – the alleged racist way in which the impact of hurricane Katrina on New Orleans was dealt with by President George Bush's administration in August 2005 is a case in point.

On the other hand, and more importantly for this part, the preceding paragraphs refer both implicitly and explicitly, to a process of identification, where I identify the participants and myself in different ways. Diana Fuss (1995) concludes a book on identification by making the following claims which tie in with the argument informing the foundations of this thesis. Firstly, she states that identification has a history, and she specifies that it is a colonial history. Secondly, she says that this colonial history poses serious challenges for contemporary recuperations of a politics of identification. For this section, suffice to say that race and colonialism have a curious history with the origins of racism bound inextricably to the early stages of colonial expansion. It was through encountering the colonial subject that processes of 'othering' began, which became

increasingly racist over time, to the point of 'stripping' the colonial other of the right to subjectivity (I have provided a more detailed discussion hereof in the literature review, mainly through a consideration of Seshadri-Crooks' work). Stated differently, racial identification has a history, a history that tends to stand in the way of projects of deracination and projects of nation building where equality (and sometimes sameness) is emphasized. Colonial history, though similar in its dehumanization of certain people and rendering them possessions of others, has important colonizer- and colony-specific differences. For instance Mozambique as a Portuguese colony was different and gave rise to dynamics that were specific to that context as compared to R'eunion Island as a French colony and its dynamics.

For this project, I would add to the idea of identification and its relationship to colonialism the concept of the unconscious. The latter introduces the effects of external and institutional aspects of colonial history on the individual. It suggests that these go beyond the realm of the conscious, and therefore, beyond personal control (as per the discussion on Lane (1995) in the literature review section). The processes of identification, especially racial identification, are subtended by unconscious processes, which we can only sense, but not access in full. It is my hypothesis that in the current sociopolitical climate in South Africa, where overt racism has been declared a crime, not only in this country but also by the United Nations, the facility of the unconscious deserves even more attention given the negative sanction that overt racist actions would evoke. According to psychoanalytic theories, the unconscious becomes the repository of all those thoughts, instincts, feelings and other behaviour that would bring about negative

sanction or pain. However, the contents of the unconscious continue to find indirect outlets, and impact on one's behaviour in ways meant to evade recognition.

I would like to provide an overview of how I believe unconscious processes might have played themselves out in the course of this project. This takes the form of exploration of my personal reactivities, and some observations about the process throughout the fieldwork and data-gathering phase of the project. I have referred to the differentiation between blackness, Africanness and colouredness above, which then I believe allows for the process of a differential identification, racial identification with all its adherent implications. One of these implications is what Diana Fuss refers to as the lack of political innocence of identification, in other words, the political culpability of identification. In essence, my referencing of the participants as coloured people brings with it the burden of what it means to be black, coloured or white in a country that has a racist past marked with antagonism between the different groups. This reference, or identification of the participants, becomes shorthand for the long history of relationships that coloured people have had with blacks Africans, or with the idea of blackness. This is an explicit aspect of this project, which though veiled by the dictates of academic exploration, does not require much effort to appreciate. Similarly, my own self identification as black carries with it the (racial) history of relating to the idea of colouredness and with that, that of whiteness too. With this referent, mindfulness of oppression at the hands of whites primarily, but also the complicity of coloured people in this process is brought to bear.

'Swaart gevaar'

This Afrikaans concept is loosely translated to mean that blacks are dangerous, and that they attack women (in particular) and children of other racial groupings indiscriminantly and without provocation. It is particularly associated with whites (in their diversity) in South Africa and the neighbouring countries [e.g. Zimbabwe (known as Rhodesia in the pre-independence era) and Namibia (known as South West Africa before the political changes)]. In spite of its prominence following the ascendancy of the National Party government in South Africa and its investment in elaborating and promulgating racist policies, it is a concept whose roots portrays a long historical trajectory associated with the dehumanizing effects of colonialism on the colonial subjects. As Butchart (1998) avers through his description of the classification systems in which the black body was described by the colonizer, blacks were animals, and not human beings, and as such, they lacked the facility to be rational and civil (in the eyes of the colonizer). Therefore they could rape the colonizer's women and harm her children. This is the kind of propaganda that incited male white settlers in particular, into action, to protect their loved ones against the perceived dangerousness of black people. It also both facilitated the development of racist attitudes against blacks as well as the violent attacks against and the killing of blacks.

This expatiation on the concept of 'swaart gevaar' is relevant in this case insofar as this was not a factor that remained locked up only in the black-white relationships in South Africa. Zegeye (2001) states that once coloured people were given a vote at the beginning of the 20th century, their political leaders 'struggled to demonstrate their level of

civilization by internalizing the very codes and values used by the white elite to classify them' (p. 8). He goes on to say that many of the coloured people were subject to political fatalism and alienation from black South Africans as a result of the National Party propaganda which instilled a fear of black South Africans. Based on this, and the differential access that being coloured (or mixed) afforded coloured people access to scarce resources, relations between coloured people and black Africans have not always been cordial. This was particularly worsened by the lack of residential contact that was a fact between the two groups. In this lack of contact existed a space in which to deposit the projections each group elaborated and harboured against one another. I have raised this here, as one of the possible factors that were at play in the resistance that I theorize about here. In the same way that some coloured people exaggerated the effects of stranger perception, it would seem that I might have identified with this projection, and anticipated a defensive aggression when visiting coloured residential areas.

I wish to proffer that this is part of the 'tension arc' (borrowing Ernest Wolf's (1994) concept) that feeds the complexity of this project, and that informed the ultimate form that this project assumed. It is the tension that interacts with other aspects of the identification process, both local and global, as well as the constant changes as different people come into contact with one another, and subvert ideas of the phantasied other.

Part II

Methods and Study Orientation

Of the three different perspectives in psychological research, namely nomothetic, idiographic and hermeneutic perspectives, this study falls more within the latter than the former two. This is because it does not attempt to identify laws defining human behaviour, instead it strives to identify meanings that a specific social signifier (colouredness) infuses within the everyday subjective experiences of participants in this study. Hayes (2000) states that such meanings occur on a number of levels, including the conscious, unconscious, personal, social, cultural and sociopolitical.

Studying subjectivity and looking out for possibilities using the psychodynamic lens, posits that people's feelings and personal experiences are real, worth studying and that they should be taken seriously. Specifically, implied in my interest in studying the impact of being classified as coloured, is the need to look at how that external process (of being classified racially) impacts subjectively (i.e. on how the participants see/experience themselves and the world around them) on those who are classified or self-classify as coloured in the contexts referred to. This study seeks to use both empathy and distanciation in order to understand and to interpret what is understood in its context. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) differentiate between the two concepts, and describe empathy as understanding a human phenomenon as it is lived in its context, and distanciation as that which points to the limitations of subjective and contextual

understandings. Implied in distanciation is the need to move out of the context in order to gain an alternative perspective on what is studied. These authors hold that a text can mean more than the author meant it to mean. Therefore, on the one hand, this study seeks to provide a contextual account of being (called) coloured when one is closely related to black Africans, and on the other, it also seeks to provide a psychodynamic reading of the life histories that will be generated. To the extent that the understanding that results from this study is particular to the theoretical background and the specific questions that I seek to answer, this is a perspectival understanding, resting on "such interpretive and integrative abilities which I may have, as well as shortcomings in these respects" (Sherwood, 1980, p. 312).

In what follows, I explore the subjectivities of coloured individuals related to African-coloured families as well as different individuals who have had an intimate relationship with black Africans (as described in the introduction). The focus of this study is not exclusively on the manifest expressions of these subjectivities. To the extent that this was possible, this study also makes reference to the inner worlds (or the psychodynamics) of those interviewed, as well as the social contexts in which their subjectivities were in construction and being articulated. Consequently, this consideration compels a choice of an approach that focuses on the whole person (i.e. psychic as well as social inscriptions of identity and experience), and not on single attributes (for example, specific attitudes). Such a focus has several advantages, amongst which is the possibility of appraising intrafamilial and general race related experiences, as well as their interplay in the manifestation of subjective experiences. This approach also had to facilitate the

production of data that would throw light on both conscious and unconscious processes. Given this, I expected this method to enable the study of the individual 'in relationship' (to the family or significant others), while privileging socio-historical contexts as well.

With these considerations in mind, I conducted a series of interviews with selected individual participants over a period of twelve months. These interviews constitute the life stories on which this study is based. In addition the observations made during my contact with the interviewees regarding the interviewees and the researcher's interaction with them constitutes additional information that I have used to aid this exploration. This study was intended to be a naturalistic study (as contrasted to experimental studies taking place in laboratories), with unstructured, conversational interviews and contact with the families and the individual members taking place at the homes of these participants where feasible. According to Sherwood (1980), openness to meeting at the participants' homes is important in that broadly, it facilitates the development of relationships in the field and increases the possibilities of fruitful research. Specifically, it communicates to the participants that the researcher recognizes their homes and families as constituting an intrinsic dimension of their social world. The unstructured interviews allow individuals to talk about their life experiences in their own chosen ways, increasing the possibility that participants will feel valued and have some sense of ownership of the process. To confirm this point, despite the difficuly of accessing the relevant participants as discussed above, some of those that were accessed eventually indicated how they had borne a wish to write up their family histories. An interview style that allowed them to pursue what

emerged in the interviews satisfied the need to explore aspects of their family histories in a manner that they had not engaged before.

The sample

A total of fifteen individuals constituted the sample. The motivation behind this number was the need to provide time so as to attend to the data in as detailed a way as possible, facilitating an in-depth understanding. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), six to eight data sources or sampling units represent an adequate sample size for a homogeneous sample, and 10 to 20 where the intention is to conduct shorter interviews so as to show maximum variation or disconfirm existent evidence. Bearing this in mind, I limited the sample size to fifteen individuals, almost double the number these authors recommend, partially because this was not a homogenous sample. Therefore a smaller sample would have restricted evidence of the variability that had begun to emerge as the interviewees proceeded. Further, these were indepth interviews, with each individual being interviewed on at least two occasions. As a result, this process yielded a huge amount of data, so that a bigger sample would have made the analysis and interpretation difficult.

Further, in a study similar to this Sherwood (1980) uses three families, and gives the reason for this as “the complex and interlocking processes which are under analysis and the need to work microscopically and indepth” (p. 14). Mama (1995) uses life histories of 14 black women, citing similar reasons. She states that one of her considerations was that the category ‘black women” defined these women only partially, and that beyond this,

their subjectivities varied as a function of other factors which were not common to all of these women. One may deduce from this that a smaller sample would have deprived this study of adequate variability, which is necessary for the theorization of subjectivity as she has done with a sample of 14. Similarly, Sherwood's sample of three families represents 12 individuals from those families, which conforms to the general idea suggested by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999). The current study and the decision regarding the sample size draws on the following considerations, underlined by Mama and Sherwood:

- It adopts the position that there are multiple ways of inhabiting coloured identity (hence my reference to coloured identities throughout this thesis),
- It accepts that there are multiple meanings to this identity, and
- It asserts that there is paucity of studies that are decidedly psychodynamic on the subjectivity of coloured people in general and of individuals in African-coloured families in particular

Given these considerations then, the sample of this study adopted the sample size that Mama recommends, a decision also due to the similarities between the issues her study addressed and the issues relevant to this project. Similarly, in Sherwood's study, though based on three families, the number of individuals involved went beyond the number that I have opted for in this project, suggesting an adoption of the higher end of the number suggested by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999). It is important to note that although families were an important reference point for this project (as is discussed below), it was individuals that became the primary sampling units.

Criteria for inclusion

The concept of family has been conceived of in many and varied ways. The most defining characteristic of the families that were included in this project is that the parental couple should have one member being African and the other coloured, or the individual participant must have (had) an intimate relationship with a black African person. Further, I limited the sampling process to the immediate family where such a relationship exists or existed. Families in which members of the parental couple who were widowed were also included. The chosen families and/or individuals were identified or self-identified as coloured and lived or had lived in areas which were designated as coloured areas according to the now defunct Group Areas Act of 1950. A few of the participants (Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Muizen, both self-identifying as coloured) were included because of the significant exposure (or a significant lack thereof) to interracial contexts, even in their households. For instance, Mrs. Thomas grew up with black Africans in the Eastern Cape, and only became exposed to the social divide between coloured people and black Africans when she arrived in Cape Town. Mrs. Muizen has played host to international students coming from East Asian countries such as China, compelling her to engage with cultural and racial differences in orientating these students to the realities of the Western Cape in particular, and South Africa in general. Lastly Mr. Mmota was included because he is married to a coloured woman, and has lived in coloured townships for years. He self-identified as black African, and this has facilitated an engagement with racial identities of coloured people in ways that are important for this project.

Of greater importance, these families or individuals had to be willing to talk about themselves. To this extent, in spite of the fact that different family members were contacted differently, where possible, individual commitment was sought through individual consultations after initial family meetings (where this applied). Those who were included were family members or individuals who were willing to talk about what self-identifying or being identified as coloured meant. In terms of age participants had to be 18 years or older. The rationale for this was to ensure that each individual had accumulated a considerable range of social and familial experience, and had reached a certain level of maturity and self-reflexivity.

Gaining entry

Initially, as explained in the discussion on self-immersion, I sought to spend as much time as possible within areas which were formerly known as coloured residential areas. Although this did not happen as planned, I still used the first few months in Cape Town looking for people I could identify as key informants. During this time, I also made contact with schools, churches, professionals and NGOs and other community formations operating in coloured communities. The first six months defined the shape and characteristics of the sample I came to use. I soon realized that I did not have an abundance of people to choose from. There were leads that I pursued for long periods of time, and had to give up on when realizing that the people concerned were not keen to participate. I enlisted the help of a radio station whose target was mainly coloured

communities (Bush Radio). This idea followed a meeting with an employee of the station who was also a student of a colleague. Evidently, there were leads that lead to other leads or ideas. With most of these, there was not much that came through. It took patience, persistence and knocking on different doors to finally have enough participants trickling through.

Amongst others, I also placed an announcement in a Muslim newspaper which has a significant readership in coloured communities. Out of this effort, a well-known psychologist and anthropologist in Cape Town (Gerald Stone), who had worked for many years in and with coloured communities, called and offered some valuable advice regarding what I could do to maximize my yield of participants, part of which was to drop my insistence on using English as a means to communicate with all potential participants, and to treat the initial sessions more as social sessions. I also contacted the Social Welfare offices in Wynberg, whose social workers did a lot of supervisory work on the Cape Flats, hoping to use this opportunity to familiarize myself with coloured communities. Out of this contact, I managed to get three participants, whom the social workers had had some dealings with in the past. Further than this, colleagues at the University of Cape Town also provided links with people they had worked with before, either professionally in therapy and/or while doing their own research; or socially in their everyday interactions in Cape Town. The point of this discussion is to illustrate the time it took to access the fifteen participants I ended up with, and the various sources that were attempted and that lead me to them. So I ended up with a mixed group of people, the brief description of which I provide below using pseudonyms:

- Mrs. Lotus: An older pleasant woman aged 67. She lives in a working class environment in what used to be called council flats, south of Cape Town. Her great-grandfather was a Scotsman who arrived in South Africa in the 1820's. He married a coloured woman and together they gave birth to Mrs. Lotus' father, who then married a daughter of a Xhosa woman and a white man from Cape Town. Mrs. Lotus' mother never saw her father, and grew up as a Xhosa woman and speaking isiXhosa, although her physical features gave away the fact of her mixed parentage. Mrs. Lotus is married to a coloured man from one of the small towns neighbouring Cape Town. She speaks both isiXhosa and Afrikaans, and has six grown up children. She is a pensioner.
- Ms Jameson: A professional woman in her fourties, owns a thriving business in the Southern suburbs of Cape Town. She is unmarried, has a primary school-going child whom she lives with. Her father was an immigrant from one of the islands surrounding Southern Africa. She has a long history of activism against racism in South Africa, and is in a committed relationship with a black African man.
- Mrs. Muizen: She is a house-wife and does part-time product sales. A jovial woman with presence, she plays host to foreign students in Cape Town at her house in the more affluent coloured suburbs, south of Cape Town. Her father was white and her mother coloured. She is married with grown up children.
- Mrs. McCarthy: She is a woman in her 60s, living with her husband in a house in one of the middle income houses in coloured townships. She has grown up

children, living on their own away from the family home. An active community and church member, she was born to a black African man of foreign origins and a coloured woman. On the main, her father brought her up, while her mother remarried a coloured man (following a marriage to a white Irishman before she met Mrs. McCarthy's father). She adopted a coloured identity and facilitated, through the church, that her husband and the rest of his immediate family be reclassified from black (Tswana) to coloured.

- Ms McDouglas: She is in her early-thirties, formerly active in the youth and trade union movements, as well as other community and NGO initiatives; she lives in the Cape Town CBD. Her mother was born to a black African man and a coloured woman, and she grew up in coloured townships . She has a rich dark complexion, and is mother to three children fathered by a coloured man.
- Mr. Lenniz: An openly gay man in his mid thirties, Mr. Lenniz was born to a coloured woman and a black African father of foreign origins. His parents never got married, and his father returned to his home country leaving his family secured with a coloured identity and a house in one of the low income coloured townships. Through the years he has lived in and out of his mother's house, occasionally spending extended periods with his father in his father's country of origin. A very eloquent man, he does occasional jobs and lives at different places in temporary accommodation.
- Mr. Mmota: In his late fourties, he is a black African originally from Gauteng. He is married to a coloured woman, and they have two children. They live in one of the middle income coloured suburbs north of Cape Town, having lived in other

coloured townships that are relatively less affluent before (for example, Bontheuwel). An active member of community, especially when it comes to the needs of the poor, he engages quite often with government structures in facilitating service delivery.

- Mrs. Daniels: She also lives in a less affluent coloured township around Cape Town. She provides care for the needy on a part time basis, and derives her income from this. Mrs. Daniels was born to a coloured man and a black African isiXhosa-speaking woman. Originally from the Eastern Cape, she has experienced removals which were part of the Group Areas Act of 1950 during her formative years. For most of her life, she has embraced her mother's culture and identifies more as black African, although officially she had been classified coloured. She is married to a black African man.
- Mr. Zitha: A successful businessman in his fourties, Mr. Zitha is a black African man living in one of the affluent white suburbs east of Cape Town. He is widowed, and most of his children are grown up, with the exception of the youngest one, whom he still lives with. He came to Cape Town from Gauteng, and settled with his family in the southern suburbs of Cape Town where coloured people lived, before moving to the east of the city. He is in a committed relationship with an English-speaking coloured woman, and they have a child together. They also work as business partners.
- Mrs. Thomas: She is an elderly coloured woman, living in the middle income coloured suburbs, south of Cape Town. Her family has important political connections, and some of her family members occupy senior positions in the

government. She also came to Cape Town from the Eastern Cape, and settled down with a coloured man.

- Ms Russels: A pretty young coloured woman in her early thirties, she works in Cape Town and lives with her siblings in the city. However, she still commutes between the CBD and a neighbouring town north of Cape Town for work purposes sometimes. This is where her mother lives. She was born to an Indian woman and a coloured man, whom she described as having Madiba's (Nelson Mandela) physical features. Her significant intimate relationships have been with black African men. She is engaged to get married to a European national.
- Mrs. Adams: A health professional in her mid-fourties, she lives in a mixed coloured township in terms of income. She has also stayed in a number of coloured townships and suburbs, before settling in her current community. Mrs. Adams is married to a 'fair' looking man, and they have grown up children. She also has a rich dark complexion, her mother was Xhosa speaking and her father was coloured. She had had no contact with her maternal relatives.
- Mr. Paulse: A cheerful intellectual, with a long history of student leadership, Mr. Paulse is in his late twenties. He suspects that he has a black African great-grandfather, but does not know this for sure. His grandfather is black African, but had always been perceived in the family as a step-father/step-grandfather until just before his death. He lives in the Southern suburbs, but has his family home where most of his family lives in the north-west of Cape Town. He is a single man, working in the higher education sector.

- Mr. Tate: He is in his late fifties, married with no children. He has a history of difficulties with the law, but is currently a devoted Christian together with his wife. His parents were black Africans who had adopted coloured identities, and had had no contact with the extended family members who had not adopted coloured identities. He is unemployed, and lives with his wife in a middle income coloured suburb/township in Cape Town.
- Mrs. Tate: She is an older, retired woman who has worked in the clothing factories and dry cleaners. Originally from the Northern Cape, and born to a moTswana woman and a Xhosa man who never married, she adopted her coloured step-father's surname as a young girl, and was racially classified coloured. She is in her second marriage with a man who was also born to black African parents who had passed as coloured. She lives in one of the middle income coloured townships and owns the property she lives in, which she inherited from her step-father.

A couple of participants are black Africans, and they were included in the sample because they were in intimate or marital relationships with coloured people. As such, they were able to offer useful insights regarding coloured subjectivities through narrations relating to their lives with their partners, both in coloured communities and elsewhere. As families and couples, they had spent significant parts of their lives in coloured communities, interacting closely not only with their partners, but also with coloured communities in general.

Procedure

Letters with a brief introduction of who I was and a request to meet were prepared initially, but these were expanded to include a more detailed description of the project. These were left with the participants after the first meeting during which a description of the project would be given while at the same time attempts were made to get potential participants to commit. This worked better than sending a letter in advance, because then a misunderstanding of the letter carried a risk of costing the project participants. Some of the initial meetings took place at coffee shops, restaurants, or bars during people's breaks at work or after work. Others took place at family homes or at the University of Cape Town - Child Guidance Clinic which was hosting me for the period of my fieldwork.

Similarly, actual interviews took place at the homes of these individuals, in their offices or board-rooms at their workplaces, and at my office at the Child Guidance Clinic. Sometimes with the same participant, interviews would take place at several of these places, mostly at the behest of the participants, depending on the privacy levels, levels of comfort and freedom from disturbance experienced at any of the given places. This illustrates that in spite of the difficulty of reaching the relevant participants, once accessed, a reasonable relationship and an adequate level of trust developed, facilitating their being comfortable with allowing me into these different, usually private spaces and areas of their lives. There was also reasonable commitment, evinced by their willingness to make an effort and travel to where I was working from. It also became apparent that where there were intra-familial differences regarding participation, I had to back off while keeping the door open should there be a resolution regarding this. Indeed, some of

the participants did not trust the process, and while others did not shift from this mistrust, some did and ended up participating. Through it all, handling the families and the individuals gently, and avoiding intruding in spaces where families were not willing to go bore fruit for the project. For instance, although in one family it would have benefited the project to interview the husband who had changed from a black African identity to a coloured identity, the family dynamics were such that pursuing him would deprive me of two participants in that family. There was a feeling of protectiveness towards him, and an apparent lack of willingness on his part to participate. Clearly, once relationships had been established, there was a need to nurture these on an ongoing basis.

Once trust had been established through the initial meeting, which tended to be more social in nature as per Gerald Stone's advising (sometimes a couple of such meetings before the interview proper) the participants did not object to being audio-taped. They also agreed to signing a consent form, allowing me to interview them, and indicating that they were not coerced to participate.

Data analysis

In some research methods textbooks, several steps on how a research process unravels are given, suggesting a progression characterized by discrete stages (Hayes, 2000 and Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). At the same time most textbooks caution that the process of research is fluid and there is an overlap of activity, although there is more emphasis on one activity than on others at different stages. Following this statement, analysis of research material begins as soon as the data gathering process has started. However, the

period following after data gathering is characterized by a more systematic synthesis and consideration of what was gathered from the field, including transcriptions and field notes. In this project I went through the transcripts thoroughly - in a sense immersing myself in these data, having been 'disabled from immersing myself' in coloured communities - to ensure adequate familiarity. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) suggest that during this time, one should make notes, draw diagrams and engage in brainstorming. All of these processes characterize the initial stages of thematic analysis, which once the data were transcribed from the audio-tapes, were subjected to. In essence, in this part of analysis I drafted a map (or signposts) that aided the navigation of this huge amount of data for a more complex and theoretical analysis.

Instead of privileging theory in the development of themes or in identifying categories to look for, my approach in this project was that of looking at the material and working out what theoretical principles and assumptions could aid in the explanation of the material. This approach is referred to as a 'bottom-up' and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) call it a step where one induces themes. The usual approach is to use concepts such as the Kleinian concept of 'projection' to theorize race and racialized subjectivities. In the current study, theoretical concepts that are used are those that data gathered suggested or pointed to. Following this step, the next one is that of data coding where one marks different sections of the material as relevant to particular themes which would have been induced in the step before this one.

Throughout these different steps, but more so during the step of elaboration I have used different readings, especially sources on South Africa as the 'post-colony', as well as sources of relevance for the themes at hand both within Africa and elsewhere to evaluate and interpret the data. I have also found that some works of fiction and autobiographical accounts contributed in the elucidation of the data that I gathered.

In terms of the orientation of this study, I also paid attention to instances where psychodynamic explanations were suitable in looking at these life histories and in theorizing coloured subjectivities. The theoretical arguments mounted are employed mainly to trace the impact of racial classification and the psychodynamics of race on the individuals interviewed and whether and how these impact on their subjectivity broadly as coloured, and specifically as coloured individuals with close African-coloured relationships. It is also at this point where the interpretive bias of this study came forth more forcefully. Of the many bases that psychoanalytic theories have been used from (e.g. literary, political, etc), I have portrayed a more clinical inclination which privileges formative relationships with important others, especially within the family. Most especially, I focused on the significance of the parent-child and sibling relationships, the intrapsychic processes that result out of these and their interaction with the outside world (i.e. outside the family). I examined how all of these influence subjectivities in the contexts of interest for this project, and what impact they had on black African-coloured relations from the perspectives of the participants.

I have differentiated between what I refer to as socio-historically and psychoanalytically based analyses to ensure clarity of theoretical application. In practice, there is resonance between the psychodynamic and the socio-historical (Mama, 1995), suggesting that there is likely to be some overlap between these two sections of analysis. Consequently, this study reflects a synthesis between the two, with adequate pointers where one predominates. These pointers serve as a frame justifying an emphasis of one in one section relative to the other. It is worth repeating the point I made under the section on study orientation, which says that given my specific approach to data analysis, the interpretation of the results rests on "such interpretive and integrative abilities which I may have, as well as shortcomings in these respects" (Sherwood, 1980, p. 312). Given the privileged position accorded the family in exploring and analyizing coloured subjectivities in this thesis, I now turn to a brief discussion on 'the family', both from a general functionalist perspective and a psychoanalytic one.

General conceptions of the family

The concept of the family proved significant for the analysis of data in this study because it is in families where foundations for future social relations are formed. Although I have identified individuals and not necessarily families as primary research subjects, the influence of the family is palpable in the contents of the interviews, with people recounting how family life engaged with what was going on in the wider community and society. A lot of the interview material refers to how in turn this interaction between the family and other social structures impacted on resultant individual subjectivities.

The family can be described broadly as that social unit with the biggest influence in early childhood development. Indeed, one of the most important functions of the family is caring for and socializing the young. Definitions of the family also emphasize partnership and mutual support between a husband and a wife, as well as mutual affection for all the members. What is more significant is that families are seen as 'a primary source of personal happiness and self-fulfillment' (Elliot, 1996, p. 11). This is a sense (particularly of the nuclear family) that derives from functionalist descriptions of the family. However, even those descriptions of the family that accept the diversity of family forms and the different relationship dynamics between members of the family, seem to emphasize some enduring functional aspect of the family. One such description is provided in Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2000, p. 3):

> Within such a system, individuals are tied to one another by powerful, durable, reciprocal emotional attachments and loyalties that may fluctuate in intensity over time but nevertheless persist over the lifetime of the family.

On the one hand, this quote suggests that family relationships endure over a long period of time, and they are characterized by concern for the well-being of others in the family. Schneider (1968) differentiates between friendship and kinship (the family being one example of kinship) and he states that although both of these relationships may be underlined by what he calls 'enduring diffuse solidarity' or love, one is born with one's relatives whereas one can pick one's friends and discard them where necessary, without any obligation. His emphasis is on the concept of 'enduring diffuse solidarity', which he

defines as ‘doing what is good for or right for the other person, without regard for it’s effect on the doer’ (p. 51). This concept suggests a selfless devotion to the well-being of one’s fellow family members. The difference between Scheider’s description and the idea that Goldenberg and Goldenberg suggest in the quote above is that the latter recognizes that the doer is not necessarily a benevolent altruist. The action emitted in favour of the other anticipates reciprocation as in Marcel Mauss’ (1996) notion of how ‘the gift’ works. It is important though, to emphasize that both these sources (Schneider and Goldenberg & Goldenberg) insist on the durability of family relationships.

Other conceptions of the family explicate the family as some kind of refuge against the vicissitudes of life ‘outside’. Tizzard and Phoenix (1994) refer to this issue regarding trans-racial adoption in the UK. They provide a response to whether white parents adopting black children might be incapacitated in terms of teaching the adopted children how to deal with racism outside the family home, rendering such children more vulnerable to racial insults. These authors dispute that teaching black children to deal with racism is necessarily the preserve of black parents. In that sense, they maintain that in a trans-racial adoption context a home retains its function as a refuge, thus agreeing with the idea that the family and the family home provide a form of insulation against potential harm from the outside. Pervasive social insults and the competitive, highly pressured and generally impersonal modern world necessitate a place (physical as in the family home; or emotional as in the relationships between family members) where such are perceived to have no access, allowing members of families some respite from these (Elliot, 1996). The perception in this sense, is that the refuge provided by the family

allows for the carrying out of primary functions of the family, the most important of which I have identified above as the socialization of children. The romanticized perception of the family contained in this kind of description is unmistakable. Rapoport (1996) raises a point that goes against this perception in recognizing the importance of interaction between the family and the outside world. He says that families in advanced industrial countries accustomed to the idea of social change and cultural discontinuity see the process of socialization less in terms of social reproduction but as one of continuous cultural reinvention. This would represent a more progressive conception of socialization, more so because it recognizes possible influences of the 'outside world' on what is going on in the family. More precisely, Rapoport asserts:

> I see the family household as more than a kind of domestic classroom. It is a microcosm of its society, exposing the growing child to many of the challenges and problems characterizing the larger social setting. The way the issues arising are handled provides a foundation for how the child will handle them in the future (pp.17 – 18).

Here again, although allowance is made for possible multiple influences on the family, one is left with the impression that socialization ought to deliver a functional citizen to society, equipped to contribute meaningfully and to the well-being of the general society. In the case that Rapoport refers to, ideally it is someone who is able to engage within an industrialized country that the family has to deliver. This is the ideal indeed, and the changing nature of the family, more than just what Rapoport's work describes, forces us to consider other aspects of the family as the microcosm of its society. Indeed, Elliot (1996) states that American families in the late 20th century, an era characterized by

defensive protection, falling living standards, neo-conservatism and pessimism, and struggles over the ordering of sexual and parental relationships, have to contend with:

> Increasing ethnic differentiation; economic restructuring, high levels of unemployment, tight monetary and welfare cuts; population aging and the discovery of ageism; a new awareness of the pervasiveness of violence in family life and the eruption of AIDS as a major health crisis (p. 1).

Although the time lines and the actual events are specifically American, the point to be made is the influence that these apparent social changes bring into family relationships. Rapoport points to a matter of relevance for this project when he refers to challenges to the family structure wherever different ethnic groups share a common territory. The South African situation has been complicated by the fact that it is not only the salience of ethnic difference that raises challenges in our society (and by implication, in our families). The manner in which racial classification was effected from the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 19th century and beyond provided a socio-political context in which families found themselves embedded. As the argument goes thus far, ethnicism, and more significantly racism, are issues that families have had to articulate themselves in relation to in South Africa. One of the most significant and extreme effects of racial classification, and how it impacted particularly on family life is exemplified through the notion of 'passing'. This notion refers to some failures of racial classification methods then, in that it was possible for a member of one 'racial group' to classify as a member of another 'racial group' in spite of prohibitions to do so. To illustrate the point I am

pursuing here, Ebrahim-Vally (2001) describes what passing entailed in her book called *Kala Pani – Caste and Colour in South Africa*:

> The passing was done totally anonymously and in a solitary way, leaving behind family and friends darker in complexion. This practice which has been traced back to the 19th century, would ensure that such a person's entire lineage acquired the status of a white person/family (p. 37).

One can read from this quote how racism as a social problem broke up families, and forced family members to denounce their belonging to a given family. It points to how subjectivities were shrouded in racial secrecy. An important point for this study is the malleability of lived racial identities. What is the impact of all these processes on processes of identity formation? Does the past that is characterized by such denouncements and subsequent secrecy fade into oblivion in the lives of such persons? Psychoanalytic conceptions of family life, to which I turn below, provide one possible response to these questions.

Psychoanalytic conceptions

Psychoanalysis privileges family relationships in the formative years of one's life. These are seen as bearing a significant influence on how one turns out later in life. The significance hereof ranges from Freud's rather pessimistic view on the mutability of 'defects' resulting from these relationships to object relations theorists who believe that psychogenic relationship difficulties rooted in early (m)other-child relationships, can be

dealt with as a matter of course, provided that one is exposed to a corrective relationship when these begin to impair functioning, and provided that the damage was not too severe.

Psychoanalysis comprises several schools with the original theory that Sigmund Freud developed being specified as classical psychoanalysis. Other schools of psychoanalysis emerged either to further develop Freud's original theory, and others still developed as a divergence from classical psychoanalysis. However, there are a number of points around which the different psychoanalytic theories cohere. Margaret Wetherell identifies three core assumptions concerning identity and family life that reflect this theoretical coherence (in Muncie, Wetherell, Dallos & Cochrane (eds.), 1995). The first one refers to the important role of the unconscious and contradictions in the experience, subjectivity and general psychology of the individual. This assumption rejects the view that human beings are quintessentially rational and coherent beings. Instead, psychoanalysts see human rationality and sensibility as mere superficial appearance, arguing that these 'emerge from an uneven struggle between forces of the unconscious and the conscious control we try to exert in response' (p. 260). Wetherell asserts that our subjective experience is divided and split: as adults we are fragmented and only partially aware of our emotional lives. However, those aspects of our subjective experience that we are unaware of are as active in our subjective experience as the ones we are aware of.

The second point of coherence is that the family mediates between the self-centred needs of the child and the dictates of culture and society. To illustrate this point, Wetherell quotes Minsky who argues that

> The unconscious of any individual seems to be structured by what goes on emotionally within his or her family, whether it be nuclear, single-parent or extended. We all have to have parents or parent substitutes to survive, whatever culture we are born into. The unconscious we end up with depends on the repression of events and conflicts set up in early childhood involving these people.

Based on this, it would appear that the family plays an important part in constructing the unconscious. The metaphor that Wetherell uses to describe the human mind is indicative of this point. She compares the human mind to an iceberg, with consciousness represented by the tip and the unconscious being represented by the submerged and bigger base of the iceberg. This metaphor points to the unknown, inaccessible (at least to consciousness during any given human experience) and overwhelming influence of the unconscious on human subjectivity. The split, mainly between the unconscious and the conscious is a result of the dictates of society as transmitted to the child by the family. Classical psychoanalysis with its emphasis on instinctual life provides an example of what becomes part of the unconscious because of societal expectations. Unlike Rapoport (1997) who suggests that infants and children possess what is called 'cognatic love', that is, non-erotic, non-sexual feelings towards the other, psychoanalytic literature suggests that

> The child, far from being an asexual innocent, begins life as a demanding, narcissistic, and auto-erotic animal who is gradually forced to accept the existence of others, and certain

> socially sanctioned organizations of its sexual needs (Hirst & Wooley quoted in Muncie et al., 1995, p. 263).

Stephen Frosh's (1989) conceptualization of this assumption captures its full essence when he says: 'The child must swallow his/her desires in the face of the power of the real world'. Of further significance is that it is not only the nature of what is swallowed that shapes one's subjectivity, but more importantly, the manner in which this was swallowed and the relationship dynamics that facilitated the swallowing.

As a final point of convergence, Wetherell posits that psychoanalysts agree that sexual relations and family life assume a dynamic but historical view. What this means is that what goes on in any given family contains traces of experiences from each spouse' (or partner's) family of origin. In this sense, what goes on manifestly in the family represents not just conscious levels of interest and awareness, but also the unconscious, the most part of which derives from formative experiences in one's family of origin.

Psychoanalysts differ in terms of the concepts they employ to explain their formulations of the human condition, as well as on the emphasis they put on different aspects of the relationships they regard as important in the formation of human subjectivity. The main difference between classical psychoanalysis and other psychoanalytic theories is the emphasis that classical psychoanalysis puts on instinctual life and the adherent drives. Other theories (e.g. Object Relations and Self Psychology) recognize the importance of interpersonal experience, and the primacy of the care-giving surround in the formation of human subjectivity. So for this project, the intended focus on the family has not been

usurped by the focus on the individual because as psychoanalysts say, in spite of all other varied influences that interplay in individual human experience, the influence of the family remains paramount. The family 'fixes' the character and personality, and it lays down the bases from which future actions stem.

Some of the experiences derived from one's formative years and life within the family can be brutal or harmful in the long run. This is a point that Wetherell alludes to, and it is the primary subject of Alice Miller's (1995) book called *The Drama of Being a Child*. In this book, she explains the drama of childhood as follows:

> The tragedy is that of early psychic injuries and their inevitable repression, which allows the child to survive. In a broad sense, it is the tragedy of almost everyone: As children we strive, above all else, to accommodate our parents' demands – spoken and unspoken, reasonable and unreasonable. In the process, we blind ourselves to our true needs and feelings. In our adult lives this is like trying to sail a ship without a compass. Not knowing who we are, what we feel, and what we need, even as grown ups we remain subject to the expectations placed upon us from the beginning of our lives, expectations we fulfilled not for love, but for the illusion of love. Without that illusion we could not have survived childhood (p. 2).

Miller's book presents a criticism of psychoanalysis, in that she posits that the explanation that psychoanalysis provides for parent-child dynamics is a distortion of facts. It would seem that what psychoanalysis sees as the 'antisocial' tendencies of the growing child which need to be refined through their encounter with the demands of the external reality and relationships, Miller sees as the 'true needs' of a child which should

not be subordinated to the demands of reality (or parents). In this sense, Miller's work suggests that a family constitutes an unfair political arena, where, given their relative power, parents subject children to domination, and children are forced to comply for survival.

