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Birch, Maxine

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MASTERS RESEARCH THESIS

Title:

An Intergenerational Study of the Negotiation of Apartheid Memory Among White South Africans.

Maxine Birch

0715004v

Supervisor: Dr Antje Schuhmann

Political Studies Department

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

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Abstract

South Africa's history of societies structured on the basis of racial hierarchies, and specifically minority white power, has had far-reaching repercussions. Although apartheid was abolished eighteen years ago, and significant changes can be seen in the country, the country is still, to an extent, racially divided and difficulty in accessing basic rights still correlates strongly with race. Essentially racial tensions within South African still exist. White South Africans still maintain their structural privilege and South Africa is not yet free from the clutches of white dominance. When asked about their apartheid pasts, white South Africans often demonstrate a complete lack of engagement with their pasts and race. Some either choose to remain silent or 'forget' the past and among others a not-knowing emerges. Many do not acknowledge their role and responsibility with regards to apartheid believing they were merely bystanders to the apartheid regime. This remembrance of the past is fundamentally shaped by their whiteness. This lack of engagement with the past aids in continuing to perpetuate the centrality and invisibility of whiteness and white privilege. How then is this memory of the past and relationship to whiteness communicated to the next generation? What could the repercussions of this process of remembrance and invisibility of whiteness be as South Africa attempts to muddle through current racial tensions?

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the topic

Racial hierarchies and the subsequent oppression, subjugation and discrimination they invoke, have played an integral role in the structuring of many societies in the world. South Africa is probably one of the best demonstrations of this past. Through slavery, colonialism and most recently apartheid legislation, South Africa has been ruled and shaped by structures of dominance aiming at entrenching white supremacy and superiority. The racialised effects of these are so deeply ingrained and difficult to challenge that, even eighteen years after the end of apartheid, while the country has made significant progress, racial discrimination and tensions along racial lines are still apparent. South Africa has had a tumultuous past with apartheid the most recent component of it. Apartheid was the systematic and institutionalised oppression of people of colour in South Africa established by the government in power at the time, the National Party. Oppression in this case can be understood as the exercise of authority or power in a cruel or unjust way. Institutionalised and systematic oppression refers to the unjust use of force, authority and societal norms as well as established laws, customs and practices that reflect and reproduce inequalities dependent on ones membership to a specific collective. In the case of South Africa, it was through ones membership to so called 'non-white'[1] collectives that one became the target of this unjust oppression and discrimination. The subjugation of Black[2] people in Southern Africa was entrenched through formal European colonialism and justified through the construction and classification of Black people as heathens, savage, barbaric, unclean and unworthy of such benefits, in opposition to white Europeans as civilized Christians. Through this process of 'othering' on numerous dimensions, there eventually emerged the basic opposition of white versus Black. Race became the "common conceptual denominator that gradually came to signify the respective global statuses of superiority and inferiority, privilege and subjugation." (Mills 1997: 21) Globally and particularly in South Africa, society was organised along racial lines,

[1] I have used the term non-white in this context because it was the apartheid classification used to enforce oppression. However, I do not wish to perpetuate apartheid classifications and feel the term non-white only reaffirms the focus on white, making it the point of reference and everything else the other. I will instead, for the purpose of this research, use the term Black to refer to this oppressed group.

[2] I choose instead to use a term oppressed people chose for themselves, Biko's understanding of Black. To Biko being Black did not refer to pigmentation but to a mental attitude, it included all people being racially oppressed in South Africa and saw one's identification with being black as debunking the idea of blackness as inferior and taking a step towards emancipation. I choose to use a capital letter for this term to emphasise a renewed focus on this group and to use a small 'w' when referring to whiteness to emphasise a need to break down the centrality of whiteness.

white being viewed as something supreme and superior. This notion was so deeply ingrained and internalised that it soon became something natural and normative. The apartheid system was the legitimate structuring of South African society according to this constructed racial superiority of whites. The design of the system intentionally and methodically provided white South Africans with certain benefits at the expense of Black South Africans. The abolition of apartheid and its subsequent challenge to white domination in South Africa has initiated a deconstruction of white superiority and privilege, but South Africa's past is, in many ways, still evident in the present. Race still correlates strongly with issues of poverty, access to education, unemployment and other basic rights. Race is still the elephant in the room impacting the lives of every South African in ways sometime obvious and other times invisible to us.

For as long as I can remember race[3] has featured in my life in different ways. I define racism as a kind of doctrine that entails the belief that inherent differences among various races determine their superiority or inferiority. As is discussed in chapter that provides a theoretical overview, racism is often thought of as an individual discriminatory act, but we need to recognise the many faces of racism, from an overt act, to institutionalised racial hierarchies and a constant 'othering'. In my home racism as overt oppressive acts were not tolerated, I was taught by my parents to treat every person with respect. Racist words, that we would often hear flying out of the mouths of friends and their parents, were not an option or tolerated in my home. Racism did not necessarily feature in my life through overt discriminatory words or acts; but rather it was the insular and segregated life we lived while I was younger and to an extent even after the abolishment of apartheid. It was a constant awareness of a difference, a 'them and us' discourse, that developed at a fairly young age. While race and racism was something I was always aware of in my life, it was not until my University years, studying subjects like politics and international relations and mixing with people of varying backgrounds and strong values, opinions and beliefs, that I began to think more about this complicated concept that affected every aspect of our lives in South Africa. I started to really think about our past in this country, to understand that issues, we as a country are facing in the present, have everything to do with our unique history of apartheid atrocities. The past plays an integral role in the present. That everything needs to be unpacked and interrogated to understand the 'why's' and 'how's, not just taken at surface value. I found

[3] The concept of race is complicated and cannot be fully dealt with within the scope of this research. It is important to note however, that within this work, like Frankenburg, I recognise race as a social construct rather than a biological identity. Race is socially constructed and linked to power relations, it is not inherent or static but rather a social feature who's meaning changes over time.

it difficult to grapple with how such a system could even have been allowed to happen, how one group of people could have treated another group as barely human. I would question my own parents, ex-pats who moved here in the early 80's, asking them how they could move to a country knowing that apartheid was going on. How could they have lived in South Africa and done nothing about it. Their response was always the same, "resisting was terrifying" and "we didn't know the extent of what was going on at the time". This only left me more perplexed; surely they must have known what was going on? It was in my post graduate level of studies that I began to really start unpacking the complexities of race, to start thinking about my own whiteness[4] and analysing my own feelings of guilt and shame for being associated with this group of white South Africans responsible for such a terrible regime. I began to think about racism as not only the individual acts of individual people, but on a broader level, as the structural privilege awarded white people by virtue of their belonging to a particular collective. A non voluntary privilege (Vice 2010), a privilege we do not necessarily choose (or challenge) but are born into because we are white in a system organised for our benefit. Privileges that are sometimes so obvious and other times so subtle we do not even know or think about having them. What I began to notice among the white South Africans I interacted with was, among my parents generation, a tendency to claim ignorance when referring to our apartheid past, for silences around the past and racial tensions to emerge. They did not want to talk about and engage with their past. There seemed to be a complete lack of acknowledgement of their role in the past or how they benefited from the system and still benefit today. These tendencies appeared to be communicated to many of my own generation. Many of the young white South Africans I mix with do not find it necessary to engage with the past. Race is something they never interrogated within their family or social unit. Their whiteness and the privileges it awards them on a daily basis has never been interrogated, rather, most of them believe, that contrary to benefiting from their white skin they are actually experiencing a kind of reverse racism, feeling that our past should have no bearing in the present.

It was from my own feelings of guilt, shame and responsibility and the aforementioned observations, that the necessity of an investigation of white South Africans in the context of their memory and whiteness became apparent. This is the very subject of this research thesis.

The apartheid system was a complex structure supported by some in a definitive way and adamantly struggled against by others. However, a number of white South African's lived in

[4] Whiteness in this research, as will be discussed in chapter 3, refers not to ones skin colour but to the socially constructed category of white and the position of privilege it provides those belonging to the collective through societies organised according to white superiority.

the country at the time, advantaged by the system, neither overtly agreeing or disagreeing with it and not directly involved in the political struggle either for or against apartheid. (By 'directly involved' I mean consciously deciding to become politically involved in continuing the system of oppression or consciously deciding to become involved in political movements and bodies with the purpose of ending the apartheid regime.) These people were complicit in the system, some may have resisted[5] in their own way, but they all inadvertently contributed to its preservation. They all benefited from the system that advantaged their race and they all passively allowed it to continue. This group of white South Africans is the focus of this research. Within the framework of canonical theory on memory studies, intergenerational memory, whiteness and racial hierarchies, this research has aimed to understand how this group remembers their pasts, what shapes their memory (and often lack thereof), do notions of silences and not-knowing emerge and why? How is this then conveyed to the next generation? Are our parent's memories, views and opinions on our apartheid past and race inherited by us, their children? How do we as white South African's think about our own whiteness? Do we acknowledge our white privilege and the structures that continue to perpetuate it? Could the way we view our own whiteness shape the way we remember the past and could our engagement with the past influence the way we think about and engage with race? If so, how does this affect us in our attempt to move forward as a country?

1.2 Chapter Outline

This introductory section has briefly presented the topic of research and the main question this thesis has attempted to investigate further and answer.

The initial chapter provides an outline of the methodological approaches this research has made use of. It looks more closely at the framing of this work within a feminist methodology of situatedness and explains briefly the theoretical framework established in the third chapter. It then looks more closely at the interview process. Who is interviewed, the selection criteria for the interview participants, how the interviews were conducted and possible concerns that may arise.

[5] While I include formal resistance in my definition of being 'directly involved' I acknowledge that resistance can take many forms, this group may not have been directly involved in resistance but they could have resisted in other ways.

The second chapter will contextualise the research. It will begin with a brief history of South Africa with a specific focus on Apartheid. It will then discuss the current debate on whiteness happening in the media, different viewpoints and contributions, in an attempt to locate my own research within this debate and highlight its significance in the present.

The next chapter will present a theoretical framework in which canonical authors and work relevant to the topics of memory studies, intergenerational memory, whiteness and racial hierarchies, will be discussed and analysed as it pertains to the research.

The fourth chapter will discuss the findings of the research through thematic sections. This will point out some of the major themes emerging from the interviews conducted and connect them with subsequent themes in theoretical approaches hopefully answering the research questions previously laid out.

The last chapter is a concluding chapter providing a summary of the research, an overall assessment of the work and future recommendations.

2. Methodology

This qualitative thesis makes use of a combination of both a theoretical and empirical approach to the research conducted. Using a variety of methods the research has aimed to expand on and provide a greater understanding of the politics of memory and whiteness in the South African context. A theoretical framework has been established making use of relevant academic works, a process of individual interviews with specifically white participants was carried out and a deeper analysis of these interviews was conducted to draw out important themes surfacing in the interviews.

2.1 Feminist Methodologies

This research will employ a feminist methodology of research. Feminist methodologies, especially including theory and criticism developed by women of colour, emerged out of a need to move away from a supposedly scientific research method that was centred originally on a white, male, property holding subject claiming to be objective and universal and conducted through a masculine and racialised lens. It occurred as an attempt to challenge and provide an alternative to mainstream research methodologies. (Daucet 2007: 40) Feminist methodologies are distinct from other forms of research as it "begins from the premise that the nature of reality in western society is unequal and hierarchical." (Skeggs 1994: 77) Feminist research comprises of a number of different characteristics. It recognises the importance of understanding power relations within research and urges researchers to recognise that researcher and respondents have differing, often unequal relations to knowledge, it is important to understand the ways power influences knowledge production and construction processes. (Daucet 2007: 40) Issues of power are always present in our attempts to know and represent others, both participants living in close proximity to the researcher or from different spaces. Doucet (2007: 40) suggests that it is important to, when conducting research with participants sharing structural or cultural similarities, understand that one cannot guarantee a knowing. Another important characteristic of feminist methodologies is the necessity of some kind of reflective process. A major feminist critique of mainstream research is that in its attempt to remain objective through maintaining detached and impartial relationships to the research, it really just obscures the ways that a researcher's identity and standpoint shape the research process, the acquired information and his/her analysis fundamentally. (Willig 2001) To counter the above concerns, many feminists argued that the researcher should rather fully situate themselves within the research. They

should undergo a process of self-examination and acknowledge the centrality of the researchers own positionality in the research. One should identify one's own standpoint in relation to the research and identify the ways it shapes processes and findings. (Willig 2001) Researchers should "openly reflect, acknowledge and document their social location and the roles they play in co-creating data and in constructing knowledges." (Daucet 2007: 41)

This research has been conducted within the feminist methodological framework of acknowledging my position within the research (a more extensive discussion of my position as a white South African has been discussed in the introductory section), acknowledging that, given my close proximity to the research and research participants as a young white South African around the same age as my participants with parents of similar mindsets and of a similar class, upon which this research was conceived, an attempt at objective research would only become more problematic, that rather a certain level of reflection is required and that throughout the research I must remain conscious of my own situatedness and positionality.

