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TROUBLING 'RACE' AND POWER IN PRESCHOOL: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF 'RACE' AND IDENTITY DISCOURSES CIRCULATING IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN SOUTH AFRICA

Jaclyn Murray

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VIST-I-PLAU
EL DIRECTOR DE LA TESI
Dr. Enric Roca Casas
Professor titular de la UAB
Departament de Pedagogia Sistemàtica i Social
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

VIST-I-PLAU
EL DIRECTOR DE LA TESI
Dr. Jordi Pàmies Rovira
Professor Lector
Departament de Pedagogia Sistemàtica i Social
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study explores the complexities of how young children aged five to six years construct and perform their 'race' identities in early schooling in post-apartheid South Africa. Set within the broad framework of transformation and integration within the education system, official, formal and informal discourses of diversity, difference and identity are examined in order to understand how dominant ideological and discursive frameworks serve to structure social categories and imbue them with power. Through intensive engagement with the linguistic and embodied practices of children, I explore the range of contemporary discursive positions available to them with regards to the category of 'race', and other notions such as gender and class. Framed by poststructural theory, and concepts of power, positioning and multiplicity, this study takes a close look at the myriad ways in which children and educators (re)construct, negotiate, resist and subvert subject formation processes. An integral epistemological and methodological concern of this thesis pertains to contemporary research practices with children. Deconstructing essentialist principles that have served to position children as passively socialised into society, this thesis works from the premise that children are competent social actors that contribute towards shaping society. Thus, while adults are also given a voice in this thesis, theirs is not used to speak for, and so represent, the children. Instead, these voices are juxtaposed to provide a more holistic interpretation of the identity and discursive processes under study.

This research has demonstrated that power relations inherent in the child-adult binary often serve to prevent educators and caregivers from viewing children as capable of taking on complex 'race' identities that are more than just descriptive. My approach as a 'non-sanctioning' adult during fieldwork allowed me to gain an in-depth look at how children wrestle with social categories and relations of power. The findings from this research show that the 'racially' segregated past continues to shape identities and relationships in the present. While the desire to move forward towards reconciliation and transformation is evident, the tight grip that 'race' maintains in the lives of educators is reiterated through reference to skin colour, 'whiteness', notions of superiority/inferiority, silence on the issue as well as practices of defensiveness and aggressiveness. The informal discourses circulating among the children are significant

in giving meaning to their personal and social worlds. Notions of 'race', gender and class are taken up with regularity and used to assert positions of power and/or privilege, as well as to exclude. Foregrounding the subjective world of children I have shown how children actively contribute to, and contest, dominant definitions of 'race' such as through engaging in detailed discussions of physical appearance and difference. Play, stories and friendship patterns were tools through which to explore children's notions of 'race' and otherness in more detail and highlight how discourses of 'race', gender, class, and language intersected in ways that affirmed or negated the identity positions that children took up. 'Race' is therefore not an abstract concept for the children in this study; rather, it is invoked and used in concrete ways in social exchanges. While the children were exposed to multicultural discourses they were not ignorant of the more complex nature of 'race' politics in the wider South African society.

RESUM

El present estudi etnogràfic explora les complexitats de com els nens d'edats compreses entre cinc i sis anys construeixen i exploren les seves identitats racials durant la seva etapa educativa infantil en la Sudàfrica del post-apartheid. Aquest estudi està emmarcat en un marc general de transformació i integració del sistema educatiu, en el qual els discursos oficials, formals i informals de diversitat, diferència i identitat són examinats per tal d'entendre com el marc discursiu i ideològic dominant serveix per estructurar categories social i proporcionar poder. Gràcies a un intens involucrament amb les pràctiques lingüístiques i corporals del nens, vaig poder explorar un rang ampli de posicions discursives contemporànies pel què fa al tema de la raça, com també nocions com el gènere i la classe social. A travles de la teoria post-estructural i conceptes com poder, posicionament i multiplicitat, aquest estudi examina profundament les diverses percepcions en les quals els nens i els educadors reconstrueixen, negocien, resisteixen i subvertir processos de formació de la seva persona. La meva tesi enfronta problemàtiques epistemològiques i metodològiques en relació a les pràctiques d'investigació actual dels nens. Contràriament als principis essencialistes deconstructius que han servit per posicionar els nens com entitats passives de la societat, aquesta tesi treballa des de la premissa que els nens són actors socials competents que contribueixen en el desenvolupament de la societat. Per tant, mentre que els adults també tenen la oportunitat de tenir la seva pròpia veu, aquestes veus no són utilitzades per representar

els nens. En canvi, aquestes veus estan juxtaposades per aportar una interpretació més integradora de la identitat i del procés discursiu en aquest estudi.

La present investigació demostra que les relacions inherents de poder a la binària entre nens i adults sovint serveixen per prevenir la percepció dels educadors i famílies que els nens són capaços d'interpretar identitats complexes de 'raça' que són més que tan sols descriptives. El meu enfoc com adult sense autoritat durant el meu treball de camp em va permetre guanyar una visió en profunditat de com els nens confronten categories socials i relacions de poder. Els resultats d'aquest estudi ens mostra que el passat radicalment segregat continua influenciant les identitats i relacions en el present. Mentre que el desig de superar i avançar cap a una reconciliació i transformació són evidents, la marca profunda que la 'raça' manté en les vides dels educadors és reiterat a través de la referència del colors de la pell, 'blancor', nocions de superioritat / inferioritat, silenci en la problemàtica, així com també les pràctiques d'actitud defensiva i agressiva. Els discursos informals que circulen entre els nens són significatius, de manera que donen sentit als seus mons socials i personals. Nocions com 'raça', gènere i classe són utilitzats amb regularitat i usats per definir posicions de poder i/o privilegi, així com també excloure. Posant en primer pla el món subjectiu dels neus, demostro aquí com els nens activament contribueixen a, i contesten, definicions dominants de 'raça' com ara establint discussions detallades de la seva aparença i diferència física. El joc, les històries i les amistats són instruments a través del qual explorar les nocions d'alteritat amb més detall i posar en relleu com els discursos de raça genera classes socials i llengua que interaccionen de formes que afirma o nega les posicions d'identitat que els nens prenen. 'Raça' és, per tant, no pas un concepte abstracte pels nens en aquest estudi. En canvi, és invocat i usat d'una manera concreta en intercanvis socials. Mentre que els nens estan exposats al discurs multicultural, no són ignorants de la naturalesa complexa de la política racial en el conjunt de la societat sud-africana.

CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

The reward of ending apartheid will and must be measured
by the happiness and welfare of the children.
Nelson Mandela

1.1   Troubling 'race' in early schooling using an ethnographic approach

In the social sciences, interests in identity and its social dimensions such as 'race' have come to the fore as worthy of investigation in contemporary societies. However, early schooling has traditionally been relegated to the margins of research and there remains a dearth of knowledge on how 'race' comes to inform young children's identities, in other words, how 'raced' identities are produced, appropriated or challenged in the context of early schooling. This can be attributed to various factors which include young children not being seen as competent social actors in their life-worlds, or as being unable to process, or uninterested in, notions of 'race'. Children, as Chen (2009) points out, are seldom listened to and their thoughts and opinions are often ignored. Following Bhana's (2002) thinking around early schooling and gender, it is too often assumed that children and 'race' are not relevant issues in early schooling and that incidents around 'race' are not to be taken seriously. However, as studies from around the world have begun to show (see, for example, Van Ausdale 1996; Connolly 1998a, 2008; MacNaughton 2000; MacNaughton and Davis 2001), children are competent social actors in their own right even though traditionally they have been denied the right to participation, resulting in their voices going unheard (James and Prout 1990; Alderson 1995; Alderson and Morrow 2004). The emergence of a field known as 'the new sociology of childhood' within the broader discipline of sociology has been particularly influential in making visible the notion that children, like adults, are social agents who are as affected by political, economic, social and cultural forces (Gaitán Muñoz 2006). Yet, in various contexts, such as in South Africa and Spain (Gaitán Muñoz 2006), few studies have been conducted that take up the important epistemological and methodological concerns addressed by the new sociology of childhood. These concerns, which form a central component of the present study, include the understanding that studies with children should be done from their perspective, looking directly at their activities, relations, knowledge and experiences (Gaitán Muñoz 2006). Furthermore, special attention should be paid to the social worlds which they inhabit including their relations with other

children as well as adults (Gaitán Muñoz 2006). Finally, and highly relevant to the present study:

> El objetivo de la investgación es ligar cualquier hecho relevante observado en el nivel de la vida de los niños (condición socioeconómica, estatus político o sentido de identidad) con contextos de macro nivel y explicar aquel hecho con referencia a las estructuras y mecanismos sociales que operan en el macro-contexto y generan efectos en el nivel del grupo infantil. (Gaitán Muñoz 2006, 14).

Troubling the formation of 'raced' identities in young children aged five to six years, this work shows how the making and remaking of 'raced' identities is connected with early schooling in complex and multi-faceted ways. While adult informants have generally been the predominant source of knowledge regarding the needs and desires of children, Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001, 1) demonstrate in their study on young children, 'race' and racism, that children are not the 'unsophisticated' and 'innocent' beings of 'many adult imaginations'. These imaginations are perpetuated by the strengths of certain beliefs regarding the conceptual abilities of children, which have been heavily influenced by traditional theories of child development. As Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001, 2) succinctly put it, for caregivers the 'focus is on child as imitator, not as creator or master of language'. This leads to the erroneous assumption that 'young children cannot "do" race or ethnicity in a serious or meaningful way', and that racial concepts are used by children in 'imitative or artless ways, with little or no awareness of the broader implications or social meaning' (Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001, 5). However, as the study by Van Ausdale and Feagin, along with other studies (Thorne 1993; Bhana 2002; Davies 2003a,b; Connolly 2008) show, the construction of 'raced' and gendered identity in early childhood matters in the early years of life and school, and to gain more in-depth knowledge into how and why it matters requires engaging directly with young children. While the perspectives of key adult caregivers are included in the present study, a major component of the data pertains to ethnographic conversations and discussions with the children attained through eight months of participant observation in a Grade R[1] centre which forms part of a public school located in Cape Town, South Africa. As specified above, engaging with children in this way ensures that their beliefs and opinions are not marginalised and that they are re-centred as the subjects of this dissertation.

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[1] In South Africa, early childhood development (ECD) is made up of three components, namely, Pre-Reception Year programmes which cater to children from birth to four years, Reception Year (Grade R) programmes for children aged five to six years, and the 'Foundation Phase' for children aged seven to nine years.

While this study is particularly concerned with how young children come to construct 'raced' identities within the discursive domain of the classroom and the broader society, it falls within the general framework of understanding how children come to *live with difference,* which Stuart Hall (1993) identified as the question of the twenty-first century. As societies around the world become more defined by their diversity rather than their similarity (Morrow 2007), resulting in an increase of diversity in subject positions, social experiences, and cultural identities (Back and Solomos 2000), understandings of how people come to (re)construct their subjectivities within diverse historical and spatial contexts is becoming increasingly important. It is not surprising, therefore, that the 'thorny question of identity' has become a main feature in social science debates in recent years, with more critical and radical theoretical approaches developing alongside this 'seemingly known and knowable social category' (Nayak and Kehily 2006, 459/460). Studies on identity formation range from the philosophical to the anthropological, sociological, and psychological. Authors and researchers working along various points on this 'identity' continuum each take up and contribute to what we know about the concept of identity, how it is constructed and negotiated in social situations and how this affects how we come to see ourselves and others as subjects in the world.