These conceptualizations of the family form the background against which I analyze the research material. I concede that for a more accurate interpretation of the psychodynamics that are at play at any given point in time to be possible requires an intense, sustained relationship under very specific conditions. Therefore, this project does not set out to provide a clinical formulation of the subjects' experiences, but it provides a commentary on the subjectivities of coloured people, using psychoanalytic assumptions where appropriate. In particular, some authors (Koenigsberg, Young, Kristeva, Rustin, etc.) have articulated the problem of racism and racial thinking using distinctly psychoanalytic concepts such as 'projection' and 'projective identification', making some original contributions to explorations of race and racism. The original Freudian theory did not say much about this problem, at least not directly. So the contributions of these authors fill in a gap that the enormity of racism as a social problem, and the significance of race in human subjectivity accentuate.

Eliciting and reading the unconscious

In clinical settings, the production of unconscious material and its expression is facilitated by the onset of the transferential (and countertransferential) relationship between the patient and the clinician. Research on clinical settings suggests that there are

certain factors that make the expression of identifiable unconscious material more likely. Broadly, these are characteristic of the psychoanalytic "frame" that explicates the responsibilities of both the analyst and the patient in clinical encounters (Ivey, 2000 & Hinshelwood, 1991). For example, some of these responsibilities relate to time and payment arrangements.

To the extent that taking cognizance of these characteristics will be possible in my interaction with the participants in this project, they will be taken into consideration. More importantly, I intend looking for and interpreting the unconscious material from whatever productions that may be part of my interactions with participants. In writing on psychic and objective reality, Wolf (1988, p. 158) reports that

> … all autobiographical memories in which one's own person appears as an object amongst objects must have been worked over, and therefore are in some sense, bound to be different than the original experience.

Having said this, Wolf makes the point that anyone standing outside a remembered experience can never describe it accurately. He introduces the concept of 'psychic reality' to emphasize that internal processes make each individual memory different from memories of other individuals. In particular, the argument can be made that the life-stories that research participants provided contain their own psychic reality, which validates a psychoanalytic interpretation. Further still, although the psychoanalytic consultation room is an ideal space for the production of specific unconscious material, with specific therapeutic goals in mind, unconscious material is not exclusively

observable in clinical settings. As Dunn (1995) implies, unconscious transference processes are omnipresent, even in a researcher-participant interaction and relationship.

Ethical considerations

A number of ethical considerations in the carrying out of this research require highlighting. The fact that a clinical basis of psychodynamic theories has been indicated to be part hereof, which to some extent involves making clinical impressions of the participants' lives raises concerns regarding my obligations if I detected something that is to the detriment of the participants' well being. Further, using both socio-historical and psychodynamic concepts and theories for the elaboration stage means that of necessity I am likely to form impressions that participants will not necessarily agree with or will not have had access to during data analysis. Therefore, my commitment in this regard was to refer participants to relevant referral places (places where counseling and other community interventions are provided), including those which provide affordable services to these communities where necessary. The intention was to raise this only when the need emerged, or when the participants requested the information. I avoided raising this in advance because that could have suggested that I anticipated some psychological disturbances on the part of my participants. Where more than one member of the family or couple was interviewed, care was taken to inform them of the confidential nature of the interviews, and they were assured that what they related in the interviews would not be shared with other members. The same confidentiality was assured for all the other participants as well, and that there would be no disclosure of the interview contents unless this had been discussed with the concerned participant in advance. The fact that

this was going to be prepared in report form, and the possibility of publishing parts or the whole project was also stated and the participants were assured of adequate and reasonable disguise of personal data, to prevent identifiability.

CHAPTER 3: PERFORMING COLOUREDNESS, ABJECTING BLACK AFRICANNESS

Introduction

Historical characteristics of time and place tend to affect meanings attached to processes of identity adoption, resulting in idiosyncratic differences amongst such identities, especially if such a history contains inequalities relating to power and privilege. This is the sense that a close reading of *Coloured by History Shaped by Place*, an influential collection of essays in the literature on coloured identities, edited by Erasmus (2001), evokes. Racial identities, particularly in racist societies, have a

tendency to evoke perceptions of one group as more powerful than, and in the case of South Africa superior to, the other groups. The intervention of post-modern theories (e.g. Hall, 1996, Butler, 1993) suggests that taking on a particular identity is an infinite process, involving adaptations of that identity in response to the multiplicity of other identities that co-exist (amongst other influences on identity processes). Butler (1993) in particular, proposes that given this fluid nature of identity, especially in regard to cultural identities, an adoption of such identities is akin to a performance, a constant process that on the surface, seeks active and conscious self-alignment with the identity of choice. The process of asserting a chosen racial identity at a particular moment and delineating it as different from other racial identities implicates the unconscious too, as I will illustrate below.

This chapter discusses personal motivations for performing coloured identities. In part, I use the concept of identity performance in the sense that Erving Goffman (1959) proposes. He suggests that social life and interpersonal relations resemble a theatrical performance, in which the individual presents himself or herself in ways that are meant to project certain meanings about themselves, as well as having specific effects on the 'actor's' audience. What I want to add to this analysis and thereby extend it is the implication of the unconscious in its workings.

Abjection

The concept of abjection was popularized by Judith Butler (1993) in discussing sexuality and sexual identities. In *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* she posits that heterosexuality (and other hegemonic subject positions e.g. whiteness in relation to other racial categories, or colouredness in relation to black Africanness in this case) are produced essentially through disavowal. For example a heterosexual identity is produced through identification with homosexuality, which is followed by a disavowal of the latter. In essence, the abjection of homosexuality (or the non-hegemonic subject position) enables, even produces, heterosexuality (or other hegemonic subject positions) (Seshadri-Crooks in Lane, 1998, p. 370). Applied in this study, one of the most prominent aspects of performing a racial identity in South Africa is the perceived need to abject other racial identities. I introduce this concept in this section, and I use this idea as a central tool of analysis that runs throughout this chapter, although other sections reflect differences in emphasis.

I propose that the perception that performing coloured identities required the abjection of black Africanness is a function of the racist racial classification system of the past, which attempted to draw sharp boundaries between racial categories and identities through graded degradations. Transgressing or even attempting to straddle these perceived boundaries was met with sanctions that carried further potentially negative repercussions for others who were related to the person, especially if one was classified higher in the racial hierarchy. (For instance the sexual relationships that Millin (1924) writes about in her novel are instructive in this case, where white men who had sexual relations with black African women suffered disgrace following the birth of 'coloured' children from these relationships). The implication is that the

only racial category that was exempt from the negative sanction of relegation to the lower ranks of racial classification in this country was blackness (read African), given the fact that it occupied the lowest position on the racist racial ladder. However, elsewhere, as in the Botswana that Bessie Head writes about in the novel *Maru*, it seems that the category of being black African was not the lowest, in the racial and racist hierarchies of the world. For instance, Bessie Head (1971) gives the following description of the racial rankings in her novel, as well as of the treatment that the Bushmen received at the hands of the Batswana:

> Before the white man became universally disliked for his mental outlook, it [the horror of what could pour out of the human heart] was there … And if the white man thought that Asians were a low, filthy nation, Asians could still smile with relief – at least they were not Africans. And if the White man thought Africans were a low, filthy nation, Africans in Southern Africa could still smile – at least they were not Bushmen. They all have their monsters … [Scientists forcibly open the mouths and examine the teeth of the Zebras]. Scientists do the same to Bushmen and they are not supposed to mind, because there is no one they can still turn round to and say, 'At least I am not a …'. Of all things that are said of oppressed people, the worst things are said and done to the Bushmen (p. 11).

The observation I wish to make in citing this quote is the tendency for prejudice to trickle down socio-politically constructed racial hierarchies, and for the worst prejudice to be suffered by those who have no one else below them on a racist racial ladder, those who have no one to abject.

Of particular interest for this project, are the meanings and implications produced in performing coloured identity in relation to both the idea of black Africanness and how black Africans are perceived and treated. Broadly speaking, within the discourses of white domination and racial oppression in this country, coloured people have been inserted through the concept of complicity, which amongst others implies that while themselves victims of racial oppression by whites, coloured people were at least non-resistant to this process, or were themselves racial oppressors of black Africans at the worst. Adhikari (2005, p. 173) differentiates between resistance and protest in a useful way, stating that coloured people protested against, and did not resist, the racist political order). In her introduction to her collection of essays on coloured identities, Erasmus (2001) refers to the colonial racial hierarchy which placed coloured identities midway between white and African. Accruing to this midway position was the power *and* option to exclude and oppress black Africans.

One of the aspects of the performance of racial identity which the current chapter illuminates is the futility of attempts to diffuse the significance of coloured racism against black Africans and the idea of blackness by pointing out that coloured racism targeted fellow coloured people as well, and not only black Africans. Although this is true, a closer examination of this phenomenon reveals that the main reason why some coloured people were (and still are) discriminated against within their own group is because their appearance approximates that of black people (discussed later in this chapter). It is the perceived blackness in these coloured people, the visible blackness, that is the source of their discrimination. When this racism happens, it not only points

to coloured people being racist against other coloured people; but also it serves as a clue to the racism that coloured people harbor against black Africanness or black Africans.

Precisely because of coloured identity's 'entanglements' with whiteness, Africanness and East Indianness' (Erasmus, 2001), adopting a coloured identity is a precarious process, fraught with anxiety because of the heightened possibility that one could be relegated to a lower racial category. How different people ended up with a coloured racial classification reflects a multitude of trajectories, with 'potential' claims to a variety of descents – 'potential' claims because whether such descents were actually claimed or not had significant implications for one's continued membership in the classification of choice. This was particularly the case for those individuals or families who adopted a coloured identity in a context where claims to black African identity were equally, if not more, valid, as illustrated in the descriptions of the participants in the earlier chapter. Alternatively, it was the case where the possibility of being identified (or classified) as black African was a threat.

Performance through silences and disassociation

One participant, Mr. Paulse, described what sounded like many silences regarding the black members of his family. In discovering a photo of a black African man amongst the family photos while looking at these with his great-grandmother he was confronted with the first, but not the last, silence around black Africanness in his

family. He states that his great-grandmother removed the photo from his hands, and said that it was just someone else, and that it was not important. Naturally he was curious about this, and he reported that the curiosity persisted to this day. Asked what he did about this curiosity, he replied:

> Mr. Paulse: No, I have never followed it up. It's always been kind of a sensitive issue. To this day we don't talk about it.

In this case, given that this photo was amongst photos of family members, Mr. Paulse remained with the suspicion that the black African man in the photo had an important link to the family, and had possibly been the great-grandmother's husband. It seems that in spite of his curiosity he responded to the apparent unwillingness to discuss the subject by colluding with the rest of the family in the silence about the (possible existence of) black members (or relatives) of the family. For Mr. Paulse, this marked the beginning of that which the performance of coloured identity demanded where there was apparent intersection with black Africanness. As his great-grandmother seemed to suggest, when you are a coloured person, relationships to black Africans do not matter and they are not something that you should bother yourself with, implying that black Africanness should be repressed. Erasmus (2001) states that in addition to coloured identities being constructed through the disrespect and exclusion of black Africans, complicity with the racist practices of this country meant a disassociation from things African in general.

In the family referred to above, Mr. Paulse's grandmother, who was the daughter of the great-grandmother who failed to provide a satisfactory response to Mr. Paulse's question

was classified as coloured, in the same way as her mother. According to Mr. Paulse, his grandmother married a man whose racial classification could have been that of black African. In the quote below, he states that the family did not know the grandfather's family, in spite of the fact that it was known that he had a daughter roughly a hundred kilometers away in a neighbouring town where his black African family lived. His coloured family did not seek contact with this daughter even after she had made an attempt to locate her father:

> … we know that he's got a daughter living in Worcester, but we don't know anything more than that. We don't know where in Worcester, we don't know names; we don't know anything about his side of the family, all we know is him. And that's it. For example he is Xhosa-speaking, he can't speak Afrikaans. We couldn't understand … he couldn't speak Afrikaans fluently, but we all spoke Afrikaans to him, and he spoke Afrikaans to us ... we were never taught to speak Xhosa.

The disassociation that Erasmus refers to seems to have occurred literally in this case, where at once children are discouraged from finding out or learning about the 'black side' of the family; and indications that the family might have a link to the black 'race' are obliterated. The most decisive blow to the possibility that the family's 'black racial links' could be acknowledged, is dealt in the form of apparent severance of ties between the parent and the child. From what Mr. Paulse says, there were no attempts on his coloured side of the family to find out about the daughter. The participant's grandfather was absorbed as part of the coloured family, and severing ties with his daughter was part of the price he had to pay to make this absorption possible.

Compulsions of the honorary racial status

In this particular case however, it seems that the price implied by the severance of ties with his family was not adequate, and in Mr. Paulse's eyes, his grandfather's abjection of blackness was not complete. In his adopted (or conferred) identity he seemed to be haunted by his black Africanness, against which he had to defend in performing his preferred identity. It seems it was difficult for the grandfather to fully identify as coloured in that one of the most important indicators of identifying as coloured was the ability to speak Afrikaans. In this regard, even in the eyes of members of his 'new family' he fell short. There is a suggestion that he was a 'deficient coloured', which further suggests that he was vulnerable to needing to perform colouredness more vigorously in other respects, as there was apparent inadequacy in one of the most visible ways in which colouredness is performed. In a sense, he was predisposed to employing the defense mechanism of overcompensation which Carson, Butcher and Mineka (1996, p. 80) define as 'making up for frustration in one area by overgratification in another'. With his inability to speak 'fluent' Afrikaans or to posses a command of the language in the same way as other members of his family, his abjection of blackness was likely to be more 'costly' and pronounced.

An intriguing phenomenon in this context is the idea that it was not only the government officials who could confer a racial identity on one. One would suspect that failure to speak Afrikaans, combined with an African-sounding last name, would lead to

classification as black. However, in this case it seems the community and the family into which he had married had accepted this man as a coloured person, and legitimized the status of this family as a coloured family, albeit at a price. For instance, to maintain his acceptance as a coloured person in this community and family, he was not supposed to assert himself too strongly against other coloured people, including his wife. Except for the 'flaw' evinced by his inability to perform coloured identity through language, he could not (read *dared not*) display other flaws, such as maintaining ties with his black relatives. The might of this process can be further appreciated when the participant states:

> 'we don't know anything about his side of the family, all we know is him. And that's it.'

The grandfather's honorary racial status and his absorption in the coloured community is magnified in the sense that links with the coloured relatives of the family, and in this case his wife's family, were maintained, reflecting a preference of contact with coloured people above black Africans. Mr. Paulse was able to describe and talk about different members of his grandmother's family, in contrast to the dearth of information he displayed regarding his grandfather's family.

Projection and Distantiation

Given that the grandfather's (suspected) black Africanness was not open for discussion, nor any other aspect that related to (suspected) black African members of the family (for instance the photograph) the assumption that he was coloured took root. However, the precariousness of this attributed identity is evident in the extremities he seems to have

gone to in an attempt to establish his racial distance from black people. An uncanny example of this is his reported participation in what appears to be the demonization of the black man, in stories or threats employed in coloured communities to frighten troublesome children. In this process of demonization a black man is constructed as that monstrous person who will come and kill children, children being told: 'there comes a black man; run for your life'. Other than the implicit indoctrination of children against black Africans implicit in this process, where they are told 'there comes a black man; run for your life', when this is said by a black man in this context, the process of projection is unmistakable. It is a 'black man' himself who demonizes the image of the black man. The hypothesis in this regard is that this represents a projection, which refers to an 'operation whereby qualities, feelings, wishes or even objects, which the subject refuses to recognize or rejects in himself (sic), are expelled from the self and located in another person or thing' (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, p. 349). This process suggests a need for Mr. Paulse's grandfather to divest himself of his internal feelings of blackness, which if not expelled, would worsen the severity of his anxiety about being an honorary coloured person. He is terrified to confront the reality that he too, is the dreaded black man whom coloured children should be afraid of and run away from to save their lives. Stated differently, he himself needs to run away from black Africanness, given that in the context of this family, and as illustrated above, embracing black Africanness would bring about rejection from the group he identified with, and towards which identification he had staked his life. He therefore strengthens processes of association with colouredness and disassociation from black Africanness by actively participating in this almost ritualized form of projection.

A further instance where this participant's grandfather seems to be performing colouredness through the abjection of blackness is in his refusal to talk Xhosa with the children in the family, even when they showed interest. Mr. Paulse also reported that black African workers on the farm were not allowed to come into his house, whereas coloured workers were allowed to. He would also not allow the children to go to black Africans' residential area to play with black African children on the farm. In essence, the arrangement on the farm, where he was a foreman, rendered him 'better' or superior to other black people. In a country that privileged race as a means of grading people, the natural position that he was perceived to have progressed to was that of being coloured: he stayed in a residential area of coloured people, he was married to a coloured woman, and was called father by coloured children. Both black Africans and coloured workers deferred to him. Mr. Paulse says:

> I can't recall us ever having spoken about (grandfather) as being black or confirming whichever his status is. But it was very clear that the kids were not gonna learn Xhosa. It was very clear that the kids were not gonna go to the Eastern Cape, or interact with the rest of the family which I think was reconfirmed when … when the daughter … well I think the daughter called … to find out about him. And she (*the grandmother)* just said 'no he is not there.'

In this discussion I try to illustrate that in being accepted as a coloured person there were certain performances that the grandfather had to engage in to maintain some 'racial distance' from black Africans and to claim a sense of belonging to the coloured family

and community. Failure to maintain this performance would interfere with his inclusion in a coloured identity category. Looking at the quote above, it appears that this was a family performance, not one of an individual. I have referred to how Mr. Paulse's silence regarding the 'suspect' members of the family can be interpreted as colluding with the rest of the family to keep the secret and to 'protect' the grandfather's status as a coloured person. The quotation above suggests that the grandmother too participated in 'keeping' the family coloured, by keeping away any attempt by the black African relatives to establish links with this family. The determination to do this is illustrated by the fact that even after the death of her husband it was still inconceivable that the family would inform a relative, who was believed to be his daughter, of this fact, depriving that person of an opportunity to mourn the loss of one whom she could call a father, albeit only in the biological sense. It is clear though, that there was a process of yearning that was going on on the part of this 'alleged' daughter, a yearning for some contact. The 'integrity' of the coloured identity of this family seems to have been at significant personal expense to others of the grandfather's family. It would seem that up to this day, this daughter may still be thinking that her father is alive somewhere because in performing the identity of the coloured family, those who could tell her of her father's demise can not or will not do this. From the analysis of this example, it appears that what I will call 'African-coloured family', lives under the specter of being exposed as black African, with the anxiety related to anticipated and perceived adherent socio-racial relegation. In addition, in this context they could suffer being thought of as liking black Africans, a sentiment incongruent with being coloured, making them vulnerable almost in the same way that '*nigger-lovers*' in the US were subjected to social ostracism in white communities. To

avoid this, anything possible was done, including disregarding of the human needs of the black African relatives (in this case, the need to have contact with a parent and the need to mourn a parent's death).

Internalized racism

In a later chapter (Race, Coupling and Sexuality) I deal with the idea of emasculation and the hypermasculinization of a black patriarch in this context. A black African man lording it over coloured workers in a coloured community and family (albeit precariously), represented a rare moment in the racist South African society of that time. It seems this was part of the allure of being seen as coloured to a black African at the time. For purposes of this chapter, it is important to explore the concept of the internalized racist, in the sense that if racism against black Africans in South Africa is believed to have been the brainchild of the white settlers, and the white Afrikaners subsequent to that, then it is imperative to explore how this practice became adopted by coloured people who were themselves victims within that system. Zegeye (2001) provides one of the keys to this exploration. He suggests that in a context where whiteness equaled civilization, and any degree away from the 'purity' of the white race represented lack of civilization, coloured people (read the coloured elite) 'struggled to demonstrate their level of civilization by internalizing the very codes and values used by the white elite to classify them' (p. 8)

In key historical novels, for example that of Millin (1924), such ideas are elaborated

further than this to imply that coloured people - and any other people who were not white - as represented not only a relative lack of civilization, but also moral impurity and shame. This kind of association is also cited in Norval's *Deconstructing Apartheid's Discourse* (1996) where she states that Afrikaner Nationalists constructed racial mixedness as leading to a degeneration of whiteness. There is further literature reporting views along the same lines, that racial mixedness was seen by racist whites as weakening the white race or gene pool (See the Report of the Commission on Mixed Marriages 1939). It was asserted that racial mixing between two different races bore the potential to weaken the race higher up in the racial hierarchy. What this implies then, is that similarly, coloured people might have believed that racial mixing between coloured and black people would weaken their claim to being 'better than black Africans'. From some of the interviews conducted for this project, it is clear that in the same way that social interaction between whites and members of other races was regulated (formally), coloured people appear to have emulated this practice in their interactions with black Africans. For instance, Mr. Paulse describes social interaction between black and coloured people while his grandfather was still alive in the following way:

> And we were always also treated … I always got a sense … better because we were Sebenza's kids. And so people would treat us with a little bit more respect if I recall. We were always seen as being better off kids. Ehm, but we were not allowed to go and play with the black kids. Even though there was another family, there with a colored mother and a black father, if we wanted to play with those kids, those kids always came to us, instead of us going to their place. With the other coloured kids, we were always fine, we always went to go and play there at their houses or they would come to our house and we

> would just play, their parents would come to our house to visit, my parents would go to them to visit. But we never went to the black kids to go and play there. If my grandfather wanted to go to one of the black workers, he would go alone, my mother never went to … along to go and visit the wives or speak to them, if she wanted to talk to them then someone would be sent to pass the message on, so that they could come to us to speak to us.

This kind of interaction would be typical between black and white people elsewhere in South Africa, especially on the farms. It seems there was this perpetual perceived danger that such interaction engendered, especially where white women and children were concerned. In the same way as a white 'madam' would call black African workers to the back porch of her house to address them, Mr. Paulse's report suggests that his grandmother engaged in a similar practice. She would not go to their houses, and black Africans were not allowed in her house, although this did not apply to coloured people. The irony is that her own husband, whose 'black Africanness' was not discussed unless there was conflict with him, lived with her and owned a home with her.

The discussion so far illustrates the fact that racial practices in South Africa, despite a semblance of systematization, were in fact haphazard and had no sustainable basis. The dynamics that these contradictory practices give rise to deserve further exploration, and they are the subject of the chapter on familial difference. It is interesting to observe that during times of conflict, both within the grandparent couple and between the grandfather and a member of the extended family, labeling him as black was used as a means to attack him, supposedly with the knowledge that he would be defenseless against such a

charge. This is the case because these were legitimate members of the 'audience' towards whom his performance was directed who judged him as having failed to become coloured by virtue of the fact that he was not 'born a coloured'. It seems this kind of attack was used each time there was conflict, suggesting its effectiveness as a weapon against him, and perhaps also providing some indication of underlying resentment and racial aggression that his 'coloured family' harbored against him.

The reported silence with which he met such attacks suggests that being told that he was not coloured, that he was black African or a 'kaffir', indeed dealt him a decisive blow and communicated to him that his identity and power was conditional. The inclusion which allowed him his coloured identity was at the mercy of people who could choose to exclude him if he angered them. Continuing this particular 'performance' of colouredness under these conditions is testimony to the powerful allure of being coloured identified and the aversion towards black Africanness in a racist system that relegated black Africans not only to the lowest rungs of the racial hierarchy, but also to the lowest rungs of what was considered human at all. During these incidents, he was rendered *persona non grata*, with no rights or means to defend himself. In cases where this involved extrafamilial conflict his wife, who was a racial equal of the aggressor, tended to become his defender.

What raises more concern is that as recently as in 2003 part of this family's understanding of what it meant to identify as coloured included staying away from black residential places. Mr. Paulse states:

> When I was at home now in the December vac, and … till this day, it is this funny thing of …we're not allowed to go, because they still live separately .., we're not allowed to go to the black area if we're like …I went because I wanted to go, because there is people I know from church. So I went because I wanted to go and say goodbye, and hello, all those things, you know, hello and goodbye. But the youngsters were not allowed to go, and when they went my Grandma, my mother, she was on their case about having gone there, because they mustn't go and walk around there.

In this quote, Mr. Paulse indicates that he defies this prescription. He crosses the divide between coloured people and black Africans to carry out what constitutes a deracinated everyday life performance. One could say that this represents a divorce from the performance of colouredness as his parents and other family members have known it. Given that this participant still identified himself as coloured, this defiance does not constitute a denunciation of colouredness, but a different way of being coloured, which does not include degrading black Africans, or a fear of interacting with them lest one's claims to being coloured become destabilized.

What raises concern is the kind of explanation that his grandmother gives as justification for this prohibition. In response to an inquiry as to what his grandmother's reasons are for inhibiting interaction with black Africans on the farm, Mr. Paulse says:

> Well typical things would be … it would just be '*wat soek* ... what are you doing down there again, I told you not to go and socialize there, you can't trust those people.'

It would seem that the demonization of black people still continues even after the

political transformation in this country. In the case of this family, this vilification ('you can't trust those people') continues even after decades of life and an intimate relationship with a black African. Based on the description of the grandfather in this family, his dependability (foreman of the farm), his caring for other farm workers (both black and coloured), his responsible execution of his role as a husband and parent, it seems the perception of a black African as untrustworthy, simply by virtue of his/her racial identity, is rooted somewhere where factual evidence does not reach. Is this part of internalized racism, the kind that is inherent not only to performing a racial identity, but is intricately linked to being human too, as discussed in the literature review? The continuing vilification of black Africanness in spite of such strong evidence to the contrary suggests that this is possible.

Exploring the prohibition against contact with black people further yields an understanding that is common in literature on the colonial situation (Fanon, 1967). This relates to the hypersexualized perception of the black African man. Young girls that dare cross the racial divide to socialize are seen as being at a risk of sexual violation by a black African man, especially when he is young, single and healthy, a *sine qua non* of male virility. According to Mr. Paulse, interaction with a coloured man meeting the same description minus the racial identity would not have led to similar cautionary utterances on the part of his grandmother and others.

A defense called colouredification and its variants

Mr. Paulse's statement that his grandmother prohibited or discouraged coloured girls from interacting with black Africans also provides an opportunity to explore how the duality of desire and disgust operate in other "races'" interactions with black African men in particular. In terms of this duality, the black African man is demonized as hypersexual and violent on the one hand; and is simultaneously fascinating precisely because of the same attributes on the other. If a performance of a different racial identity includes an aversion towards the black African man, a close interaction (read intimate relationship) with him would require a defense against his perceived predisposition to attack (and rape). In this case then, as is the case in a number of other participants' stories, this defense takes the form of what would be termed *colouredifying* the black man. If he is identified as coloured (in spite of the shaky ground on which this identification is based) then he is also divested of his predisposition to attack and rape, which is what black Africans in racist contexts are perceived to be liable to. Mr. Paulse says of his grandparents' relationship:

> I don't know what the politics would have been when they got together. And I would imagine, and I mean like I probably don't have anything to base it on, but I would imagine that it must have been quite a big step for her, to have gone for a black guy beyond just a fling. She … I think she sees herself as coloured, and she has learned to live with having a black partner, who really became coloured. And that to her … and I don't know what motivations there were, but she … to this day sees herself as coloured, and sees her kids as coloured …

The black Africanness in his grandfather's identity is rendered non-existent as can be

seen even in how children from this liaison are perceived. There is no acknowledgement that they could be children of a black African man. Like 'both' their parents, they are all coloured.

In contrast to Mr. Paulse's family, Mr Mmota, another participant, resisted what he perceived to be the *colouredification* of his appearance, but the price he seems to have paid for this is the apparent strife in his marriage. He describes his wife's attempts to change him as follows:

> What was worse is she wouldn't want to see me as a black person, she would see me as … like in her mind she is seeing another coloured person. She forced that she sees me as a coloured person because she wanted me to have short hair, cut close to the skull as much as possible put some cream on that, make it a bit shiny. She tried even my way of dress. She would try her best to dress you, and I refused many a times. And I said to her this is who I am and this is the person you fell ... I said to her if you did not want to fall in love with me because I am black and if when you fell in love with me I was not black then we dissolve this marriage right now, because I cannot be what you have in your mind for me to be. I cannot be that, you rather go to that person ... that ideal person that you're supposed to have actually been in love with and got married to.

He goes on to say,

> I said to her , you know this is who I am and I met you with this long bush hair that you see on my head, and I loved it on my head I must say that… I don't … I don't believe in cutting my hair; only if there were funerals even then I was forced to cut it I said to

her. But because it is linked … to you this is linked to an identity, you see you can't, you know, like destroy my identity, and then I become you. You can't change me, and do not try to change me because I'm not changing.

The strife that seemed to characterize this particular marriage is absent in other contexts where the black African partner accepted *colouredification*. For instance, Mr. Paulse gives the following description of his grandparents' marital relationship, as well as their last moments together just before the grandfather who was accepted as coloured died:

Mr. Paulse: No … I … well, I thought it was good if compared to my mother, my biological mother and my step-dad, compared to their interaction my grandparents were amazing. I mean they were …they were … I thought, and if that was anything to go by, then I think that was an example of how much they loved each other, and how much they cared for each other. I mean he was sick for a long time, and she took care of him in his final months … I mean even the day he died, the two of them had their last moments together. They had made peace with the fact that he was gonna die. And he had thanked her for the 37 years they were together, she thanked him. It was really ... they loved each other. And their interaction was fine, he was very protective over her as much as he was with the kids. He was the man of the house, she consulted him on almost everything. And to us he was presented as the father, he is the father, he is my husband, I 'm gonna marry this man or I married this man. And I would stay by his side until the end. So their relationship was fine, but it was when it came to the racial things that I think they preferred not to talk about it. And they didn't, unless they would be forced to

This sounds like a fulfilling relationship in spite of the silences when it came to race-related issues. These were silences that allowed the family to retain a coloured identity without any effective challenge to this, even though it seems it was common knowledge in the family that he was black African, at least amongst adults. Children grew up with what sounds like incongruencies where his identity was concerned. He was not fluent in Afrikaans and he had black African relatives, although there was no contact with this side of his life. They also knew that he was from the Transkei, was prevented from working in Cape Town, and when he did find a job - that he had been expected to carry a 'pass' (identity document for black Africans) when going to work in town. All of these are what used to apply exclusively to black Africans, yet he was accepted as coloured.

The state v/s communities: attaining a coloured identity

In preceding parts of this chapter I have illustrated that conferring a racial identity upon a person was not an exclusive prerogative of the state. Communities were also able to confer a racial status in a way that worked as well as when it was conferred formally by the state. In those instances when it was chosen that the state confer the desired coloured racial identity on one, ways were found to influence the decision favourably. The quote below is instructive in this case:

> Mrs. McCarthy: We stayed here. Like on the fringes of Blouvlei, just opposite here (R: Ok). And the…ja that time they wanted my husband to carry a 'pass'. His father was quite a bit … because his father was Tswana, and his father appealed to him to carry a 'pass' but he didn't want to carry a 'pass'. He wanted to have an identity document. And

> I remember the police often coming there, at night you know they used to come at night to come and look for kaffirs. So, because of me, he got his identity card because I was a Catholic … we got married in the Catholic Church, and then he got his identity card, and I also got my identity card as a coloured.
>
> R: Ok which classified him as what?
>
> Mrs. McCarthy: As a coloured …Cape colored. We were Cape coloureds at that time.

Ultimately it appears that coloured identity depended not so much on any sense of independent criteria, but on finding a convincing way, convincing in the sense that it would be credible in the eyes of fellow coloured people, that one was coloured. More importantly, it was essential that one should identify as 'not black African'. As part of this process, the abjection of black Africanness seems crucial. Where possible, people tried to pass as whole families. This ensured that as 'coloured people' in becoming complicit with the racism that coloured people and white people directed towards black Africans, they did not have to demonstrate this against their own family members. In this same case where an association with the Catholic Church facilitated the conferring of coloured identity, the concerned person (Mrs. McCarthy's husband) passed as coloured along with other members of his family, as the quoted interchange below illustrates:

> R: What did that mean in terms of his relationship with his family and so on and on, who were not …who didn't have identity cards?
>
> Mrs. McCarthy: Well he didn't have a mother, and all his sisters managed to pass for coloured (R: Ok), yes, because at that time they sort of just looked at you, at your photo. You looked like a coloured or what, because … and as a Cape coloured … I think it was

easier to pass for coloured here in Cape Town than it would have been elsewhere (R: Ok?). I think so.

R: So the family, the whole family passed as coloured?

Mrs. McCarthy: Yes, but his mother had died by then. He only had three sisters and brother (R: Ok, so they all …) Two sisters, sorry, and a brother.

What this wholesale passing as coloured for this family unit does not explain is what happens to the rest of the extended family in these contexts. However, at the beginning of this chapter one finds a clue that where only one member of the family managed to pass as coloured, then there is a severance of any form of contact with those that did not pass as coloured too. In the case that I am referring to, one can appreciate that even if the nature of the relationship was as close as that of a parent to a child, it still did not prevent the severance of that relationship in favour of taking on a coloured identity. Concepts such as *vensterkykers* (those looking into the window) which is a term that was associated with the rest of the coloured family of the one that has passed as white can be applied to black African extended families too, insofar as contact with those who managed to pass was undesirable in the performance of coloured identity. *Vensterkykers* is a concept that one of the participants used to refer to the idea that non-white relatives of one who managed to pass as white looked at shop windows, away from this person, when they passed each other on the pavements in town. It was feared that looking at this person who identified as white with too much familiarity or recognition could cause suspicion and cast doubt on the person's white status. In interactions where the concept of *vensterkykers* apply, it is clear that there is a mutual process between the one that has passed as white, and those that have remained classified as coloured. This process denies the existence of

familial ties between the actors, and implies the severance of significant relationships between family members. In performing a racial identity that is placed higher up on the racist racial hierarchy, there seems to be a denial of the pain that accompanies severing these ties on both sides. It is important to emphasize that the process implied by the concept of *vensterkykers* is not always mutual and it is not the case that all participants in this process agree with or wish those who have passed as higher up in the racial hierarchy well.

Coloured identities, black Africanness and the domestic space

In yet another interview, where I interviewed a couple (as individuals), even though both partners had assumed a coloured identity, it seemed the way they embraced this identity differed. Although not to the same extent as the other couple where the husband described his resistance to being *colouredified*, in this case the differential identification with the coloured identity marked the point of conflict between these partners. Mrs. Tate described how her husband uses the concept of *kaffir* (a derogatory concept, used to refer to Black Africans) when referring to black people, showing his disgust at them. In these instances, she stated that she pointed the irony of the situation in that not only was he married to a person who believed herself to be black African (or a kaffir), but also to the fact that he himself was a black African:

> Mrs. Tate: I do tell my husband that no, you must remember *jy's met n' kaffir getroud, jy's nie met n' bruin mens getroud. Ek is 'n kaffir* (you are married to a black person, you are not married to a coloured person. I am black)

R: What leads to that, why do you feel you need to remind him of that?

Mrs. Tate: No, I just say it because he sometimes you know, can talk about the people 'kyk daardie kaffir daar' (*look at that kaffir there)* … then I say no, you don't say that to people. It's not nice. It's a person just like you so just because you are this, you don't say that to people. Forgetting yourself that you are also that person or forgetting yourself that you are not a coloured, just remember that. 'Yes, but I didn't know that because the people in those days they didn't tell us'. Even then.

It would seem that there is something in the script of coloured identification that compels one to find ways to distinguish oneself from black identification. As stated above, this may happen in spite of one's personal proximity to black identification. This is particularly important because of the point that I raise above, that the trajectories and lineages that lead to coloured identification are multiple, and for some coloured people claiming a black descent is as valid as claiming other descents, especially the white European descent which most coloured people tend to privilege over any other (Field, 2001). For instance, in the case I have discussed at the opening of this chapter (Mr. Paulse), it is some obscure reference to being related to a white person that the family acknowledges, and never any relation to black Africans even though there is reason to suspect that this exists, as the quote below suggests:

Ehm … my great-grandmother is still alive. Ehm … I don't know much about my grandparents … ehm it's a topic we don't speak about much. Ehm … my great-

> grandmother …ja I know she is originally from the Cape, those kinds of basic things, but the only things I know about her parents is that there was some white person somewhere, and there is a photo somewhere that I discovered one day, of a black guy sitting on the horse. And when I asked her about it I was silenced basically.

In this quote, it is clear that knowledge that there could have been any connection between this family and black Africanness diminishes from generation to generation. There is no attempt to articulate the nature of this relationship, in spite of the children's known suspicions. Yet another instance where coloured people display their relative lack of acceptance of black people is illustrated in reactions to blacks appearing on television in coloured households. I quote an interview excerpt below that portrays this reaction:

> Mr. Lenniz: I believe … you see, this is the most hurtful thing, and this is why I say, you know, a television is a good-bad thing. When we sit watching television, and let's say the news come on, and someone is now speaking Xhosa, you can hear by the responses people … you understand … what they say (R: People in the house?) in the household. Like my mother would refer … she would like say derogatory things (R: Like?). Like '*haal uit daardie kaafir channel*' (remove that kaffir channel) you know, so it's hurtful for me.

The multiple claims of descent and the common – although not necessarily accurate – perception that there is a black African ancestor and a white European ancestor behind all coloured identified persons forms the basis of the apparent need to project out all possible identifications with blackness. Even when a black African is only on television, it seems

this becomes potentially persecutory to one who is set on becoming a coloured person, i.e. one who is not accepted as white, and does not think of himself/herself as native or African (Bickford-Smith, 1995). The description of colouredness that Bickford-Smith uses suggests that coloured people's exclusion from the white race and its associated privilege in South Africa was out of coloured people's control. But in line with the argument so far, their exclusion from black African identification features a performance that reflected not only the conditions of the weight of external powers and forces of coercion at the time (the state, for instance), but also reflected a form of agency, albeit a strongly conditioned one, to use Shamil Jeppie's (2001) concept. This agency was evident where coloured people identified themselves in contradistinction to black Africanness. To repeat a point made earlier, one subjugates others in order to avoid one own subjugation, in the process having to pervert relations both with significant others and even to some extent with with 'undesirable' parts of the self.