2.2 Methods of research

i. Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework has been constructed discussing relevant works on the topic of my research. This has explored work in memory studies, examining the ways memory is shaped by the collective, constructed and functions in identity formation. It emphasises the creative and selective processes of memorising. It continues to explore the negotiated process of intergenerational memory transmission, developing an understanding of the way in which memory is passed on from one generation to the next, especially in locations of traumatic pasts, and ending by discussing theories of racial hierarchy and critical whiteness studies. A theoretical overview of subject matter relevant to the research intends to provide both a framework within which the reader may understand the empirical data gathered as well as seeking to observe the correlations between theoretical approaches and emergent ideas within the interviews.

ii. Interviews and Participants

For the purpose of this research I have conducted semi-structured interviews. The participants chosen for these interviews are specifically white South Africans. While I acknowledge that

understanding racial hierarchies of dominance in South Africa requires perspectives from all races and cultures, this research concentrates particularly on understanding white memories of apartheid and whiteness in South Africa, and considering the limited scope of a master's thesis a focus primarily on white South Africans was necessary.

This research has intended not only to examine the memories of apartheid and views on race of one generation but to also examine and understand if and how those are then transmitted to the next generation. Due to this, the research participants were interviewed as families (I conducted interviews with both a parent generation and their children) to allow me to observe this transmission. While I refer to the second generation as the children now and throughout my findings chapter this is not really an appropriate term for them. Using the term child is merely to demonstrate that they are the offspring of the older generation (their parents) I will be engaging with. These participants are actually all aged twenty two years old to twenty seven years old. This age group was specifically demarcated as a criteria for this research as I felt that twenty two years of age is around the time people generally complete any further study if they have chosen to do so, and I felt participants of that age would have a higher level of maturity in answering the sometimes difficult questions they were being asked. This is not to say that every person of that age has the same or a high level of maturity but it was necessary to set some kind of perimeters. The second generation participant age group was cut off at twenty seven because I felt that participants above that age would possibly have had very different experiences of race, their years of apartheid and post apartheid. Their parents were not chosen through a demarcated aged group but rather on account of their children's age. The participant selection criteria of this research were that the participant white, had lived in the country during apartheid and had not been politically active in either resistance or oppression during apartheid. My understanding of active political resistance and oppression has been dealt within in the introductory section. This was necessary because my research is specifically targeting an understanding of the average, middle-of-the road, white South African.

I focus my research in a predominantly white, middle-class suburb, (Brackenhurst, Alberton) south of Johannesburg. The research participants were chosen through a snowball effect whereby each family would refer me to the next one guided by the criteria mentioned above. The interviews were conducted with primarily English speaking participants, some with Afrikaans heritage, others of British descent but having lived in the country during apartheid.

The interviews were all conducted separately, especially the child parent interview. I would conduct the interview with the parents of each family first and then interview the child away

from the parents. While I acknowledge there may be reasons and advantages to conducting the interview in a group style, I felt very strongly that the interviews should be conducted in this manner, separately. I did not want memories mentioned by the parents to influence what the younger generation can remember and I did not want either parent or child to hold back views or memories because they felt uncomfortable or even afraid to reveal them in front of their parents. I decided that I would be better able to gather the necessary information through separate interviews.

I interviewed 6 families and conducted fourteen interviews in total. I anticipate issues of representivity being raised with regards to this research and the way it is formatted. It is important to note therefore that, like Ruth Frankenburg (1993: 20) argues in her study of white women in America, this research has not aimed to provide a random sample or a microcosmic representation of white South African's. It does not provide an exhaustive set of views and opinions on the relevant issues and it by no means attempts to represent all whites in South Africa, or even in the suburb within which it was conducted. It merely aims to provide rich, deep narratives through which we can unpack and understand further patterns of memory and race among this group of white South Africans. These interviews were conducted to substantiate previous theoretical works on the pertinent topics, to draw common themes occurring among this group of participants and identifying links with the theoretical work.

iii. Textual Analysis

A textual analysis is a flexible method for analysing text data. A qualitative textual analysis, used for the purpose of this research, is a research method that focuses on the "characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning." (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1278) This textual data may be in verbal, print or electronic format and obtained through a variety of methodological approaches, for example; narrative responses, open-ended surveys, print media or, as used in this research, interviews. Weber (1990) argues that textual analysis goes beyond merely counting words to deeply examining language for the purpose of classifying texts into efficient categories that represent similar meanings. Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1278) define this form of analysis as a research method for the subjective interpretation of text data through systematically classifying the text according to identified patterns and themes, the objective of the textual analysis being "to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomena under study." (Downe-Wamboldt 1992: 314) A textual analysis makes use of a coding process whereby larger texts are organised into

a few categories representing emergent patterns or themes derived through an analysis of the text and identifying relationships between these categories. An analysis of these patterns provides an interpretation of the contextual meaning of the content. (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1285 - 1286)

This research method of textual analysis was used for the purpose of analysing and unpacking the interviews conducted for this research. Through this textual analysis I was able to classify the content of the interviews according to pertinent and important themes emerging throughout the texts. I was able to derive meaning from the texts through exploring and understanding these themes within the broader theoretical frame, identifying the correlations between these themes and the correlations between the interviews and theoretical overview.

The next chapter will present a contextualisation of this research by providing a brief summary of South Africa's history and outlining the current media debate on whiteness, locating this research within it and explaining why I believe talking about whiteness is important.

3. Contextualising This Research

3.1 A Brief History of South Africa

South Africa has a past wrought with different forms of oppression through slavery, colonisation and apartheid. This past has had far-reaching repercussions and has played an important role in shaping South Africa in the present. As this research has concentrated on white South African's memory of their apartheid past and how this past shapes their present, it is important to provide a brief history of South Africa so as to contextualise this research. It must be noted that while it is necessary to provide an outline of South Africa's historical context for the purpose of this work, and that while I aim to provide as accurate an account of the past as possible, I acknowledge that history is not something rigid or static. History is a fluid, ever-changing concept, the dominant version of history disseminated at the time is often determined by complicated power relations and history is always interpreted and reinterpreted within different contexts. I do not believe that one completely correct version of history exists, for me it is a far more complex process that will be discussed further in the third chapter of this work, in my discussion of memory studies.

According to Giliomee and Mbenga (2007: 5) evidence shows that people have lived in the region of Southern Africa for at least two million years. It is not within the scope or the purpose of this research to provide a detailed account of our history dating back two million years. For the purpose of this research I will begin my historical overview at the beginning of colonial settlement and slavery in this region. In 1652 the Dutch East India Company established a refreshment post at the Cape, bringing with them approximately ninety Europeans in the employ of the company. This quickly became a colony based on slave labour, a slave society whereby all institutions were permeated by slavery. (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007: 47) By the course of the eighteenth century new communities defined by race, religion and culture had emerged. Status was attached to the differing groups, usually defined racially, and providing the groups with differing sets of right and privileges or lack thereof. (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007: 79) By the end of the eighteenth century, all those not of English descent (Dutch, German and some French), had merged into a new 'Afrikaner' community speaking 'Afrikaans', a version of Dutch that had deviated from its original structure. (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007: 70)

Initially European conquest had been relatively peaceful but the latter half of the eighteenth century saw strong resistance to its continued expansion. In 1795 the British took over the Cape Colony. The next few years saw the colony being returned to the Dutch and taken back by the English, eventually becoming a formalised British colony in 1814. (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007: 85) By 1807 the British had abolished slavery but this only really produced subtle changes and some form of real emancipation only materialised by 1834.

By 1838, urged by growing frustrations around the lack of land, labour, security and political marginalisation the Afrikaners began the Great Trek, moving into the interior of the region. The first half of the nineteenth century saw major changes to the political configuration, geographical location of the people and to the culture of Southern Africa. (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007: 185) The discovery of gold and diamonds meant the emergence of a successful mining industry. This century also saw the rise and destruction of African kingdoms, the subordination of African economies and the expansion of colonial power. Within a hundred years, from 1850 to 1950, the region went from persisting primarily on subsistence agriculture to a rapidly urbanising industrial economy. The political changes and tensions were just as dramatic. (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007: 185) By 1899 the South African war had began and lasted until 1902.

By 1910 the Union of South Africa, based on the idea of white control, was established comprising of four provinces; Transvaal, Natal, Orange Free State and the Cape province, two former British colonies and two Boer republics. The poverty of Coloured, Indian and Black people at this point was considerably worse than any other groups. (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007: 185) 1912 saw the formation of the South African Native National Congress (later becoming the African National Congress, ANC). The Natives Land Act was passed in 1913. This allowed Africans to own a bare seven percent of the land in the region (later this was raised to a mere thirteen percent) and in 1914 the National Party was formed. (Steyn 2001: 179) By 1948 the National Party had been voted into power and in the following years, most of the apartheid legislation subjugating Black people was passed in South Africa. Almost ten years later, dissatisfied members of the ANC along with others, formed the Pan-Africanist Congress. (Steyn 2001: 179) Violence hit a critical point in the 1960s when tragically police killed sixty-nine protestors in the Sharpeville Shootings. After escalating conflicts between government and resistance movements a state of emergency in South Africa was declared and both the ANC and PAC were banned.

Opposition to apartheid continued but, with the peaceful path of resistance having had little or no effect, the ANC decided at this point to initiate an armed struggle. Both the ANC and

the PAC decided to establish military wings to their movements. By 1969, under the guidance of Steve Biko, the Black Consciousness movement emerged in South Africa and international sanctions placed on the country because of its political state were tightened. In 1976, opposition to the apartheid regime once again hit a critical point when school children demonstrated against the use of Afrikaans in their education system in the Soweto Uprisings. After another historical act of resistance, international pressure mounted and the country faced the possibility of an economic downturn. (Steyn 2001: 180) The year after the Soweto Uprisings the government officially banned any and all organisations affiliated with Biko's Black Consciousness Movement. Shockingly Biko died later that year of injuries inflicted on him while in police custody. (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007: 306) From this point until at least 1990, South Africa continued in a state of emergency. Resistance was met with constantly increasing repression and violence from the National Party still in power. Inhumane legislation and censorship continued backed by armed forces. (Steyn 2001: 180) However the early 1990's saw change slowly approaching. Through mounting resistance, international pressure and the possibility of further economic downturn (among other reasons) apartheid was seemingly gradually coming to an end. Government officials had, in 1988, begun talks with imprisoned ANC anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandel and by 1991 newly elected President of the National Party F.W. De Klerk released Nelson Mandela along with other political prisoners. De Klerk had also lifted the ban on the ANC and other resistance organisations. It was at this point that white South Africans participated in an all-white referendum resulting in seventy percent of whites in the country approving the continuation of negotiations. (Giliomee 2007: 306) In 1994 South Africa held its first free and fair elections. The ANC easily won these elections and Nelson Mandela was sworn in as president of the newly democratic South Africa in May of that year, heading the Government of National Unity (GNU). By 1996 the final constitution of the new South Africa was accepted, one of the most highly regarded constitutions in the world, and the National Party began its withdrawal from the GNU. The ANC has continued to govern the country since this first democratic election.