1.2   Theoretical antecedents of the study: Deconstructing young children's 'raced' identities

Within academic circles a critical engagement with postcolonial, poststructuralist and feminist theory has generated 'new clusters of knowledge', thus opening up the status of identity to 'spatial and temporal mutability, plurality and fragmentation, social and psychic manifestation, and the bounded politics of inclusion and exclusion' (Nayak and Kehily 2006, 460). The work of Fanon (1967) and Bhabha (1994), for example, move the discussion forward regarding people's feelings of belonging and alienation (Soudien 2007a). Sarup (1993, 2) points out that the preferred term for the person in poststructuralist thinking is 'subject', which signals an important move away from humanist conceptions of identity, which:

> [H]elps us to conceive of human reality as a construction, as a product of signifying activities which are both culturally specific and generally unconscious. The category of the subject calls into question the notion of the self synonymous with consciousness; it 'decentres' consciousness.

In this study, influential theories of identity formation are explored across various disciplines, with a particular focus on poststructuralist understandings of identity and Judith Butler's work on notions of subjectivity and performativity. This theoretical positioning will be usefully employed in troubling the formation of 'raced' identities in young children within the socio-historical context of post-apartheid South Africa. While Butler's work focuses predominantly on 'troubling' gender identity, her work has had a profound impact on thinking through and beyond how subjects come to be 'raced'. Post-apartheid, the education system has been directly implicated in the project of transformation, yet very little is known about how this impacts on the experiences and actions of learners and teachers in the classroom and school environment. This is problematic as there are few contexts where identity politics are fraught with such tension as in South Africa. Undergoing massive social, political and historical transitions has had a profound impact on how people living in this society see themselves and those around them. The fall of apartheid, the loosening of the grip of 'white supremacy,' and the concomitant opening up of schools to students from diverse cultural backgrounds has meant that old, taken-for-granted identity categories are under interrogation, especially in relation to the notion of 'race'. Yet, as people wrestle with 'who they are' and their sense of belonging in the new democratic dispensation, they do so with old apartheid identity categories close at hand, as 'race' remains a key player in the dominant ideological and discursive frameworks within which identities are constructed and negotiated. In line with this, schools post-apartheid are struggling with tensions around diversity and integration, as individuals struggle to move beyond 'racial' categories and classifications. However, to create a just and equitable education system and society requires us to dig deeper and explore why and in what ways these categories persist with such force and how they are continually taken up by subjects, albeit a painful and uncomfortable project. Work in the field of Critical Race Theory, as well as Soudien's work on Official, Formal and Informal discourse, will be usefully employed here as a means of interrogating what discourses of 'race' are circulating in the school environment and in the South African society at large.

This study on the identity concept 'race' and how it is taken up, investigates concepts of power, positioning and multiplicity through interrogating what it means to become subjects in contemporary societies. Referring specifically to 'racial' and ethnic identities, Bulmer and Solomos (2004, 7) note that Hall's work has been fundamental in showing how they are:

> Far from being fixed in some essentialist past, they are subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.

It is not possible to reduce 'identity' to one category alone and I am certainly not promoting this idea in my thesis. I am fully aware, as Gregory (1994, 28) notes, that 'race never operates alone but articulates with gender, class, nation, sexuality, ethnicity, and other differences to form heterogeneous identities and crosscutting social hierarchies'. Other notions of identity including gender, class, nationality and so forth must out of necessity enter any discussion around identity, yet in this study the focus is 'race', while it is shown that other social categories are intimately wound up with the formation of 'raced' identities in young children.

The social and discursive contexts in which 'raced' identities are formed need to be explicitly outlined as:

> [T]he meanings of race and racism need to be located within particular fields of discourse and articulated to the social relations found within that context. It is then necessary to see what kinds of racialised identities are being formed within these contexts. (Bulmer and Solomos 2004, 8).

This is reiterated by Connolly (2008, 173) who notes that 'there is thus no universal form that either race, gender or childhood takes but rather they tend to vary as they reflect the particular social, political and economic forces that at play within any specific context'. Working within a theoretical framework constructed around the work of poststructuralists, in particular the stimulating and engaging work of Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 1997b, 2006), serves to challenge more conventional notions of identity formation, which is of particular importance in societies where identities have been constructed around systems of inequality and injustice, and where identity formation processes remain largely taken-for-granted and invisible. Butler's continual interrogation, destabilising and deconstruction of the terms by which subjects are constituted have allowed them to be opened up to interpretation and contestation. While Butler's work focuses predominantly on 'troubling' gender identity, her work has a profound impact on thinking through and beyond how subjects come to be 'raced'. Specifically, her work on the notions of performativity and embodiment provide important analytical tools through which to understand ethnographic and interview data such as that obtained in this study. Such a framework moves discussions regarding

young children and identity beyond more conventional psychological theories that postulate that the self emerges from intrapsychic processes or, at best, is shaped within very limited caregiver and familial contexts, thus avoiding the 'complexity of human subjectivity' (O'Loughlin 2001, 57). To take account of this complexity requires conceptualising human subjectivity 'as inherently situated and constantly in the process of becoming', thereby acknowledging that 'we constantly name ourselves through insertion into, identification – or possible disidentification – with, and performance of prevailing cultural practices and ideologies' (O´Loughlin 2001, 57). Interrogating what the identity concept 'race' achieves, what it makes visible and what it occludes, as well as who is given authority through its usage and who is deprived of it, such as is undertaken in the present study, can thus be considered as poststructurally informed queries (Davies 2000).