No contact, even in death

Mrs. Adams, another participant, reported that her parents identified as coloured, although her mother was Xhosa (read black African). In this case, she reported that the family maintained no contact with the families of her parents, and up to her parents' death, they had had no contact with any of their parents' families of origin. This was not because there were no relatives or brothers and sisters (for instance she refers to the death

of her maternal uncle in one interview), but it seems in constituting itself as a coloured family, this family saw the maintenance of links with their extended families as bearing the potential to destabilize how the family had identified. Clues to the nature of this impact are provided in Mrs. Adams' assertion that her father did not allow the children 'to speak a black language'. In general, the family identified as coloured, so maintaining relations with coloured relatives would not have affected the perception that the family was coloured identified. However, as far as aspects that related to black Africanness were concerned, the family had to limit and monitor itself, lest its proximity to these cast doubt on their identity as coloured. Mrs. Adams states the following:

> But it was very funny to me as I grew … as a child it wasn't very important, but as we grew up I asked my parents about their families, because we never, ever, saw one of either of their families. Not from my father, not from my mother's side. They never … I don't know an uncle or an aunt or something like that.

Whereas with regard to Mr. Paulse contact was skewed in favour of the mother's coloured family, and contact severed only in regard to the black (grand)parent's family, in this case there is more than just the eschewing of relationships in favour of colouredness (because the family identified as coloured), but also it would seem that this identification provided the family with an opportunity to situate itself as the beginning of a lineage, with no 'contaminated' base to refer to. The only referent that was retained was the identification as coloured, with its adherent abjection of black Africanness. In this case again, it is with regard to when death of a 'family member' has occurred that the absoluteness of this severance is illustrated, as well as the sheer determination to cling

onto the coloured identity. Aversion towards black Africanness and attraction to colouredness as a higher racial position in a racist society is illustrated in such instances as having been extremely compelling. Mrs. Adams describes the occurrence of death in this context in the following way:

> As we grew up we started asking them. But we just never saw them. So once, my mother received a telegram that her brother died. But I mean we were teenagers already at that time. I mean it was so funny to see her crying for someone we didn't even know. And what was so funny, she didn't even go to the funeral.

In this quote, it is clear that her mother did not attend the funeral of her own brother. Common courtesy would dictate that one should attend a family member's funeral, if not to pay one's last respects, at least to facilitate the mourning process and the letting go of a loved one. It would seem that attending a funeral of one that is known to be black African, even though this happens to be a family member, would be dissonant with performing a coloured identity. One can only imagine the impact that the lack of these family observances might have on the psychological well-being of the persons concerned. However, what is definite is the attitude that seems to prevail in relating to black Africans, even if these are family members. Mr. Paulse described how as a child his curiosity about the photo of a black man amongst the family photos was thwarted by the lack of an adequate response from his great-grandmother. The outcome seems to have been collusion around the silence within the family, at least up to now. Similarly in the quote above, Mrs. Adams describes a situation she recalls where even in relation to her as an older child (teenager), the death of a black African 'family member' and the pain

inherent to this still did not compel her mother to act outside the script of coloured identity performance. Her mother could not or would not engage with her around this issue, and one wonders whether some of the strangeness she remembers feeling at the time was as much about the secrecy and contradiction inherent in the situation as it was about a lack of familiarity with this dead unknown uncle. Her mother's tearfulness exposed her grief and possible attachment to her black African brother but the need to preserve the performance of colouredness in this way prevailed above all else.

In another instance, Mr. Tate, whose parents brought him and his siblings up as coloureds although he (the participant) acknowledges that his father was Motswana, a member of one of the black African ethnic groups in South Africa, states how his sister got married to a coloured person who discouraged her from maintaining contact with her family, lest she be identified as black to the detriment of her new family. He recounted how even when they tried calling her she would be cold and brief on the telephone, with her husband shouting out an inquiry in the background as to who was calling. According to Mr. Tate, during the funeral of one of their siblings, his sister only attended the burial, and left as soon as possible after the funeral. This behaviour would be anticipated of a stranger in this context. It is clear that Mr. Tate had expected that his sister would arrive some time earlier before the funeral, and that she would stay a while longer afterwards – to connect and mourn with other family members. There could have been other reasons why she was unable to behave as expected, for instance out of her own preference or maybe in deference to her husband's apparent dominance. However, given the discussion so far, it is compelling to attribute her behaviour to the demands of coloured identity

performance, where anxiety is aroused when close kinship relations with black Africans are acknowledged too strongly.

Alternative performances of colouredness

The apparent denunciation of the 'black side' of the family is not the option that all coloured families pursue(d). One participant, Mrs. Daniels, expressed how close she was to her mother's 'people'. She went to the extent of choosing a school where there were a lot of Xhosa children, although this was in a coloured residential area. In her case, the family maintained close contact with both the maternal and the paternal relatives in a context where similar to other families I have discussed in this project, the mother was a black African Xhosa-speaking person. In what seems to have been a complicated parenting experience, she reports the following:

> My father's favourite children were the children who looked like my father. And my mother - her favourite children were us.

I have described this parenting experience as apparently complicated because Mrs. Daniels related how they used to have a lot of arguments about this, pressing their parents to explain to them why they treated them in that way. In one of the interviews she stated that they asked her parents 'why are you doing this; why are you treating us like fish and wheat?' From reading this it would seem that the problematic way in which her parents related to her and her siblings went beyond the common perception that parents may be closer to one or two of their children than to others. The salience of this tendency in this

context is raised by the fact that Mrs. Daniels attributes its occurrence to the fact that some of the children looked like their father (and therefore were without argument - coloured) and others looked like their mother (predisposing them to being perceived as black Africans). In this instance the mother seems to have implicitly embraced her own blackness by bestowing favour upon her 'blacker' children, giving them permission to own this aspect of themselves even though they were puzzled by the differentiation. She appears to have resisted attempting to 'colouredify' herself or them, but the process of living in such a family was not unproblematic.

Although different, this case still supports the argument that one of the most commonly observed aspects of being coloured in these contexts (African-coloured families) is a problematic relationship with black Africanness. From this interview it is not clear how the 'coloured looking' siblings related to their mother in turn. However, as will be discussed in the chapter on coloured childhood, the parents' perceived 'race-based' differential preference of their children seemed to affect how the children related to each other. Their relationships reflected some of the prejudice against those of a darker shade (read black Africans) that I have discussed as forming part of a coloured identity performance above. Further, it is clear that both inside the family home and outside in the community where this family lived, members of this family encountered this prejudice and its association with being coloured, and they seemed to have aligned themselves accordingly.

Relating her experiences of growing up a darker coloured person in her family, another participant, Mrs. Adams, offered a different perspective on her experiences of being parented, which seems to have countered the negative impact of being prejudiced against by other coloured people in her community. In spite of this, the counter effect was not completely effective because her life-story is pervaded by negative racist experiences that have had a decisive impact on her life. Even the way she introduces the idea of having been perceived (and self-perceived) as racially different to her siblings reveals the fact that this categorization has had a decisive influence on how her life has turned out. She introduces this in the following interchange:

> Researcher (R): … and you were telling me that your father was colored
>
> Mrs Adams: Jaa, he was colored
>
> R: Your mother was black
>
> Mrs. Adams: Jaa, so they had eight children, four sons and four daughters. And the two brothers died so we are four sisters and two brothers. So some of us are black, and some of us are colored.

Unlike in Mrs. Daniels case discussed above, Mrs. Adams felt both her parents were particularly protective over the 'black' children, but the siblings themselves displayed behaviour that was similar to some of the instances described previously. It seems that it was common for children to say things to one another that were hurtful. In this case

again, the prejudice against the darker looking 'coloured' children (although it might have been uttered in jest), is reported to have permeated the way in which Mrs. Adams thought about herself, and how she ended up planning and living her life. She identifies her relatively darker features as the main reason for the difficult childhood she experienced outside the family home and later in her own marriage. The following interchange illustrates some of her experiences as a member of the community and as an employee:

> R: But in, I mean in your everyday life, in your community, you know, let's say before you had children before you were married, what did people say ... (Mrs. Adams: mhh) but in the community when you go to the shop, when you walk to wherever, to the station, did you have any interactions with…
>
> Mrs. Adams: Ja, I have, wooo! Several, several, several!
>
> R: And give me an example?
>
> Mrs. Adams: Even when you buy something, where people don't know you, when you buy something at the shop, you're being addressed as '*sisi*, can you speak … what language do you choose, shall I speak?' Because they take it generally that you can't speak Afrikaans, 'shall I speak English with you? Do you understand English?' That type of thing.
>
> R: And how... (She interrupts him)

> Mrs. Adams: Woo! I get mad! I do get mad sometimes, '*ja, ek praat Afrikaans ook'*. Just like yesterday, yesterday the same thing happened, people came into [my work place], these two white women, and my supervisor introduced them to me. And the one asked "I don't think you can speak Afrikaans and I'm sorry, I'm sorry I can't speak Xhosa". And I said "*nee u kan enige taal praat, enige van die taale. Ek verstaaan al die taale*". She said "oh! thank goodness!"

On the surface, this interchange reflects how she felt she experienced the prejudice of those that she interacted with. However, it also introduces her own investment in being coloured – through objecting to being perceived as black African. In the same interview she provides clues regarding her own abjection of black Africanness as part of performing coloured identity which was clearly her preferred racial identity. This is another instance (following Mr. Paulse's grandfather) where it would appear that where one's colouredness is not 'obvious' one has to work harder or do more to justify claiming coloured identity. Ultimately, these intensified efforts seem to focus on the abjection of black Africanness more than anything else. It is being less close, or bearing the least resemblance to black Africans that increases the credibility of those that are invested in being coloured when they claim their identities as coloured. It is almost as if this becomes a literal application of the apartheid definition of what colouredness is. According to this definition a coloured person is one who is neither white nor black. Essentially, colouredness cannot (and should not) be confused with blackness. Based on the sentiment expressed in the interviews discussed thus far, it would appear that this definition should be sharpened to read: A coloured is one who dejects that which is black African identified and idealizes white racial identification and what adheres to this category,

accepting however that one is not fully white. The second part of this explication did not come out forcefully in the interviews I conducted, except for a few instances where it was implied. For instance, Mr. Paulse described the different ways in which his family reacted to his friends depending on whether they were black or white. As can be seen in the quote below, it appears that there was lack of social investment when it came to his black friend as compared to when he brought white friends home:

> It was always in terms of race. It was always 'one of [Mr. Paulse's] black friends came to visit'. And it was the same with the white kids, it was … 'one of his white friends came to visit'. Ehm … although I think with the white kids there was more curiosity of wanting to talk to them, and wanting … initiating some kind of interaction. Whereas I didn't always pick that up with Thato. Thato by the way, is the only one of my black friends that has been home.

In the next quote, this becomes even more apparent:

> Mr. Paulse: It was only now, it …it was … initially the only friends that occasionally went home with me were the white friends and they were always paraded around town.
>
> R: Paraded around town …?
>
> Mr. Paulse: Well, we were always … my mom was always like 'oh you must take them to whoever's house', like people we knew, to go and say hi, or 'why don't you guys go wherever' and that's what we did.

The family seems to derive pride from being associated with white people. It is something that everyone in that community should see as it seems to support the family's perception of itself as being better than black African, in fact as being 'one up' on other coloured people too, who did not have children studying at a university in the city and therefore had no hope of having white people as guests.

Performance through marriage

Preference for looking coloured (looking white was even better) in contrast with looking black African was central, in the discussion of race issues for all the interviewees, to the point that it influenced the process of choosing a marriage partner for Mrs. Adams. She says of this:

> So that is ... how we grew up. And it was so ... you know it became so … I don't know how my sisters related to this, but I said to myself: I'm not going to break down, I'm not going to marry a black person. I'm going to see to it that I marry a fair person, so that my children don't need to go through this pain.

In this quote she seems to have wanted to rectify her failure to be *inarguably* coloured by marrying someone whose colour would literally 'lighten up' her own colour in her children. So strong was she in her resolve that she indeed married a man whom though there is no basis to doubt that she loved, met her most important criterion, that of being 'very fair'. The thesis that the darker coloured people in this context, who because of this have been victims of prejudice in coloured communities and in their own families is

further supported by this participant's description of her brother and the marriage partner that he chose (elaborated further below). She describes her brother and his experience of school as follows:

> … (E)specially with my brother, with my brother, it was very difficult for him. It was very difficult. What did they call him, they called him *indodo* (or *indoda*, referring to a black African man) or something like that, at school, *dikvoet* (thick foot) things like that they called him. For him it was very difficult, because he is dark, dark, dark, dark, dark, he is very dark. Even the white of his eyes sometimes it is red. So for him ... mhh it was very difficult for him, it was very difficult for him, it was so difficult that he even … he didn't complete matric. He went to standard nine and just dropped out from school, and my father didn't do anything about it.

The way she repeats 'dark' and 'difficult', as these adjectives relate to her brother, suggests that in this context, being 'dark', and by implication, appearing black African, was a heavy burden. It is clear that being 'dark', as Mrs. Adams describes her brother to have been, required extraordinary measures to shore up the experience of oneself as coloured. It also had far-reaching implications for him, including dropping out of school. I explore this outcome when dealing with coloured childhood in chapter five. Suffice to point out here that similar to his sister, his choice of a marriage partner seems to have been influenced by reactions to his perceived black Africanness. The description of his wife and of the other siblings' marriage partners follows below:

> Mrs. Adams: My elder sister married a man, he is also dark, my sister's husband but he is Afrikaans, he grew up in (Sara..) ... but he is also colored but he is a dark colored. My brother married a fair, fair, fair girl.
>
> R: Your brother, which one? The one that was struggling at school, that dropped out?
>
> Mrs. Adams : Ja, ja ... very fair, *sy's somer spierwit, spierwit* (she is pure white). My sister also married ehm … he is not so very fair, but he is those coloureds, coloured, coloured, he is coloured. Ehmm ja, they all married, ja, coloured, coloured, they married coloureds.

Being coloured-identified in this context seems to emphasize the importance of contrasting coloured identified people to those who are black African identified. Once again, Mrs. Adams' repetition of the word 'coloured' suggests that the marriage partners that her siblings chose were unarguably coloured people, and that they could lay claim to this identity without any challenge against their claim. For Mrs. Adams and her siblings, marrying coloured people who could lay claim to coloured identity in this way provided security for their own claim to coloured identity. Further, and more importantly in this context, this choice of marital partners provided them and their families refuge from being black African identified in their communities and in their families.

Language and Appearance: Being 'misconstrued' as black

On the more observable level, even just speaking a black African language or allowing one's children to do this was perceived as a threat to the delicate legitimacy of the

family's or the individual's claim to the coloured identity. Confusion of one as black African seemed to raise acute defensiveness as attested to firstly by Mrs. Adams' words quoted previously, where she states that she gets mad at perceptions that divest her of what is associated with coloured identity. In her context, this is when she is misperceived as being unable to speak Afrikaans, which is the first language of the majority of coloured people in the Western Cape, particularly in Kensington, being the community where she grew up (Field describes Kensington in his work on coloured residents of Windermere in Erasmus, 2001).

Another person whose performance of coloured identity (according to her husband who was interviewed) was in the first place problematized by her appearance which did not fit into what is perceived to be the coloured look, also seemed to react in a strongly negative way to any suggestion that she was black. However, as discussed previously, she married a black man who was not prepared to pretend to be a coloured person. It seemed this increased her problems in identifying as coloured, especially if the argument holds that one of the most significant ways of performing coloured identity in a family where there is racial mixedness is the abjection of blackness. The husband (participant, Mr. Mmota) described a visit to his home in one of the big black townships in Gauteng. He states that his wife was in tears at being misconstrued as black, especially because this meant that the black Africans whom she came into contact with while in this township failed to see a difference between themselves and their homeboy's wife. It would seem that the main basis for their assumption was her appearance which apparently fitted the black African

look more than it fitted what the Gauteng people associated with coloured identity. In his description he says:

> R: Why was she miscontrued as black?
>
> Mr. Mmota: Because you see [she] doesn't have those coloured resemblances that much you know, she is a little bit lighter than you and I, and she has the colored hair I guess, but you know, looking at some of the black women in fashion and this kind of hair stories you find that some of them have these extensions, some of them have that hair. You know they are black but they have that hair. So, she has the same kind of hair that some of the mixed marriages children who are black have, you know. So it's easy to see her as a black person because she has the features of the black person.

In his perception, at that time in Gauteng there were coloured people whose investment in abjecting black Africanness did not reach the levels that he was observing in the Western Cape. Black Africans and coloured people who 'appeared even more coloured' than she did, socialized freely and coloured people also spoke African languages. Mr. Mmota says he could not understand why this difference in attitudes existed in different contexts, but perhaps the argument in this chapter provides a possible way of understanding this. It is not necessarily coloured people whose coloured identity is established beyond any doubt (especially by their looks) who need to defend against the destabilization of their identity by abjecting blackness, but rather those who in a sense are more marginal. In the quote above, he also introduces the subject of black women's aesthetics, which has increased the blurring of lines between the appearances of black

African and coloured women. The next quote shows how Mr. Mmota's wife responded to the perception that she was black (or put differently, her response to the perception that her coloured identity was disputed):

> R: And how has she …how does she normally respond to being misconstrued?
>
> Mr. Mmota: Ohh very angry she wouldn't want to be called black. She would say '*no sorry I'm not black, I'm not black please, I'm not* [with emphasis]'. She will be so angry. I've wondered if she would be so angry at being thought of as white too.

What Mr. Mmota intimates here, and indeed he expands on this in another part of the interview, is the idea that I introduced above in the explication of colouredness, especially in this context. On the one hand there is a strong wish to disassociate from black Africanness, especially in those contexts where one's colouredness is not apparent (e.g. by appearance and/or association) if not actively claimed or performed. On the other hand, as he also implies in this quote, there is an apparent wish to approximate whiteness and what adheres to that racial identity. In other words Mr. Mmota recognizes his wife's idealization of whiteness in his comment.

The racist performance discussed in all its diversity in this chapter is not peculiar to African-coloured families. It can be observed even in other coloured people whose descent does not reflect (acknowledged) direct links to black Africans. In another interview where the participant gave a description of her colleagues' reaction to black people at health facilities in the Western Cape, it was possible to detect this too:

Mrs. Lotus: But myself, I didn't say I'm gonna treat these one better because this one is coloured and this one was Bantu (R: mhh) as I told you ... Me I don't have that "I'm coloured , I don't have time for Bantus", up till today.

R: And your colleagues were they aware of the difference between coloured and Bantu people as you say? Did they do anything to show that they were aware?

Mrs. Lotus: Some of them ... some of them.

R: Like what? What would they do for instance?

Mrs. Lotus: They ... you can see sometimes they work with people they ... you know (R: mhh) their noses up in the air (R: Mhm) I just learn to look at that ... and I said to myself 'ahh ...what's going on here' (R: mhh), just because you are coloured, this people is black. And there, I kind of … taking out these.

Initially Mrs. Lotus distances herself from this performance, and identifies it in others. She also refers to how it is still common practice in coloured communities to display racial prejudice against those whose physical features are similar to those of black Africans. The argument proffered in this chapter is that although there was an option not to display the same racist attitudes towards black Africans and perceptions of blackness, people with coloured identities seemed compelled to embrace white conceptions and attitudes towards black Africans, or perceived blackness in fellow coloured people. It appears that distinguishing oneself (and others) in terms of the degree of relation to black Africanness became a form of self-policing or surveillance, as contrasted to state-

policing. This is not to de-emphasize the influence of the state which was ubiquitous in this process (*a la* Foucault's idea of the panopticism, in Faubion, 1994), particularly in ensuring that the racial space or line between black Africans and whites would not be transgressed. Coloured people occupied this boundaried space and enacted this vigilance as part of a performance of their own identities and as individual actors (Muzondidiya, 2005), thereby keeping black Africans where racist white domination put them in the racial hierarchy.

In practice, the racial prejudice of coloured people and its similarity to the racist perceptions of whites is potentially illustrated in the example of one family where a mother gave birth to three children, the third one (interviewee) having a different father to the first two. She says the following about how her father was perceived in the family, and how she was in turn perceived:

> Ms. Russels: My father has got nappy hair and my mother got … because my mother is Indian you know, so my mom's got long straight hair; a bit sharper features, and my dad looks black. So my dad looks like a … he's got that Madiba look.

This part is preceded by her stating that her mother is much closer to her siblings than to her, implying that she was treated differently because she had nappy hair (and other physical features associated with black Africans, e.g. a nose that was flat, 'big but', etc.), which she believed she had inherited from her father. Unlike the kind of sibling rivalry that one finds commonly in different households with children, the rivalry manifested in this case is relevant insofar as it is perceived to be explicable in racial terms. The most

important point regarding Ms Russels' case is that unlike in the cases discussed previously, hers adds the moral dimension. She perceived herself to be carrying the burden of her father's 'sins', (alcoholism, social failure, abuser, etc.) in her mother's eyes, just on the basis of the fact that she bore a close physical resemblance to him. She felt that she was 'the odd one out', and was burdened and distressed by statements such as 'she's like her dad', regardless of what these meant in reality. I return to discuss the relationship between these siblings more fully when dealing with coloured childhood in chapter five. For this chapter it is important to note that the description of her sister who was fathered by someone else seemed to play an important part in how she felt she was perceived and treated. She attributed the following physical characteristics to her sister: light skin, very straight hair, green eyes, beautiful.

It seems physical appearance, (visible) racial identity and moral attributes tend to be conflated in reading the racial subject. Du Pre (1994) describes how people who were not white were perceived during the reigns of racist regimes in South Africa to be: savage, murderer, thieves and drunken layabouts. Other descriptors that are read simply from what one's race is perceived to be abound in the literature on the colonial period. For instance, Fanon highlighted perceptions of the black man as hypersexual and prone to rape more salient, and pre-emancipation white American literature depicts the black African-American woman as a lecherous being.

Conclusion

The various examples and instances discussed in this chapter have hopefully illustrated some of the prejudicial perceptions that coloured people harboured (and perhaps still harbour) in regard to black Africans in South Africa. They are perceptions that fixed black people as undesirable in the eyes of coloured people, while whites represented the ideal. For the darker coloured person, the need to defend against being perceived as black, and therefore by association, as morally debased and subhuman, called for a more intensified abjection of blackness in performing one's coloured identity. This assertion should not, and does not, lose sight of the fact that such performances of coloured identities were not necessarily the norm. It is also important to bear in mind that the performance of identity was located within an excessively racist political context which awarded access to scarce resources on the basis of where one fell on the hierarchy of race. The fact that unless one was white resources were scarce introduced inevitable competition between those who fell outside white identification, race being one of the 'legitimate' ways to further restrict differential access. However, the discussion has suggested that the performance of a particular racial identity and the processes of subjugation and association and dissociation that this required took on a life beyond this. Coloured identified people, but most particularly those with some black African association, actively participated in processes of defining and policing boundaries not only within intimate family systems but even in more internal or intrapsychic ways. What this chapter has sought to demonstrate is how this perverted relationships with others and the self and how downward discrimination co-opts anyone who has something to gain by retaining a somewhat higher position on the ladder. The discussion has also illustrated

some aspects of internal racism and the attribution of particular disavowed characteristics to black Africanness.

CHAPTER 4: INTRAFAMILIAL 'RACIAL DIFFERENCE'

Introduction

It is a common expectation that if children have the same parents (i.e. born to the same mother and the same father) they would generally be of the same race. Deviations from this expectation, which are common too, tend to attract undue attention towards such member(s) of the family. In the case of many white South Africans during apartheid, such attention was accompanied by disapproval which could be acted upon by calling for state intervention. As discussed earlier, there was a widespread perception aided by the racist order promulgated by government, that sexual relations between white people and members of other races weakened the genetic pool of white people, and these were regarded as abominable and illegal. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act (No. 55) of 1949 and the Immorality Act (No. 5) of 1927 provided for such intervention, outlawing unions between whites and members of the 'non-white' groups. Zakes Mda's novel – *The Madonna of Excelsior* – gives an example of what these laws allowed their adherents to do, to invade the privacy of people suspected of being involved in a cross-racial sexual relationship and to charge them with breaking the law. However, the political imperative that underlined the promulgation of these Acts into law played a determining role in people's lives, governed and specified which relations and interactions were allowed, and limited people's personal freedom.

This chapter focuses on the ways in which racial identities are constructed through relationships within the family. It explores the ways in which these constructions affect relationships within and across generations. In particular, this chapter illustrates the permeability of the family system, and how as a social institution the family reflects the dynamics of the larger society, albeit on a much smaller scale. Amongst the different

analyses of the family, I have considered those which seemed pertinent to a discussion of the family and racial identities. The first few sections focus on the privileging of whiteness as that which is beautiful and valuable, while black Africanness is portrayed as different and ugly. This manifests in how individual family members experience their appearances subjectively, and how parents and siblings relate to one another. The bulk of the other sections focus on the burden of the history of intra-familial racism, and how it continues to affect relationships and self-perceptions across generations. The latter part of this chapter also refers to changes in how racial identities are perceived, with Black Africanness having gained in value because of the current non-racist, pro-redress, political order in South Africa.

Beauty and the Caucasian norm

In the previous chapter on performing colouredness, I referred to the colouredification of those black Africans who married coloured partners, or the strife that seemed to attach to those relationships where one partner resisted the colouredification process. One often reads of coloured people (especially - but not exclusively - women) maintaining their coloured look by straightening their hair and using skin lighteners (Erasmus in Nuttall & Michael, 2000). Although this has been a common practice in response to ideas of personal beauty and aesthetics in most 'races', it is important to state that in this context, beauty was associated with the physical characteristics of a Caucasian - so that straight hair and light complexion were indicators of beauty. Caucasian facial features were also associated with beauty. In essence, as Erasmus (2000) says, 'degrees of whiteness' were

regarded as the yardstick of beauty, morality and social status. In the racist racial hierarchy, colouredness was believed to contain a higher degree of whiteness, and therefore to imply greater beauty, and was associated with higher moral standards and social status, whereas black Africanness had the least degree of whiteness, if any, and the least number of Caucasian physical features. Black Africanness equated ugliness, immorality and inferiority.

Taking into consideration the Acts that I have referred to above, as well as the racialised sense of beauty just discussed, this chapter focuses on how race and racism are experienced and lived out within coloured families. Mrs. Adams, discussed in the previous chapter, provided the most striking observation about her experience of difference in her family. Right at the beginning of the interview, she remarked:

> Ja, so they had eight children, four sons and four daughters. And the two brothers died so we are four sisters and two brothers. *So some of us are black, and some of us are colored* (my italics).

In this case, these were siblings with the same pair of parents. I believe there are two main reasons why she made this remark. Firstly, she experienced herself as less than coloured because of the physical features that she had. She felt that her skin was too dark, and her hair was not straight. So significant was this self-experience that she had this to say of those fleeting moments when she felt she could identify as a coloured person: 'I feel that *ek is deel van julle* (I am part of you),' referring to her family members who were fairer than she. She stated that she used to have this feeling when she had used a

skin lightener and was wearing wigs (straight artificial hair commonly called *winkel haar* or 'shop hair' in coloured communities). It would seem that this experience is an important comment on the subjective and the social. In spite of being born into a coloured household, this was not adequate for this participant to experience herself as coloured. A racial identity as a relational (or social) identity seems to derive its full meaning in response to opinions of external other(s), regardless of whether these are internalized or not. This idea resonates with Erving Goffman's discussion of the presentation of self in everyday life. According to this, one constantly presents oneself and one's activities in ways that control the impression others form of one. Similarly, racial and gender identities represent social performances which presuppose an evaluative audience. By stating that 'some of us are black, and some of us coloured' Mrs. Adams excluded herself from the larger group of coloured people, and in so doing she othered herself from her own family as well. As such, her experiences of a racial identity that was supposed to be hers (coloured identity, given that she was born into a coloured family) rendered her a sojourner to coloured racial identity in the sense that it was a part-time experience, a diversion from others' perceptions of her as black African.

The second reason why I believe Mrs. Adams made the remark referred to above, is that the process of 'othering' also came from other family members. For instance, she stated that her sister who was also dark (and her brother whom she described as '*dark, dark, dark*' in a quote used in the previous chapter) experienced negative comments from the rest of the siblings as the following extract illustrates:

> Mrs. Adams: It's myself, and my one sister that are black.

> Researcher (R): And how did that … within the family, how did that affect the relationships, did it affect the relationships at all?
>
> Mrs. Adams: No, of course it did, of course it did. It did, it really did. Even amongst the siblings, it affects the relationship there too. Because even there, they used to … your own brother, your own sister called you 'kaffir', *'jy's kaffir, jou hare kan nie groei nie'* (you are a 'kaffir', your hair can't grow), you know that type of thing.

The exchange above provides a good example of the idea that identity is relational. It seems when 'important others' - that is, those who are perceived to be legitimate judges of whether one makes the cut as a member of a certain group or not - do not give their confirmation of one's membership, feelings of alienation result. Of course, the processes of confirmation and alienation reflect personal motivations too, with the differentials of power and motive rendering the process fraught with complexity. However, expanding on personal motivations and using a self psychological understanding (a psychoanalytical theory made popular by Heinz Kohut in the USA), it appears that the dynamics of confirmation or alienation as referred to here, are akin to what results from a withholding of mirroring responses (i.e. responses that evoke subjective feelings of affirmation, recognition and appreciation) by the self-object, depriving one of self affirming or cohesion-evoking experiences. In this case it also seems the withholding of affirmation (derived through confirmation by important others, of one as coloured) is not the only effect on the one whose attempts to have his/her needs met are thwarted. At the same time Mrs. Adams is bludgeoned in being called that which is undesirable. Unlike in contexts where the withholding produces damage that is not necessarily specific, the

withholding of confirmation here is followed by the naming of that degraded identity to which she is relegated. In these contexts, the extent of the resultant damage is not only determined by the individual's inherent predispositions, but also the specific relegation of one who desires being coloured or white to *kaffir-ness* or African blackness, by those who are important to one.

Parents and the process of othering

The process of othering Mrs. Adams did not have solely negative consequences. She also described how her parents related to the 'black ones', as the interview extract below suggests:

> No, no. Not from my parents, but amongst us, never from them. Especially my father, I always had a sense that he felt sorry for the black ones.

Considering this quote, the 'black ones' represent an assumed distinction and in this process this can be interpreted as confirming their difference from the fair-looking children. One is also left with the impression that in such a household a coloured identified person who possesses physical features that are associated with black Africans is rendered vulnerable and in need of special care from the parents. Although it sounds like Mrs. Adams' father made more effort to protect the 'black ones' it appeared that both parents presented a united front in being protective towards the children. The perception of inequality between the siblings that this uneven treatment must have reinforced is unmistakable. Paradoxically, in protecting the 'black children' the parents seem to have

reinforced the experience of a devalued identity that needed to be compensated for in some way. This suggests the infantilizing of some of the family members, given the hypothesized mutuality of interaction that enabled this interaction (parents assuming the role of 'special' carers and 'the black ones' the role of those in need of special care).

However, presenting a united front in giving special care to children whom racist perceptions by others rendered vulnerable did not happen in all families. Another participant, Mrs. Daniels, reported how her parents were split in terms of attachment between the children who appeared darker, and those who looked fairer. In describing the apparent differences between the children which was based predominantly on physical appearance, she stated the following:

> Because … three of my sisters … they're very beautiful … they look like my father, and some of the people used to ask us 'why is this one black with no hair, but the other one's light in complexion, [with hair]?' Are you … (R: adopted?) adopted, ja. Something like that.

Then she goes on to say

> M: No, we always my fa … my father's favourite children were the children who looked like my father. And my mother, her favourite children were us.

It should be emphasized again that such differential preference in parents is a common occurrence even in contexts where race is not privileged. However, it is precisely because

of the privilege that has been and is accorded to race in the development of these preferences that this phenomenon gains importance in these contexts. In this case, these parental preferences suggest that approximating whiteness is valued highly, whereas approximating black Africanness is valued less, if at all. Appearance is emphasized here, mainly because other than their physical charactersitics, the children in this family had a similar family background, they spoke the same language, they were parented by the same couple and brought up in the same household. To explicate the value that accrued to being visibly 'not-black', based on these quotations, it appears that the children who were perceived to be darker were also perceived by others and themselves to be lacking in beauty, in line with the association between beauty and whiteness (or some 'degree of whiteness') mentioned previously. The duty to protect the 'darker children' from denigration was left for Mrs. Daniels' mother, whose own blackness seems to have facilitated identification with and empathy for their experience.

Siblings

It seems in contexts where there is racial awareness and associated dynamics, race becomes fore-grounded as the basis underlying and structuring most perceptions and interactions. As the extended interchange below illustrates, appearance has been a feature in potential conflicts between many siblings, as well as between siblings and other children outside the household (the fable of Cinderella, her stepmother and her stepsisters illustrates this point). However, the sense of lack or deprivation that Mrs. Adams reports below features specifically racial longing and racial alienation quite strongly:

Mrs. Adams: Now, it is different now it's different, now it is different. *Dit maak nie meer saak soos dit destyds saak gemaak het nie* (it does not matter now, like it used to then). It's different.

R: And is there a lot of interaction between you and your brothers and sisters? The ones who are still alive?

Mrs. Adams: Ja, but it's also different now. We're adults now. And we have accepted each other, Ehm I was very jealous of them, through the years.

R: The ones that are fair?

Mrs. Adams: Jaa

R: Why?

P: Because they are fair and I'm black.

In this interchange, Mrs. Adams emphasizes the idea of difference between the 'now' and the past, echoing and registering the socio-political change that has taken place on a personal, subjective level. She seems to have occupied a precarious position of being a sibling while her (subjective) experiences of her appearance as discrepant from that of her "fair siblings'" seemed to deny this. This and the special treatment that she got from her parents as the 'darker one', as well as the *excluding* labels that her fair siblings used

against her, must have rendered her position as a sibling and 'legitimate' daughter in a coloured family a complicated one.

This does not negate her assertion that things have changed now, and that all these issues and feelings do not matter as much in the present as they did back then. On the one hand, it is possible to explain this as an instance of repression, where the memory of that which represents a subjectively painful experience is pushed out of consciousness and banished to the realm of the psyche where it cannot be called upon readily, and where it ceases to have a direct impact on one's subjective experience. On the other hand, such 'forgetting' is reminiscent of Fanon's project of decolonization, in which he recommends the reconstruction of the self as positively valued if decolonization is the goal. In discussing and disagreeing with this idea, Verges calls upon Marx who stated that 'the tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living. And just when they appear to be engaged in revolutionary transformation of themselves … precisely in such epochs or revolutionary crises they timidly conjure up the spirits of the past to help them (Verges, 1999, p.14). Although I am not talking about the colonized subject here, this case illustrates the untenability of Fanon's idea that past devaluation can be fully transformed. Following her survival of the racist relations in her family, the new creation (Mrs. Adams) is not unfettered by pain and the hurts of the past as evidenced by the strength of her assertion. True to the idea of the unconscious that I employ here, such experiences as Mrs. Adams had had have a tendency to outlast the time of their occurrence, and to project themselves into the life dynamics of the present. One of the

characteristics of the unconscious (understood in terms of its topographical, as contrasted to its descriptive, sense) is that its contents

> … gain access to the conscious or preconscious systems in compromise-formations after having undergone the distortions of the censorship (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, p. 474)

As an adult, after getting married, Mrs. Adams was still living the *life-project* which had its roots in the experiences she had as a child, both in her parents' house and in the larger community.

'Erasing' black Africanness

In the previous chapter on performing colouredness through complicity, I referred to Mrs. Adams' decision to marry a fair coloured person, to make sure that her children did not suffer due to being dark (or black African) in appearance. Her ultimate attraction towards a fair looking man was informed by her wish to avoid the pain of exclusion, as she came to realize. This is reminiscent of the Cape coastal plain of colonial times, where white males, though prohibited from having sexual relations with 'slaves of full colour', considered 'mixed blood' persons more attractive and sometimes even worthy of marriage (Venter, 1974, pp. 19 - 20). Given this idea, attempts were made to produce more persons of mixed race, a process that was called 'improving stock', with some white families keeping European men just to engage in sexual intercourse with the female slaves, with procreation being the goal (Venter, 1974, cites examples of this practice).

For Mrs. Adams, although her choice of a fair-looking husband did achieve the desired goal of bearing fair-looking children whose appearances would not associate them with black Africans, it continued to maintain her own exclusion and difference, and this time, from her own children, whose appearance denied her status as a parent. She explains her continued feeling of exclusion in the following way:

> And what is so funny, as a teenager I never had black boyfriends, it's … it's … they're all fair, even the husband I married. I said I'm going to marry a fair person. So that's what happened, but I mean that didn't change anything for me, because I'm still in the very situation I've been all the years.

She describes her current experience of 'the very situation she has always been in in all the years' in this way:

> It is much better when they are seen with their father, because they're more like him, coloured, but he is very fair. So, but with me, *oh gits*! (Oh gosh!)

On the one hand this case illustrates the resolve of a parent to 'selflessly' protect her children from the pain that she herself has experienced and continues to experience. On the other hand, it provides an indication of the wish to escape association with blackness at all costs. The apparently altruistic love and instinct to protect her children may veil the parent's need to defend against her own perceived black Africanness, and with that, the subjectively experienced difference and alienation both from the racial group of choice and from the family. Although she feels she is misperceived as black African, having

married a fair looking man, Mrs. Adams is empowered to give birth to coloured children, which helped shore up her insecure claims to coloured identity in her family of procreation. In this regard she cites what sounds like the racialized drama of child birth each time she gave birth to a child, this in addition to the continuing feeling of being excluded. She says:

> So even there, his mother died never accepting me as a daughter-in-law. So with each child, I've got three children, with each child that was born, she used to open the blanket and say '*Oo gits, laat ek kyk of die kind nie soos haar is nie* (Oh gosh, let me see if the baby is not like her)', you know that kind of thing.