While the years of apartheid and the period of transition from white minority power to the ANC government were not free from violence, South Africa was able to avoid exploding into a civil war (although it teetered on the brink more than once) and is considered by many to represent an example of effectual negotiation and a relatively peaceful transference of power. Although South Africa has seen significant changes and challenges to white dominance, the repercussion of the country's past still affects the present and, as mentioned in the

introductory section, racial tensions are still apparent. Open and honest conversations about race are a necessity in South Africa. An understanding by white South Africans of the structural privilege awarded them is a crucial component of these discussions. For any discussion on race in this country to proceed in a productive way that challenges dominant white narratives, a deeper interrogation of whiteness by white people is essential in my opinion.

3.2 Locating this research within current debates: Why is the critical study of whiteness in South Africa Important?

Understanding and unpacking the construction of whiteness, white superiority and privilege, the normativity of whiteness and other related conceptions of whiteness, is not a particularly new area of study but one that, in the context of South Africa, has been awarded a renewed sense of vigour. Questions of white privilege and superiority, of how to grapple with being white in South Africa, how to deal with a new social reality as a white person in a new democratic South Africa and essentially plotting an ethical way forward for white South Africans, is currently a heated topic of debate. Through academic articles, talks and the media, many South African's are presently voicing their views on these aforementioned concerns. My research has attempted to problematise whiteness in South Africa through an investigation into how white South Africans remember their apartheid pasts, recognising the integral role their own whiteness plays in this process of memorising and how the way they view their past effects them in the present. As one of the main focuses of this research is whiteness in South Africa and the ultimate objective of this work is to educate white South Africans on their own whiteness, I believe it is necessary to include a brief surmising of some of the relevant discussion and locate this research within the current debate. I acknowledge at this point that by focusing on whiteness I run the risk of not only reinforcing its centrality, but also of reinforcing racial categorization, reducing identities to either black or white. However, my belief in the absolute necessity of this kind of work on whiteness and my opinion that in order to break down structures of racial hierarchies in South Africa we need to engage in racial dialogue, I would argue that this is a required risk.

The abolition of apartheid and the establishment of a new democratic South Africa has left white South African's facing a very different social reality. As Melissa Steyn (2001) purports in her text Whiteness just Isn't what it used to be, white South Africans are having to renegotiate their identities in the present context. How white South African's should 'be' in

the new South Africa is the pertinent question up for debate. Samantha Vice's (2010) controversial paper How Do I Live In This Strange Place has lead to a renewed interest in the topic of whiteness. Vice (2010) argues that even though apartheid has ended and the structures of white dominance are slowly being challenged, South Africa is still a visibly divided country and our racially structured history is still with us in many ways. Its effects surround us daily in the clearly visible poverty and inequality, the crime, the racial segregation of our living spaces and the recognition of who is still serving whom. (Vice 2010: 323) She asks how white people, with their deeply engrained privilege and sense of superiority, can live in South Africa. What is the morally appropriated response to our positions of privilege that still exists in South Africa today? Vice (2010) argues that whiteness, white people and their perspectives have been privileged to the point that it has been rendered unremarkable, normative and even invisible. The benefits received by virtue of being white are non-voluntary, deeply ingrained and very difficult to challenge. (Vice 2010: 325) Vice argues for a private process of self improvement. She believes that the white voice is inevitably tarnished by its position of power and privilege and that white people have, for too long, held the influence of public spaces. In her opinion white South Africans need to engage in a non-political, private, self reflective project of self improvement with an awareness of one's privilege as a white person. This process must be conducted with a degree of silence and humility. (Vice 2010 323, 340)

Pierre de Vos (2011), in a talk delivered at a workshop on whiteness at WITS University, rebukes Vice's argument. De Vos (2011) argues that the self reflective process put forward by Vice is essentially narcissistic and self indulgent. (de Vos 2011) He argues that it is ultimately a self centred project that places too much focus on the white self, rather than focusing on the system that reproduces whiteness and racial hierarchy and our continuous perpetuation of this. By choosing to concentrate on the white self we may be reaffirming the very structures that produce white privilege and by remaining silent we do not challenge the broader structures of white dominance that maintain the current racial hierarchies. Our silence, according to de Vos (2011), may be interpreted as an assumption that Black South Africans are so powerless they are in need of our silence and that white people deserve some kind of special recognition in their noble attempt at goodness, once again centering whiteness.

De Vos (2011) believes that Vice correctly acknowledges that white dominance is not something South Africa has passed, that we are not yet colour blind and that whiteness still represents an unfair advantage and is still the social norm. However, de Vos believes that

rather than undergoing a silent self-reflective process, we need to rather adopt a language of responsibility and reparation, acknowledging our privilege and reflecting critically on how it effects us and how we can take responsibility for who we are in a more ethical and meaningful way. (de Vos 2011)

Others have contributed to the debate by arguing that while Vice correctly recognises the institutional structured racism in South Africa, she places dealing with it at an individual level. If the process she suggests only leads to a reflective silence, then what is the point? It allows us to not openly address how to change structural racism. (Ngcoya 2011) Charles Villet (2011) added to this by arguing that remaining silent only perpetuates apartheid narratives, that we should actively engage in the public political sphere while maintaining some degree of humility. Other's felt that Vice's intervention only functions to silence redress by providing a surface apology for the past, and that talking about the 'burden of whites' in their attempt to self reflect only indulges their so-called suffering and entrenches the centralisation if whiteness. (Mngxitoma 2011) Eusebias Mckaiser (2011), while acknowledging the importance of Vice's article and her assessment of deeply rooted racial hierarchies still geared towards the benefit of whites in South Africa, disagrees with her argument that white people should withdraw from the public space. He argues instead that it is every person's responsibility to engage as equals in the public space to begin an open and honest discussion about race, and that Black South Africans do not need to be protected from the opinions of white people.

Gillian Schutte recently wrote a piece urging white people to begin the 2013 year with a new sense of reality, a reality in which they remove the 'blinkers', apologise for the atrocities committed by their ancestors and acknowledge their role and responsibility for South Africa's apartheid past. She asks white South Africans to reflect on their own unearned privilege that they and their children are born into, to think about its profound effects and to realise that whiteness is constructed and white superiority is taught. She wants white people to understand the terrible injustices suffered by Black South Africans and the deep rooted pain they felt and still feel, to understand that poverty and unemployment are social conditions not born out of laziness, stupidity and lack of ambition and to understand that our current conditions are the consequences of a long history of racial oppression in South Africa. Schutte (2013) appeals to white people to unpack the varying dimensions of their own whiteness. The negative response Schutte received from many white South Africans (not all) just, In my opinion, reinforces the need for white South Africans to actually engage with these issues.

This appeal by Schutte to white South Africans resonates strongly with Malaika wa Azania, who argues that it is important to direct these discussions of whiteness to white people. He believes that rather than allowing the work of anti-racism to lie in black struggle, it must lie in white people and their communities. White people who are serious about fighting against the system from which they benefit, need to start debunking white supremacist philosophies, within their own communities. (Azania 2013) Azania argues that "the existence of whiteness as an oppressive system is informed by the construction of whiteness as an oppressive idea". White supremacy exists because it is first theoretically designed and then institutionalised and this structured white dominance needs to be dealt with in order to deal with practices resulting from it. White people need to recognise themselves as the oppressors and they need to do so on their own. They need to realise and acknowledge their unfair advantage and that the system providing it exists. They must be educated to see their white privilege and what it means for them and others and they have to do it themselves. It cannot be the role of Black people to educate white people on their own whiteness. (Azania 2012)

While each author may have a particular view on how whiteness should be dealt with in South Africa presently, what they all share is a recognition of the need for white people to acknowledge their role not only during apartheid but in the broader racial hierarchy of white dominance, the privilege they receive because of it and the responsibility they have in reparation. The importance of this recognition is made apparent through its reinforcement in every article, yet what this research will demonstrate, is that many white South Africans still claim ignorance about their pasts and remain somewhat oblivious to their received structural privilege. This research therefore aims to expose white people not only to the ignorance of their own privilege but to their blindness to their ignorance. Not only do they not acknowledge their structural privilege but they are also conditioned to remain blind to the fact that they do not acknowledge it. Like Azania argues above, I believe that it is crucial that white people uncover this blindness for themselves.

Much of my justification for this research resonates strongly with the work of Steve Biko on Black Consciousness and specifically his critique of the white liberal. Biko argues that the white liberal immerses himself/herself in the black man's struggle against white supremacy, telling the black man how to fight his own fight while still benefiting from the structures of white power.

> *"Being white, he possesses the natural passport to the exclusive pool of white privileges from which he does not hesitate to extract whenever suits him. Yet, since he identifies with the blacks, he moves around his white circles – white only beaches, restaurants and cinemas – with a lighter load, feeling that he is not like the rest." (Biko 1978: 71)*

Biko believes that the white liberal can never truly identify with the oppressed group or their struggle because he will always have the ability to dip into his pool of privileges due to his whiteness. He argues that all whites are born into this system of white privilege, it is not a conscious choice and because of this no white, whether he/she supports the struggle against apartheid or not, can escape the "blanket condemnation that must come from the black world." (Biko 1978: 71)

Biko argues therefore, that the liberals must leave the black man to fight his fight, and they themselves should fight their own,

> *"The liberal must fight on his own and for himself. If they are true liberals they must realise that they are oppressed and that they must fight for their own freedom and not that of the nebulous 'they' with whom they can hardly claim identification." (Biko 1978: 72)*

While Biko was writing during the struggle against apartheid, much of what he puts forward still resonates strongly within South Africa currently. With regards to this research in particular, his critique of white liberals, for me, has guided me in conducting this kind of work. Biko not only comprehends the non-voluntary root of structural white privilege but he also points out the importance of white people confronting white problems. As a young white researcher I opted to conduct research based on white South Africans because I could identify with them as a collective and because I wanted to, as a white person, begin a discussion about whiteness, to expose whiteness, structures of white dominance and white privilege, to white people, to reveal to them their own whiteness and their own blindness to the broader systems of white power providing this unearned privilege. I completely agree with Biko when he argues that white liberals should fight on their own for themselves. It is not the responsibility of Black South Africans to educate white South Africans about their whiteness, it is our own responsibility. I direct this research at white people and urge them to start acknowledging their role as oppressors and interrogating their whiteness further.

The crux of this thesis is to demonstrate how our whiteness plays an important role in shaping the way the past is remembered and to understand the difficulties that may arise from ones

lack of engagement with the past and ones' own whiteness. The next chapter outlines critical theory relevant to the aforementioned topics. It begins, therefore, by discussing memory studies and intergenerational memory. It then continues in an assessment of critical whiteness theory and Mill's (1997) theory of racial hierarchies.

4. Theoretical Framework

This crucial chapter of the research critically outlines important theoretical work conducted on topics relevant to this thesis. As my research begins with a focus on how white South African's remember and engage with their pasts, I begin this theoretical overview with a discussion of the study and the politics of memory. I then include an examination of theory related to intergenerational transmission of memory, as this thesis also considers the ways in which the apartheid past, and resulting views and opinion, are passed on to the next generation and how they reinterpret and negotiate these. Ones whiteness in South Africa plays an important role in shaping the way in which these white South Africans remember (or forget) their pasts. Hence, it is crucial to understand and assess the racialised structure of many societies and the subject of whiteness. I have therefore included an analysis of critical whiteness theory and Charles Mill's theorisation of the racial contract. This theoretical outline provides an important framework within which one can understand the research findings discussed in the next chapter.