1.3   Conceptualising 'race': A social construction of power and discourse

Anyone writing about South Africa faces an enormous challenge in coping with what Leonard Thompson (1990) calls a 'terminological minefield'. Indeed, terminology to describe so-called 'racialized' groups is highly contested (Gunaratnman 2003). Yet, questions still remain – to refer to groups in research, which terms should we use? The terms found in documents? Or should modern terminology be followed? In the post-apartheid state the old racial categorizations of 'black African', 'white', 'coloured' and 'Asian' are still retained in order to assess progress with regards to transformation as per affirmative action policies [2] (Moodley & Adam, 2004) and 'race'-based university admission policies (Govender 2010). In this study I use the following terminology, placed in quotation marks, when distinguishing among the various 'racialized' groupings: 'black Africans', 'Asians' (people of predominantly Indian and Chinese descent), 'Coloureds' (people of mixed descent), and 'whites' (both English and Afrikaans speakers). I do not use these terms in an unproblematic sense and am fully aware of the need to take a critical look at how they are employed. One example of the inadequacy of such terms is identified by Moodley and Adam (2004, 181), who note that: 'The common label of *African* for the 'black' majority does not preclude that the

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[2] In South Africa affirmative action, sometimes referred to by euphemisms such as 'corrective action', 'reverse discrimination', or 'positive action', is defined as a remedial strategy which seeks to address the legal historical exclusion of a majority (Adam, 1997).

members of the other groups are also African in the political sense of citizens belonging to the African continent as their only home and origin'. Gunaratnman (2003, 18) takes this further and states that these terms might be understood as 'dangerous categories' in that their use can serve to:

> …reify 'race' and ethnicity as entities that individuals are born into and inhabit, and that are then brought to life in the social world, rather than 'recognizing' race and ethnicity as dynamic and emergent processes of being and becoming.

The notion of 'race' as 'a natural or obvious given' has for a long while been challenged (Yon 2000, 1) and is a position which is maintained in this study. While 'race' is identified as a social construct, having what Butler (1993, 247) terms a 'fictive status', it by no means suggests that it is either artificial or dispensable. Seeing 'race' as a construction does, therefore, by no means deprive the term of its force in life (Butler 1993). Indeed, it is not possible to neglect the psychic hold and the materiality of racism (Howarth and Hook 2005), which requires an analysis of the permutations of the notion of 'race' through time and space. The coupling of 'race' with discourse shows that as discourse has changed, so has our understanding of what 'race' signifies. Yon (2000) writes that studies of the construction of 'race' have shown how objectifying racial differences was contingent upon imperialism, and that the development of racial categories was in line with modernist obsessions of classifying and ordering as a strategy of control. Linking discourses of 'race' with those of 'culture', and geography (Yon 2000) further served as a means of 'naturalizing' this identity category in an attempt to make invisible the racist norms and discourses which were circulating in different societies. South Africa serves as a particularly pertinent example whereby discourses of 'race', although underpinned by biological determinism, were also directly linked to concepts of culture. In this way the racist ideology of the state was secured through 'racialized' discursive practices which enforced the notion that different 'cultures' could not live side by side[3]. This ideology was set within a heterosexual normative matrix, which was built on 'racial' codes of purity reinforced through the implementation of anti-miscegenation laws. Together this was an attempt to normalise the ideology of 'separate development' (apartheid) using the discursive

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[3] This is reiterated by Dolby (2001, 10) who points out that 'the coding of race as culture has its roots in anthropological notions of race (or 'culturalism')'. She cites Gilroy (1987) who illustrates this point with the example of how "race" in the context of Thatcher's Great Britain became coded as 'culture'. This is highly evident in the fear that Britain was being 'swamped by people with a different culture' in reference to immigrants from India and Pakistan (Goldberg 1992, 551 cited in Dolby 2001, 10).

terrain of 'race' and 'sex' to do so, and supports Butler's assertion that vectors of power operate simultaneously and through one another (Salih 2002). Undertaking a critical analysis of 'race' and racism is not easy as it requires 'imagining the possibilities in spaces and relationships that de-racialize practices and identities, while acknowledging the practical impossibility of moving beyond 'race' as part of our current ideological realities' (Howarth and Hook 2005, 429). This requires going beyond merely deconstructing 'racial' practices and identity constructions, in order to look at how they might be made visible and disrupted in everyday and scientific discourses (Howarth and Hook 2005). It is in line with this poststructurally informed thinking that the term 'race' is used in this study.

The adoption of a poststructuralist framework is useful in that it recognises that categories of 'race' and ethnicity are always inscribed by multiple forms of difference, meaning that 'race' can no longer be equated with biological difference or ethnicity with place-based culture (Bhabha and Comaroff 2002). There is an important point that needs to be made here that relates to the use of the term 'race' and that of 'ethnicity'. 'Race' is generally seen as evoking a 'biological and genetic referent', while 'ethnicity' refers to cultural and religious differences as well as kinship (Gunaratnam 2003, 4). However, the binary distinction between the two, as Hall (2000) argues, has been disrupted and 'race' and ethnicity are not two separate discourses but are 'racism's two registers' (Hall 2000, 23). This recognition of the interrelatedness of the two terms is important in that it 'can enable analysis and empirical research to examine how biological and cultural discourses might be variously ordered and identified with by different groups within specific social contexts' (Gunaratnam 2003, 5). The poststructuralist perspective provides the space to work both *with* and *against* racialized categories in order to make connections between lived experience, political relations and the production of knowledge (Gunaratnam 2003, emphasis in original). Researchers undertaking a study on 'race' and ethnicity must, however, be continually vigilant of what Radhakrishnan (1996) terms the 'treacherous bind', which names and describes both the dangerousness and the contradictions of the continued use and reliance upon racial and ethnic categories that can be complicit with racial typologies and thinking (Gunaratnman 2003). Hall (1996), following Derrida, therefore refers to concepts operating 'under-erasure', which signals a deconstructive and anti-essentialist approach that recognises concepts that, although no longer 'good' to think with, have yet to be replaced (Gunaratnman 2003). While this means that they still need to be used,

poststructuralist and postcolonial scholarship provide theoretical frameworks that conceptualise 'race' and ethnicity as socially constructed, relational and socially located (Gunaratnam 2003).

