

https://dspace.org/

First year students' narratives of 'race' and racism in post-apartheid South Africa.

Puttick, Kirstan

2012-02-10
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/11275

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

ABSTRACT

The democratic elections in 1994 marked the formal end of apartheid. During apartheid 'race' was, for the most part, a somewhat rigid construct which, despite many nuances and complexities, typically seemed to frame whiteness as dominant, normative and largely invisible, and blackness as subordinate and marginalised. The transformations brought about in post-apartheid South Africa have heralded many positive reformations, such as macrolevel institutional changes. However, many of apartheid's racialised patterns of privilege and deprivation persist and 'race' continues to influence the identities of South Africans. Furthermore, an inherent tension exists in South Africa's social fabric, where 'race' and racism are often juxtaposed against narratives of the *Rainbow Nation* and colourblindness. This study, which is framed by critical 'race' theory and social constructionism, aims to explore the extent of the fluidity and rigidity of 'race', racialisation and racialised identities in post-apartheid South Africa by exploring the narratives of black and white first year students. This study collected the narratives of seven black and seven white first year South African university students. It was found that South African youth identities can be seen to be functioning in relation to and reaction against both South Africa's racialised past as well as its present socio-cultural context. It was found that the racialised patterns which characterised apartheid still impact on black and white youth identity in contemporary South Africa. For instance, despite the many disruptions to whiteness post-1994, it was noted as still being a normative and dominant construct to some extent. Similarly, despite attempts to rectify power imbalances in the new South Africa, blackness is still constructed as being somewhat *other* and inferior. However, many alternative voices emerged which subverted these narratives, suggesting that identity is in a state of flux. Thus, despite the continued influence of apartheid's racialised patterns of identity, shifts and schisms are appearing in post-apartheid racialised identity, where issues of racialised dominance and power relations are no longer as clear cut as they once were.

Keywords

Apartheid, Apartheid Archive Project, blackness, critical 'race' theory, identity, narratives, post-apartheid, 'race', social constructionism, thematic content analysis, whiteness