As this excerpt shows, giving birth to a coloured looking baby led to the acceptance of the baby, but it still failed to bring about a declaration that she, the mother, was coloured. Following the suggestion above, that giving birth to coloured children would help shore up her security in claiming coloured identity, it seems having coloured children provided concrete evidence that she was a member of this desired racial grouping, against her own visibility which had led others as well as members of her own family to pronounce her a black African, or to use the derogatory concept that they actually used – *'n kaffir*.

The potency of intra-familial insult

What renders perceived and subjectively experienced exclusion by one's family members more potent and hurtful is the assumed expectation that natural affinity occurs between family members, especially between siblings, but also parents and children, as suggested

by Goldenberg and Goldenberg's (2000) description of the family cited in Chapter 2 . This is part of the romanticization of the family that is so common, which however, gets interrupted by the reality of the conflictual nature of human encounters. There is an expectation that family members will stand by one another against social or physical insults from the outside world. Where this expectation exists and the opposite occurs, the involvement of family members tends to compound the negative impact. The interchange below suggests this. It appears that the hurtfulness of the derogatory comment diminishes in comparison to the hurt caused by the desertion by one's family member implied in that context.

> Mrs. Daniels: Maybe the people call me kaffir, they call me, say you kaffir – *jy gaan by die kaffir skool* (you attend the school for blacks). They would stand with that people in the corner, but they won't say nothing – 'why, you leave my sister' – they wouldn't say that.
>
> R: And how … did that …
>
> Mrs. Daniels: It hurts.
>
> R: It hurts because they're on their side, or it hurts because those people are saying those things? What … what?
>
> Mrs. Daniels: And most of my family – not my whole family – most of my brothers and my sisters – was on their side. It was very hurtful.

This interchange suggests that this desertion took place outside the family home, where without the refuge provided by the home, one is rendered more vulnerable and exposed to social insults. However, with some of the family members not acting in ways that would be perceived as protective towards their fellow family members outside the home, it is not surprising that they maintained this position even within the family home. One possible explanation for these intrafamilial relationship characteristics is the idea that the household and the larger community inter-influence, and what you find in one has important links with what is in the other. In this sense, the racism between different members of society may be played out between family members. Additionally**,** Mrs. Daniels has this to say about interactions between the siblings in the household:

> Mrs. Daniels: But there was – because my brother and my sister – some of them used to bring coloured people in the house. And me and my sister used to bring Xhosa people in the house, so there was always … tension.
>
> R: Oh. How did you sort it out? When you've got your friends – you and your sister have got your friends here, your other siblings have got their friends – their coloured friends – how did you sort it out? How did you finally manage to deal with it?
>
> Mrs. Daniels: They used to pass ... remarks, but we just ignore them.
>
> R: Who would pass remarks – the friends or …
>
> Mrs. Daniels: My brothers and my sisters – and their friends.

R: What kind of remarks, for instance?

Mrs. Daniels: … *Julle moet nie die swaart mense hier bring nie. Julle moet nie die swaart taal hier kom praat nie. Dis bruin mense se plek hierso* (You should not bring black people here. You should not speak a black language here. This is a coloured people's place)

The 'race-based' antagonism in this family was brought to bear most particularly upon the mother's death. As discussed in the previous chapter regarding instances when death has occurred, in the normal course of events family members would be expected to mourn the loss of a parent together. In this case again, one of the siblings stayed away from the proceedings although she was still part of the household. Her reason for this was that there were too many black people at her mother's funeral. Her action (as discussed previously) resonates with the performance of colouredness through the abjection of black Africanness, in that it seems she felt the need to distance herself from 'black people' lest her racial identity be 'tainted' by this association. Her need to perform her colouredness weighed more than the need of the family to pull together beyond racial identifications. In this process, she seems to have asserted herself as unrelated even to her own parent, whom Mrs. Daniels explained was a Xhosa woman, married to a coloured man. This is how she described the incident:

Mrs. Daniels: Ja. Let me tell you something about my sister - she's now staying at Gugulethu. When my mother died … my mother … it took … from here to Gugulethu,

but she didn't go with the funeral because … she was ashamed of the coloured people, because there were a lot of Xhosa people …

R: So … she stayed at home, instead of going with the procession to the graveyard?

Mrs. Daniels: Ja … she did. She didn't go to the graveyard … (R: Did she say … say that?) We knew that she was ashamed, because there was (sic) lots of Xhosa people.

Her sister seems to have heeded the comments of fellow coloured people who said amongst themselves: '*Het julle gesien, daar was klomp kaffirs* (Did you see there were a lot of black Africans?)'. Implied in these comments is that it was scandalous that black people attended a funeral at a coloured household, and more of a scandal for those coloured people to have allowed this.

Intergenerational burdens

In another instance, the death of a family member did manage to bring the family together, even though during the life-time of the person who had died there was little sense that she was family at all. Even then, the family cracks caused by an extended period of family strife along 'racial' lines found a way of appearing. In a context where other family members wanted to show that the family was united, the participant, Ms. McCarthy refused to play along, feeling that it would render her a hypocrite, given that her grandmother had never been a grandmother in the way that she had wished for her to be:

Ms. McCarthy: …and we used to see her walk past us and we would say 'oh there's your mother going', but that's just mother's mother, that's it, you know, biological mother. We used to visit her sometimes, sometimes although she is down the street, but we knew it, we knew that the relationship wasn't good. And I know that when she died and it was her funeral, my mother's brother was like quite upset because he wanted us to be … he wanted me in particular to be a pallbearer, I refused to be a pallbearer (laughs).

R: Why did you refuse?

Ms. McCarthy: Because I didn't want to put up a show there at the funeral man.

R: Why would it be a show?

Ms. McCarthy: What I … the relationship … she was never a grandmother to me, never a grandmother to me. She was just another woman that stayed down the road. That was the relationship. I mean I don't remember seeing her at birthdays or family gatherings.

To provide a background for how this relationship between the grandmother who had passed away and Ms. McCarthy came to be the way it was, it is important to record that the great-grandmother had stated that she was not prepared to bring up 'kaffir children'. I return to the relationship between the grandmother and the participant's mother shortly. Here it is important that I give a description of how the participant experienced herself, given her own physical features and the comments these were attracting from the outside, (e.g. at school). She stated that during her primary school years, other children tended to

exclude her from group activities and called her ‘kaffir’. She said that as a child she could not understand this, but she used to get home and cry. She also stated that she found it difficult to tell her parents about this, because to her it felt like it was a huge thing which she could be blamed for. It is possible to see this from the vantage point of the innocence of childhood, with the associated inability to grasp the full extent of what it meant for one to be called kaffir. Alternatively, it is also possible to see this process as indicating that even at a young age, being called a ‘kaffir’ evoked so much shame that it had to be kept away even from one’s own parents. Where the parent’s protective intervention would have been what is expected, in this case it seems the parent-child relationship did not provide adequate safety for the child to show her vulnerability, which is entailed in that she had been labeled a ‘kaffir’ – implying that she had been found to be lacking colouredness by other coloured people. As an adult she reflects on this and says:

> Well, I wasn’t picked (for play time activities) because I was dark skinned and my hair was *kroes* (laughs). And I think that was … that was the only reason why. I can’t think of any other reason why.

It would seem that the tendency to exclude her on this basis did not end during her school years. It continued beyond that point, and extended into her family as well. She stated that when her maternal grandmother died, and when she refused to be a pallbearer, she was pregnant with her own child. Given that she was already an adult when her grandmother passed away, this suggests that up to that point, she still felt and responded to the rejection as a grandchild.

A further incident of familial difference where the parent evinced a painfully racist attitude towards her own child who in turn evinced racism towards her father is illustrated by a triangular relationship that one of the participants, Mrs. McCarthy, referred to. The potency of this rejection once again is aggravated by its occurrence in a context where familial benevolence is expected. Mrs. McCarthy had her early encounter with racism during her pre-school years. At the age of two, her own maternal grandmother had traveled from another town to see her daughter, and to fetch the grandchildren, lifting from the shoulders of her daughter the burden of mothering while she was struggling to find work in the city. It would appear that the grandmother did not anticipate that her daughter was involved with a 'black man'. The participant states that her grandmother was proud that her daughter had found an Irish man, who gave her two 'white children' (Mrs. McCarthy was the third child and fathered by a black African out of wedlock). This is the description that she provides of her experience when her grandmother arrived:

> So when my Granny came, my Granny was really shocked to see my mother living with this black man ... Then when my father … she … my granny came to fetch the children, now I don't know whether she came for a holiday whatever. She was so shocked to see me now, with these other two siblings of mine. She was apparently very proud of my mother, having this white husband and these white children. So she said no, I'm … I'll take these two, but I'm not prepared to take this 'kaffir' child. And my father … she told my father that you know, "I am not going to take your 'kaffir' child". So my father decided that is … he broke up with my mother. And he left my mother and he left with me. And I was … I think I was two years old that's what he told me, two years old. And he said to my mother, my mother will never see me again.

The above suggests that where race is privileged in defining relationships, the strength of kinship is weakened if one fails to meet certain racial expectations. In this case, it seems the characteristics of some children were superseded by the fact that their father was a white Irish man and others by the fact of their black parenting. For the grandmother from whom one would expect a personal interest, her grandchildren's value lay in their racialized appearance rather than being intrinsic to their individual beings. The over-emphasis on racialized appearance is even more apparent in this case in that Mrs. McCarthy described this Irish man as abusive, a drunkard who could not look after his family. Her mother and father met because her mother, who was married to the Irishman, had to perform laundry services for other people, including Mrs. McCarthy's father, so as to make some money to look after the children and herself. All of these features of the marital relationship, which one would expect would cause disfavour within the extended family, were downplayed against the importance of the perceived whiteness of the Irishman, and the race of the privileged children. In essence, the negative characteristics of this man and the failure of this nuclear family do not illuminate the goodness of the black African man that Mrs. McCarthy's mother had become involved with. His goodness can be seen in that he was taking care of his own child and the two other children fathered by the Irishman. However, on the basis of his race, and therewith, the race of his child, the grandmother denounced both of them as a son-in-law and a grandchild respectively. This also suggests that in this case, goodness could not be recognized when it was 'raced' wrongly, nor could badness be associated with the preferred race.

The psychic mechanism of splitting can be used to explain some of the sense suggested by Mrs. McCarthy's mother and her refusal to take her 'black' grandchild along. It seems she could not reconcile the pride that she experienced at her daughter's ability to become involved with a white man with the apparent shame that was evoked by the same daughter's involvement with a black African man. It also seems she was not aware of her daughter's involvement with this black African man until she arrived in Cape Town. According to St. Clair,

> … splitting is related to processes that allow the infant to let in as much of the environment as she [sic] can manage, without the whole undigestible experience. Thus early splitting refers to the maturational inability to synthesize incompatible experiences into a whole (p. 9)

The grandmother's first encounter with the fact that her daughter was involved with a black African man and that this couple had a child together evoked a defensive reaction on her part. The specific form that this defensive splitting takes reflects its embeddedness in a racist society that values whiteness at the expense of black Africanness. Like in Mr. Sebenza's case discussed earlier, the grandmother as a racist racial subject denounces her familial relationship to a grand-daughter because this granddaughter was black African, which would lead to ego-dystonic experiences of herself and her family as coloured identified.

'Sins' of the parents

For Mrs. McCarthy's family, her grandmother's decision to discriminate against her on the basis of race set the tone both for the relationship between the child and the grandmother, as well as the mother and the child. The excerpt discussed above indicates the father's intention not to allow his child to have contact with people for whom he and his child were unacceptable by virtue of their race. Because of these developments, Mrs. McCarthy had to grow up without contact with her mother, until at a much later stage, where in re-connecting with her mother she denounced her father, only to be rejected again by her mother, because of her perceived race. About her own desire to re-join her mother and the subsequent rejection that she experienced, she says:

> Mrs. McCarthy: She lived in Westlake, it used to be called … I can't remember what it was called but I remember it was in Westlake, my mother lived there, in that area. So my mother lived there and for the first time I was with my mother now. But my mother had a colored husband and I felt after a while that she didn't accept me. I was really disappointed.
>
> R: That she didn't?
>
> Mrs. McCarthy: My mother didn't accept me (R: Ok), because we were strangers. My father had raised me and I was raised in a different way and I think my mother was a racist as well. My mother was sort of embarrassed to tell them who I am, because she had never told anybody about me. And when I turned up she was angry with my sister for bringing … I didn't know that at that time, but my sister told me afterwards. My mother

> was really angry that she had brought me, to see her and that I stayed there … my mother was embarrassed because she had to explain to people who I am and who is my father.

This is a further indication that the parent-child relationship too is vulnerable to the destructive force of racial identification. In this instance specifically, the allure of coloured identity, and the disdain against being identified as associated with black Africans proved too overwhelming for the mother to respond to the longing of her own child, from whom she separated when the child was still a toddler. Unlike in the other case where the performance of a coloured identity compelled the father to frustrate efforts of a daughter to contact him (Mr. Paulse's grandfather), in this case the mother rejects her daughter after the contact had already been established, and after the daughter had moved to live with the mother.

Similarly, the apparent allure of coloured identity and the wish to abject association with black Africanness did not spare the daughter-father relationship. What is of major significance for this project is the fact that in each case, the one that perceives himself/herself as having a better chance of claiming colouredness is the one that abjects association with black Africanness. So, as the interchange below illustrates, it is Mrs. McCarthy (the daughter) who accepts the responsibility for having damaged the relationship with the father, primarily because of his perceived black African identity:

> Mrs. McCarthy: Because I think with my father taking me at that time, I realized because then I met my mother, I forgot to say that, when I was in standard eight, I think that broke also my relationship with my father … I met my mother. And I think that was a bad time

> for me to have met my mother because then I actually became rebellious towards my father.
>
> R: Was it because of any reason?
>
> Mrs. McCarthy: I think it is because he was an African; he was 'kaffir', as they were called that time, and I thought I had no relationship with my mother. And why did he do … I became very rebellious towards my father. That was also another reason.

For the second time this man is rejected by a close family member because of his perceived racial identity. The description that the participant provides of the kind of person he was, and how he had prioritized her over everyone else during the time that he was bringing her up on his own from the age of two, only provides testimony that there was little ground on which to base the rejection that he suffered, first from his partner's mother, and then from his daughter. According to Mrs. McCarthy, this is a man who had chosen his own daughter even above a later partner who disliked this child:

> … but my father also split up with this woman because this woman, eh she didn't … somehow she didn't like me. Because my father was actually very close to me, she didn't like me.

Another participant (Mr. Lenniz) had a similar experience to Mrs. McCarthy's father. First he was rejected by the parents of his partner, when they realized that he had made their daughter pregnant. Second, he was also rejected by his own daughter, simply

because he was perceived to have a black African racial identity. The severity of the action that they took just to make sure that their daughter did not marry a black African man is striking. In the first instance, he was rejected by the girl's parents after they had encouraged the friendship between the two, and actually accommodated Mr. Lenniz at their home. He described the reaction to the pregnancy in the following way:

> Ok she was pregnant, ehhm they discovered. And then they went to the police, and they first wanted to say, look this guy raped her, but look I was still under age, she was under age. So the police said look I'm sorry but you can't … you know, you can't convict him for rape, because he is still under age. And then because she was Muslim, ehhm, she had to get married. So she was still pregnant at that time, and they found a boy for her, just all out of the blue. Look it was shock therapy for me when I was sixteen. So out of the blue she got married and the next thing …I was look, I was … because I had coarse hair. So it was the acknowledgment that you are black, you know my hair. So the mother was Muslim, was very hair-conscious 'a kaffir, kaffir', she kept on reiterating, 'how can you be pregnant by a kaffir'? But anyway look she was … she was still pregnant and then immediately they arranged for her to get married. And I needed to get out of the way, ok. So anyway I got out of the way.

This reaction to discovering the pregnancy is significant for this chapter because at the same time that it criminalizes Mr. Lenniz it also denies his relationship to the pregnant mother and the unborn child. If this relationship is acknowledged, it can only be through the criminalization of the black African, since no such relationship is conceivable between black Africans and coloured persons. Religious prescriptions and cultural

expectations are implicated in the decision to marry off the young girl, but the racist connotations of this response are unmistakable in the quote above, and in Mr. Lenniz' words:

> So when she was pregnant, the mother's disgust wasn't the fact that I impregnated her. The disgust was that I was black, you understand? '*Die kaffir, die kaffir'*
> (This 'kaffir', this 'kaffir')*;* because I remember so clearly, it was very hurtful, I was very young when it happened you know. And they chased me out of that house and it was a very violent break up.

What is even more surprising is that following a prolonged lack of contact between Mr. Lenniz and this woman, this child (unborn when the mother was married off) was re-introduced to Mr. Lenniz through a court action which sought to compel him to pay maintenance for the child. In a way there is a sense that this reflected a semblance of acknowledgement of the participant as the father. However, this acknowledgement still came through an initiation that could criminalize him, and it was imbued with conflict and suspicion.

> Mr. Lenniz: This was during the court case man, because you see, she said '*ons moet die kaffir in die tronk sit (*We should put the kaffir in jail*)*' you see, so the determination wasn't against … (R: That's what she said). Yes, ja, so the determination for them wasn't to get money, the determination was to get me to Pollsmor, you understand? (R: Mhh). So they were more desperate to get me in Pollsmor prison, than to get a fifty rand, you understand? They didn't want my money per se, you understand? They just wanted to

> hurt me because she (the daughter) was feeling hurt. So for them … for me to be in prison was like a trophy to them, you understand? And when I realized all that, I didn't want … with my daughter, to fight anger with anger, you understand? So although she was going through all this saying '*ons sit die kaffir… die kaffir-moffie* …(we put the 'kaffir' … the 'kaffir' faggot …)' is what my daughter refers to me, you know, because look my daughter she … by now she knows I'm gay, you know. So she said '*ons sit die kaffir-moffie in die tronk in*' (we put this black faggot in prison).

The blood ties that defined the relationship between Mr. Lenniz and his daughter were polluted by the fact that he was black African in the first instance. Secondly, it is possible that the fact that he was gay too had compounded the negative feelings that the child and her family evinced towards him. I discuss the overlap between sexuality and being perceived as black African in coloured communities in Chapter 6. At this point, suffice to say that the quote below suggests that sexual preference on its own, without the complicating factor of black Africanness in a coloured community and in a context where racial identity was privileged, would evoke less damage and hostility in a parent-child relationship. This quote shows that the most important determinant of this child's acceptance or rejection of a relationship with her father was his perceived racial identity. The fact that Mr. Lenniz' mother was coloured rendered her more acceptable, because from that, and not the perceived black Africanness of her father, Mr. Lenniz' daughter derived her coloured racial identity.

> I think what would have happened, because look she (Mr. Lenniz' daughter) is very open to my mother, you understand? That confirms to me that … because my mother is

> coloured, after the litigation proceedings and everything, for her, the confirmation that she is colored is my mother, do you understand, and that is her grandmother.

Although this is a child's perception with all the adherent lack of experience and depth of understanding, it is a warped perception of family relationships, to say the least. In spite of it being the perception of a child, it also illustrates how racist thinking in families misshapes relationship ties. According to this way of thinking, it is possible to pick and choose who one is related to in a family, and it is also possible to skip a generation, and declare a relationship with an earlier generation to the exclusion of the immediate one, all of these in the service of the intent not to be identified as, or related to, a black African.

Intra-familial struggles with black Africanness

At the time that I interviewed Mr. Lenniz, he described his life as isolated, following a long history of strife in his own family. It is true that the way in which family dynamics manifest are multiple and intricate, and that it would be close to impossible to isolate family perceptions of race as being responsible for the way things turned out in this family. Having said that, it is also impossible to ignore how at least in Mr. Lenniz' eyes, his embrace of the black African racial identity worsened a relationship that had been difficult in the first place. Describing this relationship, he says:

> I've always been the one who … because look I mean I realized the conflict between my mother and I when I was extremely young. So, there's always been a love-hate relationship between the two of us.

However as an adult and following a long period of separation between his parents Mr. Lenniz reached back to his father, who at that point was not part of that family, and who represented the only link (read plausible evidence) that this family had with black Africans. This development as part of his need to belong seems to have impacted negatively on how his mother related to him specifically. It brought to bear how she felt about black Africans, a generalization that emanated from her own personal experience with a specific individual black African. This is how Mr. Lenniz described the impact:

> Yes, I think for my mother it was important to disassociate herself with black people. And the fact that I went to Maputo and I came back … I kind of reiterated or re-affirmed my father's lifestyle in her life. I think that was the … that disturbed my mother a lot.

Mr. Lenniz' decision to re-establish contact with his father who lived in Maputo seems to have disturbed his mother's and the whole family's security in claiming coloured identity that is not complicated by the presence of a black African parent. In essence, this family had purged itself of any direct relation with black Africanness, even though the mother at least, knew of its existence. In the next quote, the generalization which fits into the racist stereotypes of the time, which held that black Africans were not to be trusted, comes into play. Coming across a critical emotional encounter with a person of another race seems to provide a shortcut to these stereotypes as people try to make sense of it all:

> Mr. Lenniz: I think largely. I think for my mother – she completely disassociated herself from that hurt. She turned to religion, because of the negative … perceived negative aspects of so-called black people.

What is apparent from this is the tendency to make racial attributions where alternative explanations could have clearly been equally plausible. It was apparent that Mr. Lenniz' mother had painful memories of her relationship with Mr. Lenniz' father. Alongside the racial attributions that she makes is the apparent desire to rid herself of associations with black Africans, even if this desire flew in the face of expectations regarding families, such as the significance of parent child-relationships as well as the significance of the relationship between siblings. Perceived racial identity, especially if this is black African in a context where coloured identity is preferred, seems to cause fissures within relationships which even the appeal to family ties fails to remove or prevent.

White associations

It was in the nature of the hierarchical racial classification system of South Africa that those racial identities associated with classifications that were lower on the hierarchy were denounced in favour of identifying higher up in the system if an opportunity presented itself or was found. The focus of this chapter so far has been the on the

anomaly that even family ties fail to prevent the tendency to 'other' those who are perceived to be too close to lower racial identities on this classification hierarchy, be it through association or physical appearance. I have explored how the pursuit of coloured identity within the family strained relationships along 'racial' lines. Similarly, relationships can be strained in a coloured family where other members find a way to associate with whiteness. Another participant (Ms. Jameson) described how she often overheard conversations about a family member who had become romantically involved with a white person and who as a result was perceived to be shunning coloured relatives while she was growing up. More importantly, she described how this occurred in her own family, saying that due to the fact that her Scottish grandfather married a dark woman, he lost connection with the rest of his family. She says:

> My dad – my grandfather – some of these, my grandfather is 88 from Scotland and that kind of stuff; now he married my grandmother, who came from the East … her family of origin is in the East, they were sold as slaves here (R: Ok) … slaves both. And so he married this dark woman, and he lost ties with them. So there's family that I have – out there – that I have never seen in my life, but because of the choices my own grandfather made, to marry this woman. And … so … ja, we …we …we … there's family out there. Even from my mother's side. Um … we've met uncles through the telephone directory – my mother's surname was Roux. And there were six Roux in the Cape, and … only two of them married coloured women. And … so we know that there's lots – the families somewhere around with the surname of Roux. But … we don't know them.

This quote suggests that the tendency to dissociate with the lower racial rank where possible occurred throughout the hierarchy, with white families also engaging in this behaviour when one of their own became involved with anyone other than a visibly white person. In the case of her maternal uncles, Ms. Jameson suggests that their marrying white women led them to disassociate from darker members of the family, including her mother whose marriage to a white man seemed to have discredited him and his new family in the white community. This point became clearer when she described what she anticipated might happen if she attempted to contact the other family members who had become disassociated from the rest of the family due to racial identification:

> Well, you know I suppose it's easy to sit here. To do that, particularly because we would then be rejected … so I'm not going to go in search of anybody who rejected us. Um … because I don't know what they would have to offer me – you know what I'm saying … staying where we were – or staying where we are, without knowing them doesn't make a big difference in our lives, because if I go back to when we were kids, … if then they weren't able to engage and be part of … us, as a black family, now, and we grew up knowing that there are people who have … who think it's not very nice to be part of us – or known or seen in the neighbourhood … then it's not an issue for me, whether I go there or not.

This is not a typical family set up, but it reflects the complexities regarding the impact of racial identification on, or the desire for a given identification through, the family. Although it does not implicate the black African racial classification directly, it shows how important it was for members of the maternal and paternal families to draw lines

according to the perceived racial closeness either to white racial identity or to black Africans. These are lines that seem to have persisted across a number of generations, and have created imponderables for members of these families who are still alive. At the same time, there is an acknowledgement that there are members of the extended family out there, in a sense an identification with these; but also a dis-identification with them because of the burden of racial decisions made by their predecessors. As such, these processes illuminate the dynamics of the family, and for the purposes of this chapter, these are dynamics that are informed by racial thinking and the abjection of the racial identity which is perceived to be lower on the racial hierarchy, than the desired one.

For some white people like the late Marike de Klerk, coloured people are 'leftovers' (*Sunday Tribune* 05 February,1983), implying that - at least for some white people - they are people who lack dignity, and who are below that which whites should associate with. In this case the defensive pride that seems to underlie the lack of preparedness to engage which those who are perceived to have been the rejectors seems to be reflecting the apparent ascent of black African racial identity following political changes that culminated with the democratic elections of 1994. In terms of these changes, white racial identities and the idea of the supremacy of the white race are not propped up by barring 'non-whites' from accessing resources any more. The way in which other racial identities were conceptualized and (de)valued has been destabilized as apartheid crumbled and the idea of a non-racist order took over. One participant, Ms Russels, states the following in this regard:

> Ja … one of the things that I always used to tell myself is that 'thank God I don't have to socialize with white people to achieve something in life, or make me a better person, or make me reach more better things'. I've always had that thing that … some people try and suck up and try and live like white people – aspire to that. I mean you'll always find a situation whereby some people would comment 'oh my child or something has these white friends etc', I have never had to do that. I mean I don't have to socialize with white people to be able to go to restaurants or be able to be seen or be taken around to places where I may not have been privileged enough to go to.

What is concealed in this statement is how in the past associating with white people facilitated access to the very same things that are now open to everyone, and where access is not regulated according to one's racial identity anymore. I look at this idea, and especially at the personal implications raised in this quote more closely in Chapter 7, which deals with subjective transformation. At this point, suffice to quote what the same participant said after a long period of feeling 'not beautiful enough' mainly because she perceived herself to have 'black' physical features:

> Ms. Russels: So, I always felt like the ugly little duckling because my hair wasn't completely straight, and I had like very black features, you know, in terms of not very straight nose, and kind of very typically Khoi-San features.
>
> R: So you feel that you had typically Khoi-San features?

> Ms. Russels: Ja, at the time, because it was always like I always had to struggle with sorting out my hair. So I felt quite the odd one out, big butt, although it's very fashionable now (both laugh). Now I look highly fashionable.

The discussion so far seems to suggest that there was nothing that could and did attract coloured, white and Asian people to black Africans who occupied the lowest rank on the racist racial hierarchy during the apartheid years. However, this would be an oversimplified presentation of choices that people made and their motivations. Human behaviour is extremely complex, and in a poorly defensible racist system like that of apartheid South Africa, it is more than likely that there would be exceptions, where people's personal choices did not conform to racist expectations. For instance, another participant (Mrs. Muizen) reported that her father, who was racially identified as white, married a coloured woman, and subsequently identified as coloured. In doing this, he sacrificed the privileges that his racial identity could have afforded him:

> Mrs. Muizen: Because I will tell you why, eh eh because he was … we were living in at the …time, they were moved from Cape Town, to a coloured area set-up called Steenberg (R: Steenberg) Ja ... right, and he would then …where it was said that he was coloured but on the white side, he would choose to go to the coloured side.

Although this does not necessarily suggest that Mrs. Muizen's father wanted to be coloured, it does illustrate one person's refusal to be complicit with what he believed did not make sense, at least to him. She described him as a person for whom skin colour, and

consequently, racial identity, did not matter. What makes this even more significant as a principle for this man is that it seems he refused to take on the white identity and the privilege that accrued to it even in the face of enticements by government officials that he could identify as white with all of his new family. This also illustrates one of the weaknesses of the racial classification system at the time. The decision to classify was left in the hands of race inspectors, whom Venter (1974) describes as having had no qualification or training to perform this duty. More importantly, their decisions were susceptible to bias in a context where there were no clear criteria set for their decisions. The workings of the racial inspectors always portray the funny moments in the machinery of the racist system of the past as the quote below suggests. In this quote, Mrs. Muizen reported that at some point her father got so sick that he could not work anymore. On going to the welfare offices to apply for a state pension (as this was available to coloured people as well as white people at the time, and not to black Africans) this is a description of what happened:

> Mrs. Muizen: Then if there is Afrikaaner women, I mean you know eh eh, that freckled, blond, eh … looking at her (participant's sister) you'd say that she's white, ok. So eh they said to my dad eh, they asked him now about his family. I mean he said he is married to a coloured woman (she laughs) …A white man married to a coloured woman you know, applying for a state pension! And they also gave him a letter to take home, so that he could come home and have all of us reclassified white. So that's … 'Why should we live like coloured people, you know. We shouldn't live like coloured people because look at your kids, my goodness they are white. So come to the white side'. And then we made a hell of a fight with them (government officials) that day, I can't remember what

> transpired, but of course, it never happened because we said simply ‘no way’. How could you be ashamed of who you are? You know that …you cannot be ashamed of who you are ... We said ‘like bloody hell!’

Frivolous as the activities of government officials might seem, they carried serious implications for people’s lives, more so because they determined one’s access or lack thereof to resources and social liberties. Those white people who resisted the system as it were, had to live with the knowledge that they were excluding themselves and their families, especially their children, from the privileges that they could claim without any difficulty. It meant going against the flow, in that what was apparent were people aspiring to ‘ascend’ the racial ladder, or at least to approximate what was associated with ‘races’ that were perceived to be higher up the racial hierarchy.

Conclusion

The discussion above illustrates some of the dynamics that arise out of family situations that have been constructed with racially influenced considerations in mind. Considered the oldest social institution, the family has always evoked romanticized associations, such as the belief that the family ‘continues to associate itself with love and intimacy, reproduction and child socialization, and the satisfaction of primary group needs …’ (Kephart & Jedlicka, 1988, p. 3). May (1954), writing about the family in the post World War era, describes how the world was characterized by uncertainties and how in this context the home offered ‘a secure private nest removed from the dangers of the outside world’. At the same time, May also refers to the ambivalence of this context, positing that

the family was at the same time showing vulnerabilities against which it needed protection particularly from the intrusions of the outside world. It is especially such vulnerabilities that this chapter has tried to illuminate, revealing the susceptibility of the family and its members to 'external' social insults, and subverting the idea of the sanctity of the family.

To state this in another way, this chapter has also shown that race and racism is not something that is out there, that once the doors of the family home are closed, is then kept outside of the family. It 'lives' as much within and between families, and within and between individuals. Its violence is as much a part of the family as it is a part of the general society. Racist thinking wreaks havoc at the intrapersonal level as well, which reminds us of Hunt's take on Freud's idea of the 'biological fable' in the development of the child. According to this, a child invents and conceives this fable expressly 'to explain being wrongly born, badly off, and badly loved' (Verges, 1999). The main difference between this notion and the intrapersonal dramatics of race discussed above is that the former is a normal transient task of development, whereas essentialist racist thinking about self counters psychological health, and hinders personal development. The next two chapters will focus on the changeability of racial conceptions and the fluidity of race and its role in the formation of identity, as well as the overlap between the abstractions of race and sexuality as dimensions of identity.

CHAPTER 5: COLOURED CHILDHOOD

Introduction

In the last two chapters I looked at how racial and racist thinking played itself out in lived experiences of being coloured. I tried to show how this specific way of relating to and conceptualizing black Africanness forms part of certain coloured identities, in certain specific contexts. Although my approach in those chapters was to look at the general life-stories of the individuals I have referred to, the focus was on their adult lives, and how they were impacted upon by the socio-political realities of the time that they have lived through. I also looked at how given those social realities the concerned individuals managed to construct and negotiate personal identities that reflected traces of their specific historical periods. For instance, in contrast to the statement that is often made in coloured communities that before the onset of political changes in this country they were regarded as not white enough to benefit from the resources that white people could access, and that post the political transformation they are now not black enough to benefit from the redressive measures meant for those who were disadvantaged, it is a fact that *being* 'not black' invariably meant being relatively advantaged over the black majority (in terms of access to social welfare, general infrastructure, educational provisions, jobs etc), more so in the Western Cape than in other parts of the country. As such, the previous chapters have drawn attention to the practicalities and peculiarities of living through this consideration – not passively, but actively constructing coloured identities through complicity, amongst other things.

In this chapter, I look specifically at instances when the participants reflect on their childhoods, and explore how those childhood experiences might have impacted on how they experience themselves today. Where such experiences and their effects have not been made explicit in the data, I draw these out and make inferences about the potential effects. In that sense, I explore the historicization of coloured identities, manipulated childhoods, childhood encounters with blackness, the privilege of a coloured name, the black parent and the absence of black children in coloured childhoods. Where applicable, I use relevant literature to interrogate some of the ideas that emerge in this exploration.

Coloured identities and their selective historicities

One of the most striking effects of households where the coloured 'race' became privileged and sought after in processes of self-understanding is exemplified by Mrs. Tate. Her experience suggests that there are aspects of her self-understanding and her self-knowledge that have been compromised by gaps regarding the information that she has about herself and her family. In particular, Mrs.Tate laments the paucity of information regarding her father and his family. In line with those societies (and communities) which accent patrilineal descent, she seems to hold the view that it is getting to know her father that would help her understand herself, or in essence, that will 'give' her an identity. The quote from the interview below portrays one of the instances during an interview with her, where her quest for some contact with or information regarding her father or his people is reflected at its most potent:

Mrs. Tate: I do sometimes feel that … she doesn't want to tell me the truth, or maybe she is afraid of something, or I'll do something or say something (R: Like what?) Arrgh I don't know, I'm just thinking, or … I don't know.

R: But you do have the wish to know who your father was and what happened to him.

Mrs. Tate: Mhh, what happened and where … if he is still alive, where is he. I just want to know, you know.

R: You said that you don't remember your father's surname, (P: No.) from that side and your …

Mrs. Tate: … I don't know if it was Africa … I don't know. That's why I say my mother doesn't tell me really what … you know, if it's Africa or … I don't know. I'm just in the middle of nowhere.

It would seem, at least from Mrs. Tate's perspective, that her mother does have information which could help her fill this gap, and she perceives her mother as withholding this information. I have referred to how in some coloured families information about the family lineage that could potentially establish the link between the specific coloured family and black Africans is withheld. Field refers to this in his discussion of a research project carried out with coloured residents of Windermere. More specifically he posits that "the silences within the popular memory of coloured communities need to be carefully analyzed and not simply labeled as 'amnesia', which is a way of pathologizing and stereotyping the coloured communities" (In Erasmus (ed.),

2001, p. 98). I would concur with this position insofar as it points to the complex reasons why the 'withholding' of information that I have referred to in this case occur. I agree with Field that such silences or what I have referred to as the 'withholding of information or selective historicity of coloured identities' are created by emotional legacies such as traumatic or painful events experienced by oppressed individuals and groups under the apartheid state. However, in support of this, Field seems to take a statement that was made regarding a very specific occurrence (i.e. the aftermath of the 1994 national elections, where the majority of coloured people voted for the National Party, in an attempt to keep what was perceived to be a black African political movement away from power over coloured people), and he uses this to make a sweeping statement that exonerates coloured people of racism. In fact, both Rasool (in James, Caliguire & Cullinan, 1996), the provincial leader of the African National Congress in the Western Cape, and James (also in James et al., 1996) do not exonerate coloured people from racism. Instead they assert that the burden of being racist is carried equally by everyone else, and coloured people are not, and should not be singled out as being racist against black Africans. In itself, this is a problematic statement which would require a different context to engage.

For the case at hand, it seems one of the reasons why Mrs. Tate's mother seemed reticent about the information regarding Mrs. Tate's paternal family is that there was a strong connection that had been established with coloured identity (e.g., speaking the predominant language in coloured communities, marrying and changing names to coloured names, living in a coloured residential area, etc.). Another point that I have

discussed at length in a previous chapter on the complicity of coloured people with racism against black Africans is that a performance of coloured identity required the maintenance of a distance from black Africans. For Mrs. Tate, who is a grown up woman, this idea is pertinent for this chapter in that since her childhood, this is something that she never got adequate information about; and at the time of the interview, she still felt that the way her mother, an elderly woman, related to her, showed signs of being 'fixated' at a stage where as a parent she had to look after the well being of her 'little' daughter. The concept of fixation has a very specific meaning in Freud's theory of psychosexual development. It points to a developmental failure (or disruption) and therewith the emission of stage-inappropriate behaviour (or qualities). It is the latter part hereof that I find particularly compelling in this case. The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (1995, p. 290) describes fixation (specifying this as affective fixation) as the kind of arrested development which could produce an inability to form normal, mature relationships. I contend that undue anxiety about revealing information on Mrs. Tate's mother's part fails to recognize Mrs. Tate as an adult who, given her expressed need to know this, hardly needed the infantilizing motherly protection that it seemed her mother gave her. Arguably, this protection is also unnecessary given the transformation that has taken place in South Africa, more specifically regarding legislated racism. Human dignity and access to resources (material and otherwise) does not depend on being 'non-black' any more. The quote below illustrates Mrs. Tate's perception of how her mother related (and still relates) to her:

> Mrs. Tate: She doesn't come out with her whole story. What I can see is that she doesn't want me to contact … (R: Mmm), but why, I don't know. But I said I'm still going to –

even if it can take how many years, I'm still going to find out about my father (R: Mmm) – because I want to know, maybe something I want to know about my father, or, you know, things like that – you know, things like that (pause). *The things I want to find out about my father, is that I want to know what I am*, and why this, you know, why things happened like this, and – you know, I want to know. Even though maybe he's dead, or so, but I still want to get in contact with my father's people (R: Ok) … but it seems to me that my mother doesn't want …

R: And tell me – look, I mean … you feel that you want to know what you are … can you say a little more about that? What do you mean when you say you still need to find out who you are, or what you are?