1.4   Research questions guiding this study

The present study examines the complexities of how children come to construct 'raced' identities in early schooling within the post-apartheid South African state and what this might mean for the project of transformation and integration within the education system. To explore this, an ethnographic study was undertaken at a formerly 'white' co-educational state school with a learner and educator body from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgounds. This school, referred to in this thesis as Table Mountain Primary[4], is located in Cape Town, South Africa.

This thesis explores various research questions, which require both theoretical and empirical investigations. An extensive literature review, as well as previous research that I undertook (Murray 2009, 2012), which focused on the need to develop specific intercultural education programmes in early childhood development centres in South Africa, made it apparent that children were not being actively brought into conversations about cultural and 'racial' diversity and that attempts to address identity issues in the classroom were predominantly ad hoc and tokenistic. The need to narrow the focus of this research endeavour required that I focus on a particular aspect of the issues identified above, and I thus chose to make this study an exploration of 'raced' identity, given the continued and controversial place that it maintains in the South African society and psyche.

My thinking on this matter is in line with Hoffman (1998, 324) who has called for social science to 'problematise' identity, especially in the field of education where the prevailing perspectives on identity 'stress understanding, respecting, and celebrating it, rather than holding it up for critical interrogation'. Hoffman stresses that this is not to suggest that valuing the diverse cultural backgrounds of students is not important, rather, we need to move the discussion further and thereby interrogate discourses on identity that permeate society in general and the classroom in particular. Identity formation is intricately tied up with an individual's sense of self and belonging and as Steinitz and

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[4] I have used a pseudonym in order to protect the identity of the school as agreed upon by the Director of the school, the Western Cape Education Department and myself.

Solomon (1989, 135 cited in Pica-Smith 2009, 2) note, schools serve as 'sites of identity', places where 'young people draw conclusions about what sort of people they are, what society has in store for them, and what they can therefore hope for'.

Bringing together these key points, this study serves to explore an identity concept which remains highly relevant in the South African society and schooling arena, and secondly, it serves to re-centre children in the important debates regarding how to foster transformation and integration in the South African education system. Without an in-depth exploration of how and what children are thinking with regards to notions such as 'race', and how it comes to bear directly upon them as they construct their subjectivities, it is extremely difficult to evaluate whether or not we are moving beyond 'old' conceptualisations of the self and 'other', or whether, and in what ways, we are still investing 'racial' classifications with power which serves to divide and alienate rather than unite society. Furthermore, through an in-depth understanding of these issues, transformation and integration programmes can be implemented that speak directly to learners and educators by drawing on the frames of reference within which these individuals are constructing their subjectivities in a society which is undergoing drastic social realignment. From this thinking the following general research questions arose:

- How might old and new discourses of 'race' be identified and challenged?
- How is 'race' ideology and discourse expressed in the way that children are positioned and position themselves as subjects in early schooling? In other words, how is 'race' articulated and played out within the classroom and playground environment?
- What are the various ways in which discourses of 'race' are resisted or subverted by children within the school context?
- How are social relations among the children as well as between the educator and the children implicated in the construction of 'raced' identities?
- How might a better understanding of children's identity-work improve school policies and practices with regards to transformation and integration?

These questions allow us, as Gooskens (2006, 9) so succinctly puts it, 'to approach issues around identity, diversity and integration in contemporary young South African's daily lives in new ways, breaking with conventional ways of doing so'. Drawing on

these general research questions, this study was delineated through the identification of specific research objectives which are presented in Chapter four.

1.5   Structure of the thesis

The study is structured according to nine chapters. Moving on from the introduction, which serves to orientate the reader as to the research objectives and to introduce the theoretical and methodological framework within which this investigation was carried out, Chapter Two provides a detailed description of the context of the study. In the first part of the chapter I present a brief history of South Africa starting with the colonialist endeavour, and moving on to describe the policies and practices under the apartheid state. The second part of the chapter takes a detailed look at the transition to democracy and the attempts to promote reconciliation and transformation post-apartheid. This sets the scene for an in-depth analysis of 'race' relations and identities at both the macro- and micro-level in contemporary South Africa.

In Chapter Three I position this study in the theoretical framework that informs the design, implementation and analysis of the research presented in this thesis. The chapter is divided into three parts. Part one is concerned with problematising important theoretical concepts including ideology, discourse and identity, and does so by turning to poststructuralist theory. The second part of the chapter looks more specifically at the relationship between 'race' and schooling and draws heavily from the pioneering work being undertaken in the field of Critical Race Theory. The final part of this chapter situates these theoretical standpoints squarely in the context of early schooling and looks at how young children come to be theorised in work that deals with identity formation processes in this formative period of life.

In Chapter Four I detail the methodological approach of this study and link this to the theoretical concerns and tools presented in Chapter three. I reflect on the suitability of adopting an ethnographic approach to address the questions under study and reflect critically on my role as ethnographer. I detail the research design including the selection of a research site, gaining access to the research participants, the methods I employed to collect data, the organisation and interpretation of data, as well as the data analysis procedures followed. I also reflect on the process of negotiating access to the social worlds of children at Table Mountain Primary School through displacing dominant adult-child modes of interaction and by fully immersing myself in their everyday

activities and interactions. The opportunities and challenges that arose as a result of this approach are addressed.