4.1 Memory Studies

How can it be that one person's remembrance of an event can differ, sometimes drastically, to that of another persons and within a lifetime even? This is something most people at some point in their life have encountered. The memory of something experienced by numerous people can differ so much from one individual to another, from one collective to another and even over time. This is because memory is not something static, it does not remain forever unchanged, it is fluid, it is reshaped and subject to interpretation. The field of memory Studies involves ideas about how individuals and collectives remember (and often forget) in common and what may shape or influence this process of remembering. In relation to the work of this thesis, memory studies aids us in its ability to provide a framework within which we can understand the negotiated process of remembering, how memories are formed or manipulated, how groups can remember or forget? How we construct and reconstruct our memories, our past, and the role that it plays in our identity.

i. Individual memory, collective memory and identity.

There is no clear distinction between individual and collective memory, we may remember events as individuals but that individual memory is always shaped by various social interactions. (Olick 2003: 6)

> *"While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember."* (Halbwachs 1992: 48)

Maurice Halbwachs is a canonical author in the field of memory studies, writing groundbreaking work on collective memory. He argues that collective memory is a social construct, not a given and not always remembered directly, but stored and interpreted. While individuals may be the ones that remember, it is always within their social context that their past is recreated. (Halbwachs 1992: 22) Essentially our memories of the past are not merely a known fact but are rather something we construct and reconstruct according to different contexts and group interests. Memory is dependent on our social environment, and it often requires family, friends or others, to recall and reconstruct our memories. Our individual memory stems from our belonging to a group and is often shaped by the social system in which we live, the norms, ideas, interests, opinions and so on. It is in society that we acquire, recall, recognise and localize our memory; the process of remembrance is almost never an individual one. (Halbwachs 1992: 38)

Memory is not static but rather something fluid and ever-changing. As we go through life we are constantly reserving memories from different times and stages, keeping an account of our past, which is reproduced over and over again, and through these memories a sense of our identity is perpetuated. We continuously recall these memoires at different periods in our lives and they are not always reproduced in the same form. As we recall our memories in different contexts they are reshaped and reconstructed. (Halbwachs 1992: 47) As a teenager I may remember a particular event occurring one way, but when I recall that event twenty years later, as an adult in a completely different social context, I may remember it in a completely different way. Our past is a social construct, shaped by the concerns of the present. Our collective memory is a reconstruction of the past in light of the present. (Halbwachs 1992: 26) We reshape our memory of the past within our current context and present generations construct themselves and their identities in the present, in the context of their constructed past.

Memory and identity are intricately connected. The past may shape the present and in turn our identity but we may also reshape our past within the context of our constructed identity in the present. Race, class, sexuality and gender mark our identities in very specific ways and memory is located within these specific contexts. (Hirsch and Smith 2002: 6) In the creation, construction and reconstruction of ourselves we reinterpret the meanings of significant events. We make the 'self' through the way in which we understand and reshape our memories of the past. Ron Eyerman (2001) explores this in his work on the formation of African American Identities in light of their past experiences in the United States. After experiencing slavery, emancipation and then segregation, African Americans had experienced a double rejection by white society. (Eyerman 2001: 25) These major events in the pasts of African Americans had repercussions felt long after and even still felt today. They shape this groups identity in very specific ways, as mentioned above. Our past shapes our identity and our identity provides a specific context in which we reconstruct our past. Later generations of African Americans attempted to reconstruct their pasts of slavery and segregation so as to remove the negative and inferior identity awarded them for being black. (Eyerman 2001: 33) By interpreting their pasts in a different way they were able to construct a new kind of identity.

White South Africans in the new South Africa are having to rethink their own identities since the end of apartheid. Now that things have begun to change, white South Africans are having to renegotiate their place, their role and their identity.

Memory is articulated in a range of ways, visual literary, national myth, bodily practice and even through silence. It is often most forcefully transmitted through individual voice and body, through eye witness testimony. That testimony does not necessarily have to be their own but through recollections of others within a collective. (Hirsch and Smith 2002: 7) The family plays an important role in the transmission of memory, through relaying recollections of the past. Families have their own particular memory. Within society, families have their own set of rules, customs, social norms and their own mentality, and remembering takes place within this environment. (Halbwachs 1992: 74) Family and the way they interpret and reconstruct memories within their own context influence the way in which those memories of the past are then transmitted to the next generation. At some point in our lives we will move to engaging outside the family, and the boundaries of our recollections are extended. We can sometimes change our memories along with opinions, principles and judgements as we extend our collective and pass from one group to another. (Halbwachs 1992: 74)

It is also important to note that social memory also takes place with a complex hierarchy of power and psychological mechanisms. (Connerton 1989) Memory is bound in issues of hegemony and power; it is always about contested power and remembering or forgetting. The politics of memory as an area of study attempts to unravel these issues of power and dominance, through understanding what influences memory of the past? How certain memories of the past are recognised as the public version, and how that may change over time.

ii. Memory Politics

Memory Politics is the political means by which events are remembered. It addresses the role politics, and importantly, cultural forces, may play in shaping individual and collective memory. Government policies, popular culture and social rules and norms all influence the way events are remembered. What one may consider to be an objective, truthful history is questioned, since our remembrance of the past is constantly being reconstructed in the present. David Glassberg (1996), in his discussion of public history and memory studies, emphasizes the fluidity of memory and remembrance, making an important connection between memory of the past and history. He argues that memory of a society is "created, institutionalised, disseminated and understood" in various ways. (Glassberg 1996:7) Different individuals and/or groups have different versions of the past and these are communicated in society through a number of different ways. Like Halbwachs purports, individual memory is always a product of group communication, it is intimately linked to the collective memory of a community. Stories of the past are often handed down within families and among friends or communities but memory of the past can also be shaped by the larger political culture at the time, not only through personal remembrance. (Glassberg 1996: 10-11) Glassberg (1996: 10) also identifies that one should not only focus on the institutions of memory but also on the minds of the audience. Different people may derive completely different meaning from the same historical representation and that meaning may change as they reinterpret it in their own social context. Among all of these versions of the past competing for influence, what becomes interesting is how one of them assumes the role of the public history. How some become established and disseminated as the dominant version of the past. This can be due to a number of factors such as the political culture at the time, popular culture and place consciousness.

This dominant versions of history can and do change overtime. How people remember the past can affect the healing of societies torn though regimes of violence and oppression.

Memory has important connections to nation building, and has been used in countries of tumultuous pasts. Memory is an interdependent process of both remembering and forgetting. In areas post conflict memory can be used for corrective and reparative means through an acknowledgment of the past. South Africa is an important example of this, its use of memory to rebuild a broken society is demonstrated through its attempt to create a 'more truthful' shared memory of the past through institutions such as The Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This aimed to establish some kind of unity through memory in a previously divided state. (Amadiume and An-Na'im 2000) Jeffery Olick (2003) continues to address this issue in his text, once again emphasising memory as a fluid concept whose meanings, place in social relations and form changes and varies over time. Societies often attempt to create unity through constructing 'normal' pasts through normative principles they have already established. What he attempts to demonstrate is that memory can never be completely unitary no matter how hard powers that be try to make it. (Olick 2003)

iii. Intergenerational memory

As mentioned in the above discussion of memory, memory is a social process; it is formed and shaped within the collective. In this social context, memory is also something passed down to generations through both public and private means. The term 'transmission' being used here implies a one way, top down process in which the younger generation appears as merely passive receivers. I think it is important to note at this point that, while I will use the term transmission in this paper to refer to this intergenerational memory process as it is a process whereby the older generation convey their memory of the past to the younger generation, I acknowledge and want to emphasise that memory is a negotiated process whereby these younger generations may reinterpret, renegotiate and reconstruct these memories of the past within their own present context.

An important branch of explorations of intergenerational memory is understanding this transmission among those who have experienced traumatic events. For the purpose of this research and the following theoretical analysis, a traumatic event refers to a humanly created, deeply distressing and disturbing event experienced by a collective. This includes the likes of war, genocide, ethnic conflict or regimes of violence and oppression. It is something so powerful it causes a tear in the social fabric of a society resulting in a collective loss of identity or meaning. (Eyerman 2004: 160) Apartheid in South African definitely falls into this category of a 'traumatic event'. While it clearly affected a specific group of people who were

subject to the violent oppression more profoundly and in different ways, it has destabilized the country and everybody living in it, as a whole.

Monica Eileen Patterson's (2003) text Memory Across Generations: The Future of "Never Again" explores the complexities surrounding ones understanding of memory. Patterson provides three working definitions of memory, it is a social process, it is inherently selective and interpretive and it is the meaning we give to experience. (Patterson 2003: 1) She argues, however, that these definitions overlook the underlying political and cultural dynamics that can both enable or limit memory, especially in light of traumatic events experienced by a country. Certain memories are more permanent or visible due to the varying access to knowledge and information people can have. She adds that sometimes, it can be in the interest of an individual or group, to suppress certain memories. (Patterson 2003: 2) Rather than deal with difficult past experiences people may choose to suppress them, to remain silent, as a defence mechanism. Power is always involved in the process of remembering distressing events. (Eyerman 2004: 163) Remembering occurs in a complex of power relations and is recalled, remade and forgotten. Memory is constantly shifting and understandings of it and interpretations of it change over time. The transmission of memory occurs within this same complex frame. To understand the transmission of memory it is important to understand not only the past in which the events occurred but also the intervening period between earlier times and the present. (Patterson 2003: 2) Patterson (2003) continues to ask asks how memories of repression and violence are passed on, how collective memory is produced and transmitted to the next generation, and what the political and cultural conditions are that either allow or prevent generational discussion? Eva Hoffman (2004), in her book After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust, asks similar questions with regard to the Holocaust. She ask how do we apprehend this kind of past, what meanings does it hold for us today and how do we pass these meanings on to subsequent generations.

Marianne Hirsh (2008) in her text, The Generation of Postmemory, engages in an important exploration of this transmission of memory. She develops the concept of postmemory to refer to the relationship between second generations to these powerful, traumatic events referred to earlier. Hirsch (2008: 106) argues that when this level of trauma occurs, the descendents of those involved (including both victims and perpetrators) connect so deeply to the previous generations remembrance of the past, that their memories can be transmitted to those that were not actually there, but are, at the same time, distinct from the recall of the actual witnesses and participants. The second generation experiences the traumatic event even

though they themselves did not live through it. Their relationship to the traumatic event is defined by their 'coming after' and how the trauma is communicated to them through stories, images and behaviours. These traumatic experiences are transmitted to the second generation so deeply and affectively, they appear to constitute memories in their own right. (Hirsh 2008: 106-107) Postmemory is not identical to memory, it is clearly impossible to have literal memories of the experiences of others, however, it "does approximate memory in its affective force." (Hirsch 2008: 109) Making use of Jan Assman's (1997) work on memory, Hirsch distinguishes between two different kinds of collective remembrance, "communicative' and "cultural" memory". Communicative refers to biographical and factual memory located amongst those who have witnessed the event and can pass it on, cultural memory refers to the point at which memorising of an event becomes institutionalised through books, archives rituals or commemorations. (Hirsch 2008: 110) In more recent work Aleida Assman (2006) extends this analysis to the creation of four main memory formats, namely; individual and family/ group remembrance, corresponding to Jan Assman's 'communicative memory', and political/ national or cultural remembrance, resembling his 'cultural memory'. In terms of the transmission of memory between generations, Hirsch (2006: 110) makes the distinction between intergenerational memory referring to memory transmitted through predominantly the family and social ties and transgenerational memory as national/ political or cultural/ archival memory transmission. For the purpose of this research, my focus of transmission is primarily through the family. As pointed previously in this chapter, and by Jan and Aleida Assman, the family is a crucial unit in the transmission of memory. Hence my referral to this section as intergenerational memory. It is important to remember, however, that familial transmission of memory is not completely free of political and cultural forces. It is also important to note that the transmission of traumatic events to the second generation runs the risk of having that generation's own stories and experiences displaced. (Hirsch 2008: 112)

Jeffrey Prager (2004), in his text Lost Childhood, Lost Generation: The Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma, contributes to this point made by Hirsch. He asks how the experiences of a humanly created trauma suffered by those individuals of one generation (a trauma in the case of this research being the apartheid regime) affect their relations with their children and what the resulting impact on social/cultural change and their capacity to define themselves is. (Prager 2004: 173) This kind of trauma does not only impacts those directly targeted but affects an entire generation as a whole and can often make it difficult for their children to separate their parents past with their own distinctive present. (Prager 2003: 174) An experience such as apartheid leaves a deep wound that is difficult to heal and is

continuously passed on from one generation to the next, their "present is lived as if it were the past". This results in the next generation's inability to define themselves separately from their parent's pasts. Their generation can suffer a collective incapacity to escape their own pasts, their identity development completely dependent on experiences not even their own. (Prager 2003: 176-177)

The Centre for the study of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa recently conducted a report, History On Their Own Terms: Relevance of the Past for a New Generation, in which they explored the role of the past and how it is transmitted to present and future generations in the South African context. This report found that memories of the past in South Africa continue to affect the next generation, even though they are often not direct experiences. These memories of South Africa's largely unresolved past are perpetuated mainly through stories told within the family and broader communities.