Mrs. Tate: Well, I still want to find out, what happened, and who am I, and you know, my father's religion, or something, or what race he was. She only tells me … but it seems to me my mother doesn't know, she's just guessing, that's all, she's just trying, like now she's still … like you know, controlling me. You know, I can say that I'm still like a big person, you know, like somebody can do my own things and you know, she's still like holding on. Like a child – I'm still like a child for her; she still controls me: "Don't do this, don't do that; do this and do that" you know. I mean, I feel I've had it now (R: You've had it now?) I've had it now (R: Ok). I mean I … I do understand, I'm the only child, you know, is it maybe that? Or what is it? I don't know.

In the face of such a strong need to know, the interchange above clarifies that at the very least, what Mrs. Tate feels is that her mother's unwillingness to provide her with the information she needed, is out of tune with the expressed need. Of particular interest for

this study is the fact that Mrs. Tate suggests that her mother does not know the 'race' of the man that fathered Mrs. Tate. In a context (I use context as it references time and space) where race was as privileged as it must have been when Mrs. Tate was born, her mother's inability to recall what race her father was resonates with Field's conceptualization of 'silences' which are observed in the life-story narrations of coloured people. Specifically on the point of black and white ancestry, he says "… it [is] common for coloured interviewees to talk about their white ancestry and not to talk about African ancestry. In many cases the forgetting and silences around black African ancestry goes back so many generations that the current generation no longer has memories of this ancestry" (In Erasmus [ed.], 2001, p. 107). Although this is true in many cases, including this one as I will illustrate in a moment, it is also apparent that this would not apply in this case insofar as the parent-child relationship is concerned. It is not about some distant ancestor that Mrs. Tate is inquiring, and it is not from a distant relative that she is making this inquiry. It is an inquiry that involves a child and her parents. Where Field's view holds in this case, is where it seems there is an incomprehensible obsession (not in the pathological sense of psychiatry) with white ancestry. The following example is instructive in this particular case:

> Mrs. Tate: So, I don't know, on my father's side, is it my father or my grandfather, no I think it's my grandfather or something like that was a Dutch (R: On your father's side?) On my father's side, but it's Xhosa people.

In a context where direct information about her father and his family is withheld, it is astounding how such an obscure detail about Mrs. Tate's paternal family is remembered. It is also worth remarking that this is a detail that would not introduce any inconsistency in Mrs. Tate's claim to coloured identity. Similarly, Mrs. Tate suggests that her maternal grandmother was a Griqua as can be seen in the quote below. In essence, these seem to justify her claim to coloured identity, in spite of the contradiction that I will deal with later. The point I wish to emphasize here is the pervasive and active attempt to omit black African ancestry in the information that is passed on from generation to generation, where coloured identity is sought after. In this case, as if it was not sufficient to lay claim on the lineage that is free of 'pure African ancestry' Mrs. Tate also seems to flirt with being 'naturally' coloured. This can be read from her feeling that she always struggled with Setswana and Sesotho (two of the African languages in South Africa). Although this is a lack which she has grown up to regret, it would seem that inability to speak an African language was consistent with a performance of coloured identity in Mrs. Tate's childhood. Proficiency in an African language was one of the criteria through which one's 'kaffirness' or black Africanness was decided and conferred on a person, setting such a person apart from other racial groupings that were relatively higher up on the hierarchized racial system in South Africa.

> Mrs. Tate: No, that was before … she was still with … to my own father. They were not married, they were not married. Let me say, as to speak … when I was young, I was still a little girl my mother took me from Jhb to my auntie in Kimberly. And I went to school there, and then when I was in Std six or seven, or five, round about there, because I couldn't understand, you know it was difficult for me, the languages. From childhood, I

was in Afrikaans, I couldn't speak Tswana or Sotho, I couldn't, I just couldn't – I don't know why. Then I went to the Afrikaans school from childhood, they had to take me over to that school (R: That's in Kimberly?) That's in Kimberley yes, and then she sent me to boarding school, my auntie did sent me to boarding school where her daughter was, at boarding school. She was a teacher there, and they had to take me to boarding school. I remember it's in Maseru, but I can't get to that school's name. (R: So it was in Lesotho – the boarding school?) It was in Lesotho by the boarding school, but it was just … I couldn't get to the languages, it was too difficult for me – I don't know. Because I think it's my grandmother, I don't know, I haven't seen them, that … as they say that she was something like a Griqua or something like that.

R: Your mother's mother?

Mrs. Tate: Ja, it was my mother's mother

As can be seen from this quote, Mrs. Tate avers that it could be her relationship to a grandmother who is a descendant of the Griquas, that is responsible for her lack of proficiency in the languages referred to, which happen to be languages not generally associated with coloured people.

***De*-creaming coloured childhood experiences**

The most common way through which the inter-generational history of families is passed on is by parents to their offspring while bringing up these children, and the silences and omissions in this process do not exempt children's lives from the effects of that which

has been omitted, as can be seen from Mrs. Tate's experiences discussed above. Regarding the context that is central to this project, it seems there were deliberate attempts by parents to '*de*-cream' (or divest of potentially rich or important experiences) childhood of certain aspects which are perceived to threaten the claim, not only of the concerned children, but also the family claim on coloured identity. At this point, I turn to exploring the effects I have referred to above, regarding the 'de-creaming' of childhood off certain experiences, especially where racial identity complications are anticipated. One of the participants, Mr. Paulse reflects on his childhood and his experiences of being parented in this context in the following manner:

> I don't know how to make sense of it at all; I don't know how to ... I don't know where that leaves us. At times I feel like I've been robbed of a side to me that may have enriched me further, at times I don't know whether it would have made a difference, to who and what I am. At times I want to drop a bomb, and find out, try and find out what's happening, especially because my great-grandma is still alive, and she could be a source of that information. But at other times it's just 'leave it, it is not worth it, to explore it, let's just move on'. But I mean for me it's been … from those days to now it's been like, you know, it's been a major transformation, for myself personally, so in going back home now it almost becomes difficult, because you're wanting to make peace with these side but other people are not necessarily ready … to move forward, so you just leave it.

What Mr. Paulse shares in common with Mrs. Tate is the feeling that there is something about their identities that is outstanding and incomplete. It seems this feeling leaves them

in a perpetual state of uncertainty, with Mr. Paulse wondering how his life could have turned out had he been granted access to what he feels is the 'black side' of the family, and Mrs. Tate feeling a fundamental loss of who she is. The imagery that Mr. Paulse uses as can be seen from the quote above suggests that exploring the possibility that the family has links with black Africans bears the potential to be devastating to his family. It is worth explaining further the incident that seems to have stayed in Mr. Paulse's mind, which I have referred to in the previous chapters. He related a childhood memory in regard to an incident which occurred while going through family photos with his great-grandmother. During this intimate family moment, he saw a photo of a black man sitting on a horse, and his inquiry as to who that was met with his great-grandmother's unwillingness to talk about that specific photo, taking it away and declaring that it was not important. It would seem that this family was so determined not to explore this that Mr. Paulse feels enquiring about it could have such destabilizing effects on the family and who the family believes itself to be, as would be seen in contexts where a bomb has exploded (or has been dropped). What is the impact of these 'no-go' areas on processes of identity formation of children in these contexts?

In spite of the uncertainty that one senses in Mr. Paulse's statement quoted above, he goes on to state with more conviction that a childhood sanitized of certain aspects of the family history, which nonetheless continue to make their presence felt in the inevitably widening circles of interaction in the post-1994 period, the inevitable social change, and the role that personal identity plays in those processes of social change and how in turn identity is susceptible to this change – is a childhood robbed:

Mr. Paulse: Well firstly, I might have the Eastern Cape homeland where I've never been ... (They laugh) … I think … actually I think to … to be honest I think it may enrich me more. I think there is so much to learn from … from people, that I think knowing who your family is, where they come from, where they're at. It can't but enrich you. … not that I have experienced the other interaction … the … the meeting of family and ja, it will enrich you, it will make you … I think to an extent a better person, putting the secrets behind, that we were pretending … although all is fine we know all is not fine, but let's just leave it.

R: But what is not fine?

Mr. Paulse: I don't think it's fine to have this kind of secrets. I don't think it is fine to … to lie to people because I think it is based on the fact that the other side of the family is black, and you are ashamed of that side of the family, and so you deny the kids who are now grown ups, the opportunity to make that decision for themselves, as to whether they want to be a part of the other family or not. I think it should be my decision … as painful as it is for the parents involved … I think … I mean how do you build the relationship built on all of those secrets, all of the secrecy?

Elsewhere I refer to the effects of inadequate knowledge on processes of identity formation and performances, the most important of which is the anxiety that tends to underlie interpersonal relations (Kometsi, 2004). What Mr. Paulse refers to here belies the idea that efforts to conceal undesirable information about the family could be fool-proof. The information could remain concealed, and indeed attempts to exhume the

buried aspects of the family history could lead to emotional explosions. However, as in the case of Mr. Paulse's family, there are leakages akin to seeing a photo of an unknown man amongst family photos, which though encountered in childhood, leaves question marks that create indelible uncertainties in the minds of the children, and henceforth a quest to find out, which is submerged under the veil of normalcy, and perceptions that things are fine as Mr. Paulse infers. Faced with unrelenting resistance of parents to provide answers to their questions and to erase the uncertainties, children are rendered powerless in these contexts, and are left to construct their identities with what is made available by their contexts.

Childhood encounters with black Africanness

Another participant, Mrs. Adams, encountered the difference of her family at the age of nine, when fellow coloured people sent her family to a black African residential area called Nyanga. This happened on the occasion when her family was relocating from one area to another. This was an incidence that her protected childhood did not prepare her for, and what came with it is the uncanny of her self-recognition in those that up to that point her family and other coloured people had constructed as the 'other'. The passage below describes the family's arrival in Cape Town that I am referring to. The first point of the quote that follows, is to illustrate firstly a demarcation between the children and their mother, but also a demarcation between this family and the rest of the coloured community as a result of Mrs. Adams' mother. The second point is to illustrate how powerless this parent was against the social (read racial) grouping to which her own

children and as such her family (of procreation) belonged. For Mrs. Adams, this would set the tone for a quest to belong to this group, which quest could only bring about tenuous feelings of belonging:

> When we came to Cape Town in 1960, because we had to move the whole household, so he (father) stayed behind to come with the furniture and all the stuff. And we came by train. They arranged with the church people, that we will be here in town on such and such a day. When we came in Cape Town they met us here, but they took us to Nyanga. 'This black woman with these two colored children' (referring to Mrs. Adams' mother and the children), they took us to Nyanga. So when my father came a few days later it was a big, big issue in church, a big issue because they were supposed to take us to Crawford. But seeing my mother they took us to Nyanga.

Except for the possible bewilderment of the children at this faux pas, Mrs. Adams related the following in regard to her self-recognition in that which in her context up to that point had been constructed as the 'other', when she encountered black African children in Nyanga:

> R: Ok. And if you recall the experience of those few days that you stayed in Nyanga, emm what was happening? You'd wake up in the morning and do what?
>
> Mrs. Adams: Ja, to me it was nice because this kids looked like me (R: ok), although I couldn't relate to them, but it was nice to be amongst children that ... accept me. I could ... I was part of them, although we couldn't relate to each other, but to me we looked alike.

R: Was it different for other sisters?

Mrs. Adams: Ja, ja. They didn't like it at all.

R: Ok.

Mrs. Adams: No, no, they just stayed at home. I remember it was me and my brother that used to go out and play with the other kids it was … yes thinking back we were like them, we fitted there (R: mmm).

It sounds as if at this stage, the physical likeness with black African children created an excitement in Mrs. Adams, an excitement that was based on experiencing an essential alikeness with others. The glee that seems to have characterized the moment when she realized and experienced this alikeness seems akin to a moment when one's alterego needs have been met. According to Wolf (1988) the metaphorical structure called the self, needs to be embedded in a milieu that is experienced as constantly supplying a self-sustaining self-object ambience, to ensure its cohesion, vigor and balance. Alterego needs specifically, refer to 'a need to experience an essential alikeness with the selfobject' (p. 55). Accepting the validity of this theoretical construct, i.e. the self, which can loosely be explained as the psychological centre that gives rise to experience, allows for a description of Mrs. Adams' gleeful experience of the black township. One cannot qualify the extent to which this township or the children that Mrs. Adams encountered served as selfobjects for her. However, it is possible to deduce that from the vantage point of Mrs.

Adams the child, this was an affirming experience in a context where even some of her own siblings failed to meet her needs to experience an essential alikeness with them. Her journey to adulthood complicated the picture, and Mrs. Adams the adolescent had this to say:

> R: Does it mean you would associate or relate to black or white people in different ways?
>
> Mrs. Adams: More to colored and white not to black people.
>
> R: Colored and white ... what do you mean?
>
> Mrs. Adams: I wanted to be with them, I wanted to be part of them.
>
> R: Would you say there was an opportunity to be with black people at all?
>
> Mrs. Adams: Ja, I'm sure, I'm sure because I remember my brother, he did this ballroom, and the lessons they used to take in Langa and I can't ballroom but it's nice for me to see people ballroom. He used to take me with him. Then I just sit there and watch. And if somebody [black African] tries to talk to me, then I'll go back and … I shout man. *Ek wil nie praat nie! (*I don't want to talk!*).*

Years of exposure to that which she perceived as different to her seem to have divested black people of the quality to evoke the cohesion, the vigor, and the balance that are characteristic of having one's alterego needs met. Although it was possible to view her childhood experience of black people (children in Nyanga) as self-objects, the adolescent

we encounter in the quote above wanted nothing to do with black people. Where self-objects refer to objects or people who give rise to the experience of selfhood and/or experiences that maintain such selfhood, it is clear from this quote that associating with black people in any way would lead to a fragmenting (as contrasted to a cohesive) self experience for Mrs. Adams. Another adolescent's (Ms. McCarthy) experiences of looking different to the rest of the coloured children that she had interaction with are similar to the one's that Mrs. Adams had experienced, except in her case we encounter her feeling rejected and excluded by those she believed herself to be part of. Firstly, she describes herself as follows:

> I was the person in class that had like African features, you know. There were kinds of prejudices that I experienced. I remember also I had a new pair of … I got glasses, and the glasses were tinted. And that time, you know tinted glasses, I didn't know I mean the optician asked me do I want 'see-through' glasses or tinted, and I said no I want tinted. And then the tinted ones you know, for the kids that was also a joke because I'm dark skinned, with my hair, and I wear tinted glasses. So when I used to go to school I would put my glasses in my bag, so that when I get to school because of, in the sun it's tinted, but in the class it's 'see-through'. So I would get to class and then I would only put my glasses on when I'm in class, because I know for them it would be a big joke to see this black with the sunglasses. Because that time in amongst coloured communities if you are black you don't need sunglasses. Because, I don't know, it makes your features worse, or something. Now at least I don't wear glasses (laughs).

Then she describes a social event that felt like it had become a norm in her life:

> And then I also … I mean there were class parties that I used to go to, but also because my parents are very religious you know, they don't really allow us to go to like discos. And when I go to class parties, I go to class parties. But I wasn't that keen to go to class parties because I know when dances take place, I wouldn't be asked for a dance, the guys were just … and that time you know, guys must ask you for a dance. But I just knew that a guy would never come up and ask me for a dance. (R: Because?) Because I just don't look like how … like… I just don't look like a girl that a guy in our area would go for.

A rich dark complexioned Ms. McCarthy in her mid-thirties was eloquent about her childhood experiences, and she spoke lovingly about her own daughter who lived with her estranged partner. She described her estranged partner and their daughter as 'fair' with beautiful hair. From the interviews it was not clear as to why her daughter ended up spending more time with her father, but if Mrs. Adams' experience is anything to go by, it would seem it was less complicated when the child appeared in public with a parent whose appearance and complexion approximated that of the child. If one looks at Ms. McCarthy's own experiences at junior school for instance, it is probable that she would not want her own child to suffer discrimination simply because the child's parent is black. Like Mrs. Adams it seems as a parent, she would much rather carry the pain of not being with her daughter than carry the blame for her daughter's pain of exclusion that she herself endured, as in the description below:

> Well, I wasn't picked because I was dark skinned and my hair was kroes (laughs). And I think that was … that was the only reason why. I can't think of any other reason why.

Is it possible that her appearance (pun intended) and a public claim of her place as a mother to her daughter would affect the relationships that her child might have established at school up to that point? Would this destabilize the security of this child's claim to coloured identity, which her father on his own seems to have secured for the child? The interview did not pursue this path, and the strength of this argument is doubtful, but there seems to be compelling evidence from other interviews, where firstly, Mrs. Adams (as illustrated in previous chapters) stated the following:

> Mrs. Adams: Ja, they're totally accepted in the colored community, until, until they are seen with me or with their father. With the father he is too white and I'm too black.
>
> R: What happens when they are seen with you?
>
> Mrs. Adams: Oh *heene!* (gosh!), you see people's attitudes, sometimes they laugh. Jaa, every year, ne, at the end of the year there is a family day at my husband's work. I never go. I never go, because it's better for him, to be with the children, than with me, himself and the children. I never go.
>
> R: Why is it better?
>
> Mrs. Adams: Ooh *gits*! (gosh!) I went once. It ... it is almost people were not enjoying this occasion, 'cause everywhere people were staring at us. The children were much younger than this, they were all still at school. I only had the elder one, that is in matric now, but the two are now grown ups. So even since at school, it didn't change, nothing changed.

R: So isn't it strange then that even when they are seen with their father, you know, the acceptance changes somehow, why? How does it change?

Mrs. NS: It is much better when they are seen with their father, because they're more like him, colored, but he is very fair. So, but with me, oh *gits*! It's different.

The discussion above suggests that children in the contexts which are a focus for this project go through unique experiences of parenting which seem to have been affected by racial considerations. To be more precise, they seem to be robbed of an opportunity to be parented, where their parents' wish to claim coloured identity for their children is fore-grounded (e.g. the apparent obliteration of Mrs. Tate's father in her life).

The privilege of a coloured name

Such anomalies of parenting in the contexts discussed above are exemplified more forcefully in Mr. Paulse's family where it appears a father accepts being regarded as a step-father and defers being a biological parent to someone else whose claim to coloured identity is not as tenuous as his own. In this family, the husband who ends up being absorbed in the coloured family and assuming a coloured identity himself (being colouredified, as suggested in the previous chapters), brings up children who for most of his life regard him as a step-parent. The children use the 'coloured' surname, in spite of the fact that he was married to their mother. Using the mother's surname is a common practice with reconstituted families, except for where the children that the married couple bear together are concerned.

Mr. Paulse describes his own mother's experience, and this somehow suggests that she might have grown up believing herself to be a daughter of a coloured couple, only to realize in adulthood that the black man who got married to her mother (Mr. Paulse's grandmother) was her biological father, and not the stepfather as all the children had always thought.

> Mr. Paulse: Ehm … and even the fact that my mother was my grandfather's biological daughter was kept secret for a long time. Ehm … we all thought … we all grew up thinking that she and my uncle had the same father. And the way we were told was also like very like undercover. My pastor's wife actually told me … when I was already at university, when the truth came out and...
>
> R: The truth about?
>
> Mr. Paulse: My mother's paternity.
>
> R: Your biological mother's?
>
> Mr. Paulse: My biological mother's father. We all grew up thinking that my mother and her brother had the same biological father.
>
> R: Same …grandfather Sebenza?
>
> Mr. Paulse: No, no, no. We knew they were not his biological … we knew that my uncle

> … we thought both of them were not the Sebenza's kids. We thought they were all … my uncles, this father that was identified - we all thought that it was this colored man's kids, both of them.
>
> R: Ok, where was this colored man?
>
> Mr. Paulse: This colored man, this colored man is living in town …

It is not possible to state with any certainty how knowing that this man was her biological father would have affected the parent-child relationship between this man and his daughter, but based on the positive description that Mr. Paulse provides of this man, one would expect that such knowledge could only have improved the quality of this relationship. However, in this context it is not a foregone conclusion that this would necessarily have improved this relationship. Following the argument thus far, this is a context where being coloured identified was valued, and where threats to that identification would be intervened with through means that would increase the security with which claiming coloured identity would be restored. Of essence for this chapter is the fact that this revelation appears to mark a point of rupture between this woman's childhood experiences and those of adulthood. Where coloured identity is prized as described above, a revelation that one has in fact been fathered by a black African is likely to have caused a major emotional injury for her, which in part explains the continued secrecy regarding the suspected black ancestry of this family. Further, as Mr. Paulse says, this is a sensitive subject in his family, and indeed, in the interchange below, he describes the mood in which his mother finally confided in him regarding this.

Following this revelation, it is not clear whether the rightful biological father was acknowledged in any particular way in the end, nor is there an indication that he needed to be acknowledged as such.

> Mr. Paulse: My Pastor … they were not meant to tell me. My grandma felt, well, she did this whole …she is a born again Christian, so both my biological mother and my grandmother and my grandfather they're all born-again Christians. And my Grandmother at the time she couldn't live with the secret, and so it was more a confession to God, and then confessing to my Pastor then. And I think she got him to come and tell me, I don't know. But they felt that they needed to tell us, in telling us they told us that my mom didn't want me to know. 'So I am telling you this because I feel you need to know it …but at the same time remember that they don't know'. So it's almost …putting me in a difficult position. And my mom actually told me … my biological mother. She ended up telling me. But it was …it was a very tearful telling me, because she was dealing with her issues, of not having known who her father was for all these years. And so when she told me, she hadn't dealt with it, so I just left it.
>
> R: And your grandfather – was he still alive at that point…?
>
> Mr. Paulse: He was still alive …
>
> R: … When your mother found out?
>
> Mr. Paulse: Ja, he was still alive, but they have always been close, he's always been close to both of the kids. And … and I think he knew, because he … she always had like a

> special place in his heart. And she was always seen as …at least when it came to him, that she was little …the apple of his eye kind of thing, and so I think he knew. She certainly didn't, and so even when she told me I … on the one hand it was like … you're wanting to delve for more because maybe they told her more, but at the same time she was very emotional and dealing with her own things. So I didn't want to delve into my sense of curiosity. I'm sure there has been opportunities to speak about this again with her, I just left it there, I never spoke about it again, and ja. And then when he became ill and then he just didn't wanna go into that and then he was passing away, and I was like 'just leave it'.

Unlike Mrs. Tate whose mother is still alive - although given her old age it would seem Mrs. Tate is running out of time, and might not be able to find out the information that she is looking for before her mother dies - it appears that in this case Mr. Paulse has yet another secret to deal with, and for which no resolution is in sight. With his grandfather having passed on without dealing with the aftermath of the revelation that he is Mr. Paulse's biological grandfather, and with the rest of the family being unwilling to talk about the black family members still, Mr. Paulse's quest to find out more will have to be put on halt for the time being.

It also seems there was a deliberate attempt on the part of the elders to mislead the children into believing that the grandfather was actually Mr. Paulse's mother's stepfather as the quote below illustrates. In this context, it appears that instead the failed relationship between Mr. Paulse's grandmother and the man that left her with her first child but did not marry her is glorified through the recognition it gets given at least insofar as the

children are concerned. And they are deprived of the knowledge and the experience that adheres to the knowledge that Mr. Sebenza is the biological grandfather, at least for Mr. Paulse:

> Mr. Paulse: They never married, and then my grandmother hooked up with Sebenza. The two of them then had my mother but the communication to us was that the daughter was also that of Ruiters, ehh my mother, and it was only … so we grew up thinking that both my mother and her brother was of the same father and this man is all our grandfather.

When this kind of secret leaks as it has done in this case, it is possible that the trust that children have in their parents would be negatively affected at the worst, or this becomes a complicating element in the parent-child relationship, with the child having to deal with different kinds of phantasies as to how this happened. In the case at hand it was the parents' religious beliefs that compelled them to 'confess' the secret of the family, albeit in a controlled way that did not really open this up for discussion within the broader family system. The perceived fragility of the system and its individual members seem to have militated against a thorough exploration hereof. It is interesting that the decision was to tell Mr. Paulse alone, and not necessarily the other members of the family. There might be a number of reasons why this was the case, but the more plausible one in this regard seems to be the fact that there was a direct relationship through his mother to her grandfather and therefore with this newly revealed aspect of his racial identity. Mr. Paulse does not refer to this detail in the interview, and it would seem that in the same way that he feels that it is going to take a long time for the rest of the family to get to a point where they would be willing to talk openly about the black racial identity and the

implications it carries for the rest of the family and their identities in this context, the same can be said about him. The interchange below illustrates the aspects discussed in this paragraph:

> Mr. Paulse: No, Ruiters. But they all said father and accepted Sebenza as their father. And it was only probably like in ’95 or ‘96 that I don't know how my mother found out but it was only then that my pastor's wife one day called me aside after one of the services. And she said that they needed to speak to me. And then we had this conversation, with pastor's wife and the pastor, and then they told me that the reason they’re talking to me and not my mother is because my mother and them are not sure how I would handle this news. That actually, my mother is the daughter of my … Sebenza father. And to me it was like ‘oh, why is this an issue? … That is great, I mean’. But to the family it was an issue, to the family it was … and I’m sure that not everyone in the family to this day know, but it was made an issue of because you know, she has a black father, and not the coloured father that she thought all her life to be her father. Ehm … it is those kinds of things that makes you wonder …I mean that's the anger, it makes you wonder ‘are there more skeletons that you gonna hear about when you turn thirty (he giggles)? Are there more surprises coming? Ehm … it’s on the one hand wanting to put closure to the issue, it's wanting to know, ok this is who I am, this is where I come from, this is my family. Ehm for all I know, there could be a relative sitting next to me and I wouldn't know that it's a relative. It is wanting all this things but of course the family is not there, and I don't think they’ll be there in a long time.

What Mr. Paulse seems to be looking for is a place in the world, which he can occupy comfortably without fears of the unknown. A more depth interpretation of the latter part

of his statement where he talks about the possibility that he could be sitting next to a blood relative could be a comment on the taboo of incest. More than anything else, the fear of not knowing one's blood relatives is engendered in the possibility of incest this provides.

The black parent effect

Being fathered by a black African in coloured communities had negative social effects that imbued the childhoods of people in those contexts with misery and embattlements with adults, against whom children had very little recourse, more so because it seems it was an accepted fact that indeed their continued belonging to the coloured 'racial' identity was tenuous. Given this, it also appears that this context created an opportunity for adults to cause children distress with impunity. Mrs. McCarthy describes her schooling experiences with a German teacher whom she characterized as a racist. Although this teacher seems to be in the foreground in terms of how Mrs. McCarthy remembers her school days, it seemed that except for her strong academic performance, she did not have fond memories of the time as the excerpt below illustrates:

> Mrs. McCarthy: Ja, but … but we weren't chosen … we always were thrown out, although I was quite a clever child. I always used to come first and second in the class, I did very well academically, but I couldn't be accepted at the concert, I couldn't be accepted for the school choir as well. So then I knew it was the racial thing because this nun used to tell me, "you're 99 percent kaffir". This German nun used to say … she used to say "you are 99 percent kaffir …"

The statement that the nun (or teacher) used to say that Mrs. MM was 99 percent kaffir is reminiscent of the North American system of racial classification, where the 'one drop rule' was employed (Davies' 1991). According to this view, the concentration of one's whiteness as compared to blackness could be quantified in one's body, and in that way, one's racial identity could be quantified. This statement is also similar to the eugenicists' belief in the superiority of the 'white blood' and therewith the belief that the more one has of that blood, the less of an inferior human stock one belonged to. To take this further, it would appear that in this context, there was a shared belief that coloured people had more white blood compared to black Africans. The fact that Mrs. McCarthy was fathered by a black man was perceived as having reduced the levels of her white blood substantially. It still does not explain how the nun came to the percentage that she was imposing on this equation. All that this explains is that given Mrs. McCarthy parentage, the teacher felt entitled to discriminate against her, as did the rest of the school system.

Once again, discriminating against certain children at school is common, and some of the times this can be based on reasons such as the socio-economic status of the child and her parents, their religious beliefs, and others. In this case, it is clear that the main reason for the discrimination that was part of Mrs. McCarthy childhood was based on what her racial identity was perceived to be. One could also explore the possibility that there was a misfit of personalities between Mrs. McCarthy and this particular teacher. But the point that it was her racist tendencies that founded this treatment of Mrs. McCarthy is

corroborated where this treatment generalizes to other children as well, who were perceived to have similar racial features as Mrs. McCarthy:

> Mrs. McCarthy: I was very small, I was too scared to respond to this German nun, and she was …eh everybody was scared of her, but I had her since standard five because we did domestic science and she was the only domestic science teacher and needlework teacher … So she used to … but I wasn't the only one that she would say that to. She would say to quite a few of us who didn't have nice hair and who were also dark and so on (R: Ok). So that was some of my experiences which I had … as a child.

I have discussed the family childhood experiences of some of the participants in the chapter on intra-familial difference. For this part, Mrs. McCarthy cites a further example of how being parented by a black African seemed to exclude one from the bonds of the coloured family. The more secure claim (part of which would be being an offspring of parents both of whom are not classifiable as black Africans) to coloured identity seemed to guarantee a better treatment from others, even above familial ties. Mrs. MM says the following of her step-brother:

> Mrs. McCarthy: Cedrick, yes because this lady, this grandmother, it was his own grandmother because it was my father's wife's mother, it was his own granny, but she didn't … she preferred the other children to him because … because he was very black.

R: He was also very black?

Mrs. McCarthy: His father was a Mozambican, so he was black, quite darker than I. So he was really treated … he was eh … you know, often didn't get food sort of, whereas I could work, and I would have to scrub the floors and do all the hard work whereas he couldn't work, but I had to work, but they didn't treat him very well. They really discriminated against him, he was treated … and then he wasn't doing that well, he wasn't coping at school as well. Whereas I had this privilege, I did well at school I had with the reading, I locked myself in books, and that's how I got through my life, like that because that was a very, very unhappy period because I never experienced discrimination until I got to Parow (R: Ok), you know, maybe because I could understand now that I was different you know.

As I have stated earlier, it would seem it is not just having a black African parent that leads to the discrimination of the children that are parented this way. It is more especially the presence of visible black African physical characteristics that seem to be responsible for this treatment. Mrs. Adams who described herself as a black person, but mostly because she seemed unable to strip herself of the visible black African physical characteristics in any permanent way says the following:

So that was at school, and of course some of us have long hair; but like myself I'm black, I'm a black person. So ... even ... it's not unusual for me when a black person comes to me start talking to me and some of them get very furious if I can't relate to them. So, that is a real issue ...

But at the same time, in spite of her visible black African physical characteristics, her mother-in-law whose positive or negative reaction towards Mrs. Adams' children depended on whether they were black or fair tends to withdraw the potential discrimination for the fair children. It is their mother, who remains burdened with this physical appearance or 'corporeal malediction' as Fanon (1967) calls black African features and how these are read in racist contexts, especially the black skin. It is the mother who also remains the object of the mother-in-law's discrimination. This is also where it seems the comparison with the pre-civil rights movement North American system stops, because with the American system, it is not just the visible biology that is privileged in the racial classification system, but most importantly the invisible ancestry. Put in another way, the official racial classification of the United States classified Americans as blacks regardless of how fair they looked, just as long as their parentage evinced black ancestry.

Further, it also seems the more pronounced one's black African features, the more severe the discrimination. Mrs. Adams also referred to her brother's experience, who ended up leaving school, possibly because he could not tolerate the amount of distress that he suffered at the hands of the teachers, other children and other care-givers outside his family. As the quote below suggests, she believes that it was the fact that relatively speaking her brother's skin was very dark that he attracted intolerable levels of discrimination and taunting:

> For him it was very difficult, because he is dark, dark, dark, dark, dark, he is very dark. Even the white of his eyes sometimes it is red. So for him ... mhh it was very difficult for

him, it was very difficult for him, it was so difficult that he even … he didn't complete matric.

Reading from the emphatic way in which she gives this description, it seems possible that there is more that lies beyond the description than just her brother's features. Could it be that this description sets her brother aside, and salvages Mrs. Adams somewhat, exactly because in her position of bearing inescapable black African physical features it would be comforting to know that it could have been worse? Like Mr. Paulse, this is one of those aspects of experiencing childhood in these contexts, which comes too close to home, which would evoke anxiety insofar as it involves looking at one's ways of defending against the perceived 'danger' of self-declaring as black entirely. Prevailing perceptions at the time suggest that 'being better than something or being coloured, in the sense that it was possible to claim a slightly higher position in the racist racial hierarchy of the time, would have been experienced as better than a complete admission to black African racial identity. Stated differently, even if there were perceptions that one was 99% black, the one percent that was not black was held onto for dear life, because it set one apart from the down-trodden majority in the South African context.

The absence of black children

In addition to the important role that parents play in the general socialization of their children, and more specifically in the passing on of important information about the family and others, opportunities for children to play with other children provide the growing child with experiences essential for future interactions with, and

conceptualizations of, self and other. Primarily, it is Mr. Paulse's childhood experiences that provide the suggestion that the childhoods of coloured children in these contexts were not allowed contact with black African children. Although in most cases this was the direct result of the Groups Areas Act, which made social contact between the different racial groupings difficult, at least in the case of Mr. Paulse's childhood the opportunity to interact with black African children existed. His parents seem to have mounted a deliberate attempt to prevent such contact, which as indicated in previous chapters, seems to have carried on through to the adulthoods of Mr. Paulse's peers. From the quote below, it is clear that this deliberate prevention was part of what being coloured was understood to mean, and therewith, what its interaction with blackness was thought to imply:

> Mr. Paulse: Well I don't know, I don't know how he classified himself. Even his classification to us was kind of dodgy, because we would say … we would speak about us as coloured people, and to an extent I think he was accepted as coloured, except when there were family arguments. And so when there was a family argument, not necessarily with my grandma but with uncles and aunts, he would be ... eh or my grandmother rather, would be reminded that she has got a black man. And so, she has almost shamed the family because she's with a black man. Himself, I think probably saw himself, I got this mixed feeling when thinking back but I think he saw himself as coloured, because … because of the clear cut from … from his side of the family, because of not wanting the kids to speak Xhosa, to play with the black kids, to interact with black people. I mean his views as far as I can imagine at least, were probably as colored if there is such a thing, as the rest of the family.

Mr. Paulse suggests that it was a coloured thing not to interact with black African children insofar as he implies that his grandfather's refusal to allow them to play with black children reflected the coloured view that had become his too (in Chapter 3 I have referred to how Mr. Paulse's grandfather became colouredified on getting married to a coloured woman). More than just this, it seems that even from childhood, children in these contexts came into contact with the 'coloured view' that interacting with blacks was shameful. Zimitri Erasmus writes "today looking back, I can see how these possibilities were shaped by the lived experiences not only of gender and class, but also of 'race'. I can see how respectability and shame are key defining terms of middle class coloured experience" (In Erasmus (Ed.), 2001, p.13). The shame that I am referring to here differs somewhat with the one that Erasmus describes. She seems to be referring to an inherent sense of shame, which is engendered in perceptions that coloured identities are defined by 'lack' or taint, or remainder which does not fit a classificatory scheme (p.17). The shame that is implied in this case involves actively engaging with perceptions of race, and using distance from black people, even in childhood, as that which could ensure the respectability and legitimacy of coloured identified persons in a racist society. In this case, it is not the constitutional shame that is at play, but a fear of shame that is believed to be engendered in associating with black people, and therewith, a fear of loosing socio-racial rather than personal respectability. Again here, Field (2001) seems cautious and conservative in his analysis of the virulence of racism found in coloured communities against black Africans. In identifying the age-group of his interviewees as 55 to 80, one gets an impression that it is the older coloured generation that harbour racist 'fears of the

African community' (p. 113). The attitudes of a given generation do not remain stagnant within the given generational category. Insofar as these are people that play an important role in the upbringing of children, aided by the residential separation of different racial groupings in South Africa, the racist attitudes evinced then are likely to still be detected today, more so considering that such fears are actively instilled in bringing up children as I have discussed above. With regard to the residential separation of different racial groupings, one participant, Mrs. Muizen, stated the following:

> Mrs. Muizen: Not at that time, at that time there was no Mitchelsplain. Mitchelsplain wasn't yet existent. We had Grassypark, we had eh a suburb called Heathfield, eh Retreat, that is the next suburb, Athlone. That kind of thing but eh, that is where you could buy, we couldn't of course we couldn't just buy anywhere you wanted to buy (property). And you had set certain coloured areas. And all colored areas were set far apart from black areas obviously, you know they separated, they separated ….
>
> R: And … and given that, how much interaction did you have with black people given that there was such separation?
>
> Mrs. Muizen: Very little, very, very little. My first interaction really with the black people ehm like chatting like we are chatting now was in fact not even … let me see, I'll tell you now, first interaction was about … not in my childhood but as an adult of about twenty two.

Given that coloured people and African blacks lived so close to one another, having no meaningful contact with black Africans for two decades, that is, a childhood that is

sanitized of black contact, could only mean that there was something more than just the state that discouraged such contact. Coloured people, as illustrated up to this point, were buying into the idea that black contact was shaming and that it lowered their respectabiltiy; and similarly, black Africans are likely to have been complicit with the racist practices in some way.

Mr. Paulse says that on the farm where he lived, as soon as black African children reached school-going age, they would be sent off to the Eastern Cape, being the province where most of the Xhosa people in Cape Town come from, while coloured children were catered for on the farm where he stayed, and could go to school there. This reflects one of the worst effects of apartheid, in terms of the arrangement that black Africans were not provided for as families at their workplaces. This implied that children had to be separated from their parents, and herewith, lack of contact between the different groupings was enforced and maintained. Black people could not but return to the Eastern Cape, or their 'homelands' where their children and elderly parents were. In the end this might not have worked out as expected, failing at some point to satisfy the needs of business at the time for readily available labour. But what it did succeed in was keeping the racial groupings away from each other, except for at the workplace. More importantly, the Group Areas Act managed to keep childhoods of the different racial groupings out of contact with each other, holding up the supremacy of the white race and the supposed inferiority of the black. With that, came the valuing of any difference from 'absolute' black Africanness, even if this was perceived to be only a one percent difference as indicated in the case of Mrs. McCarthy above. In the chapter that deals with

complicity I have quoted Bessie Head on the gradations of racial identities and their adherent practices. In this case too, it seems there was a perception that blackness existed in degrees, with those whose blackness was less 'concentrated' being degrading towards, and separating themselves from, those perceived as more black.