Chapters Five through Eight present the analysis of the research findings and are structured in accordance with the research objectives outlined in Chapter One. Chapter Five begins by providing a brief historical background of schooling in the Cape region, and more specifically, Table Mountain Primary School. The school's commitment to social justice issues and transformation are examined through an analysis of school policies and practices. This is followed by a detailed interrogation of two key events that pertain directly to the school's diversity work, namely, the panel discussion involving education specialists, educators and caregivers, as well as the educator diversity workshop. In Chapter six discourses of 'race', difference, diversity and transformation identified in Chapter Five are explored in more detail through an analysis of in-depth interviews with educators at Table Mountain Primary School. Furthermore, this chapter begins to re-centre children by examining the beliefs of educators with regards to young children's conceptualisation of the identity notion 'race', and how this is implicated in their identity formation processes.

Having identified discourses of 'race' circulating in the context of a public school setting, Chapter Seven zooms in for a direct look at how children engage in identity work and the importance of social categories such as 'race', gender and class for processes of subjectification. Thus, this chapter interrogates how the identities of young children are shaped and (re)produced within the discursive terrain of early schooling, which is achieved by paying close attention to their linguistic and embodied practices and performances. In keeping with this micro-level analysis, Chapter Eight continues to explore how children (re)construct difference and diversity in the classroom, but does so by juxtaposing this with the dominant discourses circulating at both the societal and school level (discourses which were discussed in the previous chapters). The use of materials and resources that deal with diversity and difference are discussed, as well as a key incident that involved practices of overt racism in this setting.

Finally, in Chapter Nine I present the conclusions of this thesis by summarising the findings of the study and the implications of this for educational practice. I also engage in a process of reflection on the research process whereby I highlight limitations of the present study as well as potential for future lines of inquiry.

CHAPTER 2   SETTING THE SCENE: 'RACE', IDENTITY AND EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

PART I

2.1   Historical background of the study: The South African landscape pre-1994

2.1.1   Original inhabitants of the land and the arrival of the Dutch colonists

The Republic of South Africa is located at the southern most tip of Africa and is home to people from highly diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds that together constitute its estimated population of 48, 7 million inhabitants (Statistics South Africa, 2008). There seems to be a fair amount of confusion as to the demographic and linguistic make-up of South Africa, with mainstream Western media only relatively recently beginning to discuss the 'racial' and ethnic diversity in the country (Anderson 2003). Perhaps most notorious for legalising 'racial' oppression and segregation through the powerful and pervasive ideology of white supremacy, known as *apartheid*[5], South Africa is intimately associated with the histories of oppression that seem to plague humankind. However, when democracy became a reality in South Africa, it also stood as a beacon of hope for the world regarding what could be achieved to restore peace, forgiveness and reconciliation after centuries of human rights abuses. The transition to democracy marked the end of 'one of the greatest struggles of the second part of the twentieth century' (Soudien 2007b, 182), while simultaneously being heralded as 'one of the finest achievements of the twentieth century' (Thompson 2001, 241).

In order to understand the present situation in South Africa, it is necessary to look to the past. As Wilson and Thompson (1969 cited in Duly 1970, 206) write in their acclaimed historical study of South Africa, 'the central theme of South African history is interaction between peoples of diverse origins, languages, technologies, ideologies, and social systems, meeting on South African soil'. Thus, processes around interaction and the complex and interdependent relations between people living in South Africa form the central tenet through which history is explored – a framework well-suited for a brief foray into the historical context of South Africa necessary to situate the work presented in this thesis.

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[5] The term *apartheid* is Afrikaans and can be translated as *segregation* in English.

Before the arrival of settlers, the Khoisan constituted the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. According to archaeological records, the San people had widely inhabited the land from at least ten thousand years ago, while the Khokhoi pastoralists moved down south from what is today known as Botswana, reaching the western Cape around AD 200 (Worden 2007). This is supported by Thompson (2001, 4), who points out that before the sixteenth century A.D. the Southern African region was a region where 'human activity was an indigenous process, except as the arrival of people by land from further north modified it'. The arrival of Bantu-speaking populations from the north brought increased diversity and constituted 'the first farmers' since they did not only own cattle and sheep but also grew crops and used spears and digging tools (Thompson 2001). The Bantu-speaking communities were the ancestors of the majority of the South African population today (Thompson 2001) and came to inhabit South Africa through waves of migration from the Eastern and Central African regions (Worden 2007). While I present this brief history of people living in present day South Africa in a linear and seemingly straightforward fashion, it must be noted that the process was much more complex, resulting in both continuity *and* change. As Thompson (2001, 11) succinctly puts it, 'Populations were not closed reproducing entities, equipped with unique unchanging cultures. People interacted, cooperating and copulating as well as competing and combating, exchanging ideas and practices as well as rejecting them'.

South Africa, long isolated from much of the rest of the world, was after 1500, opened up to a host of influences and people, some of them who would later settle permanently on South African soil (Ross 2008). In 1652 the Dutch arrived, and subsequently colonised the Cape of Good Hope and further afield. The purpose of their original settlement was to establish a small fortified base where the fleets of the Dutch East India Company[6] who rounded the Cape annually would be able to take on board fresh water, fruit, vegetables, and grain, as well as land their sick to recuperate before they made their way to Asia. However, as the Dutch became more settled, they expanded and began to conquer the local Khoisan people and appropriate their land and stock by force. While the languages and cultural identities of the San and Khoikhoi groups are highly diverse, today they are generally referred to collectively as the Khoisan. 'White' settlers referred to these communities in a derogatory sense as

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[6] The Dutch East India Company was usually known as the VOC, which stood for Vereenigde Oost-Indisch Compagnie.