> *"These received memories shape identities as well as fuel negative perceptions and stereotypes, often hindering reconciliation processes and perpetuating identities of continued victimisation."* (Adonis and Naidu 2007: 4)

For the youth still currently experiencing socio-economic oppression in South Africa, the past becomes a means of understanding the present, often continuing and reigniting feelings of anger, blame and bitterness. However for those living with privilege, the past remains something in the past, the past "remains a dislocating memory, belonging to another generation and having little, if anything to with them." (Adonis and Naidu 2007: 4) In different ways, whether it be anger or silence, the past clearly still has a profound effect on South African youth in the present. What the report makes clear is that unresolved feelings about the past are being transmitted to the South African youth. It becomes important then to achieve some kind of balance, to remember and think about the past but to do so in a more positive way, we need to

> *"Remember the past in a way that allows for critical citizen engagement as well as one that enables the current and future generations to take constructive ownership of that history."* (Adonis and Naidu 2003: 4)

It is only through embracing our past in this productive way that we can begin to overcome negative feelings and stereotypes, embrace solutions to present issues and gain the capacity to move forward.

4.2 Critical Whiteness Theory

Whiteness as an arena of academic inquiry can be described as the study of cultural, historical and sociological aspects of people identified as white, the social constructions of whiteness and its connection to social status. A central concern of the study of whiteness is understanding whiteness as being socially constructed to justify discrimination of people of colour. The concept of something being socially constructed is complex but in my view, when something is described as being socially constructed, it is the idea that it is created and developed by society, and society then organises their thoughts and actions around it. In terms of whiteness, race is considered a social construct because the idea that the way a person should be treated in life is determined by their skin colour is not inherent, but rather created by society. The study of whiteness looks at white identity and white privilege as a process by which racial identities were created and established to signify ones status in society. White privilege emerged as economic, social, political and cultural advantages awarded to whites by virtue of the colour of their skins.

In South Africa, as discussed in the previous chapter, whiteness has become a hot topic of debate. Whiteness as an area of study is not necessarily new but more and more authors are contributing to existing work, adding new dimensions and theorisations to this expanding subject of investigation. Although focusing racial studies on the topic whiteness may appear to merely reproduce the notion of the centrality of whiteness, I would argue, in similar vein to Melissa Steyn, that studying whiteness allows us to reconceptualise racialization as something no longer invisible to white people, but as a white problem, in the same way that, in some feminist works, rather than problematising the position of the women, we look towards the male in investigations of gender. (Steyn 2001: xxix)

It is important to note when discussing whiteness that we cannot look at it as a monolithic category. Race shapes our lives in the same way that gender, class and sexualities shape our experiences. We live in world in which many societies are racially structured, a system of differentiation that shapes both those privileged and those oppressed by it. (Frankenburg 1993: 1) Race, and specifically whiteness, is not experienced in isolation. It is crucial to consider the ways in which race intersects with other axes of social power (Rasmussen et al. 2001: 7) such as gender, sexuality and class. These intersections of social power further subdivide the terrain of whiteness. Whiteness is a fluid notion. Race, racial dominance and whiteness are all complex lived experiences that are historically structured and change over time. (Frankenburg 1993: 21) Our history shapes our lived experience in the present and

therefore our experience of whiteness. (Frankenburg 1993: 237) Whiteness cannot be viewed as a homogenous category.

In my research on the subject of whiteness, three important dimensions of whiteness seem to standout for the purpose of this research: whiteness as a social construct, whiteness as structural privilege and whiteness as invisible or unmarked.

Whiteness as a social construct is the idea that being 'white', and all that entails, is something constructed, not something inherent. Whiteness as a construction emerged in South Africa as central to colonization. Using enlightenment, notions of universal progress and the supremacy of reason, colonizers were able to establish themselves, the white European race, as scientifically superior, fit to take a dominant role (Steyn 2001: 150), in comparison with the native 'savages', as they perceived people of colour. This, Melissa Steyn (2001: 150) refers to, as the master narrative, the conception, over many years, of whiteness as the centre, the dominant, the moral being, the superior. This master narrative was a way for white western men to legitimize their "transformation of the world in their image." (Steyn 2001: 150) This construction of whiteness has then been reshaped and reformed over the history of South Africa, being even further embedded through the legal enforcement of the white supremacy through the violent and oppressive apartheid state. Whiteness and being white, according to this research, is not a credible biological property, it is a social construction used for the justification of a certain way of organising society. (Rasmussen et al. 2001: 8) Ruth Frankenburg (1993: 11), in her canonical text, The Social Construction of Whiteness: White Women, Race Matters, reiterates this point. Race, in her view, is a social construct, linked to relations of power and has effects around the world. It has a "real, tangible and complex impact on an individual's sense of self, experiences and life chances." Whiteness is a complex social and political construct that changes over time and space. (Frankenburg 1993: 236) Roediger (1991) , in his study of the formative years of working class racism in the United States, speaks to the idea that, through a complex series of psychological and ideological mechanisms that ingrain and reinforce racial stereotypes, the racial superiority of whiteness has been constructed to secure their economic and social advantage. Whiteness has been, over the years, constructed in such a way as to justify and maintain the structural privilege awarded this group by virtue of their skin colour.

White skin privilege is an important component of critical whiteness studies. Our Race translates directly into forms of social organisation that shapes our daily life. (Frankenburg 1993: 11) White skin allows for an array of social, political and economic privileges, being white makes a person the beneficiary of numerous advantages such as; jobs, access to

property, education, health care and decent treatment by police and courts especially. (Rasmussen et al. 2001: 2-3). Structural Privilege, according to Samantha Vice (2010: 324) is a commitment to the centrality of white people and their ways; this centered position is maintained through institutional, rhetorical, performative and psychological strategies. Over time and space, legal systems and economic policies have even been utilised to secure and protect these advantages. (Steyn 2001: xxix) I must at this point highlight and agree with Vice's note on the use of the term privilege. Like her, I will continue to make use of the term for the duration of this paper as it does suggest some sort of "unearned, unshared, non-universal advantages" and for lack of a more appropriate term. However I agree that it is not necessarily the most appropriate term, privilege refers to goods one cannot expect as one's dues, things one does not have a right to, and yet, as Vice (2010: 325) states many of the advantages received by whites are ones that all people should have a right to, that they should, in fact, expect as their dues. These advantages or privileges of white people are non-voluntary; they are something we are born into. As Steve Biko wrote in reference to apartheid South Africa:

> "It *is not as if white are allowed to enjoy privilege only when they declare their solidarity with the ruling part. They are born into privilege and are nourished by and nurtured in the ruthless exploitation of black energy."* (Biko 1987: 66)

Even well-meaning conscientious whites are often unable to escape the habit of white privilege. (Vice 2010: 325) Our structural privilege is so deeply entrenched; we are often completely unaware of its existence and impact.

Another important dimension of the study of whiteness stems directly from this ideas of being unaware of our privilege. White people often do not recognise or acknowledge their own privilege as a white person; whiteness becomes and operates as something invisible. Something so omnipresent and entrenched that it becomes natural, normalised, invisible. It operates as an unmarked identity against which other identities are marked and racialised. (Rasmussen 2001: 10) According to Steyn 2001), white people, as the privileged group, have "tended to take their identity as the standard by which everyone else is measured." White identity is dominant, it is just the way things are, just how it is and becomes normalised. White identity becomes invisible, white people often, do not consciously think about the substantial effect being white actually has in their everyday lives. They "edit out" the racialness of their own lives (Steyn 2001: xxvi) and in this way are able to ignore the way race structures people's lives and the way their race is advantaged by this structure. Vice (2010: 326) argues that in the application of theorizations of whiteness to South Africa, it

needs to be thought of in light of its own unique background. South Africa, in her opinion, is different with regard to this theorization of whiteness as invisible. Because of its particular historical and political circumstances, it is impossible to not be aware of one's race, "that one is white rather than black is always present to oneself and others, barring an impressive feat of willed self-deception." (Vice 2010: 326) Yet it is important to note that while your white skin may be visible your status in the world because of it may remain unacknowledged, an invisible norm.

Charles Mills, explains this racialised structuring of society through his theorization of The Racial Contract, this will be discussed in depth in the next section.

4.3 The Racial Contract

The Racial Contract is a book written by Charles W. Mills in which he posits his theory of a contract, not unlike the social contract, but one that is designed at its heart to promote white over other 'non-white' races. Mills (1997) argues that white supremacy is the unnamed political system upon which the modern world rests; it makes the modern world what it is today. This system of domination is generally not regarded for what it is, a political system in its own right, but is seen as operating in the background. It is important, according to Mills (1997: 2) to recognise racism as in itself a political system, a power structure normalising the social, economical and political privileging of a certain group. Mills states that his theorization of the racial contract rest upon three assumptions, that white supremacy exists and has for many years, that white supremacy should be thought of as a political system and that as a political system, it can be theorized as based on a contract between whites, a racial contract. (Mills 1997: 7)

The Racial Contract is a non ideal ways of understanding "the inner logic of racial domination" (Mills 1997: 6) and how it structures societies throughout the world. It is an account of the way things are and how they came to be that way. It is a set of formal/informal agreements between members of one group categorized as white, to categorize the remaining group of Blacks as having different and inferior status, as having a subordinate civil standing in white dominated polities. The regular social rules normally dictating the behaviour of whites in interactions with those of the same race are not applied in their interaction with Black people or are dependent upon historical changes or the differing groups of Black people (for example a person of Indian origin may be considered a more appropriate person

of colour). Essentially, the purpose of the contract is always the "differential privileging of whites as a group with respect to non-whites as a group, the exploitation of their bodies, land and resources and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities to them." (Mills 1997: 11) As Vice points out above, acquiring privilege by virtue of your skin colour is non-voluntary, we are born into it and even when we are aware of it; it is extremely difficult to escape it. Mills (1997: 11) acknowledges this point in his own text,

> *"All whites are beneficiaries of the contract, though some whites are not signatories to it."*

The racial contract should be seen primarily as an agreement only between whites, the positioning of Black people means they cannot ever be a genuinely consenting party. They are treated as objects rather than subjects. (Mills 1997: 12) The racial contract establishes a racial world whereby the status of whites and Blacks is clearly demarcated and its purpose is to continually reproduce this racial order so as to secure the privilege of whites and maintain the subordination of people of colour. (Mills 1997: 14) The racial contract establishes norms and procedures to maintain the status quo, as well as a kind of ignorance to allow its continuance with little protestation. Ironically, whites in general will be unable to understand or will remain oblivious to the world in which they live in. Part of becoming white, of consenting, whether explicitly or tacitly, to the racial order, part of achieving whiteness and consenting to white supremacy, is to become blind to any "genuine understanding of certain social realities." (Mills 1997: 18) By no accident, the racial contract requires a kind of structured blindness and a lack of transparency to maintain the domination of whites. (Mills 1997: 19)

Unlike its predecessor the social contract, the racial contract is not located in an ideal picture of the world but in actual historical fact. As mention above in Steyn's analysis of the master narrative, it is clearly located in a "series of events marking the creation of the modern world by European colonialism" and "expeditions of conquest." (Mills 1997: 20) It is in this quest that Europeans gradually came to see themselves as the good, the clean, the civilised Christian in comparison with the savage, barbaric heathen native counterparts. They used this classification for the justification of the native's inferiority and their own superiority, their own privilege versus Black people's subordination. (Mills 1997: 21) Although more recently challenges to white supremacy have taken place, with few exceptions, the legacy of this modern world built upon these assumptions is still with us today, seen in economic, political, social and cultural domination. (Mills 1997: 31)

Mills (1997: 320 argues that the economic dimension of the racial contract is the most important one of all. The foreground of the contract is economic exploitation. While other benefits of the contract have been accrued; political influence and cultural hegemony among others, material advantage lies at the heart of this racial hierarchy, deliberately aimed at securing legitimate privilege of whites and manipulation of Blacks. (Mills 1997: 32-33)

These benefits have been passed on over time and space resulting in a very particular structuring of the world in the 'white western image'.