Further, it also seems where black children did come into contact with coloured adults in particular, the unprepared coloured adult ends up talking what one of the participants called 'black english' to the children. In this case, the participant Ms. Jameson felt that her brother spoke patronizingly to her son, who had no knowledge of any black language. They based their decision to speaking excessively simplified English, spoken slowly with an altered accent, on the fact that their nephew's father was black African, even though they knew that the child was being brought up by their sister, who spoke to the child in the same language that they generally used (English).

Conclusion

In the discussion above I have outlined the impact of racism on childhood in a racist society. In coloured communities, this impact was effected through withholding information and opportunities for coloured children to be exposed to black Africanness and black African children, even if this meant hiding aspects that were an integral part of the children's identity. Lack of contact that seems to have characterised the childhoods of the participants that I have cited in this chapter allowed projections to develop, which allowed such stereotypical statements as the one that 'blacks are coming to kill you'

discussed in the chapter on performing colouredness, to be effective with coloured children. In this case again, it is clear that there was no need for formal law enforcement agents to monitor the boundary between coloured and black African children. Observing racial 'boundaries' was part of a child's up-bringing and values that parents and their communities instilled in their children. The impact on coloured children echoes Fanon's (1952) use of the figure of a child in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*. In this book, Fanon uses the white French child's experience at encountering a black man to make a point regarding the extent to which racism can invade society. Frightened, the child says:

> Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened! … Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up (pp.112 – 114)

Normally, a child symbolizes innocence and lack of corruption, especially by social evils such as racism. However, what I have illustrated through this chapter, and in agreement with Fanon, is the extensive reach of racism into the social fabric, where even a child's innocence gets entangled in the drama or racism. Devoid of the cognitive maturity to be subtle regarding racist statements, the child's expressions become a credible and honest commentary on interracial relations when members of different races encounter one another. Part of the innocence that characterizes childhood is susceptibility to parental or adult influence, which in the context of this thesis involves deliberate attempts to keep racial groupings apart, maintaining racist attitudes.

CHAPTER 6: RACE, COUPLING AND SEXUALITY

Introduction

Race and sexuality are both complex concepts, and I have used these in naming this chapter to denote the challenge involved in engaging instances where they intersect in these participants' lives. In post-modern terms, both of these concepts attach to ways of identifying that are not necessarily given, but that require certain ongoing performances for confirmation. In this way and in line with the power dynamics accruing to being members of different racial groupings in pre-1994 South Africa, those that were positioned higher up on the racial hierarchy had to perform non-blackness in the first place, and being (or approximating) white in the second. In terms of this notion of performing non-blackness, certain laws (discussed below and in the literature review) such as the Group Areas Act, Separate Amenities Act, Immorality Act, etc. were put in place, reflecting a progressive invasion of personal space and the deprivation of freedom of such choices as where one could live, what facilities one could use, through to who one could have an intimate relationship with.

In such a racist, patriarchal society, race and sexuality are readily deployed as means by which to affirm or oppress. I have outlined the complexities that characterize conceptions of race and racism in the literature review, and I have used the data discussed in preceding chapters to illustrate these. Similarly, in spite of its relatively shorter history of scientific usage, sexuality is a complex concept, referring to sexual desire and sexed

beings on the one hand, and related to ideologies and systems of gender oppression on the other (Cranny-Francis, Waring, Stavropoulos & Kirkby, 2003; Bistrow, 1997). For the purposes of this chapter, I use sexuality in a much broader sense as it relates to relationships (and individuals in those relationships) that facilitate the expression of sexuality. I discuss fantasies of the participants who are 'raced' (or self-identify) as coloured about potential partners, the actual coupling that takes place, how these couples live together and how they relate to their offspring and the broader community.

The concept of sexuality also covers notions of bisexuality, heterosexuality and homosexuality, which refer to persons who 'embody particular [sexual] desires (Bristow, 1997, p. 2)'. I discuss homosexuality in a racist context as well as other aspects of sexuality that I have alluded to in this introduction, to explore the feminist adage that the personal is political. In essence, I use this chapter to examine how "our most personal experiences are shaped by their locations within social divisions and histories" (Cranny-Francis et al., 2003, p. 8). The social divisions and histories of a racist society seem to have played a role in as intimate a choice as selecting a marital partner, as well as in the determination of how this will produce the offspring who will engage in very particular ways with their families and society.

Legacies of colonial anxieties

It is important to recall that the preoccupation with racial classification which was part of the colonial era and beyond was also characterized by excessive preoccupation with

sexual lives of colonial subjects. In some instances these preoccupations carried fantasies which reflected the colonizer's anxieties regarding the unknown at the resultant interaction with the colonized. As Gayle Rubin puts it, 'disputes over sexual behaviour often become the vehicles for displacing social anxieties, and discharging [people's] attendant emotional intensity' (in Parker & Aggleton, 1999, p. 143). It is these anxieties that Fanon's (1951) reference to the hyper-sexualization of the native, and the vulnerability of the white woman to the native male, alludes to. In the South Africa of old, the supposed vulnerability of the white woman seemed to be shorthand for the perceived vulnerability of the white race against contamination by other 'races' through interracial sexual relations. Here again, I refer to the comprehensive engagement of this point in Millin's (1924) novel *God's Stepchildren*.

Colonial anxieties as exemplified in the perceived hypersexualization of the native and the fear of racial contamination formed the bedrock for the racism that was an integral part of apartheid. Further, in the South African racist context, the preoccupations that I am referring to could be observed to the extent that there were such laws as the Immorality Act of 1927 (initially) and its extension in 1950, which prohibited sexual relationships especially between whites and non-whites especially, but also between other different racial groupings, although the latter prohibition was more implicit. Specifically in the context of this research, this prohibition can be seen in the negative social repercussions of mixing with black Africans that tended to accompany coloured identified people in coloured residential areas. Conversely, socializing with whites in

these contexts attracted admiration from others as well as the upliftment of the social status of the person(s) concerned. I have discussed this at length in previous chapters.

Specifically, the current chapter focuses on the dynamics of intimate relationships between coloured people and black Africans. To this end, I explore the participants' personal experiences as well as their conceptualizations of sexual relationships across the 'colour line' in view of the legacy left by colonial anxieties. I link the dynamics in these relationships to colonial anxieties and refer to them as perceived instances of boundary crossing precisely because of the argument made thus far, which holds that over and above the vicissitudes of living a racial identity in the racist state as South Africa was, coloured people also saw themselves as different from black Africans. I have illustrated how this difference was not exclusively an imposed phenomenon, nor was it a passively accepted 'inconvenience'. Rather, as I hope to illustrate through an exploration of the concepts of race and sexuality, coloured people actively constructed this difference, and colluded with the racist system of the time, particularly where their relating to black Africans is concerned. As the argument goes, these dynamics of relating seem to be evident even in relating to the perceived blackness of those who identify as coloured. To give an example, Ms McDouglas stated the following in terms of her outlook on life as a 'black' woman:

> Ms McDouglas: And my outlook on life is … back in the past, but still [today]… it's hard to be attractive and a black woman with kinky hair, especially if you're short. (laughs)
>
> R: It's still …. difficult?

> Ms McDouglas: Still! Despite having Generations, and Backstage (laughs –R laughs too). [Generations and Backstage are popular television soap operas shown from Monday to Friday on rival channels in South Africa. The characters are racially diverse, successful, 'hip and happening', and the interaction between them is intimate, flying in the face of the separatist racial ideology that has dogged South Africa for decades].

What is left out in Ms MA's statement are the complexities of sexual relating, which are predicated on and vary according to context. She also seems to be suggesting that the alternative, educated, affluent images of blacks portrayed by the characters on the television dramas that she quotes have not altered perceptions that one has to be of fairer complexion with long straight hair for one to be considered (or consider oneself to be) attractive to potential partners for intimate relationships. This view is in contrast to Elaine Salo's, whose work points to the influence of the media, especially television, in changing perceptions of young coloured girls about blackness and attractiveness. Perceptions of black African features as unattractive resonate strongly with the colonial mentality that African natives required cross-racial reproduction to improve their 'stock' rendering them more attractive and acceptable as sexual or marital partners for the colonizers. It is to these complexities that I now turn to explore black African-coloured interactions. More specifically, I explore experiences of marital or intimate partner relationships that the participants referred to, be they their own or those of their parents and relatives.

The politicization of the personal

One of the most topical discussions in the social sciences today refers to the intersection between the social and the personal. Discussions seek to illustrate how both the social and the personal impact on each other, making it possible to read personal experiences as constructed within a social context, while acknowledging the role that locations within social divisions and histories play in shaping our personal lives as Cranny-Francis et al. (2003) suggest. However, taking the role of the social seriously should not obscure the position of the individual as an actor in these contexts. There is an active interaction between the individual and the context, where each maps onto the other. This is an important aspect of the unfolding argument in this project too, and its clearest articulation is implied in the following statement by one of the participants, Mrs. Adams, in regard to her selection of a marriage partner:

> So that is ... how we grew up. And it was so ... you know it became so … I don't know how my sisters related to this, but I said to myself: I'm not going to break up, I'm not going to marry a black person. I'm going to see to it that I marry a fair person, so that my children don't need to go through this pain. So it's still there up to today. It's still repeating itself. When they see me with my children they ask them 'is that really your mother' or they ask me 'are those really your children'. They're too fair for me. But when they see them with their father, they are too black for their father. So … ja, this type of thing.

This statement implies that the kind of sexual relationship that Mrs. Adams intended establishing through marriage, and the personal circumstances of the children that she hoped to bear in the intended relationship were affected by the context in which she found herself. This statement makes more sense when looked at within the political context in which it was made. For Mrs. Adams who is in her mid-forties, it would be reasonable to assume that when she made the decision that she would never marry a black person it must have been in the late 60's and early 70's. The South Africa of the 60's and 70's was characterized by intense racial discrimination, the official version of which played itself out in the proclamation of homelands and self-governing territories for black people, and culminating in the excessive violence that the regime at the time used against its opponents. This period was also marked by the intensification of resistance against racial oppression starting with the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 and the ANC's adoption of the armed struggle soon thereafter. This course of resistance intensified in the 70's and the 80's when civil organizations and students became an important part of the struggle against racial discrimination.

What this historical reflection does not refer to, is the image of the black African that was created in the minds of those who were not part of the liberation movement at the time. Besides the explicit violence that was used to curb opposition, the racist white government fed its subjects (of all races) information that led to the abhorrence of black Africans, that emphasized the attractiveness and merits of white people, who were constructed both as vulnerable and more civilized against the backdrop of the savagery of black freedom fighters. This history forms part of the background against which relating

to black Africans was played out. More than anything, Mrs. Adams' statement above points to how 'undesirable' black Africanness had become for subjects in a racist state that privileged whiteness and held it supreme. Her choice of a marital partner, though a personal matter, reflects the difficulty that characterized being black in a racist society. It is her painful experiences that inform her decision to marry a fair 'coloured' person. This is what she felt she needed to protect her children from: the pain of being undesirable due to one's skin colour. In keeping with this part of the argument, the political context and its impact on her person shaped her choice of a partner, in an attempt to foreclose the possibility of a coital experience which would bring about 'black children'. As stated in the previous chapter on coloured childhood, Mrs. Adams' rejection of black African males' romantic advances was racialized. It had nothing to do with the objectionability of the person concerned except insofar as the person was black (not coloured or white). Mrs. Adams' experiences demonstrate how in the context described above, desire became narrowed in focus and reflected an overtly political origin and goal.

The idea that black Africans were not attractive and that a relationship with anyone other than a black African (as a relationship partner) carried social benefits got played out in how some black Africans chose marital partners too. It appears that the basis of attraction, at least for some, was the social benefits that would accrue due to the union. I have alluded to the fact that it was not only for 'non-blacks' that the image of the black African liberation fighter had been vilified (linking up with previous stereotypes about the colonial black African subject) by the propaganda that the racist regime of the pre-1994 era employed as a strategy to maintain racial segregation and the idea of white

supremacy. Some sectors within the black African population too, had bought into the idea of the freedom fighter as the social misfit. Evidence of this is suggested in the fact that there were clashes between the politicized youth of the eighties and those black Africans who had bought into the racist ideas which they had been fed by the system (e.g. the place of black Africans at the bottom of the racist racial hierarchy). It is also to a similar idea that Biko (1978) refers in his deploration of the black man whom he says is soulless and man only by name. Mrs. McCarthy perceives her father (who became involved with a coloured woman and gave birth to Mrs. McCarthy.) and his contemporaries to have traveled from Johannesburg to Cape Town with the intention of marrying 'non-blacks'. She says:

> Mrs. McCarthy: So when he … he thought no, I would rather go to Cape Town. Eh they also had this idea that there were white women that they could marry in Cape Town. They did have certain ideas about coloured women and really you know, it would like give them a boost. So that's why … they must have heard from other friends that they married coloured women. So they walked, sort of walked, rested, walked and worked as kitchen boys, garden boys, until they got to Cape Town.
>
> R: Ok. So there was an idea that you know, you think there was an idea it could give them a boost or something?
>
> Mrs. McCarthy: Ja, they thought they might have a better life, because they were always you know, ehh they were treated so badly in their own country and some of them specially came for it, some of them had not specially come … they came for work. But if they were going to get a wife, they wanted a coloured wife. You know, because that

> would put them in a different league to the one's at home. Coming home with a coloured wife and … and with the hair like a madam, you know they had this idea, hair like a madam, colour like a madam. So, that's what they longed for.

It is interesting to see how the ideas of whiteness and colouredness, and associated physical appearance seem to be collapsed in a bid to contrast that which is desirable on the one hand, with black Africanness and its representation of the undesirable on the other. In one statement one can read Mrs. McCarthy's desire for whiteness and the importance of being anything but black African; together with her patronizing perception of Africans as unable to perceive the difference between whites and coloured people. Given that she identified as coloured, she seems to be projecting her wish to be seen as non-black African and as different to, those who occupied the bottom position of the racist racial hierarchy onto her father and his peers. The argument so far holds that absolute black Africanness represented absolute undesirability, and anything differentiating a person from this represented movement towards whiteness and therefore was more desirable (socio-economically and psycho-sexually). As she implies, a 'non-black' sexual partner had the effect of 'boosting' a black African and placing him on a different level from his peers. As can be discerned from this, 'upward' driven cross-racial sexuality, choice of a sexual partner in this racist society carried multi-layered meanings and upward partnering evoked admiration and possibly envy from one's counterparts.

It is also interesting that such admiration is attributed to black African men from neighbouring countries. Mrs. McCarthy's father was Zimbabwean, and indeed, Mrs. McCarthy herself, and her children experienced the treatment reserved for 'madams'

(implied in her statement above) when they visited Zimbabwe. In another instance Mr. Lenniz, whose father is Mozambican, reports how his father allowed the children to adopt a coloured surname, and thereby a coloured identity:

> M: My mother's surname is Taijfel. My mother was married to a guy with a surname of Conradie. And because of what happened, in terms of the country and stuff, my father didn't want us to … look I mean because they also weren't married, he didn't want us to have the name of Sithole. Because look, immediately we would have been classified as Bantus (archaic reference to black Africans), and we wouldn't have been allowed into a coloured school system … So my father obviously … you can see just by names and stuff, he was a very dominant person in terms of our family and what his kids … so he knew where he wanted his kids to go.

The point I am making here is that the effects of the socio-political context at the time were pervasive, to the point that they impacted on the racial identities that children took on. As discussed in the previous chapter, parents played a significant role in shaping children's identities in their consideration of the socio-political context in which they raised them, including in the choice of a partner to parent the children with. Although there were other ways in which black Africans could pass as coloured, it would seem that it was easier for racially mixed couples to achieve this, especially where the goal was to avoid the negative outcomes which adhered to being classified as 'Bantu', as Mr. Lenniz says. Mr. Paulse provides an example that is instructive as it supports this assertion. He describes that some children were allowed access to the school on the farm where he grew up, whereas others were not:

> Ehh I know a lot of the kids tended to travel and come to Cape Town, to schools here. The black kids on the farm didn't … well there weren't black kids, or all the kids would go like ...the minute the kid is born and is close to school-going age - the parent would take the kid to the Eastern Cape. And they would go to school there. It was only the mixed couples, if you like, that had … their kids went to our schools as well. But it was also … they had coloured names, they took on their mothers' surnames. And so ja, I suppose they survived.

In a racist society, which partner one chose to marry was dependent not only on the attraction that one felt towards another person. It would seem such choices, at least for some, were contingent upon what facilitation a partner could provide for one, in terms of access to social status with a political system that dehumanized black Africans and held whiteness as supreme. The personal seems to have been rendered an arena of both political resistance and complicity, a theme further elaborated in the course of this chapter.

Furthermore, given the levels of xenophobia that characterize modern day South Africa, the aspect of foreignness adds a different dimension to being a black African. This in itself would require extensive analysis which would call for a different project (beyond the scope of this thesis). Suffice to add here that the foreign 'other' seems to evoke phantasies for the local that offer an escape from the immediate and stifling social difficulties that are an intricate part of social relations in South Africa. For instance, it is easier to project the perception that black Africans cannot see the difference between

coloured people and whites onto the foreign black African, who has not been an intricate part of the conflict between the different local racial groupings. With this ease of projection, also comes a further self-serving projection of a wish to be white (or approximate whiteness), and therewith, to be beautiful and attractive. In the eyes of the un-initiated foreign black African, coloured people who desire whiteness can enjoy this, but not in the eyes of the local black African who is too involved and has vested interest in the process.

White guilt and inter-racial relationships

The idea of 'white guilt' in South Africa emerged quite strongly in the post-1994 era in South Africa, and was spurred on by the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process, during which atrocities of the past were exposed. Partly, it is to this that Erasmus (2004) refers in her article called '*Undoing the yoke of racism*'. In this article, she posits that engaging the concept of race tends to produce associations of blacks as victims and whites as perpetrators. This polarization leads to an unproductive situation where the protagonists fail to re-conceptualize race, stuck as they become in their respective mutually exclusive positions. As part of the national agenda, this construction has been contested loudly within white groups, with people feeling that an insistence on 'white apology' would lead to a wholesale denunciation of the white 'nation' as active perpetrators of racism. For instance Helen Suzman, an ardent human rights activist stated the following:

> I've nothing to be apologetic about … I didn't initiate the system of apartheid I fought against. I don't need to join in a consolidated beating of the breast (Time Europe, 2000).

This raises an important question around the fact and resolution of the wrong that was done, and the existence of those who were on the receiving end of these atrocities. Insofar as this social dynamic is concerned, the experience of the Holocaust and how German people and the rest of humanity (see Danieli in Wilson & Lindy, 1994, p. 368) seem to have responded to it might throw some light on these issues. According to Danieli (1982) the atrocities of the Holocaust produced shame for Germans, which interfered with their ability to confront the effects of the Holocaust as represented in the narratives of holocaust survivors and their offspring. In the case of South Africa, it is in light of this that at the end of the TRC the report makes reference to the notion of 'little perpetrators' (Sanders, 2002). This notion allows for the inclusion of those who might not have played an active role in the propagation of atrocities, but who did not do anything to fight against the oppression and brutality meted out by the government and its security forces, especially against black Africans. Given this, little perpetrators are implicated in discussions of white guilt through the concept of complicity; and because they benefited from the racism that dehumanized black Africans in particular.

However, the identification of both major and 'little perpetrators' did not offer concrete ways in which to deal with the remnants of hurt and blame associated with experiences of oppression, suffering, abjection and abandonment. I also believe that this then has left different individuals no option but to employ whatever range of defenses that are at their disposal to relieve the consequent tension that emerges in interracial settings (I call these

exchanges ‘the nightmare of interracial interacting’). The argument from the beginning of this thesis has been that adopting a coloured racial identity evinces aspects of racism that are similar to those that whites adopted against black Africans. The earlier chapters show how these racisms are inscribed in the everyday lives of coloured people, where the conceptualization of black Africanness is concerned. If the argument holds, the logical conclusion would be that the notion of ‘white guilt’ should find its parallel in what I will call ‘coloured guilt’. The concept of complicity leverages this assertion in that it is through its use that Erasmus grounds coloured identities in the ‘creation of an inferior black African Other’, as well as in the exclusion and subordination of black Africans (2001, p. 25).

Ms McDouglas expresses a useful sentiment in her articulation of the ‘white guilt’ notion. Although her statements apply to relationships between black Africans and whites, coloured people would also not ordinarily choose black Africans as intimate relationship partners. Given the racial hierarchy, the pragmatics of inter-racial intimate relationships in a racist context rendered it senseless to marry ‘*downwards’* to borrow Amina Mama’s (1995) concept, unless a way could be devised to ensure the retention of the privileges of the higher racial status (e.g. the *colouredification* of a black African marital partner, or retaining the coloured surname with its adherent relative privilege). The interchange with Ms McDouglas goes thus:

R: And how long did you stay at [that organization]?

Ms McDouglas: [At that organization]? I stayed there for 7 years.

R: 7 years? Ok. And that was mainly progressive whites?

Ms McDouglas: Mainly progressive whites. The majority were white – in fact, it was a very progressive organisation, because when I started, we all earned the same. There was no direct … some of them were lecturers at UWC, *ag* UCT, not lecturers, they used to go and lecture as part of the organization's work, but we all used to earn the same salary. So I think that, you know, just affect the power relations significantly, or essentially, (R: Ok) … if salaries are the same. So, I worked very well with them. They were nice and they were … as I say, they were also but, you know, the white guilt kind of thing.

R: Say more about that … white guilt?

Ms McDouglas: You know black … you know progressive whites, they often … used to have this white guilt. I mean … I know that African men, or the black men – not African men, the black men, generally used to have white girlfriends (laughs), 'cause the girlfriends used to have this … you know, at that time, whites used to have guilt feelings – the progressive ones. Ja, no, they used to have it – because they know that obviously they benefited from apartheid, so they were part of the anti-Apartheid movement, they used to sometimes bend over backwards … you know.

R: So you think … that those kind of relationships – some of them … might have been bending backwards?

Ms McDouglas: Oh ja. Many of those relationships – that involved white people and … black people.

In the sense that I have described above, in the post-1994 era, the pragmatic aspects of intimate relationships have been affected by the political transformation of what it means to be black African in South Africa. What ties this change to the notion of white or coloured guilt as described above is that it is not necessarily material benefit that involvement with black Africans afforded participants in these relationships. From what Ms McDouglas says, it sounds like there are moral benefits to being involved with black Africans, because black Africans stand for the 'previously disadvantaged' in which the 'previously advantaged' is implicated. Such relationships stand for the actors' social mobility and political progressiveness. Involvement with black Africans sets these white and coloured people apart from other white and coloured people, who have been perceived to resist socio-political change in this country. This interpretation stretches the idea of moral benefit beyond the purely altruistic. Insofar as involvement in relationships with black Africans potentially carries the communication that one does not espouse or support the politics of the past, it appears there are 'selfish' reasons for these involvements. My interpretation of this is also slightly in contrast to what Ms MA suggests, in that she believes that members of races that are higher up on the racial hierarchy 'bend backwards' in establishing relationships with black Africans, suggesting a redemption move to save black Africans from the disadvantage. This assumption de-emphasizes the mutual benefit that occurs for both the partners.

Ms Russels gives a description of the type of black African, especially men, who has become desirable to coloured women following the political transformation that has taken place in this country. She says:

> I know, because they are like that. You see it's easy, if you happen to be a young black man in this age and time in South Africa, you get a good job, you get the fine women, so it's like you have the whole package together.

It appears that the burden of past experiences interact with the upward economic trajectory of black Africans, and the nature of the current political atmosphere in South Africa and elsewhere in the world, where racism is believed to be outdated, and racist behaviour seriously backward, and even pathological (psychotic) behaviour according to Michael Rustin (in Paul du Gay, 2000). For this section I have taken the liberty to venture beyond just the contents of the interviews, using socio-historical assertions in an attempt to highlight the aspects discussed. However, as Nicole Constable (2003) avers in her work titled '*Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and "Mail-Order" Marriages*', this is not a denunciation of other more emotional dimensions of desire or a dismissal out of hand of the possibility of love. What I employ for this part is an approach that is similar to Aihwa Ong's (1999), in emphasizing the pragmatic more than the emotional aspects of intimate relationships. Nicole Constable intervenes against such an emphasis, and elucidates the intertwined nature of love and emotion with political economy on the other, through cultural logics of desire. She believes that one of the challenges posed to scholars of transnationalism is 'to connect the minutae of

everyday life with wider patterns of power and culture without reducing them to some rigid mold or draining them of their life, their flexibility and uniqueness' (p. 143). In this project too, Mr. Lenniz suggests that even though subverting the political dispensation was an intricate part of his parents' marriage, at least on the part of his father, love and emotion were also part of the marriage:

> For him it was … he was ...ehhm, he was passionate about my mother, I believe … I believe that they were very in love, and for him he wanted a different life style.

Mr. Paulse expresses a concurring view. He suggests that in spite of the tenuous coloured identity that 'colouredification' conferred on his grandfather, what Giddens calls 'romantic love', as contrasted to love that is based only on practical considerations and facilitation of opportunities was an important part of his grandparents' marriage. Mr. Paulse characterizes the last days of his grandfather's life in the following way:

> Mr. Paulse: No … I … well, I thought it (their relationship) was good if compared to my mother, my biological mother and my step dad, compared to their interaction my grandparents were amazing. I mean they were …they were … I thought, and if that was anything to go by, then I think that was an example of how much they loved each other, and how much they cared for each other. I mean he was sick for a long time, and she took care of him in his final months … I mean even the day he died, the two of them had their last moments together. They had made peace with the fact that he was gonna die. And he had thanked her for the 37 years they were together, she thanked him. It was really ... they loved each other.

The oppression of black Africans remains both a current and historical fact in South Africa. The past locates individuals in different ways vis-à-vis one another, providing a backdrop against which identity positions are experienced by individuals themselves, or by those who view them from the outside. Cross-racial relationships constantly come up against reminders of past inequalities, even though such may not be fore-grounded by the couple. This is particularly true in the contemporary dynamic socio-political environment, where identifying racially competes and intertwines with a diversity of other ways of identifying, including across class and in terms of moral values affecting decisions regarding intimate relationships.

Coloured wives, black husbands

To continue with the theme of the politicization of the personal and how socio-historical and socio-political events become intertwined with and played out in partner relationships between members of different racial groups, I now turn to more intimate details of interactions in such relationships. I discuss this aspect of relating at length here, as it contains a number of indices along which interracial relating is illustrated. More specifically, the ensuing discussion addresses the following: the importance of coloured identification in spite of racial appearance in intimate partner selection; the couple's relating in interracial settings and the apparent inordinate explicatory power accorded race; the couple on the domestic front; cultural misperceptions; cross-racial coupling and political progressiveness; as well as cross-generational effects of interracial injury on

sexuality. The discussion does not compartmentalize these aspects, however, the list is provided at this stage to provide a map for navigating the flow of this section.

It is important to note that the relationships discussed here take place in a social context where there are mores governing behaviour of the given groups. Lack of conformity to these mores attracts attention to which the couple is subjected and at times is required to respond to. For instance, I have referred to how the parents of the woman that Mr. Lenniz impregnated as an adolescent reacted to the pregnancy, precisely because for their child to have had sexual relations with a black African (or 'kaffir' as they preferred to say) was not what they expected. A couple that I interviewed (as individuals) seemed to echo this observation. To illustrate, Ms Jameson referred to how unusual it was for coloured women to become involved with black Africans as opposed to coloured-white involvements. Asked to qualify this statement, she said:

> Yes, just … just to say that … not lots of coloured people went that route – knowing that it's a black man. (R: Ok) I think that there are lots of … if you look at a lot of coloured men, you think, yeah, that guy could have been a [darkie] (laughs), but his surname has been changed, and all of that, so people married black men without knowing they were black men. In the exclusive use of the word – you know what I'm saying (R: Ok) ... and they might later on find out oh, there was this black granny, or whatever the case is.

Her partner concurs with this, and he says:

> Mr. Zitha: I think there's a far greater acceptance amongst blacks than amongst coloureds. For coloureds it's almost … it's not a done thing.
>
> R: It's not something that is done? (Yes). Being?
>
> Mr. Zitha: Among the coloureds, of black and coloured having a relationship. Or it's a very rare occasion. Whereas with blacks this has been accepted. Whether this is driven by the desire, as it is said, and how far true that is I don't know, that you know, that there's always a desire amongst blacks to have an affair with whites or with coloureds, or with people of a different racial group. I don't know whether it's driven by that desire, I mean the acceptance of a relationship with someone of a different colour to black …I don't know if it's driven by the desire of wanting to have a relationship outside of the black community. You must have heard some kind of this talk.

Over and above just illustrating the point that unions between black Africans and coloured people were uncommon, these statements also emphasize the social importance of a racial identity, even if one looked black. In other words, although appearance was privileged in these contexts, it was more important that one carried a non-black African identity, and this rendered one acceptable as a partner in an intimate relationship. This seems to contradict the argument advanced earlier in this thesis that coloured-on-coloured discrimination still pointed to the prejudice that coloured people harbored against perceived black Africanness. However, the sharpness of this contradiction dissipates when one considers the pragmatic aspects of interracial involvements alluded to previously. This point is consistent with the idea that where passionate love had triumphed over normative preference for a coloured or white identified partner, other

means were employed to avoid subjecting oneself to the dynamics inherent in associating with persons occupying the black racial identity of the pre-1994 South Africa. Black Africans who had coloured surnames and racial identities already, would not pose an insurmountable challenge. Physical features that betrayed one's black Africanness could always be dealt with as per the activities that Zimitri Erasmus refers to in her chapter on 'Hair politics' (in Nuttall & Michael, 2000), or as in Mrs. Adams' use of skin lighteners, make-up and wigs. In the chapter on performing colouredness I have referred to how Mrs. Adams used to feel she was part of the coloured group once hidden behind this mask of appearance. More importantly, this performance closed the gap between she and what she felt her siblings and husband represented: effortless colouredness.

Mr. Zitha points to the racial curiousity that might have characterized these unions. From the statement that he makes above, it is possible to read the excitement that seems to characterize having overcome the prohibition that the Immorality Act of 1950 had erected against cross-racial unions. As in the general movement of the economically better off from the former 'blacks only' residential areas to the now deracialized white suburbs in triumph over the Groups Areas Act, there is a suggestion that part of the triumph against racism and racial segregation is encapsulated in cross-racial relationships, for both partners. Mr. MA hints at the 'boundless possibilities' to satisfy one's desires that have suddenly been brought within reach through outlawing racism.

The dynamics found in these unions were not only geared towards the outside. Inside these relationships, as in any relationship, there were adjustment problems. What sets

these adjustments apart in the relationships that I am referring to here is that they seem to become inflected with racial meanings. To give an example, Ms Jameson describes how she feels about the way her partner introduces her. As one can appreciate, it is a discomfort that might occur in other instances and with other couples as well, but the fact of their racial difference seems privileged in her assessment of what is going on:

> Ms Jameson: He always has … he always adds it; he always qualifies me in some way.
>
> R: What … how … how… does that affect you? How … how do you feel about …?
>
> Ms Jameson: Personally, I get bloody annoyed. Sometimes … because … why doesn't … I'm just Ms Jameson. And my assumption is – and maybe I don't [deal with people] … for instance, if we come to a function, and I sit in with Mr. Zitha, then everybody's there, and then people say "Oh, she's with him", or "He's with her", and that's it. Finish. I don't ask, if there's a couple walking in, and I'm introduced, or they're introduced to me, say, like my best friend, now, I will say "Oh, are you the wife?", or "Oh, are you the husband?" I just assume that they are together, and … there must be something – you know what I mean – that they're together for a reason, and it doesn't matter what the reason is. Ja.
>
> R: And you feel that qualification that now 'this is Ms DC, my life partner' – do you feel that it takes away something … from you, when you are introduced? Or it reflects …
>
> Ms Jameson: It didn't … it doesn't … it … I s'pose I often wonder if Mr. Zitha is quite sure of what I am (laughs) … that he has to qualify it; that he has to give me a … or having to explain why he's with a coloured woman, for example. You know um … ja. I just find it really, really strange.

It would seem that gender-based power contestations (which the above interchange appears to represent) also become inflected with racial tones. On the one hand there were cases where black African men became docile given the tenuous coloured identities which colouredification afforded them. As stated previously, during times of conflict, disclosing a person's status as black African was an effective weapon that coloured partners and their relatives used against colouredified men, which generally had the effect of forcing these men into docility (I discuss this point further later on in this section). On the other hand, the black man is also portrayed as carrying power in being an unreliable, unstable bastard who exploits the turn of socio-political fortunes that democracy has brought about. Starting with the latter, it appears that this perception is grounded in a misunderstanding of cultural practices such as polygamy, which are still a fact in some black ethnic cultures today. The separation of the different racial groups through the Group Areas Act and job reservation practices in the Western Cape affected familiarity with cultural practices which were not of one's own group, leaving gaps into which fantasies about the other were projected. One of the queries that Ms Russels' relationship with a black African man attracted was whether she was sure that (this) man was hers alone. This suggests the entertainment of stereotypes about black men's inability to marry or be committed to only one woman. Adding to this, Ms Russels described her mother's perception of her relationship with a black African man as follows:

> I think she … there's this perceived notion that black guys are bad, practice polygamy, and … I mean she has had a very negative attitude in regard to perceived polygamy,

> certainly how the family would treat me as a *makoti* (newly married wife of a black African man). Because that's one of the things that I experienced. When we used to go out and maybe it was at his friend's, I definitely felt as an outsider because I couldn't understand the language, and I am not used to the women hanging out in one room and the boys standing outside and … no, that's not how I grew up.

The latter part of Ms Russels statement provides a glimpse into how both cultural and racial difference impacted on her relationship. Indeed, the practice of men and women socializing separately at parties and other events is common amongst black African couples, although this does not necessarily mean that all parties involved are happy with it. Excepting this, Ms Russels seems to have had experiences with black African men that have affected her perception of all black African men. To illustrate the level of her hostility towards black men, she has this to say in response to my question:

> R: And what does feeling hostile towards black men mean?
>
> Ms Russels: Feeling like I could chop off their penis. (Both laugh (uncomfortably?)).
>
> R: Is that what it means?
>
> Ms Russels: No, that's not it. I swear I have never met a black guy who's been completely committed to me.

Ms Russels retracts her statement (possibly in consideration of the fact that I am a black African man too), but it is still possible to read her frustration with black African men off

this. It is their male organs that she fantasizes about removing, in a sense, rendering them lesser men, or non-men, asexual. This fantasy suggests that it is these phallic symbols of manhood that render black African men impossible in relationships. Frustration with black African men in relationships seems to result precisely because there is a desire to be with them. Here again, Fanon's (1951) theorization of how the colonizer perceives the black man sexually is instructive. The abhorrence of the black man's sexuality is always accompanied with the envy of or desire for the same. In a similar manner, Ms Russels expands her sentiments regarding black men in the following manner:

> I hate black men, am I allowed to say that? I had thought I was actually going to settle down with a black man, you know, stay with the brother. But I have endured so much crap with them. Coloured guys actually felt that I am a sell-out when I go out with black guys

Clearly Ms Russels points to the challenges she has had to face not only from her family, but also from her community, for having become involved with black African men. In spite of facing these, it appears that her termination of relationships because of her perception of the inability of black men to commit leaves her with nothing to show for it. There is a sense of regret in Ms Russels for not having had success in relationships with black African men. What makes this almost individualistic statement relevant for this project is the racial tone which Ms Russels' pronouncements on black men assume. Unlike Mrs. Adams whose childhood experiences as a coloured person with black African 'physical features' drove her towards excluding black African men as potential marriage material, Ms Russels lays the blame for her decision to exclude them on black

African men themselves, this in a context where they still represented the object of her sexual desire.

The sense of regret that I have referred to above is accompanied by Ms Russels' lament for the lost opportunity to be with either a coloured or white man. Although there are specific experiences that she has had with the men that she has been with, it seems it is their black Africanness that she privileges as causing difficulties for her (in contrast to colouredness and whiteness). The idea that Ms McDouglas introduced in the section above, that relationships between black and white people represented a 'bending backwards' because of white guilt seems to be paralleled in this case where Ms Russels' statement suggests she had gone where she should not have gone in pursuit of intimate relationships. She stated that it was quite common for coloured women to go up to Johannesburg and get involved with black men. The implication that this went against the rule of prudence for her can be read from the following statement (still in describing the hostility towards black African men) that she makes:

> Ms Russels: It also means … hostility and also a lot of regret, because I regret not falling for maybe, another light guy, or a normal light coloured guy, you know, more or less the same values.

Ms Russels also suggests that she had experienced being with black men as time wasted. As discussed above, this is a personal experience which should apply regardless of the person's racial identity. What makes this reflection relevant here is the fact that Ms Russels agrees that her perceptions of all black African men as unworthy partners in

relationships are racially motivated. It is a potent perception insofar as it is likely to be relayed to others who are close to her as the interchange below suggests:

> Ms Russels: I certainly wouldn't tell my niece that they (black African men) are worth considering, because they are just … (laughs). I wouldn't.
>
> R: But if you walk around with that kind of …
>
> Ms Russels: It's racially motivated of course, it is. But because of my experience, you know. It's because of my experience I can confidently … even my male black friends know that. Ja. I wasted my time. I think I wasted my time, pursuing and getting hurt in the process. You know, a lot of it was pursuing, like I'd always be … I always felt belittled but still pursuing and going back to the guy that I was with for six years. So I mean, yah it's a lot of time wasted, but on the one hand also an experience.