'Bushmen' and 'Hottentots'. While it was not the intention of the Dutch to establish anything other than a fortified base at the Cape, within a decade the Cape Colony had become relatively set up through processes of expansion and the work of slaves. Thompson (2001, 45) eloquently sums up the events unfolding around the middle of the seventeenth century and is worth quoting at length:

> The Dutch East India Company's colony at the Cape of Good Hope had characteristics that distinguished it from other societies. It was fulfilling its founders' intentions to be a fortified refreshment station on the trade route between Europe and Asia. But it was more than a refreshment station. It was the home of a small but viral mass of people of European origin who had become an increasingly independent force in shaping the colonial society. They owned virtually all the productive land but did not themselves do the manual labor. They used the labor of slaves, who were continually being imported from Asia, Madagascar, and Mozambique, and of indigenous pastoralists, whom they had deprived of their land and livestock and who had been decimated by smallpox. In Cape Town, a cosmopolitan entrepôt, social relations were more fluid that in the countryside, but even there the free blacks were too few, and the constraints on them too severe, to blur the increasingly close coincidence between the lines of race and the lines of class.

The situation at the tip of the African continent had thus quickly become both 'racially' complex and stratified, with all the accompanying inequalities that this entailed. As time progressed the colony began to expand as people ventured beyond the confines of the Cape. Semi-migrant farmers, otherwise known as 'trekboers', were largely responsible for this expansion as they moved farther and farther away from the colony (Thompson 2001). Here they inevitably came into contact with indigenous hunters and herders whom they eventually reduced to various types of tenancy and clientage (Thompson 2001). This dependency of 'white' colonists on the labour of their slaves as well as the indigenous communities drew from the 'ethnic chauvinism' which was 'already deeply embedded in the popular psyche' in Europe (Thompson 2001, 51). Thus, the foundation of a 'racially' stratified society had been laid down, with the oppressed suffering under harsh living conditions.
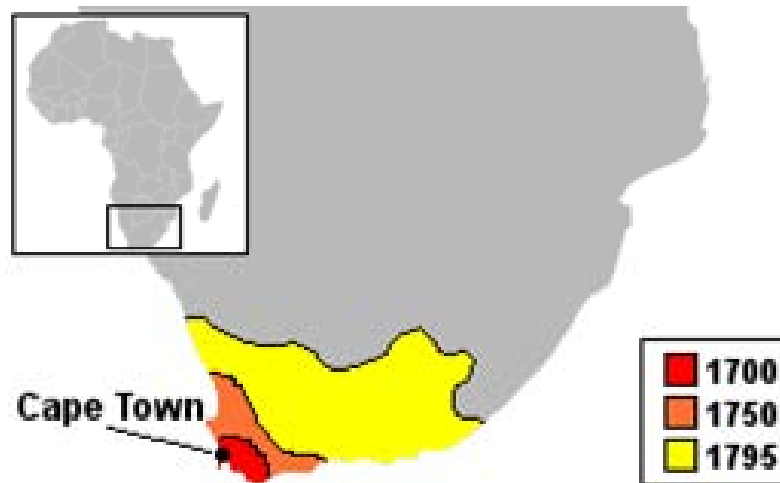
Map 1. The expansion of the Cape Colony by the Dutch settlers between 1700 and 1795[7].

The culturally diverse people, who by this point were living in close proximity to one another and forming interdependent relations in terms of labour, were faced with the major challenge of communicating with one another. Some of the colonists retained the Dutch of the Netherlands, which served as the official language of the colony. Indigenous speakers and some slaves spoke their native languages, while slaves of Asian origin adopted Portuguese Creole as a form of communication (Thompson 2001). This linguistic dilemma gave rise to a dialect to aid communication between burghers and slaves, sometimes referred to as 'kitchen Dutch', which would later develop into the language that is today known as Afrikaans[8], one of the eleven official languages in present day South Africa.

2.1.2 The arrival of the British colonists

The British colonizers arrived in 1795 to capture the Cape from the Dutch and in so doing added to the diversity of the people already in the region. Arriving in the Cape,

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[7] Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dutch_Cape_Colony.png. Accessed 02 November 2011.
[8] Thompson (2001, 52) explains that Afrikaans is 'a simplified form of Dutch, which dropped certain inflections and vocabulary items, modified the vowel sounds, and incorporated loan words from the other languages'.

the expedition from Great Britain forced Dutch officials to capitulate in 1795. However, under the Treaty of Amiens, the Dutch (then known as the Batavian Republic) recovered the Cape, only to be expelled once again in 1806 (Thompson 2001). South Africa remained a stepping stone to Asia, a factor which was of primary interest to the British whose English East India Company was carrying out very profitable trade, predominantly with India (Thompson 2001). Beyond this, South African was of little material interest to the newly arrived colonists. This led Britain to invest very little in the colony. In an interesting comparison of economic growth, Thompson (2001) points out that by 1870 the United States of America boasted a population of over 32 million people of European descent as well as approximately 53,000 miles of railroad. In stark comparison, the Southern African region in its entirety consisted of no more than 70 miles of rail and 250,000 people of European descent.

As the British moved outward, they faced resistance from many fronts and could no longer ignore the increasing demands to bring some form of 'control' and 'order' to the eastern frontier region where the local Khoikhoi inhabitants as well as the trekboers were all vying to maintain autonomy and territory. The biggest threat were the amaXhosa[9]. The relationship between the British and the amaXhosa was fraught with tension, which resulted in numerous wars being fought between the two factions. Although skilled in warfare, the amaXhosa were not able to withstand the technological advancements of gunpowder and weapons that the British held, as well as the British strategy of systematically destroying the Xhosa's food supply (Thompson 2001). Thus, British military intervention served to shift the uncertain balance established between the amaXhosa and the colonists in favour of the British (Worden 2007). While settlers were brought from Britain in the 1820s to farm contested land, many failed and moved into the surrounding villages and towns of the colony. According to Worden (2007), clashes between the amaXhosa and the colonial forces continued into the 1830s, yet by this late stage, colonial forces had brought the eastern frontier under their control (Worden 2007). Britain's intense desire to keep these two societies separate is made clear in the findings of a commission set up to investigate the situation in the eastern frontier. According to Colonel Richard Collins:

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[9] Historically, the Xhosa people form part of the Nguni migration, moving south from the areas around the African Great Lakes. They were settled in South Africa long before the first European colonists arrived. The Xhosa identify the south-east part of the country as their home. The language they speak is IsiXhosa, another of the eleven official languages of present day South Africa. It is the second most common home language in the country.