> *"Both globally and within particular nations, then, white people, Europeans and their descendents, continue to benefit from the Racial Contract, which creates a world in their cultural image, political states differentially favouring their interests, an economy structured around the racial exploitation of others, and a moral psychology (not just whites but sometimes in nonwhites also) skewed consciously or unconsciously toward privileging them,"* (Mills 1997: 40).

This allows for this kind of advantage to become legitimised and normalised to the point that it is often never investigated further. However, currently this world structured along the lines of white supremacy is being interrogated more and more. This research hopes to contribute to these interrogations of whiteness in the South African context.

How we remember and think about the past and how those legacies are passed down to our children is deeply affected by our race. We live in a racially structured world that profoundly affects everything in different ways. The question for this research then becomes, in a place like South Africa, how does our white skin affect the way in which we think about our past and our race in the present and what impact does that have on our countries ability (or its current inability) to move past it's traumatic past.

The following chapter will make use of interviews conducted with white South African's to attempt to answer these perplexities and to draw out relevant emergent themes among this group of participants.

5. Findings

Through my interviews with fourteen white South African's I was able to draw out some important themes that correspond with the previously discussed theory and can be understood within the theoretical framework laid out in the preceding chapter. The main themes coming out of these discussions were firstly the emergence of, according to the participants, a not knowing and silences with reference to the past, the construction of the past in light of the present and a lack of understanding of the role the past plays in the present. What also emerged was both a visibility of one's white skin and yet an invisibility of one's whiteness and a reoccurring intergenerational memory negotiation. These themes will be discussed at more length in the following chapter. It is important to note that I do not presume to represent the views of all white South African's in this thematic discussion; I only intend to discuss the research participants in relation to broader theoretical notions.

5.1 Remembering the Past

While participants did not always share the exact memories, views, opinions or thoughts, there definitely emerged similar ways of thinking about and remembering their apartheid pasts, indicating some kind of collective memorising among this group. The particular ideas that surfaced continuously among the participants are those that will be discussed below.

i. Silences

One of the foremost themes that became evident from interviews with all of the participants was that of a silence. A silence in that this was, for many of them, one of the only times they had actually talked about these issues, that my questioning was a rare time for them to actually think about and engage with their past. In asking one of my participants if she ever talked about the past and race in her home she responded,

> *"We never talk about it, the only time we've actually talked about it was the other day, when we were saying 'hey, that girl from WITS is coming to interview us.'" (Susan, parent)*

What becomes apparent from both the parents and children is that within the home of these participants, our apartheid past and race is something rarely spoken about. The parents may have shared some memories with their children over the years and may answer the questions of their children if they asked, but most of them do not ask or haven't in a long time. In instances when it is actually talked about, it is only to observe negative aspects of life in South Africa that they, as white people in South Africa, are feeling today.

> *"We don't talk about it really, but when we have it's to ask how they would feel if they got retrenched now, would they even be able to get another job here? The crime in South Africa, one of the first thing that comes to mind when talking about crime is the race of the person, that's pretty much all we'll talk about" (Patricia, child)*

The family is an important site for the transmission of memory (Hirsh 2008: 110) and the silences within these families provides as much insight as the memories shared. There seems to be a general lack of engagement with the past. The participants also observed that along with the family, socially, race and apartheid is not often discussed and most suggested that it is only ever really discussed when complaining about their own disadvantage as white South Africans or making racial jokes.

> *"Um... we don't really talk about apartheid, race maybe, well most of time people are sort of bemoaning the fate that things are worse now." (Desiree, parent)*

It appears that race, at least among these participants, is never something they talk about in a productive way. As one of the children participants, Kirsty, observed in her interview

> *"I don't think race is ever discussed, unless it is to say something racist. It's never something turned over to understand why, why do we feel this, say these things or behave this way. It's never something that goes into the why." (Kirsty, Child)*

Through these discussions with the participants it also became obvious that talking about these things was something that they found very difficult. Many commented on how emotionally taxing they found it to actually think about the past and recall their memories during apartheid. When people go through something traumatic, whether they are the victims or the perpetrators, they often use silence and forgetting as a coping mechanism, a way to deal with a difficult past. (Patterson 2003)

> *"Like anything, when you go through a time that wasn't a pleasant thing you tend to not talk about it, you forget about it." (Darren, Parent)*

Monica Patterson (2003) observes that groups may suppress certain past memories in their own interest. Especially with regards to this group, when bringing up the past means possibly releasing feelings of guilt, shame and igniting a sense of responsibility, it is easier to forget the unpleasant events, to disregard your own memory. But, this denial of memory can have very negative consequences as the society moves forward.

ii. Not Knowing

Another important theme observed in the interviews is a constant reiterating of a not-knowing. In every interview conducted with the parents, a theme of 'we didn't know the extent of what was happening' emerged. This was often attributed by the participants as due to a lack of knowledge about the extent of the atrocities at the time, that the system was deeply entrenched and the media coverage of it so biased that it was impossible for them to really know the truth.

> "*We didn't really have information, there was a complete media blackout, it may be a really bad excuse but we really didn't know what was happening" (Laura, Parent)*

> *"Well I suppose there was coverage but it was always slanted the way the government wanted it to be, I mean, you could see that people were segregated, that was obvious, but in terms of how they were, their rights not respected and things like that, I think a lot of the time people really didn't know."(Desiree, parent)*

While this group claims they did not know almost every one of them also suggested that they did not resist because they were so fearful of what would happen to them. They knew the situation was serious enough that it would be very dangerous to resist the system. They also were able, in their interviews, to recall some very disturbing common place events that would occur during apartheid, such as; pass raids and the terrible treatment Black people would receive at the hands of the police. Some of the participants were now able to acknowledge that they, consciously or subconsciously, chose not to know.

> *"You only had a small pool of people that could do certain jobs, we were so clearly at an advantage over other races, I would imagine, I mean there was no incentive for us to be active against apartheid cause it was much easier for us to just keep quiet, to not-know and live through it." (Darren, Parent)*

Melissa Steyn (2012), in working with recollections of everyday experiences from the Apartheid Archive Project, also detected this emergence of a not-knowing amongst white

South Africans which became the basis for her theorization of the 'ignorance contract'. She observed that like knowledge, ignorance can be established through communicative processes and circulated across social settings. (Steyn 2012: 11) Stemming from Mill's (1997) Racial Contract and the segment of it that postulates the necessity of a kind of blindness by whites to their own system of domination, so as to allow it to continue, Steyn develops her 'Ignorance Contact'. Whether 'knowingly' or 'unknowingly' white South Africans enter into a contract upon which they agree to remain ignorant to the realities of the inequalities and injustices that underpin their own privileges in society. (Steyn 2012: 21) They do this to maintain the status quo, to maintain the racial hierarchy, in which they live, that structures the lives of all South Africans but advantages only whites at the expense of Black people. Rather than facing the daunting thought of losing their privilege they end up subscribing to it. As mentioned in the discussion of silences, the silence can speak as loudly as words, this silence, this ignorance, is passed on through generations. We are taught, as white South Africans, to sign the contract. Through our socialization into the 'white' community we learn what not to know, what not to notice and what not to mention. (Steyn 2012: 13) During apartheid, ignorance was a major component of a white family, passed on to children like knowledge would be, breeding generation after generation of privileged whites claiming ignorance to their own social reality.

When apartheid ended, this not knowing allowed white South Africans to let others take the blame, their own complicity in the system was never fully addressed (Vice 2010: 327). By focusing the blame on perpetrators of obvious crimes, white South Africans were able to escape without having to fully confront their role in apartheid or take responsibility for it. This point by Samantha Vice is further substantiated by the interview participants. Every one of the parents generation, when asked to identify their role during apartheid, saw themselves as merely bystanders, apathetic bystanders.

> *"Like all South Africans at that time, we were brain washed, so pretty much a bystander following the flock" (Charlie, Parent)*

Some went as far as to consider themselves victims of apartheid,

> *"I was definitely just a bystander, I didn't do anything to make apartheid worse for them, I was almost a victim, there was nothing I could do about their laws." (Vanessa, Parent)*

What is also evident in the language of the above quote is the way in which the participant differentiates between herself and Black South Africans, the emergence of an 'us and them'

discourse that I mentioned in the introductory chapter. Using the language of 'them' and 'their' portrays an othering of Black people as not included in the collective she identifies with.

Only two participants (and they happened to be a married couple) revealed any sense of responsibility when thinking about their apartheid past, the other parental interviewees felt they had done nothing wrong as the system was so deeply entrenched that they knew no different and/or they did not know the extent of the atrocities happening at the time. Many of them do not recognise their own complicity as playing any role in apartheid. I find this problematic, for a system such as apartheid may primarily rely on violent oppressors for its maintenance but it also functions on the back of complicit citizens living under the system, feeding the system and passively allowing it to continue. Without them it could not have succeeded especially to the extend it did for as long as it did.

The question then becomes, eighteen years after apartheid, is this kind of ignorance still being passed on from one generation to the next? What effect will the neglect of any deeper analysis of complicity have? How does our parents' generation's inability to acknowledge their role in our apartheid past impact us, their children? This will be discussed in more length in the section of this chapter focusing on intergenerational transmission of memory.

iii. The Past in the Present

When thinking back to their days living under apartheid the participants reveal a mixed attitude towards the past. While only one of the female participants believed she always felt it was wrong, most admit that at the time they either saw nothing wrong with it or did not particularly think about it at all. Darren, growing up in a family that had been in South Africa for generations, talks about his feelings towards apartheid at the time,

> *"I must say from my point of view I had no, I had no bad qualms about it. I know there was apartheid and I knew that black and whites were separated but growing up, all the way through growing up, through school and then going to the army, in the army they were really indoctrinated against the black gevaar that was coming, we only spoke Afrikaans and we stood on the border waiting for the swaart gevaar (the black danger) to come along. We had nothing to actually teach us differently, I had never gone overseas or anything so I had no interaction to teach me otherwise." (Darren, parent)*

Other participants, like married couple Desiree and Charlie, believe that they can't really say how they felt about it because they both never really gave it much thought at the time.

> *"I was not that concerned about it, I wasn't going to make any changes to my lifestyle, no, I wasn't too concerned about apartheid." (Charlie, Parent)*

> *"Um, well I guess I had a very naive view of it. It was just the way it was and I had other things on my mind, it wasn't something that affected my life necessarily so it was something that was just sort of part of the background." (Desiree, Parent)*

All of the interview participants expressed a shared sense of anger and disgust (to differing degrees) at the apartheid system. All believed the system had been wrong, that it allowed terrible atrocities to occur and all highlighted the negative aspects in their recollections of their apartheid past. However, Charlie and Desiree, were both an exception to this, stating that apartheid was wrong but that they could not really recall much about their past. This could be their own kind of defence mechanism, assisting them in not having to really deal with the past.