The relay effect did not start with Ms Russels, it would seem. In the chapter on performing coloured identities through complicity, I referred to how her own father was negatively regarded in her mother's family because he had black African features (over and above the fact that he was abusive towards her mother). As a young child she seems to have associated likeness to her father as something negative, although it could be speculated that she seems to have both some conscious and unconscious attraction to figures similar to her father, i.e., to (abusive) black African men. However, the point being made here is that black African men, as non-coloured and non-white, seem to have been constructed as unworthy partners by virtue of the fact that the women referred to

here are not black Africans themselves and therefore able to make 'better' choices. In the statement below it is clear that Ms PC has a sense that pronouncements on all black African men are unfair, however, she seems pressed to hold onto the racial explanation in explaining her experiences, justifying this by pointing to other anecdotal evidence:

> But maybe not all men are like that. It's just unfortunate that it happened to me – that now I have to put it in this way, that this is a black thing. Ja, and unfortunately … 'cause I always used to say to my mom, 'oh I'm gonna bring the true African blood' and I am definitely … I have a certain attraction for black guys, African tall dark features. That is what I am attracted to. I don't like blond and Arial looking. Even it happened to my cousin as well, she was also involved with a black guy, and he was also gallivanting around. So our families' immediate experiences with black men entering the family and having relationships with the women, are not good.

Ms Russels' uses other coloured women's experiences to support her own picture of black men. Based on her report, that she has received a raw deal from these experiences is undisputable. However, it is the degree of generalization from one or two experiences that is salient. She does not perceive either this particular man or even all men as untrustworthy, but black African men as a group. It is important to emphasize here that the racist history of this country plays a part in the racialization of her conclusions to exclude black African men as potential partners and reinforces the entertainment of stereotypes about promiscuity.

However, this is not the only experience that coloured women have had with black African men. While on the one hand one comes across images of black men as violent, sly, subversive and unreliable, there are also other images of the docile, abused black man, whose tenuous inclusion in coloured racial identity and involvement with coloured women is characterized by domination. In these instances, it is coloured women who emerge as dominant, sometimes due to the fact that in terms of their racial identity, they occupied a higher socio-racial position. Ms McDouglas talks about both her father and other black African males in her family, and she suggests that the dynamics were such that the black men assumed a retiring position in relation to their coloured women, and the social dominance of the coloured identity:

> Ms McDouglas: An African man, but … like my father also, they were … they weren't very … what's the word … very assertive about their Africanness. The women were very dominant, and with that was the coloured identity that was very dominant.

Ms MA points to how her aunt's bossiness tended to relegate her uncle to the background, and how it also impacted on the quality of relationships with this uncle. In her own words, she says that in spite of the fact that her uncle was 'sweet' he also 'just seemed very obsequious'. If this was the kind of impact that the dominance of coloured women over their black African partners had on children's relationships with the latter, it stands to reason that it might have impacted on the children's perceptions of black Africans in general too. This is particularly significant given the limited contact with black Africans that the performance of coloured identities afforded coloured identified persons. These men in these households were the only contact that coloured children had

with black Africanness. The image of a docile African man emerges more strongly from Ms McDouglas descriptions of the relationship between her own parents. Here again, it is when viewed from the perspective of a child that the dominated image of an African man is brought into bold relief:

> My father … and my mother was also very domineering … my father … I mean I looked at my father, I had a photo of my father when they were young, and he looked like … like very attractive, and … a really cool guy. But if I think of my memories in the house, my mother was very dominant. If I remember going on family holidays, just the way she used to relate … the way they used to relate to people. She was always the dominant one; and now Shelly (her sister), who's very close to my father – it used to annoy her. And they (R: Shelly – she's your sister?) … my sister, and then my younger sister. And there were times when they used to tell my mother – and we were getting older you know – into the 80s, late 80s, really challenge authority – they used to tell her that she must treat my father better.

She completes the picture painted in this statement by saying:

> So, but … the house … he's never been like the man of the house – the patriarch. More matriarch.

Although the exposure of coloured identified children to this playing out of power dynamics in these contexts raises concern, it appears that these children were able to show resistance against this. It is as they grow older that they assert themselves against

the treatment that their mother metes out to their father. Could it be due to the fact that as her children, their claim on coloured identity is not as insecure as their father's? This question arises out of the description of conflictual moments between Mr. Paulse's grandmother and extended family on the one had; and his grandfather who had become colouredified (as presented in Chapter 3) on the other. As discussed previously, Mr. Paulse's grandfather was called 'kaffir' during conflicts with his wife and her family. I have also described how vulnerable and defenseless he appeared to be against this charge. Similarly, Ms McDouglas' father was the one who 'bowed down' when encountering conflict with his wife as exemplified in this description by the younger of their daughters:

> You know this mother of mine, the way she went on … with my father, like he was her child, and the way she was demanding her money from him.

Given the racist context in which these relationships were embedded, which valued colouredness over black Africanness, the dominance of coloured women was also instrumental for the continued status of being non-black. The use of the concept of non-black in this context is deliberate, as it portrays that which these families had to be differentiated or differentiate themselves from, especially in public. As Ms McDouglas describes her father,

> Oh God, I don't know. African, no I have never seen him as an African. I mean we know that he knows an African language, but we have never heard him say anything (laughs). And also the reason why I say I'm coloured, because Afrikaans was our mother tongue, when we grew up, in our home we spoke Afrikaans.

R: Ok. So you are not quite sure how your father would classify himself.

Ms McDouglas: I am not sure.

R: You seem to be putting some importance on the fact that he knows some African language. What does it say to you?

Ms McDouglas: It says that clearly he's got African … clearly his parents are African, you know … uhh and, I mean look at his sister, his sister is cool. I mean she has always maintained her African identity.

Against such strong evidence that he might be black African, this man and his family seem to depend on the colouredness of his wife, to continue living as coloured. 'Fronting' the wife, especially when doing business or official transactions, allowed the family access to those privileges which it would have been problematic for Ms McDouglas' father to supply. This created particular partner and gender dynamics in the relationship, reinforcing the wife's dominance and perceived ability to provide. The problem seems to be where does one draw the line, between strategic dominance and malicious dominance, and how does one manage this for oneself and in an intimate relationship?

A coloured *moffie*

Sexuality and race did not intersect only in heterosexual relationships and unions. The intersection between homosexuality and race in the context of this research encouraged

the need to explore the vicissitudes of homophobia in a racist context. This is not a new phenomenon. For instance Kendall Thomas (in Blount & Cunningham, 1996) uses writings about James Baldwin to examine how black communities tended to respond to and conceptualize homosexual identities. In this examination, the most revealing statement regarding being black and gay that he makes is the following:

> I knew that while Baldwin may have left America because he was black, he left Harlem, the place he called "home," because he was gay (p. 56)

What this statement reveals is the double prejudice that accrues to one who is both black and gay. In this instance, although being black tends to attract discrimination from outside, in the sense that it is those who consider themselves 'non-blacks' that tend to evince racist attitudes towards those who are black, discrimination based on sexual preference is engendered from within one's group. Given that racism was rife during the time that James Baldwin lived in America, he left his country to escape racism. However, Thomas suggests that because of his sexual preference his own home in Harlem failed to provide a sanctuary for him. It was also in Harlem where James Baldwin felt that many held him in contempt as a 'sexually dubious … unspeakably erratic freak' as Thomas says. Thomas' intervention comes in the wake of attempts to 'desexualize' Baldwin as part of the process to include him in the group of 'luminaries of the Afro-American experience'.

The point of this discussion is to illustrate the precedents of sexual preference-based discrimination where it occurs within a group where one would have believed one

belonged on the basis of racial identity. Thomas uses Baldwin to make the point that in a society that is characterized by the bifurcation of race, such as that of the United Sates, one's blackness precedes one's sexual identity as a means through which one is discriminated against. He quotes Baldwin who says: 'A black person who is a sexual conundrum to society is already, long before the question of sexuality comes into it, menaced and marked because he's black or she's black'. I intend to elucidate a contrasting point that in societies where there are multiple racial categories, a person who is a 'sexual conundrum' might evoke responses from others that include, but are not limited to, what both Thomas and Baldwin imply. It is important to note that in the US, once one fell outside of the white racial group, racial denigration was complete, with no possibility for relegation to a lower racial classification, at least not in the official sense. In that sense, for a coloured identified person in South Africa, the black African racial category represents an excess of racial classification which has implications for the interaction between racial and sexual identities. The quote below suggests this interaction, which I propose is rendered more complex than in a situation where race has been binarized:

> Mr. Lenniz: How did I classify myself ... I didn't classify myself. That first must be an important thing to me, firstly because I didn't understand; I think I was very naive when I was young. Ehhm …growing up in a coloured area, ehhm … I had double problem, because firstly I was effeminate. As a youngster I was extremely feminine. So I had dual … can I say I had a dual problem, or maybe not dual to other people, but dual to me. Firstly I never acknowledged myself as a particular … black, coloured or white. I didn't see that, ok, for me, it wasn't an issue. The only big problem I had as a child was my

> femininity, the fact that I was effeminate, the fact that I was …as they say 'girlish' was a big problem because if I walk out of my door, it was ... not that I was asking for it, but it was ja ...the boys the girls, people in general, will comment on it. You know, they would shout 'hey *moffie'* (a concept used in heterosexist contexts to derogate gay or effeminate men) or … you know. So there was that ehhm … there was immediate identification that I was different to other boys, and I think that became the focus of my life, as more importantly than whether I was black or whether I was coloured, I think, ja.

Unlike in Thomas' American context where the political self-assertion of black people had gained momentum, and asserting black identity was crucial and attracted positive sanction from fellow black people, in this context gay identity occurs not in the black African community, but within a coloured community which asserted itself against blackness. Zegeye (2001) argues that coloured people bought into the white nationalist's propaganda that black South Africans were to be feared and constructed as the socially unacceptable 'other'. How then does an additional dimension of discrimination impact in this situation? Mr. Lenniz seems to imply that at least at this point, feeling discriminated against on the basis of his perceived sexuality weighed more heavily than the fact that his father was a black African, and by implication, the fact that potentially, he could be identified as black African. In this way, seeing that he did not identify (and was not identified) as black; it appears Mr. Lenniz still redeems himself racially: is it better to deal with being called a 'moffie' than being called a 'kaffir'? It looks as if at the point which he describes, he could still claim affinity with the coloured group on the basis of race, an affinity which redeemed him from the ultimate denigration in a racist society – being identified as a black African. Although Mr. MM ended up with double trouble as

he indicates at the beginning of the quote above, it did not start off as double trouble, because his claim to coloured identity had not been challenged yet, as suggested by this statement:

> R: If you say the names that you have been called … were you called anything else other than *moffie*?
>
> Mr. Lenniz: I don't believe that at that time, other than if I did go back to Mannenberg now in my adult life, to confirm that I was black, I don't believe that people would have ...would have even … would have thought that.
>
> R: Why … why?
>
> Mr. Lenniz: Because I believe … because my mother is coloured, and because we have lived there for so many years, I think we were just accepted by the community as coloured people. I believe if I didn't come back, or if I didn't go back in my adult life and confirmed that my father was Mozambican, and confirm that we were Shangaan, I don't believe people would have …would have seen us as black people in a coloured community, I don't believe that.

Dealing with being thought of as being a black African is something that Mr. Lenniz encounters exactly at the point where his self-assertion against being called *moffie* reaches its zenith. He reports that initially he took up ball-room dancing, believing that the close interaction with female partners would lessen others' perception of him as a *moffie*. He felt that this would improve his 'social stance', and that it would lessen the

ostracism that he experienced. It is not clear as to whether his dancing succeeded in rendering him less of a 'moffie' in the eyes of his community, but it is clear that through this and the prowess that he developed in this activity, he found a way to deflect denigration and attract admiration. The doubtfulness of the success of this endeavour becomes clearer when he describes how he felt following an unplanned pregnancy of his young dancing partner. In the midst of the hurt, confusion and the humiliation of being denounced as a 'kaffir' or a black African, he seems to experience excitement:

> And because I was so ostracized in the community where I was living, it was better for me, it was better for me it was pride for me to impregnate her. So it was almost a forced situation, you understand? It was a way to confirm that I was a man in a way, you understand? The fact that she was pregnant it was … look it was a trophy for me. Because look, I was growing up in this community where everyone said *moffie, moffie, moffie*; and I had a chance to impregnate this girl. At the time I don't think I did it intentionally, but when I discovered and when I heard that she was pregnant, I … it was a trophy for me, I think, yes.

Ironically, this almost perverse self-assertion of his masculinity in this context, coincided with the introduction of another dimension within which he would be ostracized. What the South African system of racial classification afforded Mr. Lenniz, which would not have been the case in most other countries which have a history of racism, is that he had the option to embrace an alternative racial and political identity, which asserted itself against the racism practiced both by white South Africans and coloured people who were

rejecting him. This is how Mr. Lenniz read his dancing partner's relatives' reaction to the pregnancy and his response to this:

> Mr. Lenniz: It changed how I looked at myself, and how I saw myself in society, because that was the confirmation that I was black. I think my ... I became aggressive I should say, because look I was working in Belgravia Road, it was … some nights it was caspers, it was tear gas, it was … you know, throwing of stones. Because look it was at the height of the apartheid thingy you know. So it's then when I think I became a part of the struggle, I think, only in 1995 I started realizing the importance of fighting for the freedom not just, not just for other people, because I wasn't concerned. I think it was the freedom for me. I believed it was the realization of what the struggle was, but it was the freedom for me, do you understand what I'm saying?

The next chapter deals with subjective transformation, and in that chapter I explore the personal change that is implied in this quote in more detail. Suffice to point out here that it seems it was by default that Mr. Lenniz ended up embracing the black African identity. It looks as if for a coloured person whom the coloured community had ostracized due to his perceived sexuality, black Africanness held out a promise of acceptance, and more so at the onset of a democratic dispensation in this country. At this point, the sociopolitical aversion that adhered to one who was black African identified was changing, and as Ms Russels states, it was 'cool' and fashionable to be associated with black people.

To get back to the reference that I made at the beginning of this section, it appears that in the same way as Baldwin left Harlem because he was gay, Mr. Lenniz left his neighbourhood because he was both black and gay:

> Mr. Lenniz: Yes. Look I mean I should be embarrassed to say that ... but at the time I believed … it confirmed to me that I was anything other than what they were calling me. Because, ja, it was … it was more of … it was very hurtful. I'm an extremely sensitive person, and I get hurt by small things people say about me. Hence I decided to live the way I live. I live extremely isolated because I believe for myself if I live like this I don't care what people are saying, and therefore nothing will hurt me. So, ja.
>
> R: But then you know, I still wanna come back to this you know, having impregnated your girlfriend then, did that change the way people saw you? Did they continue calling you *moffie*?
>
> Mr. Lenniz: I moved out of Mannenberg remember (R: Ok). So I moved from Mannenberg to Wynberg, so I was in a completely different environment

This is the double trouble that he referred to in the initial quote cited in this section. His colouredness provided comfort for some time, but this protection crumbled as his circumstances brought one source of his discrimination (sexual preference) into dispute. Yet, unlike Baldwin, the burden of ostracism on the basis of sexuality and race drove him into a different mode of racial identification, and not out of his country. From Mr. Lenniz' description above, one can read the fact that another residential area provided refuge for him from the homophobia that he was experiencing. Further, as can be

deduced from the discussion above, the political changes that took place leading to new perceptions of the black African identity seem to have provided a racial sanctuary for him.

Conclusion

In contexts where racial identities are privileged over other kinds of self-identifying, racial difference raises tensions. One of the central arguments in this project is the idea that even though political change has taken place in South Africa, race-based perceptions are still common. These perceptions also inform the tensions that are characteristic of interracial relating in a transforming society, tensions which sometimes take the form of what I have referred to as 'the nightmare of interracial relating'. In line with this, I have argued how the personal is not exempted from the dynamics of social processes and structures that are racially defined. I have explored the interrelatedness of racial and sexual identities especially where two people who identify as racially different engage in an intimate relationship. In this sense, the discussion above concurs with Martha Hodes' (1999) remark that 'the history of racial categories is often a history of sexuality as well, for it is partly as a result of the taboos against boundary crossing that such categories are invented' (p. 1). This idea is in keeping with the one made earlier in this chapter, that preoccupations with the sexuality of the colonial subject or the black African evince colonial anxiety regarding the other who is different from the self. This difference facilitates all kinds of projections, chief of which is the perception of the colonized as

violent and sexually licentious, which then justifies the colonizer's aggression and violation of the colonized, through acts of racism amongst others.

This chapter suggests that racially inflected meanings have persisted in those contexts where racial categories have been used to differentiate amongst people. In post-colonial South Africa, the racism and patriarchy that are an integral part of interracial relations have clear origins from colonial times. In these contexts, sexualities and their expressions are compelled to respond in some way to the politics of the time, as much as they are shaped by such contexts and histories.

CHAPTER 7: SUBJECTIVE TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

The chapters that precede the current one have emphasized the effects of racist practices which have played themselves out in this country. There is also a clear link between the emergence of these practices in South Africa and broader racist practices elsewhere where colonialism is inscribed as a historical fact. For instance rules regarding miscegenation in the United States have influenced the promulgation of laws regarding cross-racial unions in South Africa, which amongst others took the form of the Immorality Act following the implementation of apartheid in the early 1940s.

At the beginning of this thesis I reviewed literature that suggested that the socio-legal framework that underpins racist practices interplays with subjective experiences, somehow rooting the existence of racism beyond the social. The intransigence of racist practices, in spite of socio-political changes, points to the need to explore intrapersonal processes which remain largely inaccessible to many of the political changes that I have referred to. I use the hypothesis that racist practices are rooted elsewhere other than in purely socio-legal and socio-political frameworks to explain the disjunctive relationship between political changes such as those contained in the South African constitution on the one hand; and on the other hand the apparent racist practices that continue to be privately expressed, even by those who believe themselves to be non-racist.

This chapter links with the previous one, and engages further with the notion of the interplay between the social and the personal, reflecting upon broad socio-historical discussions, and exploring the notion of personal change of a racial subject against the background that these discussions provide. More specifically, this chapter explores those instances in which the participants clearly differentiated between their past beliefs and perceptions regarding black people and the black African racial category and their current stance. The dawn of a democratic era symbolized by the 1994 general elections in South Africa provides an important reference point for the exploration of how racial dynamics have evolved in this country up to the present. One of the central themes of this chapter is exploring initial experiences (subjective) of the democratic era, and tracing how these have changed over time, focusing on sources of this change. In this chapter I refer to these changes as 'subjective change or transformation'.

I will attempt to show that even though there is a differential temporal relationship between intrapersonally held racist practices and their dependence on socio-legal and socio-political frameworks when it comes to change, these sources of racism are interdependent, with each giving rise to and being a product of the other. Unlike what St. Clair's reading of the theory of Melanie Klein suggests, where he states "Klein allowed little space for the modifying role of the environment and the good objects of the environment" (p. 44, 2000), I explore the impact of the changed environment on the participants' subjective experiences and conceptualizations of black Africanness, allowing for significant change in adult life. I have invoked Melanie Klein's conceptualization of pathology to describe racist experiences and practices precisely

because this is how racism has been conceptualized by some, especially within the psychoanalytic tradition. For instance, in previous chapters I have referred to Michael Rustin's formulation of racism as akin to psychosis. He draws this idea from Sartre's discussion of passion in the essay *Anti-Semite and Jew*, emphasizing the irrationality of racism, and characterizing it as the opposite of reason. In part, the irreconcilability of racist practices (or ideas) and reason explains the un-paired relationship between political change and psychic (or intrapersonal) change. Intrapersonal processes do not necessarily adhere to the rule of the rational. Where 'external' (as contrasted to intrapersonal) socio-political pressure, which depends heavily on the use of reason, manages to bring about political change, the psyche and its contents take longer (if at all), to evince change, given that intrapersonal change depends on something more than just reason. It also depends on personal, subjective experience.

Escaping the parental nest

In a previous chapter I discussed how the Group Areas Act provided the socio-legal framework that decreed that there be no meaningful social contact between black Africans and coloured people, especially in the Western Cape. I single out the Western Cape because in other parts of the country (e.g. Alexandra Township next to Johannesburg) separating black Africans and coloured people was neither pursued nor enforced for quite a long time following the implementation of the racist policies of the National Party. Where such pursuit and enforcement was attempted in this residential area, it was not wholly successful (Matlapeng, 2006). Further, one finds another example

of infrequent socializing between coloured people and black Africans in a book called *Our Generation*, written by Zubeida Jaffer (2003), a Muslim woman in Cape Town, who would have been classified as coloured or mixed (I derive this more from her description of her residential place – Wynberg, the 'coloured' section - and the residential places of other family members at the time – Grassy Park - as well as from the fact that after being expelled from the "whites' only" Wynberg library, it was to the coloured library that her mother was referred). In this book, the citing of black Africans is as an exception in a personal narration that is otherwise immersed in relationships between coloured people. This immersion prevails in spite of the fact that it is the liberation struggle that the author uses to frame her narration, focusing on the activities of the United Democratic Front, a movement that brought together people who otherwise belonged to different and even opposing organizations and other social formations (e.g. 'racial' and religious groupings). All these groups were united by a common cause namely, to fight for a democratic non-racist order for South Africa. One would have expected a more generous characterization of interaction between black Africans and coloured people under these circumstances. I suggest that the lack of such a description is not necessarily an unintended omission. Rather it reflects the reality of social relations between different 'racial' groups at the time. More importantly, it illustrates the void (of interaction) that becomes a space for projections, especially for groups which at the time were all dealing with the painful realities of racial discrimination. Once again, I invoke Rustin (2000) who suggests that in a social context where there is an abundance of negative feeling and anxiety that needs to be processed, such feelings are more likely to be projected in persecutory ways into negatively defined 'out-groups'. Based on the discussion in this thesis so far, it is

apparent that in a racist society such as that of pre-1994 South Africa, black Africans were everybody's 'out-group', into whom negative projections could be and were made. Lack of meaningful contact between different racial groups and the general aversion towards black Africanness served to exacerbate the susceptibility of black Africans to becoming an out-group and a receptacle for projection for other racial groups.

To give an example of this, Mr. Lenniz, who despite having identified as coloured throughout his childhood had begun to embrace the black African identity, described the conceptualization of black Africans by coloured people as follows:

> Mr. Lenniz: I think prior to 1994, we were nothing but labourers. We were nothing, we could be nothing but labourers, we could be nothing but people who will clean for you or ... or do things for you eehhm it's one person you shouldn't respect, it's the last person you should respect. You understand? This is the man who will build your house, this is the man who would … you understand, who would put plaster on your walls. It wasn't in an authoritative position, it wasn't a man who could ehh look after family. To ... to this community or this girlfriend that I had that time, ehhm there was no … there was no room for a black person. We were the lowest form.

Mr. Lenniz refers not only to the community in which he grew up, but also to his immediate family and the household within which he was raised. It is particularly significant to note that this conceptualization of black Africans occurs in a household that I have described in previous discussions about Mr. Lenniz as having as much claim to black African identity as they had to coloured identity. It is worth repeating here that

black Africanness seemed to become conflated with other negative experiences that the family, especially the mother, had suffered in relating to a black African man, her children's father. Having stated this, it is possible to see this conceptualization as part of the general projection process – which fails to see black Africans as anything but what the quotation above describes.

Mr. Lenniz also refers to 1994 specifically, suggesting that there might have been change between how black Africans were perceived before and after 1994. Of particular importance for this chapter, is how Mr. Lenniz includes himself within the black African racial category. The way he expresses this suggests going beyond just acceptance. It suggests that Mr. Lenniz has identified with the black African identity, a much more textured process. The formulation of identification in the psychoanalytic literature is useful to refer to for a further elucidation of this point. Identification tends to occur firstly when there is an expressed need which (an)other is believed to possess the ability to fulfill, as would be the case where alter-ego or merger needs are experienced (Ernest Wolf provides a discussion of such self-object needs in his book called *Treating the Self* (1988)). Alternatively identification occurs where there is a fear of (an)other, in which case it is meant to render one less of an opponent in order to escape the feared annihilating retaliation from this (an)other. The latter can be read off the concept of 'identification with the aggressor', wherein a victim takes on all or some qualities of the perpetrator in a move to avoid continued feelings of victimhood and the accompanying helplessness. These feeling states (general victimhood and helplessness) position one in opposition to the perpetrator, encouraging one to fight back in a context where victory is

unlikely. In responding in this way, one is likely to exacerbate the violence of the perpetrator. My point in discussing the concept of identification in this case is to illustrate that 'going beyond' an acceptance of (an)other and identifying with this (an)other is compelled by a complex nexus of needs, the fulfillment of which (be it in a mature or primitive/pathological manner) is essential for the psychological survival of the person. I proffer that Mr. Lenniz' social surround provided little opportunity for him to identify with the coloured community or to have his psychological needs met. For instance, he says:

> Mr. Lenniz: She [his mother] has denounced me ... look my whole … my family has denounced me. My whole life has been a denunciation, do you understand? If you see my history ... if you go back, if you just listen to the tapes I have given you, I … from the very onset of everything I say it is a denunciation of who you are ... publicly, physically, you understand?

In the previous chapter which focused on sexuality I discussed how Mr. Lenniz seems to have been not only a sexual conundrum (as Baldwin refers to homosexuality in Black America during his time), but he had been *dis*-identified with racially as well, and referred to as a 'kaffir'. This *dis*-identification seems to have happened precisely at a point where he experienced himself to have defeated one aspect of his denunciation: he had just succeeded in impregnating a woman, which although accidental and unfortunate, conferred on him the manliness which his family and community had made him feel he was without up to that point. It could be speculated that this 'achievement', following a

protracted period of humiliation by members of his community, might have given rise to a more hopeful seeking of the satisfaction of mirroring needs (or 'a need to feel affirmed, confirmed or recognized' – Wolf, 1988, p. 55). Mirroring was not forthcoming, and instead the quote above suggests something opposite resulted. It suggests how pervasive his feelings of exclusion were, implying that it was not recognition, affirmation or confirmation that he received, or a welcome into the fold of masculinity. He felt neither a part of his family, his community, his racial grouping, nor the socially desirable sex group. The circumstances of his subjective transformation and his particular identification with those whom the experience of his upbringing had relegated to the 'station' of being labourers are more compelling when one considers that it is not a defeated 'other' that he is both forced to identify with and personally decides to embrace. It is a fighting 'other', which continued to show signs of valiance in spite of the might of the regime at that point in time. Psychologically, this is (an)other that is worthy of identifying with, the 'relegation' to which held the promise that Mr. Lenniz' self-object needs might be met, and the potentially fragmenting self could be re-invigorated. In a sense he identified with a victim who refused to introject the position of the victimized, but retained some sense of hope and personal or collective potency. It is an identification that made him feel he belonged, as contrasted to the denunciation that he suffered particularly at the hands of those who he believed himself to have some kinship with.

The fact that Mr. Lenniz was kicked out of the family home following another expulsion from his dance partner's home, as well as his 'violent' break up with a woman who was carrying his child, seems to have exposed him to circumstances that compelled his

change of outlook and self-experience. The discussion above is consistent with the idea proffered in psychological and particularly psychoanalytic literature, regarding the centrality of the family home and experiences of relationships therein, on how one sees the world. One can read from the discussion with Mr. Lenniz that he looks upon separating from his family almost as a denunciation on his part. It is almost as if he is pressed not only to leave the family nest, but to 'destroy' its identity as well. The phantasy of the proverbial Kleinian infant who attacks and destroys bad objects which withhold pleasant experiences is given life in Mr. Lenniz's perception. Mr. Lenniz could have felt affirmed firstly, as his mother's coloured child; secondly, as his parents' son and a man in his community; and thirdly as an acceptable father to his daughter; (all of which would have represented a recognition of his being both coloured and male). Mr. Lenniz is denied affirmation from all of these identifications. The associated 'good feelings', emanating from one's ability to evoke needed responses from others, were withheld in ways that were injurious to his self at times as can be seen from the following interview extract:

> Yes. Look I mean I should be embarrassed to say that ... but at the time I believed … it [the pregnancy] confirmed to me that I was anything but what they were calling me. Because, ja, it was … it was more of … it was very hurtful. I'm an extremely sensitive person, and I get hurt by small things people say about me. Hence I decided to live the way I live. I live extremely isolated because I believe for myself if I live like this I don't care what people are saying, and therefore nothing will hurt me.

This quote clarifies that Mr. Lenniz' loosening ties with his family and 'racial grouping' was compelled by emotional pain, and therefore, akin to the turning away of the Kleinian infant (in phantasy) at experiencing the 'trauma' of subjective deprivation. The quote below suggests the phantasied object attack and destruction that Klein asserts tends to follow such an experience as that discussed above.

> R: What happened, I mean your father is Shangaan, your mother you say is coloured. So you seem to be going the one route, that you are Shangaan. What happens to the colouredness if I were to put it that way, what happens to the colouredness? Because it just feels like, it takes two people to create a child.
>
> Mr. Lenniz: I hear what you are saying, but when you are asking me what happened to the coloured side of you, I don't know. Because look, firstly, I don't see them as any different to me (R: Who?), coloured people, as any different to me. To me ... because my father is Shangaan, I naturally lurched onto that, and I see my mother as my mother, with a French father, and that's it. I don't see her as a coloured, coloured … you know, my mom is not like that hey, I don't see her as coloured.

In line with the objective of this section, Mr. Lenniz seems to have escaped the family nest, where black Africans are still thought of in racist terms. He perceives his difficulties with living with other people, and especially with forming relationships in South Africa (as compared to Mozambique) as being a consequence of his experiences with those who form part of his immediate and extended families. Even in his self-declaration as Shangaan, Mr. Lenniz seems to indicate his acceptance of the black African identity, as

long as it is not local black Africans that become his reference point. I conclude this part with a quote from Fanon (1951, p.142) where he makes reference to the interdependence between the family and the nation:

> A normal child that has grown up in a normal family will be a normal man. There is no disproportion between the life of the family and the life of the nation.

After writing this sentence, Fanon side-steps the controversy that is typically evoked by the concept of 'normality' by referring the reader to a text that elucidates this concept biologically. However, it is Fanon's failure to hold back from inserting a psychological context to the explanation of normalcy that this chapter generally, and this section specifically, resonates with. In the footnote explaining this assertion, Fanon adds that 'in the psychological sphere the abnormal man is he who demands, who appeals, who begs'. If this explanation were valid, then Mr. Lenniz would be described as showing signs of normalcy, precisely because he has turned his back on colouredness, on heterosexuality and on living with others. It is only when one appreciates the reservations that Fanon held regarding (western) psychological and psychiatric conceptualizations and practices of his time that one senses the sarcasm behind this explanation. Indeed, later psychological conceptualizations have emphasized that the essence of psychological health does not lie in the self-sufficiency implied in not needing others and turning away from social relationships. Essentially, psychological health, and normalcy by implication, is represented by the ability to live with and face some of life's unpleasantness without breaking down, or being able to achieve cohesion when unavoidable fragmentation has occurred. The scope of this project does not extend to diagnosing psychiatric conditions,

but insofar as Mr. Lenniz seems to have turned away from some of the things that he desired from his family and community (in a defensive way), and insofar as he grew up as part of a nation that practiced racism and haboured biases against particular sexual orientations, his is not a psychologically normal picture.

Political activism and subjective change

Mr. Lenniz seems to capture the perceptions that prevailed within coloured communities regarding the liberation movements in reflecting on the period before he was called a 'kaffir' by the mother of his dance partner. As discussed in the preceding section, being called a 'kaffir' represented a turning point which forced him to re-assess his personal circumstances and his outlook on life. This reassessment lead to a differentiation between gang-related violence on the one hand, which for a couple of decades had been rife in coloured townships on the Cape Flats, and the violence that was part of political agitation to bring about change in South Africa. Mr. Lenniz says:

> Mr. Lenniz: Prior to the pregnancy I never understood why people were fighting, because I was opposed to violence and aggressivity *(*sic*)*. And then when she was pregnant and the mother came up with '*jou kaffir, you … hoe kan jy, met 'n kaffir …*' (you kaffir, you … how can you, with a kaffir) and then suddenly, what was happening around me at Wembly, started hitting home. It started becoming clear why people were fighting, because look, at that time I was at high school, I was at Oaklands, it was a Muslim school, we had an SRC. They were very proactive in the things that they were going to

do, you know, restructuring, causing anarchy … you know, all those things, but I never participated, because I never understood, do you understand?

R: What was your perception of the struggle prior to that?

Mr. Lenniz: I think prior to that for me it was a lot of violence, because eehm for me it was unnecessary violence, it was eehm a lot of … because look I was living in Manenberg, it was a violent area. So the struggle was nothing different, to the area that I was living in, you understand? You can walk from the station and someone can rob you. That's violence, so why would I want to pick up a stone and throw it to a car? I mean what ...do you understand? I was … to me … living in Mannenberg, and having been exposed to gangsters on my corner, when I sleep at night, knocking on the walls where … because look they used to be on the corner. All they do if they want to create anarchy, they just knock on your wall. It's something …you understand … wake up … if they want to create their nonsense. So for me I couldn't find the correlation between the two. Because I was so opposed to the violence I was so … look I mean I disliked it so much, that I didn't see the reality of wanting to be part of the thuggery (sic) life, to create more violence, so I didn't understand the two. I didn't understand that they were fighting for the freedom of the country. You understand? For me it was to be safe, the personal security, you know, I wanted to be safe. I wanted to walk from the station without being mugged. So, I couldn't understand … but I think in 1995, the two married each other for me. And I separated it, you know that is violence against people, this is violence against the freedom of a greater part of …you know, it wasn't so much 'me' afterwards. It was … it became an 'us' - a 'we' situation. So I believe with my daughter's pregnancy, the 'we' became a reality. But I think prior to that it was more an 'I' syndrome.

I have quoted Mr. Lenniz at length here because in addition to the chaos and the incomprehensibility of his circumstances (as suggested by his manner of speech infused with repetitions of the question 'you understand?') his statement also suggests a number of things which are important in this section. Firstly, the black Africans who were the most discriminated against were the majority in the liberation movements. There is a suggestion in Mr. Lenniz' statement that clashes between government forces and black political activists led to a belief that this was all part of general 'thuggery'. If one appreciates that the government at the time used the media to spread its anti-black propaganda, and the fact that there was little contact between coloured people and black Africans, it is possible to assume that the police were seen as innocent actors who were trying to bring about order, while black Africans were seen as disturbing that order. As has been revealed by the TRC process, a lot of violence was perpetrated by the police and the military, which at the time was never brought to the attention of the public. So in essence, it was black Africans who were perceived as responsible for the said 'thuggery'. This is not something new or unique where information and contact between different groups are regulated politically. Fanon (1951) also refers to this phenomenon in discussing how the Antilleans perceived the Senegalese. This reference is instructive here:

> It is apparent that one would hardly be mistaken in saying that the Antillean does not altogether apprehend the fact of his being a Negro. I was perhaps thirteen when for the first time I saw Senegalese soldiers. All I knew about them was what I had heard from veterans of the First World War: 'They attack with the bayonet, and, when that doesn't

> work, they just punch their way through the machine gun fire with their fists … They cut off heads and collect human ears (p. 62).

With this explanation, Fanon makes the point that in spite of the similar racist experiences that both the Senegalese and the Antillean suffer on encountering the European in France, prior to that the Antillean self-excludes from the general category of 'Negro' with the adherent social perceptions. The point of this discussion is to illustrate what a mammoth task it was for those who managed to 'cross the floor' so to speak, and identify with the liberation struggle, especially when one considers the tight control that the government at the time exercised around information dissemination. If information dissemination had been less restricted, people would have managed to receive adequate information about the liberation struggle to make informed decisions, particularly in regard to whether they wanted to participate or not.

Secondly, Mr. Lenniz' statement illustrates the almost insulating effect that coloured identity afforded coloured people, alienating them from the priorities of the liberation movements. It is an insulatory effect that seems to have informed the general perceptions about black people in coloured communities of the past. For instance, in discussing the 'coloured vote' (which I will return to later in the chapter) Brian Williams (in James, Calliguire and Cullinan, 1996) echoes Fanon's childhood perceptions of the Senegalese. He says that the National Party 'promoted the stereotype of Africans as violent people who necklaced their opponents'. The fact that the violent means with which the liberation movements met the violence of the state was a carefully considered option was not recognized or publicized. Consequently, that black Africans could be leaders of high

quality, capable of running the country, was hidden from the general perceptions and experiences of coloured people. This is the insulation that I am referring to in this section, where the problems experienced by black Africans could not be conceived of as similar problems to those that coloured communities were exposed to. In Mr. Lenniz' mind, black Africans were just causing unnecessary violence, which he compared to the gangster violence which was part of his neighbourhood. It took suffering the extreme psychic trauma of being 'denunciated' by his 'racial grouping' for Mr. Lenniz to take another perspective on the liberation struggle activities.

I need to emphasize a point that I might have made light of in previous chapters of this thesis. I have discussed the experiences of the participants as if they represented the general experiences of coloured people. This should not be interpreted as an attempt to generalize the findings of this study to all coloured people. Indeed, the methodology chapter explains the limits of this study, and refers to how I analyze the data gathered. I raise this point here because Mr. Lenniz has referred to the student organizations at his high school, suggesting that even though he did not participate in student political activities, which in most cases were aligned to the goals of the liberation movements; some of his peers did, and had been involved in such activities for quite some time. I have detailed Mr. Lenniz' experiences and perceptions as a prelude to discussing how other participants happened upon political activism, especially while they were at high school. As will be illustrated, their participation in student political activism aligned to the liberation movements was not a chance event as was the case with Mr. Lenniz.