It has become a standing joke that since the end of apartheid and the new democracy in South Africa you cannot find anyone who actually supported apartheid.

> *"It's funny how, of course nowadays everybody didn't actually think that apartheid helped them and everybody is against them but that is bullshit. I mean most of us, not all, thought it was the right thing, some of us even fought for it in the army, and the rest didn't do anything about." (Darren, Parent)*

Melissa Steyn (2001), in her book, Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be, argues that white South Africans are going through one of the most profound psychological adjustments in the contemporary world. In light of new knowledge they are having to reinterpret themselves. They are having to adjust to a new reality in which their taken-for-granted superiority is being challenged, and in this context they are being forced to renegotiate their identities in the present. In an attempt to reach a positive self regard they are constructing their recollections of the past in a way that provides "meaning and security to their new positionalities." (Steyn 2002)

Halbwach reiterates this point on a broader level when he states that memory is a social construct. We construct our memories of the past to serve our concerns in the present; memory is reshaped and reconstructed depending on the present context. (Halbwachs 1992) In an attempt to fit into the new South Africa, white South Africans are reconstructing their

past memories in such a way as to serve their new identities. This is clear among the participants of my research. It is generally deemed unacceptable in current South Africa to view apartheid as anything but atrocious. While most of these participants did not particularly object to apartheid at the time, none want to be seen or viewed as a supporter of the system in the present. They all now view it as being horrific or at the very least, undeniably wrong. While this could be due to a number of reasons, for example that more information about the atrocities has been revealed post apartheid, it seems apparent to me that (whether aware of their doing so or not) they deliberately recall this specific negative view of apartheid so has to serve their new identity in the democratic South Africa, as someone who did not support or condone the violent, oppressive apartheid regime.

In another dimension of the role the past is playing in the present I want to explore the lack of understanding for programs of redress aimed at righting past wrongs in the present and the emergent discourse of 'letting bygones be bygones' and 'moving on'. It appears that many white South Africans feel the past is over and that we should leave it in the past and move on, believing that the past has no bearing in the present.

Among the majority of the participants a definite resentment for systems of redress, specifically Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) was expressed. They felt BEE was wrong, unnecessary and most extremely a form of reverse racism.

> *"BEE is just wrong I think because your pushing people up that ladder, I see people going out of for tenders, tenders is a brilliant one, this BEE tenders is a load of rubbish, they put out tenders, people go for it that are competitive and can do it and they'll go straight to the guy who is solely black, who has no idea but he gets it, he makes all the money when he has no idea what he is doing. That's just being biased, it doesn't matter if it's black, green, purple it should be distributed."* (Cassidy, Parent)

It was among the younger generation that the idea of a reverse racism emerged,

> *"It's reverse racism plain and simple, They're upset that their mothers and fathers didn't have the same opportunities as other races in the country and so they are trying to right that by limiting the rest of the opportunities for they originally thought had more, but it's affecting us youngsters that had nothing to with it and they are now limiting our opportunities in the same way theirs were. " (Jake, child)*

Few among the participants presented a deeper understanding of the need for redress,

"I think it is absolutely vital. BEE I think is absolutely vital you have to bring the standard of the masses up or the standard of the top guys down, one of the two. It's easy for me to say, we have already had the advantages of apartheid but for young white people it is hard. But we need to do it, we need to redistribute even if it is to go so far as to redistribute individual wealth, the way it has been done is wrong, the whole benefiting the few, but the BEE is right, how you legislate it to be effective I don't know, but it really can only start through education, and even land, it has to be done, you have to get the masses back in the masses."(Darren, Parent)

This view of the necessity of some form of redress was reiterated by some of the younger generation but all believing that currently redress is not being carried out correctly and is failing to actually achieve its objective of redistributing wealth, rather it is putting it in the hands of a few.

It came across quite strongly among some the participants that they did not understand why the past is still an important subject of discussion. They could not fathom the reasons as to why the past was still being discussed to such an extent, believing that it is now the time to put it behind ourselves and move forward treating all people as equal in all sphere's of life.

"We don't talk about apartheid because it's over, what's done is done, it is what it is." (Vanessa, Parent)

"We need to get that, BEE is not fare at all, I just think we need to get over it, if a person has the skill set, if they can do the job then that's what should matter not skin, can we just move on now." (Patricia, Child)

What all of the participants articulate in their interviews, both parent and children, whether they are completely against redress or not, is a concern for their future in terms of their ability to obtain employment in South Africa today as a white person. Many feel that in a lot of ways they now are the 'underdogs', the ones at a disadvantage, some feeling that it is time to move on, to leave the past behind, that the past should no longer play a role in the present. What this expresses is a lack of understanding of how deep the repercussions of a system like apartheid run and that many are still currently evident in South Africa. Poverty, access to housing, education and other basic rights still operate to a certain degree along racial lines. South Africa is not yet a level playing field. The fact that they do not acknowledge this means that they cannot understand the necessity of redress, how important it is and how deeply the past is still impacting the present in so many ways. What is also apparent from some of the participants is a feeling of despair, feeling that they are now at a disadvantage in the job

market and that the roles are reversed. What is not acknowledged is that although racial hierarchies are beginning to be challenged, the world we live in is one organised around white dominance that provides white people with privileges they often do not even realise they have. This point will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

5.2 The Visibility and Invisibility of Whiteness

Understanding whiteness in South Africa, I would argue, is crucial if we are ever going to attempt an open and honest conversation about race. I do not mean to reinforce the centrality of whiteness through my focus on the subject but rather to unpack it, understand it and expose it.

In the South African context I have observed that whiteness can be both visible and invisible. What I mean by this is that our white skin is glaringly obvious to us while our whiteness often remains invisible. By whiteness I refer to the structural privilege awarded white people through a constant commitment to the centrality of whiteness and white people in the world. (Vice 2010: 324)

Samantha Vice (2010: 326) , in her controversial text on being white in South Africa, argues that it is impossible to not be aware of one's race in South Africa, our unique history has assured us of that. However, I would argue that, while I do not doubt that being white rather than black in South Africa is always present, there still remains a system of unacknowledged, unearned privilege in place. This became apparent to me through my conversations with the research participants.

Most of the participants, both parent and child, agreed that they were aware of the fact they were white, discussing the ways they are made aware of their race in their daily lives, attributing this awareness to South Africa's historical context.

Some felt the awareness in a constant reference to race in this country or through feeling disadvantages as white person today,

> *"I think I'm aware of being white, I see it through comments from colleagues, I work in a predominantly mixed environment and there are a lot of comments, it seems anything you get asked there is always a question that comes up about race, always."(Patricia, Child)*

"Um, well nowadays I think we're made aware of being white is that in fact you are now discriminated against." (Desiree, Parent)

Others felt this awareness through their material wealth in life,

"I think I am better off, I mean, I have a roof over my head, when I see a black person on the street I'm not sure of where they are going to sleep, whether they have got food at night. You know these parking guys, it's not to say they have a home to go to, so I am aware of being white." (Vanessa, Parent)

"So this is a generalization and don't mean to stereotype, but for instance, you stop at a robot and there is a person begging there that is black, it makes me aware that I'm white because I am driving in a nice car and there is a black person standing in the heat or rain begging." (Roxanne, Child)

"Your faced with it as soon as you leave your house, when people are ringing your doorbell, when you are at robots and people as for money, your continuously faced with it." (Kathryn, Child)

Although majority believed they were aware of their white skin, barring two of the participants, they all suggested that they did not really ever think any further than daily encounters about their whiteness and what it means. All of the parent generation of participants admitted they could recognise that they had received certain privileges during apartheid, for example, education, access to employment, healthcare, housing among others.

"Basically you were the cream of the crop, you got the benefit of everything at the detriment of other groups, you had the best education, better access to jobs, everything was free, your school was free, your varsity was virtually free, you had the better everything, your hospitals, your local clinics, best of everything because the government could afford this little group but no government could afford to do that for an entire population especially if you're not getting enough tax in. It was a very privileged, insular life." (Susan, Parent)

However, in discussing their current privilege a common thread among the participants, both parent and children, emerged. Many of the participants acknowledged the privilege they received during apartheid, but when discussing their current privileges, only those material advantages carried over from apartheid were acknowledged, if that. Some of the participants struggled to view those as in fact privileges, some even reiterated the point that they were now at a disadvantage as a white South African. Two of the younger generation pointed out

that they felt they were treated differently, better, maybe more trustworthy as a white person. Other than these two, who recognised a wider spectrum of privilege rather than merely material advantage, the rest could not see the many ways in which they are privileged every day as wa hite a person, both materially and otherwise.[6] They do not see that we live in racially hierarchical societies in which white supremacy structures our world in every way (Mills, 1997: 6) and provides us with privileges we cannot see and do not even know we have. White people are often not consciously aware of the profound impact their being white has on their everyday lives (Steyn 2001), their whiteness is so natural, so normative, it is 'just the way it is', it becomes invisible. This invisibility is a crucial component in maintaining white centrality, in maintaining the racial contract.

Peggy McIntosh's (1988) essay "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible knapsack" explores white privilege, both this invisibility, observed to a degree among the research participants, and our need to acknowledge and understand its daily effects. In her work on women studies, she noticed that while men were becoming more willing to acknowledge women's disadvantage, they were not willing to acknowledge their own over privilege. This denial, in her view, was to protect their own privilege so that it would not have to be fully acknowledged or lessoned. (McIntosh 1988) It was from this point she began to see the parallel between this and white privilege. In the same way, white people are often willing to acknowledge the disadvantage of those of another race, but are not willing to recognize their own advantages and benefits. White privilege is, in the same way "denied and protected." (McIntosh 1988) Often the white person views whiteness as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but not as something that puts oneself at an advantage. Racism is seen as an individual act, not as invisible systems conferring the dominance of a particular group. We are taught and conditioned, in the same way as males, not to recognise our own privilege. (McIntosh 1988)I would argue that white south Africans in many instances may acknowledge that their whiteness was used and lead to the disadvantage of Black South Africans during apartheid and that they had and may still have certain material privileges, but they do not recognise that, while apartheid may have ended, the systems that maintain their white privilege persist and in turn their advantage based on their white skin persists similarly. In beginning to examine her own white privilege McIntosh sees it as having an invisible package of unearned privilege that she is able to make use of on a daily basis, but to which she is meant to remain oblivious. White privilege becomes this invisible, weightless knapsack, a collection of special provisions she has for no other reason than belonging to a

[6] By otherwise I refer to social and political advantaged received by whites, like, for example being considered more trustworthy based on their appearance.

specific racial group. As McIntosh (1988) argues, understanding that men often work from a basis of unacknowledged privilege, is to understand that much of their oppressiveness resulting from this privilege is unconscious. The same can be said about racial hierarchies and white privilege, by not being conscious of our own white privilege, it becomes difficult to see ourselves as oppressors and to take responsibility for that role.

It appears that to white South Africans this knapsack is indeed invisible, they do not see it; they therefore do not believe themselves to be oppressors and accept no responsibility for that role. To see this logic a white person would have to actually undergo a process of interrogating their own whiteness, but white South Africans, due to their race's centrality, dominance and normativity, have never been forced to confront their race in the same way that Black victims of oppression and discrimination have.

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5.3 Intergenerational Memory

One of the main aims of this research was to identify an intergenerational memory process, to understand whether one generations memory of the past, a traumatic past, and their views due to that, are passed on to the next generation, their children. The family is recognised as a crucial space for the transmission of memory (Hirsch 2006: 110). Family plays an important role in remembering as families have their own mentality within which remembering takes place. (Halbwachs 1992)

Among my participants there were definitely elements of memory transmission, many of the children remembered the past in a similar way to their parents and upheld similar view points on apartheid and racial issues. However, this did differ in each family. Some families all demonstrated very similar views on related subjects, others, for example Jake and his parents, presented a case where he shared very similar views to his father, but disagreed strongly with his mother.

> *"I would definitely say that I share a lot of views with my father, I would say that I disagree with my mom cause she has the idealistic vision of the perfect country with perfect people and it will never be like that, you have to be realist, my dad is a realist." (Jake, Child)*

What was made clear through the younger generation of research participants was that memory cannot be seen as direct process of transmission from one generation to the next. It is

a negotiated process that changes depending on the past, intervening period, and the present. (Patterson 2003) The family may be an important site for remembering, but at some point a person begins to move out of the family, having different experiences and broadening our recollections and sometimes changing the way we view the world. (Halbwachs 1992)

One of the younger generation participants, Kirsty, presents probably the most noticeable distinction between her parents and her own views, while her parents claim to never have thought about apartheid, both while the regime was in place and after its abolishment. They claim to never thinking about their whiteness and never experiencing feelings of guilt or shame. Kirsty, on the other hand, takes the opposite position, hoping to be a non-racial person that considers her white privilege and tries to understand a deeper analysis of racial tensions. In her opinion it was through university that she was able to open her mind and strengthen her convictions.

> *"I think university, helped me shape my views, I think I grew up never being someone who was overtly racist. I think University really shaped what was always there, I think it strengthened that." (Kirsty, Child)*

However, even though she believes she has shaped her own views, she still recognises how we can be affected and influenced by the views of our family,

> *"I think my parents views have still affected me, I think conditioning gets so deeply engraved in you that it's quite hard to rub that out so as much as I have gone to university and I call myself a non-racist and I try to behave like that in my daily life I still have knee jerk reactions." (Kirsty, child)*

Kirsty believes it is obvious to her that the racial views of her friends are often inherited from their parents but she feels it is something you can change,

> *"I think a lot of people I know do mirror their parent's views but I think it is not immutable, you can get away from it, like I have tried to do." (Kirsty, Child)*

Kathryn also identifies a link between parent's views and their children's in herself and among her friends but suggests that it not only directly from parents but also through our own lived experiences that we shape our views.

> *"Yes, I think definitely that opinions are passed on in families but it also comes down to their own experiences, to education or maybe a lack of education, it can be a really closed way of thinking."(Kathryn, Child)*

What is clear from the above excerpts is that memory and the resulting views among the participants did have an element of transmission, although it was a negotiated process rather than a directly received. What is also clear is that, whether the younger generation shares similar recollections and viewpoints with their parents, whether they adamantly disagree or whether they agree and negotiate it, the younger generation's lives are still profoundly affected by our history of apartheid and they are struggling to escape their parents past. (Prager 2004)

Memory is clearly a selective and negotiated process. It is shaped by ones broader collective and the present context. The present context is also profoundly shaped by the past. In remembering their apartheid pasts, aspects of the participants whiteness play an important role in shaping this process. Their lack of engagement with the past, their lack of acknowledgement with their role in apartheid and their responsibility for it, allows these white South African's to remain oblivious to a great deal of the structural privilege they receive. It allows them to remain blind to this ignorance and the way in which their own whiteness impacts both their lives and the lives of Black South Africans.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Memory is a collective, selective and constructed process, it is not a given, it is socially constructed within a collective and ones current context. Memory is also often shaped by the broader political culture of the time. The family plays a vital role in the process of remembering and in the transmission of memory from one generation to the next. When one generation has experienced a traumatic past in their country of residence (both victims and perpetrators), the next generation tends to take and shape that memory as their own. The past, as experienced and lived by their parents, plays a vital role in their own present and in turn can result in the inability for the children to define themselves separately from their parents; they struggle to escape from their pasts. For those associated with the collective of persons responsible for past atrocities, claims of ignorance and/or prevailing silences, a suppression of past memories has been identified in relevant theoretical approaches. Through the negotiated process of memory transmission within the family this silence and ignorance can, in turn, be transferred from a parent to child, from one generation to the next, impacting both in their identity formation and subsequent beliefs, views and opinions. At some point children do move out of their original family unit and can at this point shape their past, beliefs, views and opinions within a broader context.

Whiteness as biological status has largely been debunked, like memory it is primarily considered a constructed category, constructed historically, over time and space, for the purpose of organising most of the world around white supremacy. White has been established as deserving of superiority in opposition to Black as inferior. This in turn has provided white people, living within this racial hierarchy, structural privilege at the expense of people of colour. Whiteness has become, and to varying degrees still remains, an important organising principle around the world. Due to the long term centrality of whiteness it has emerged as something so normative, it is often not easily identifiable. Whiteness has become something so invisible it is considered natural. To maintain the racial hierarchy it is essential for white people to remain to some degree ignorant of their privilege, their whiteness must remain invisible and they must remain blind to their ignorance.

For the purpose of this research, interviews with a select group of white South Africans were conducted. A deeper textual analysis of these personal narratives revealed particular patterns and emergent themes relating to the theoretical overview that was previously outlined in this research. It was clear that being white played an important role in shaping how this group remembered their past. The dominance, centrality and normativity of whiteness meant these

participants did not really acknowledge their whiteness, this shaped their lack of engagement with their pasts as they are not forced to think about their apartheid history and race in the same way an oppressed person of colour might have to. It also became clear that not only was the past playing a role in shaping ones present identity, but their identity in the present, the identity many white South Africans want to have in the new democratic South Africa (as non-racial and always against apartheid) shapes the way in which their past is constructed. The parent generation of this group claimed no role and took no responsibility in their own past, thinking of themselves as merely bystanders. There appears, by many of the participants from both generations, a complete lack of deeper understanding of systems of redress such as Black Economic Empowerment, and their necessity in the present. Many feel they are actually experiencing a form of reverse racism.

A not-knowing emerged among the parent generation of participants. They all believed they did not know the extent of the violations and subjugation during apartheid. Melissa Steyn (2012) suggests in her theorization of this ignorance that, whether conscious or subconscious, remaining blind to the situation in its entirety is required for the maintenance and protection of white superiority and privilege. It is also much easier to remain ignorant, if one does not know, then one does not have to do anything about it. When asked to look back and remember aspects of the past, many of the parent participants found it very difficult, they found it an emotionally gruelling process to undergo, and a tendency to remain silent about the past among the families and social groups of these white South Africans emerged. It is clear that the past and their own whiteness was not something talked about or interrogated in any way. Among this group most of the participants confirmed that while their white skin was visible to them, their own whiteness was invisible. Being white has never been thought about or unpacked in any way other than to suggest how difficult it is to be white presently, how difficult it is to obtain employment as a white person and how white people are currently at a disadvantage. While the parents can acknowledge the privileges they received during apartheid and that some of those material advantages may have carried over from then (like owning a home, having decent employment and education), neither parent nor child observe the racially structured society wired to their advantage in which they live. Their own dominance and privilege remains invisible to them, this is necessary to preserve their structural privilege and remaining blind to their own ignorance is necessary for the maintenance of the broader system of racial superiority.

As mentioned above, memory is shaped by ones larger collective and present context. When looking at memories of apartheid I asked the question, what shapes the way we remember?

What emerged as a crucial influencing factor in the process of remembering was definitely the participant's whiteness. To understand memory in South Africa's unique context it becomes vital to understand whiteness in its construction, structural privilege and invisibility, for this fundamentally shapes the way this group remembers.

Memories of the past and racial tensions among this group of white South Africans is characterised by a complete lack of engagement and deeper understanding. The questions of 'how' and 'why' are never tackled by most of the participants. For the majority of the participants, nothing is interrogated and analysed on a deeper level. This lack of engagement, I would argue, stems from their whiteness and the necessity of remaining blind to the racial hierarchies of white dominance that shape South Africa. Therefore, I do not dig deeper into my past or problematise race because that may begin to make visible that which, in order to maintain the system, must remain invisible.

The current lack of engagement by both generations with their past and race allows them to maintain the belief that they played no part in apartheid, even though each and every parent participant was to some degree complicit in the system. A system like apartheid does not rely solely on violent perpetrators to succeed, but functions on the backs of complicit citizens living under the regime. It could not have been so successful without this group perpetuating racial stereotypes and benefiting from the system both explicitly and implicitly. This group would not acknowledge their own role in the system. By continuously reinforcing their role as simply 'bystanders' they are able to absolve themselves from any responsibility and maintain their privilege. Charles Mills (1997) states in his Racial Contract Theory, quoted in the fourth chapter of this text, that we may not all be signatories to the Racial Contract but we are all beneficiaries. As white South Africans, we all benefit from living in a society that has, for so long, been structured around the centrality of whiteness, white people and white perspectives. We are unavoidably a product of our white privilege. (Vice 2010: 327) It is critical that this received benefit, this white privilege, is acknowledged and understood. In the case of both generations this idea that they have no responsibility for the past allows them both to continue remaining blind to their white structured world and to the privilege received by all white South Africans, it allows them to continue carrying their invisible knapsack and let's face it, it is easier that way.

To recognise and interrogate one's own privilege is a problematic process, because, it forces a person to become accountable to it, to what you can do to lesson it. But to not talk about it, to suppress it, only leaves rooms for ignorance, oblivion, arrogance and sustainment of the status quo, a far more destructive path. But we, as white people, whether we like it or not, are

geared towards maintaining and protecting this deeply entrenched system of white supremacy and white privilege, and to do this we need to remain blind to our own blindness, we need to remain ignorant to our own ignorance.

Breaking this pattern of remaining ignorant to our own ignorance is the very point of this research. I want to expose whiteness to white people. By uncovering the way our whiteness and its quest to remain blind informs our lack of interaction with the past, which in turn allows us never to have to interrogate our whiteness further, we permit ourselves to remain ignorant to our own structural privilege as white people. This research aims to force white people to confront their whiteness in a way they previously have never had to, to begin to actually think about what it means to be white. It aims to create awareness among white South Africans to their own structural privilege and position of dominance in South Africa. To allow them to see their own ignorance to their own advantages because of their white skin.

I do not aim to propose a social campaign to accomplish this, nor do I claim to have devised a concrete initiative to achieve this task of confrontation, this is not the scope of this research project. What I aim to put across, at this point, is a recognition of the importance of this exposure. What began for me as a research thesis became a journey of self interrogation and self discovery as a white person. I always thought of myself as one of the 'good' white people but this process has knocked me off a pedestal of my own creation. I am aware now of how deeply entrenched structures of white privilege are, so deeply ingrained that we are often completely unaware of them. I see now how our lack of engagement is just another way of remaining unconscious and while I am far from perfect I can at least say that I am awakened now too much which I was previously blind. This must be the way forward. An engagement by white people with the crucial components of our whiteness. For white people to confront and interrogate their whiteness themselves.

Race is the elephant in the room affecting every South African every day in some way. Many South Africans believe that, eighteen years after apartheid, we have not adequately addressed these tensions. As Vice (2010) suggests, an open, honest and sincere conversation about race has yet to happen in South Africa, but to do so we need to be open and honest about race. The blindness and ignorance of white South Africans to their own race and the structural privilege it represents will inhibit this kind of conversation. Whites cannot productively contribute to this discussion if their own whiteness remains unacknowledged. I do not believe Samantha Vice's (2010) recommendation for white South Africans, as discussed in the second chapter of the research, is correct, however, some degree of introspective reflection on their

whiteness by white South Africans is necessary. But I would also add and agree with Pierre de Vos in his proposal to white South Africans, privilege should be acknowledged and we should reflect critically, with a degree of humility, on what this means. However, rather than wallow privately in our own guilt, we must reflect on how we can take responsibility for our actions in a more ethical and meaningful way. Doing this will allow for civil engagement on a more equal footing amongst South Africans. Eusebius McKaiser argues that this country is so desperate for and needs this open and honest conversation and engagement in order to move forward. I tend to agree with him, but must add that we desperately need to first and foremost alert white people to their own whiteness as this is crucial for any constructive conversations about race in the future.

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