In discussing Ms McDouglas in previous chapters, I have pointed out some of the incidents that she experienced as hurtful during her school years. Further, I have described school years as a period in childhood during which children are helplessly at the mercy of adults, with few personal resources to assert themselves in response to the negative experiences, which in this case seem to have been racially based. It appears that as people reached adolescence or high school they began exploring ways in which they could assert themselves against perceptions which had been hurtful to them up to that point. Ms McDouglas encountered experiences during her school years which became the foundation of her political activism, and consequently, her subjective transformation. Firstly, it would appear that in contrast to Mr. Lenniz' case, the progressive nature of her high school set off the process of her engaging the racist system which she felt was responsible for the racist treatment that she had endured as a young child, especially during her primary school years.

One of the first things that she mentioned regarding her early days at this school was the speech that the headmaster gave, which emphasized the need to act against prejudice. More specifically, Ms McDouglas was impressed by the headmaster's challenge of the idea that blacks were inferior to coloured people in particular, and other races in general. Arguably, she might have felt that she had come to a school where she was welcomed and not discriminated against. Although Ms McDouglas identified as coloured, it would seem the exclusion that she suffered as a result of her appearance evoked ambivalence in terms of this identification. For instance, she referred to a context later in her life where

racist jokes were made against black Africans. In this context, she described her reaction as follows:

> Ms McDouglas: Why, I mean the jokes they would tell about kaffirs would be like really derogatory kind of stuff. So you wouldn't want to associate yourself with them.
>
> R: Would you be the only one that would dissociate yourself when those jokes are passed around, or …
>
> Ms McDouglas: There would be others, there would be others. Like with the friends that I was with when I was 19/18 years. There would be three or four African looking yes, you know. Out of a group of about ten to fifteen…
>
> R: So in your group … that would be the part of the group that would dissociate themselves?
>
> Ms Douglas: From … yes … from, from … because I mean you, I mean you didn't see yourself as African, like from Gugulethu. You saw yourself as coloured. It's just you looked different but you saw yourself as coloured. And then you dissociate yourself from those kinds of jokes. But, but there would be, you would still have this concept that look they are also speaking about me or they're speaking about us you know, when they make these kinds of jokes or comments, about … I mean they were like really, I can't remember those jokes but they were like really terrible. Racists and racist joke they were like really terrible. I can't remember. I have to think hard to recall some of them.

This is reminiscent of Fanon's assertion that where a black person hears anti-Semitic expressions, s/he should expect racist sentiments too, against black people. In this case, it seems Ms McDouglas felt accommodated by the headmaster's speech, in that one who speaks against the discrimination of black Africans is unlikely to encourage the discrimination of coloured people with an appearance that is similar to hers. Similarly, and by means of extension of Fanon's idea concerning the relationship between the anti-Semite and the racist, a coloured person who makes racist jokes about black people is also likely to be prejudiced against coloured people with African features (as Ms McDouglas has described herself). It would seem that it was on this basis that she felt both welcomed at this school, and finally empowered to deal with the emotional scars suffered as a child.

Her political activism was also influenced by the fact that teachers at her high school had a reading group which encouraged pupils to read too, providing guidance in terms of the literature that could be read. She describes this literature as being informative regarding the working class struggle and the struggles of the oppressed in other countries. Amongst the books that were part of the list that her teachers encouraged them to read she cites *Showdown at Iron Hill* by Douglas Hill (1969) and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* by Robert Tressel (1914). Both these texts discuss the subject of intergroup oppression and exploitation, and the latter critiques capitalism and espouses socialism as a preferred alternative. One gets an impression here that unlike the conformist character of her junior school, Ms McDouglas' high school encouraged an attitude that would question the socio-political climate of the time. She also cites a visit

by one of the leaders SASO, a student organization that was aligned to the Black Consciousness Movement. This student leader encouraged Ms McDouglas and her group that as fellow 'blacks' they had to fight against oppression. The background just sketched above begs the question as to who amongst coloured people was amenable to fighting against (racial) oppression, especially if it means joining the fight side by side with black Africans. In a discussion on racism and racial hierarchy, Daria Caliguire quotes a coloured resident of Mossel Bay in whose words it is clear that although coloured people were racially oppressed, black Africans stood to gain more from defeating racial discrimination in South Africa (In James et al., 1996). To rephrase the question in psychological terms, what vulnerabilities or convictions rendered some coloured people more amenable to joining the fight against racial oppression? A further question would be what immediate benefits contributed to this amenability, given that the notion of freedom is such an abstract one, and it was almost inconceivable that freedom in its complexity would be attained in the participants' lifetime?

Looking at Ms McDouglas' history, the relevant parts of which have been referred to above (e.g. her junior school experiences), together with that of Ms Russels, it is compelling to propose that there seems to be a link between personal experience of racial discrimination (as a coloured person) and amenability (or susceptibility) to participating in the liberation struggle. This seems to be the case particularly for those whose experiences of racial discrimination identified them with black Africans (e.g. because of appearance). In the chapter on intrafamilial difference Ms Russels refers to how her black features ('curly hair', 'flat nose', 'big but', etc) made her feel the odd one out. As the

argument made earlier in this chapter goes, positive self-object experiences seemed permanently precluded or out of reach in that black Africanness was indelibly engraved on their corporeal selves. A society with more relaxed racial attitudes would open the possibility for them to be rendered affirmable and mirror*able*. It would remove from society and their consciousness their permanent malady: the negative perceptions of black Africanness. A person like Ms McDouglas would then find the burden of being beautiful and a black woman less onerous. Someone who has experienced himself as racially denounced would benefit from a non-racist socio-political order.

Family influence

The discussion above foregrounds suffering racial discrimination at a personal level as an important source of subjective transformation. In line with what I have stated in introducing this chapter, this view presupposes that there has been a period during which in identifying as coloured, the participants might have conformed to the racist beliefs of the time. For instance, Ms Russels' displeasure with her physical attributes reflected her discomfort with that which associated her with black Africanness, as contrasted to her sister whose features identified her as different to black Africans. I have also stated the importance of being anything but black African in a racist society, given that amongst other factors, resource distribution was tied to race (Calliguire, in James et al., 1996), with black Africans occupying the last position on the racial hierarchy, and having least access to needed resources. However, subjective transformation, broadly meaning the point in time where coloured people took their place in the fight against racism side by

side with other oppressed groups, but primarily alongside black Africans, was not always a result of experiences of personal racial discrimination. In spite of this, it is important to emphasize that experiences of personal racial discrimination served as an important indicator of the likelihood that one would become involved in the fight against racial oppression. There were exceptions, such as the experience of Mrs. Adams, whose suffering caused her to distance herself as much as she could from that which could associate her with black Africans. Mr. Lenniz also describes his brother in the following way:

> Mr. Lenniz: If I was a coloured, and if I was like my brother, I should say, if I was like my elder brother, who is ...that type, he just sees his life as coloured, and he has got no cultural things, and he is completely opposed to black people, and his identity is coloured. In the coloured community he is happy, everybody knows him. He is ... you know, he is married, he's got four kids, you know.

In both the experiences of Mrs. Adams and the brother that Mr. Lenniz describes in the quote above, marriage played an important role in creating a 'racial' distance between their self-perceptions as coloured and the possibility that they could be associated with black Africans, let alone fight for the political freedom and common human rights together with black Africans. Marriage also seems to have been employed in an attempt to effect proximity with the coloured group, and to ensure integration (read as decreasing the possibility of being 'suspected' of being black African) into the coloured group (as has been discussed in prior chapters).

The participants for whom subjective transformation was linked to political activism also seem to have been exposed to families or family members who were politically active at the time. In this context, I specifically refer to the participants whose family members who were part of the liberation movements. Mrs. Lotus, who grew up with black Africans in what is now known as the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, relocated to Cape Town where she trained as a nurse and started working. Prior to this relocation, there is a suggestion that Mrs. Lotus had such close relationships with black Africans that in the context of her childhood 'race' was imperceptible or insignificant. Mrs. CM describes the closeness that I am referring to in the following manner:

> All ten children was (sic) born on one farm, we grew up there. There were only two colored families, my father's cousin and us, but the rest of the people were black. We used to eat out of one dish with the black people. We never classified them as black. We never had that in us ....you are black, you are coloured, no! We used to sleep under one blanket; I had black *chommies* (friends) till the age of ... you know I went to school late. When I went to school in Tarkastad I couldn't even speak Afrikaans. That was me. I speak only Xhosa (she raises her voice) (R: Ok). I learned to speak Afrikaans in the school, in a coloured school. I was eight years old when I went to school for the first time.

The indicators of the insignificance of race that Mrs. Lotus chooses to illustrate her point in the caption above are both interesting and uniquely significant in a racist society. One comes across countless anecdotes detailing the unwillingness of one racial group to share

eating utensils with the other perceived to be lower in the racial hierarchy. Sleeping under the same blanket was also inconceivable. Mrs. Lotus uses these examples to emphasize the point that she did not identify as coloured in as much as she did not identify others as black. Yet even in this context where levels of 'inter-group' closeness were so high, racial identification resists expunction from social relationships. The point I am getting at is the curious coincidence of Mrs. Lotus' choice of marriage partner later in her life in Cape Town, in spite of the non-racist upbringing that she experienced. I call this a coincidence because there is no indication that she deliberately sought a coloured man for marriage, in contradistinction to a black African man. Her choice of husband sounds more circumstantial, located within the social constrictions set by a racist political order as is suggested by the following quote (applied in the case of class):

> I had an acquaintance once whose brother told him, "Only hang around rich girls, then you can marry for love, but she'll be rich!" (Simon, 2000, quoted in Constable, 2003; p. 116)

The political context of the time would have dictated that Mrs. CM slotted into a particular racialized social group in Cape Town, taking her place as a coloured person without much resistance. It also seems that similar to the pragmatism suggested in Constable's quotation, the racist socio-political order took form in elaborate physical arrangements (e.g. separate residential areas) that supported the separation of the racial groupings, and prevented meaningful interaction between them. Most importantly for this section, Mrs. CM recounts how her husband was a staunch supporter of the National Party (NP: the white political party responsible for constructing and implementing

apartheid) even though the rest of the family were pro-ANC (African National Congress), the main liberation movement. In the build-up to 1994 the NP and the ANC were seen as the main opponents with the NP representing the ideals of the white racist minority at the time. One can only imagine the degree of tension in a household where the mother and the rest of the family belonged to one political party and the father belonged to its opponent.

The intention with this discussion is to illustrate the tenacity with which individuals held onto racist ideas in expressing their political preferences during the period around the 1994 general elections in South Africa. This could extend to differing with the rest of the family in terms of political preference. I should hasten to add that this too although unusual, is completely normal in a democracy. Once again, the problematic nature of this stance emerges when one considers the motivations behind such a preference, which in this case were clearly racially-based. Regarding her husband's transformation, Mrs. Lotus states the following:

> When Nelson Mandela became president, he (her husband) saw that here was a black man who was genuine, who encouraged everyone to forget the past and to reconcile. Today my husband is a community worker and a strong member of the ANC, attending most of its major events, like the presidential inauguration in Pretoria.

The figure of Nelson Mandela and what it represented in the transition period before and after 1994 is characterized by a complexity which I return to at the end of this chapter. However, as the leader of the main liberation movement, Nelson Mandela was in the

public eye, with every statement that he made being put under scrutiny. It would appear that the attention that he attracted facilitated the subjective transformation that this chapter deals with, at least in some people. His message of reconciliation which he was consistent in stating, even in the face of the unhappiness of his 'comrades', seems to have dispelled the stereotypes that Brian Williams writes about in saying:

> The NP promoted a stereotype of Africans as violent people who necklaced their opponents. An official NP magazine went so far as to suggest that coloureds would be necklaced by Africans. Such strategies whipped up coloured fears, with some people asking: "If Africans can do that to their own people, what are they going to do to us?"

Williams concludes by saying that 'the culmination of this stereotype was to link Africans, necklacing - and the ANC" (in James et al. 1996, p. 25). Therefore, it is a significant move indeed when one who was fed and may have harboured these perceptions about black Africans, joins in the cause of what is commonly believed to be a 'black government'.

This polarity was not as pronounced in other families. For instance, Ms Russels' political activism, even as a child at high school was encouraged by her aunt who was a political activist living abroad. She says of her family's influence:

> I think … my family, not my mother particularly, but the extended family, they all were very politically aware, always talking about politics. And my cousin got jailed, and I always wondered – 'I wonder why'. And my aunt became part of the anti-apartheid

> movement in Holland – and she always used to send letters about protests and … so that's why I … and I knew that it was … the way we lived was wrong.

Brian Williams' (1996) quotes the following in a chapter referred to above: 'part of the history of the coloured community includes oppression and exploitation at the hands of the NP regime. Many of the community's finest sons and daughters were jailed or killed in the reign of terror perpetrated in an attempt to prop up apartheid' (p. 22). The complicity of coloured people discussed in an earlier chapter does not preclude the fact that coloured people fought against racial discrimination. Nonetheless, it is apparent that this resistance did not always reflect a wish to be associated with black Africans. As I have stated above, the absence of close interaction between coloured people and black Africans (as suggested in Zubeida Jaffer's book), is not an unfortunate omission, or even the effect of the author's (Jaffers') subject selection. Even at the height of the integration that emerged in challenging racial oppression and discrimination represented by the UDF era (which era is the subject of Jaffer's book), separation between black Africans and coloured people was unmistakable. Meaningful subjective transformation, where racist ideas about black Africans were concerned seems to have followed slowly after the 1994 elections. The final section of this chapter explores the effect of life at a university, as an example of those spaces where segregation was not the norm. It looks at the impact of racial integration on one who grew up in a context where there was an ongoing denunciation of black Africanness.

Varsity and away from home

This section adds to the sub-section that dealt with conditions in the family homes where participants grew up in, and how parents' values articulated with the outside world. For instance, in the chapter on coloured childhood I discussed how Mr. Paulse grew up in a context where he was not allowed free contact with black African children. In fact, black children were not really catered for on the farm where he grew up, and they were sent away to attend school elsewhere as soon as they reached school-going age. This section looks at how learned family conceptions regarding black Africans interacted with a different 'reality' of a black African. I call these family conceptualizations in discussing Mr. Paulse's experiences because there are clear indicators that his family actively constructed a specific image of black Africans, and rules for how they were to be related to. In his family black Africans were not allowed into one's home, they lived in a separate residential area away from coloured people, in houses that were not as good as those of coloured people, and they were regarded with suspicion (especially by his grandmother). Mr. Paulse also stated that black Africans did the more menial jobs on the farm, which were less desirable to coloured employees. In particular, in this household black Africanness was something that was employed as an insult or a derogatory concept used to demean someone who had made one angry; or as something to frighten children with, (telling them to run away because black people were coming to kill them). In essence, there was very little positive experience of black Africanness for Mr. Paulse to come into contact with during his formative years. The general message was that black Africanness was something to be ashamed of and to deny, as exemplified by his

grandfather's hurt when being referred to as a black African (or kaffir) and the hurt his biological mother experienced in finding out as an adult that Mr. Sebenza was her biological father.

Against this background, black Africanness represented a social position that was undesirable, while whiteness represented that which was aspired to. It was with these experiences and conceptions that Mr. Paulse started his university career in a city away from home. In terms of his understanding of coloured children in the Western Cape, Mr. Paulse seems to suggest that the way he experienced the social context of the university applied to other coloured children as well. This interchange illustrates this point amongst others:

> R: Then Mr. Paulse, you say that you probably … even politically and the way you think - it has changed. How was it back then? How was it before it changed?
>
> Mr. Paulse: (He laughs) well, when I got … and in my view it would be typical with coloured kids … I got to university … absolutely shocked at the diversity. I was struggling with the diversity. My first flat ... room mate was a white guy. I was struggling with the fact that I was living with this white person who to an extent we were looking up to and admiring because they're so intelligent and clever people and all those things, struggling to come to terms with the fact that there were black kids here who could speak English a lot better than I could 'cause they were meant to be … stupid, they were meant to … to, you know they were the affirmative action kids here. And here, I get here and this people are so clever and whatever. So my first year I would say it was my most difficult year at varsity. Because I had to deal with … on the one hand the stupid white

> kids, and on the other hand … and coming to terms with the fact that not all white people are clever. And on the other hand bright black kids and having to come to terms with the fact that not all black people were stupid. And … and the Zimbabwean kids specifically, when you go over the Limpopo, it's dark, there is nothing happening there. And yet, they were some of the top performers.

The experience that he describes in this interchange suggests something that is similar to what cognitive behavioural therapists refer to as flooding or implosion. Amongst the intended outcomes of this technique (which involves an extended *in vivo* or imaginal exposure to anxiety-evoking stimuli) is the creation of aversion to some specific stimulus or to decrease undue/excessive responsiveness towards this. For a person who has spent his life in the kind of environment that I have described above, surely such intimate and alternative experience with black Africanness must have evoked anxiety as he suggests in the quote above. Considering the concept of flooding, Mr. Paulse found himself in a context where his continued status as a student at his university presented him with opportunities and experiences that forced him to change his pre-conceptions about racial identities. Equally significant is the fact that this was an environment that his family was not exposed to. Therefore his family, being away from the city, and specifically having no direct experience of university, was not exposed to the same kind of imperative to change. This then suggests that Mr. Paulse was changing not only in terms of receiving more academic education than anyone else in his family (he was the first to attend university in his family), but also in terms of his outlook on life and his experiences of others. The difference between Mr. Paulse the student (and graduate) and his family

illustrates the significant degree of personal transformation that he had undergone. For example, he reported his brother's response to the perceived change that he evinced:

> 'oh you've become too black, you are just too black I can't handle this' ...

Describing the difference that his brother was referring to, which was causing discomfort for the rest of his family as well, Mr. Paulse explains:

> Mr. Paulse: Well, look I listen to *kwaito* (black township dance music) … I got dreadlocks, when … when I just casually speak, you know, certain of words I would use which he just thinks like...like I like saying 'eish' or whatever like just little things that I would throw in … I refused to read *Rapport* (national Afrikaans weekly newspaper), which is what people read at home, so I would rather go and buy the *Cape Times* or the *Argus* (local English newspapers in the Western Cape), and then over the weekend, on Sunday I would buy the *Sunday Times* (national English weekly newspaper). So, I always think it's in that sense, it's wanting to listen to Metro instead of to Good Hope FM, is wanting to listen to *kwaito*, or if I listen to jazz, it would be Judith Sepuma or someone like that, as opposed to one of the white singers or coloured singers if there are such people.

The preferences that Mr. Paulse lists as marking the difference between his family and himself seem to be problematic only insofar as they are associated with black Africans. Implied in his brother's statement that 'I can't handle this' is the fact that he is unable to handle black Africanness within the family home. The description at the beginning of this

section clarifies the (racist) atmosphere in the family home, and how alien close association with black Africanness would seem in this context. Mr. Paulse's personal change did not relate to black Africanness only. He was also exposed to white people in a different way at the university. However, his association and identification with whiteness attracted approval and support from his family, such as when he dyed his hair blond and when he brought white friends home for a visit at home.

Another participant, Ms Russels went to the same university. Even though in her case her family was fairly politicized in favour of the liberation movements, it was at university where she first became romantically involved with a black person. In the same way that Mrs. Lotus seemed to privilege being able to sleep under the same blanket with a black African to illustrate her lack of regard for race, the sense here was that Ms Russels' involvement with a black African man would shock her family. For a long time following the onset of political changes that started in the early nineties, relationships across the colour line evoked curious stares at best, or outright and even violent disapproval at worst. Becoming romantically involved with a black person in particular, was taboo for most coloured women, and Mrs. McCarthy, Mrs. Adams and Ms Jameson are some of the participants who referred to negative perceptions evoked by 'cross-racial' unions. Ms Russels suggested that although she expected her family to disapprove, she tended to live out her 'cross-racial' relationships within the 'radius' of the university, and away from home and coloured communities that would express disapproval.

An important point raised by this discussion is that one's social environment is important

in facilitating (or preventing) the subjective transformation which is at the heart of this discussion. This point ties in with the discussion in the previous chapter, which pointed to the intricate connectedness between the social and the personal. It is also important to emphasize the temporal difference between changes that happen in the social realm and those that happen in the personal. Based on the aforegoing discussion, there is a suggestion that the families of the participants that I have referred to above retained some of the negative perceptions regarding black Africanness, given that their exposure to the different 'social' was not as intense as would be the case for someone living within a university context, especially a residential university, where accommodation allocation is not done on the basis of race. Specifically, subjective transformation with regard to racism seems to be facilitated by close attention to, and experience with, objective reality, the kind of reality experience possible at an integrated university. To refer to Rustin (2000) again, racism as akin to passion - and by implication to psychosis - is irrational, and it fails the test of reason. Contexts in which one's "irrationality and psychosis" are exposed to concrete refutation, such as exposure to a top performing black African student, seem to produce some change away from racist thinking as they counter prevailing negative assumptions. Of course, this presupposes that institutions such as universities are not burdened by institutionalized racism, which would make the appreciation of black Africans' achievements impossible. However, this is a discussion beyond the scope of this thesis.

Rustin (2000) raises a second point that is of relevance to this section:

> The psychoanalytic argument is a different one. It is that psychotic attributes of mind are

> universal, original and latent components of human mentality; never wholly banished from the self; *liable to become more salient in conditions of fear and anxiety than in more benign settings;* and of course more central and pathogenic in some individuals than in others, sometimes for explicable reasons in an individual's psychic history [my emphasis] (p. 187).

It is the point on the liability of psychotic attributes that I particularly want to refer to, especially insofar as this is related to anxiety and fear evoking conditions. The turning point of the racist system in South Africa is symbolized by the 1994 democratic elections, and I proffer that this event represented a fear- and anxiety-evoking setting along the lines of Rustin's point above, which led to the flaring up of otherwise latent racist tendencies as exemplified in Mr. Paulse's in the statement below. I also proffer that this anxiety might well have arisen even within the context of the kind of evident subjective transformation that I have referred to in regard to Ms Russels, but particularly in regard to Mr. Paulse who provides a description of how he voted and the motives behind this. He explains his voting in the 1994 elections as follows:

> Mr. Paulse: And so I mean in '94 I was seen as a rebel because in the national election I voted ANC, but in the provincial election I voted National Party. And so that one vote was … because we were quite open about who we were voting for. But that one vote was seen as being rebellious. My Sebenza father was telling me never to speak about it, to keep quiet about it, and not to say anything about it.
>
> R: The national vote?

Mr. Paulse: No ...the ANC vote.

R: Which was at national level?

Mr. Paulse: Yes, sorry, ja, it was at national level. But it was also because of the view that we didn't want black people to rule us. It was … it was on the other hand the struggle thing of wanting to vote for the ANC because we've come through a struggle, so it was a celebration vote. But at the same time the tension with … but at the same time I don't want black people to rule me. And …and so let's keep them out of the way so they can run the rest of the country. And so that was the basis for that vote. And then a complete move to the last election where it was an ANC vote probably, having moved all the way across the spectrum. And so today, well it's not so difficult to make out who I'm gonna vote for, but anyway. So it was that mind-shift of initially also going home, and I think to an extent feeling good about the fact that your parents are just so happy with the fact that you have all these white friends and that …

At the point of voting in 1994, Mr. Paulse seems to have had some appreciation of the goals of the liberation struggle. In spite of this, it is a racist motive that seems to have compelled him to vote the way he did, with the expressed need to keep black Africans away from immediate authority over the Western Cape coloured people. The point that needs to be made here is that Mr. Paulse started his tertiary education in 1995, and if one reads the latter part of the interview extract above, it becomes clear that the 1994 general elections took place before his exposure to university life, during subsequent elections his choice reflects 'having moved all the way across the spectrum'. The implication of this effect of residential tertiary institutions is that those institutions, in which transformation

is proceeding at a snail's pace if at all, are likely to evince significant racist attitudes against black Africanness. In particular, I refer to those universities which were largely for the Afrikaans-speaking community. Given the close association between Afrikaans speakers, the National Party and the implementation of apartheid policies, racial discrimination remains closely associated with these institutions.

Conclusion: Embracing black Africanness

I conclude this chapter by citing two additional quotes which suggest that racist societies bring about 'inescapable human consequences' for individuals living in these societies. The argument proffered in this thesis has been that in addition to these effects that are a fact in characteristics of all racist societies, South Africa (as do other countries with multiple racist gradations) presented and still presents social dimensions of racism which were/are not commonly found in those racist societies which have a binarized racial system. As stated in preceding chapters, the South African racial classification system included several racial categories, producing additional dimensions along which dialectical and dialogical relationships around race could be read and experienced. For instance, the subjective transformation that Mrs. Adams presents us with is akin to that which I have discussed above regarding Mr. Lenniz. It sounds as if there was a realization on both their parts that the resignation to their lot suddenly became worthwhile or self affirming, after a protracted period of resisting association and identification with black Africanness. In a conference paper (2005) on Race Making/Race Mixing, Dan Yon provides an example of how black Africans were conceptualized and

'constructed' especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Discussing the St. Helenians who became absorbed into the South African racial system, he quotes a letter appearing in a South African newspaper which reads thus:

> You got with the few respectable ones many of the off-springs of liberated slaves from the West Coast of Africa and *the sweepings of the streets* [My italics].

This conceptualization, suggesting that such people were mere debris or trash, provides evidence of the pervasive objectionable*ness* of black Africanness in the racist South African society at the time. As this letter suggests, racism is not a phenomenon that was (or is) always externally imposed, in the same way that irrationality is an inherent aspect of human character. The socio-political infrastructure of the time seems to have provided avenues along which sensibilities around race and difference could be channeled and legitimized. The author of this letter, presumed to be a white South African, reflects the notion that those who had become racially classified became guardians of the boundaries between these racial classifications. Similarly, the conceptualization of black Africans by coloured people as discussed above reflected a cordoning off of black Africans from social positions of respectability.

In this conclusion I wish to emphasize what seems to be an embracing of an alternative – and in racist terms – lower racial classification. After years of resistance against being identified as black, to a point where this resistance deeply affected her life and personal choices, Mrs. Adams says:

> Mrs. Adams: When I say I'm black, I am black, I am a black person. I'm not coloured, I can't … it's only now that I realize, and really I'm not, I'm black. I mean I have known it for all the years. I've been trying to escape that for so many years, but I couldn't.
>
> R: What helped you to accept it? What helped you to come to terms with that?
>
> Mrs. Adams: It's so many things, especially the government. I think that played a major role in my life. And then we got this new government ... ja, it started there. Hey, I'm black and I can't do anything about it, people see me as a black person … People that don't know me they see me as black a person. I'm sure you also, when you saw me there, with Samantha (colleague of the researcher), you said, ja, it's a black woman this.

It is significant that embracing the black African identity seems to be facilitated by the changed fate of what it means to be black. Certainly, black Africanness could not be associated with 'the sweepings of the streets' anymore. Given this change of outlook it is almost as if it is a miracle that the 'nation' so despised could produce one who becomes a dignified head of the country, respected by the world, who talks reconciliation and not vengeance (even where the latter may have been justifiable). It is a miracle that precipitates a different way of conceptualizing black Africanness, to the point where new possibilities of being-in-the world are opened up. Echoing the realization of these possibilities is Mr. Lenniz who says:

> Look, 1994 maybe to other people is just a year. But for me it was extremely liberating (R: In what way?). It was liberating in many ways. It was a liberation for my existence,

> who I was as a person, and I just went with the spirit, and went for it. So, it's not just a year for me. It was a very profound experience that I've been through.

The theme of this chapter resonates with my interpretation of what Robert Young writes about in his paper called 'Lincoln, Mandela and the Depressive Position'. This title evokes curiosity in that it links a concept borrowed from the practice of psychoanalytic psychotherapy to both Nelson Mandela and Abraham Lincoln. It is even more curious considering that Young cannot claim to have had these two 'objects' of his admiration as patients. However, one appreciates that he borrows this concept, coined by Melanie Klein, to describe figures who represent that which according to psychoanalytic therapy represents the goal of therapy. To quote Young on this, he says: "Getting people to 'take back the projections', i.e. dwell more of the time in the depressive position is one way of describing the goal of therapy" (2004, p. 1). In the paper, Young argues that both the figures of Mandela and Lincoln are characterized by this 'dwelling more of the time in the depressive position'. For the purposes of this chapter, I extend Young's conceptualization in positing that evincing signs of subjective transformation is a sign of maturity, which is characteristic of the depressive position.

Klein's depressive position is a specific developmental stage which is characterized by less splitting and less or relating to part objects, unlike the predominance of such functions in the paranoid-schizoid position that precedes the depressive one. Describing these developmental stages in general, St. Clair says: 'The two positions suggest the

occurrence and reoccurrence, during a child's first years of specific groups of psychological mechanisms, ways of relating to objects, and characteristic anxieties and defenses' (2000, p. 42). Pursuing the line of thought that Robert Young points to, it is the less primitive depressive position that I focus on here. And once again, St. Clair's description of this position is instructive:

> This is a mature form of psychological organization and continues to develop throughout life. It begins at approximately the fifth month, when the infant has an increased capacity to relate to complete or whole objects. With a more stable experience of self, the infant makes progress in integration and a more realistic stance towards the world (p.43).

The figure of Nelson Mandela served a crucial role, not only as that which allayed the fears of transformation that Sean Field refers to in his 'Fragile Identities' (Erasmus, 2001). As Young implies, he stood for that which humanity (all humanity, regardless of race) holds up as the ideal. As part of this ideal, I have described the depressive position as that which is more amenable to reason (as contrasted for example, to the irrationality of racism). Such descriptors as are used to characterize this position such as evidence of maturity, the capacity to relate to complete or whole objects, and stability, integration and realistic thinking, position the depressive position in opposition to racial Othering and explicit or implicit forms of racism. Amongst all the influences that have played a role in facilitating subjective transformation, such as the coloured household and its dynamics; political activism; 'liberal' universities; and the family; where coloured people found the

idea of black Africanness not as aversive as their projections might have suggested, the figure of Nelson Mandela and the collective it represented provided the most significant facilitation. As a tribute to this, there are the likes of Mr. Paulse who in spite of having voted for the National Party in a racist move during the first general election, evince 'having moved all the way across the spectrum' and voted comfortably for the African National Congress. It could be argued that Mr. Paulse had taken back his projections as Robert Young suggests is possible.

I end this chapter with a caveat that, as is the case with change in the psychotherapy tradition, the subjective change that I have referred to here should best be characterized as a desired event or accomplishment. As Rustin suggests, certain vicissitudes of life evoke anxiety and fear which throw one back and forth between the depressive and paranoid-schizoid positions. Although one can aspire to the stoicism of Nelson Mandela and Abraham Lincoln, as Young suggests, it is Nelson Mandela's words that 'a saint is just a sinner who keeps on trying' that best acknowledges the tendency towards and away from racism, and the fact that countering internalized and enacted racism is an ongoing individual and social project.

CONCLUSION

The idea of race and related practices of racism dominate the historical picture of social relations in South Africa. In particular, it is the binarization of race in terms of whiteness and blackness that have dominated how different groups have thought of, imagined and understood themselves and others in the pre-democratic South Africa. On the one hand differences between the disparate groups that are subsumed under the category of blackness were concealed under the common factor that all of these groups lacked whiteness. On the other, groups that formed part of the black category themselves, drew together to fight the ills of racism, which required a united front to defeat. As part of attempts to understand race and racism and how these manifest within the black group, this thesis has explored personal meanings of coloured identities, focusing on how these meanings have related to the concept of black Africanness. It has illustrated how the pre-1994 era continues to bear an important influence on self-imaginings of coloured people as racial subjects.

Specifically, the primary objective of this study was to examine coloured subjectivities in relation to black Africanness as these are played out within families and primary relationships between parents and children, between siblings and the extended family. In Chapter 3 where I begin to discuss my findings, I illustrated the allure of coloured identities to those whose inclusion in this category stood challenged due to their proximity to black racial identity, confirmed or alleged. I used this to discuss how blackness subtended colouredness, and how by extension, whiteness requires the non-

value of blackness in order to assume value. Chapter 3 illustrated that racial identities existed independently of families. In other words, family ties do not exempt one from accusations that one is 'less coloured', forcing one to perform one's colouredness more overtly as proof of racial identity. The most outstanding aspect of performances of coloured identities is represented in the abjection of black Africanness.

The family as a microsystem within bigger systems that are racist tends to reflect characteristics of the larger society in the form that relationships between its members takes. Chapter 4 suggests that contrary to expectations that family bonds assure one of support from fellow family members against racial attacks from the outside, family members themselves can use racial insults, aligning themselves with outsiders against another family member. In addition to this, the romanticized notion of the family as a sanctuary against the racial hostilities prevalent outside the family is problematized by evidence of practices of racism within the household – in how parents think and relate to their children, in how children relate to their siblings and in how the extended family's acceptance or non-acceptance of a member can be underlined by racist responses. Acceptance of a member in coloured families is rendered particularly difficult or impossible if there are perceptions that one has close associations with black Africanness, be it through appearance or interaction.

Further, the discussion in Chapters 3 and 4 illuminated the intra-group antagonism and racism of coloured people, which has been linked to the racist attitudes that those higher up the racial ladder harboured against people occupying the lower rungs in society. To

the extent that some coloured people bore close physical resemblance to black Africanness they were disliked, maltreated and *dis*identified with, and conversely, it is to the extent that other coloured people bore close physical resemblance to whiteness that they were idealized and identified as representing true colouredness.

The literature review posits that whiteness monopolizes the condition of humanity, suggesting that the further one finds oneself from whiteness on a racial hierarchy in racist contexts, the less human one is perceived to be. The review also discussed how white racism against black Africans was emulated and incorporated into coloured identities. Both the idea of black Africanness as that which does not deserve treatment as human, and the practice of racism against black Africans form part of this emulation and incorporation. In line with this contention, Chapter 5 provides a discussion of coloured childhood, illustrating how childhood did not exempt children who 'looked black' from the racism of adults who identified as coloured. Where a human child generally evokes feelings of caring and sympathy from others, a child that is associated with black Africanness is unable to attract these humane feelings and treatment from coloured identified others. This study has also suggested how coloured racism against black Africans is perpetuated through continued lack of meaningful interaction between the childhoods of these two groups. It has shown how coloured children who live within walking distance from black African residential areas may spend two decades or more, without interacting with black Africans, except as servants (domestic workers or gardeners) in coloured households. This appears to contribute to a vicious cycle, which renders intergroup perceptions of coloured people open to malignant projections about

black Africans, fitting into the racist history that has constructed black Africans as non-humans or less than human

Furthermore, it appears that close association with black Africanness becomes more burdensome when one is subject to other sources of discrimination in a society that discriminates against difference. Chapter 6 illustrates that coloured communities reflected prejudices other than racism which form part of the wider South African society. Patriarchism, heterosexism and sexism are some of these prejudices. The main discussion in this chapter focuses on the interplay between black Africanness, homosexuality and femininity as sources of discrimination directed at one person. Homosexuality is conflated with femininity resulting in feelings of alienation and denunciation in the victim of this discrimination. The family, the neighbours, the community, all seem to fail in providing a refuge for persons against whom society directs excessive discrimination. Instead, community members and the family all seem to find ways to express their non-acceptance and hostility towards black Africanness, homosexuality and its (mis)perceived association with femininity. Black Africanness on its own attracts family and social hostility in coloured communities, but being identified with any additional source of social discrimination may even attract overt expressions of violence. Difference seems to be unbearable, especially difference associated black Africanness in coloured communities.

The examination of coloured subjectivities throughout this thesis has demonstrated how deeply embedded racism can become in the psyches of individuals and in the fabric of

close personal relationships. In a sense, it has illustrated the 'intimacy' of racism and the devastatingly painful, humiliating and alienating forms it can take. Perceptions of difference, even when these occur within the realm of close family relationships, seem to unleash the violence of Thanatos, all in an attempt to self-validate (or self-preserve) against the ravages of annihilating racist society. The fragility and vulnerability implied through the state of childhood also fails to deter the violence of racism from adults, illustrating the irrationality of racism.

As a secondary objective, I have stated my intention to examine coloured subjectivities within a racially transforming society, intending to (dis)locate the place of coloured identities within the national project of socio-political change. For the purposes of this study, the national call to transform which is an essential part of this project is anchored in the understanding that one has to break away from racism first and foremost. Theorizations of how racism works, at least as framed psychoanalytically, suggest that it could be the recalcitrance of racism that explains part of coloured people's struggles with the new dispensation. It seems part of what explains these struggles are the two notions that I have referred to above, namely, the non-inclusive black essentialism (black as narrowly and exclusively referring to black Africanness) on the one hand; and what psychoanalytic formulations refer to as the unconscious foundations of racism on the other. Thus, it seems it is the historical contexts in which coloured subjectivities have formed that continue to inform the racial in-*betweenness* of coloured subjectivities, with the post 1994 era offering a climate conducive for alternative ways in which to live coloured subjectivities, not limited to positions of in *betweenness*. In essence, to the

extent that being a post-apartheid subject in South Africa does not erase the racist history out of which racial identities emerge, coloured identities as subtended on the history and politics of racial in-*betweenness* is likely to be a persisting view. As discussed above, the persistence of this view is partially encouraged by experiences of coloured identity as idealizing whiteness and denigrating associations with black Africanness. Instances when these idealizations and denigrations happen obscure the complexity of a contemporary racial subject which is not doomed to perpetual racism against others. The analysis of coloured subjectivities, as illustrated by constant displays that characterize performances of coloured identities in this study, elucidates the fact that one person can assume a position of the perpetrator of racism and a victim of racism, simultaneously and/or alternatively.

The lived experiences of participants in this study might be personal and subjective experiences, but they form part of the social fabric in coloured households and communities. To the extent that this study has examined coloured subjectivities as discussed above, particularly as these relate to blackness, I believe it has responded to the call to explore differences amongst members of the broader category of blackness, in relation to identity and race.

Would I have evoked a different kind of research data had I been coloured? I believe I would have. However, the operative word is *different*, and not *qualitatively poorer*. I do not believe that one has to be coloured or similarly identified with one's research participants for one to appreciate the dynamics of their subjectivities. Similarly, it would

be unfortunate if such minority groups as gays and lesbians believed the appreciation of their social and subjective experiences is the exclusive preserve of others who are also gay and lesbian. On the basis of our common humanity, and in the case of this study, our common history, we are able to identify and relate to each others' experiences, however different from each other.

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