> The two societies should be kept absolutely separate from one another until the Whites are powerful enough to dominate the region. All intercourse between the settlers and the Caffres should be scrupulously prevented, until the former shall have increased considerably in numbers, and are also much more advanced in arts and industry. (Thompson 2001, 54).

There is a clear link made between the 'white' settler population as civilised (or at least needing to urgently aspire to that) and the 'black' Xhosa population as backward and unfit to mix with the 'dominant' genes of the 'white' population through copulation.

It must be acknowledged that while in present day South Africa 'racial' categorising is deeply entrenched, notions of 'racial' difference have not always been the primary means of conceptualising diversity and difference within the South African society (Durrheim 2005). It was the 'respective levels of civilisation, which was understood in terms of religion and the respective 'way of life' of the different groups' (Durrheim 2005, 446) that framed the differences between the European colonists and the so-called 'native' people living in the Cape. Thus, while differences were certainly maintained, they were not as 'starkly or categorically racial' as they were to become later on, which meant that relations were more fluid and open to exchange even though they remained hierarchical (Durrheim 2005, 447). This can be seen in the work of MacCrone (1937, 68 cited in Durrheim 2005, 447), who provides a historical description of intergroup contact and representations:

> The resident population [of the early colony], both free and slave, together with the floating population of those who enjoyed the hospitality of the 'Tavern of the Seas', presented an infinite variety of race, of colour, and of language…In such an environment race contacts were more free and less conventional than in a more rigid and more stable society. Within the urban zone, in which there was always a large preponderance of men, miscegenation took place on an extensive scale.

What this extract highlights, which will be expounded upon as this chapter progresses, is that the 'code for constructing difference – the code of racial identity' is, as Durrheim (2005, 447) points out, historical. Furthermore, it reinforces that while the two colonies (Cape and Natal) and the two Boer republics (Transvaal and Orange Free State), which merged into a unified state in 1910, all had legislation based on 'race', there was much variability and imprecision regarding the subject of 'race', with 'racial' categories often being used without any definition (Posel 2001a).

Yet, these notions of segregation and 'racial' purity would later become the legislated cornerstones of the totalitarian regime known as apartheid, which continues to cast a shadow over relations among people living in contemporary South Africa. The

idea of exerting some from of control over the sexual lives of individuals might have seemed sound on paper, but in practice, many inter-'racial' relations occurred. One of the consequences of these relations was the birth of the so-called 'Coloured' identity. While this term is frequently used to refer to a particular 'racial'-ethnic identity in South Africa, Anderson (2003) draws attention to the fact that there is considerable debate amongst this group of people regarding the validity of the term 'Coloured'. Few could deny, however, that a unique mix of cultural, religious and language practices have come to be associated with the 'Coloured' identity. The complexity and absurdity of 'racial' labels are made clear when genetic testing is brought into the discussion. In South Africa, for example, Thompson (2001, 6) points out that the Khoisan 'contributed a high proportion of the genes of the 'Coloured' people' and a 'smaller, but still considerable, proportion of the genes of the Bantu-speaking Africans'. Furthermore, they provided genes to people classified as 'white' by the government, although seldom, if ever, was this acknowledged. I myself have a great, great grandmother who is of Khoisan descent. While it might have seemed likely for 'Coloured' people to become integrated with the Afrikaners, considering the frequent cohabitation across the colour line, Afrikaner 'race' consciousness, as Thompson (2001) notes, severely impeded that from taking place. By 1861 'Coloured' children were banned from attending public schools and those who received any formal education were reliant on mission institutions (Thompson 2001). These actions served to entrench 'white' supremacy, which had begun when the first colonisers landed on the shores of the Cape, developing and entrenching the 'racial' order through practices of, for example, slavery. Even when slavery had been effectively abolished, Thompson (2001, 65) writes that very little changed in the lives of those supposedly freed slaves as the British were forced to make the transition from formal slavery (established under the Dutch) to formal freedom: 'the forms were the forms of freedom, but the facts were still the facts of exploitation'.

2.1.3   Towards becoming an independent state

The relationship between the Dutch and British colonisers and the various African communities had soured considerably by the eighteenth century and resulted in numerous wars between the British, the Africans and the Boers (Gallagher 2004). Struggling to accept changes imposed by Britain, such as those related to the ownership of slaves, the

Boers established short-lived Boer Republics towards the end of the eighteenth century, which were soon stripped of any power or authority by British Imperialist forces. Approximately six thousand Boer men, women and children, embarked north on their 'Great Trek' by 1840, crossing both the Fish and Orange rivers into what they considered to be the 'promised land' (Thompson 2001, Gallagher 2004). According to Thompson (2001), reconnaissance missions revealed the existence of fertile and apparently unpopulated land on the Highveld beyond the Orange river, as well as below the escarpment south of the Tugela river, and it is these areas that they set out to inhabit. According to a statement sent to the British government to explain the decision to move, Piet Retief wrote that he hoped that the British would allow the Boers to govern themselves without interference (Thompson 2001). These Boers, known as 'voortrekkers'[10], believed that the sacred status of their community was confirmed by them having overcome African opposition and the staking out of land for themselves and resisting British authority (Pakenham 1982 cited in Gallagher 2004). An important part of this move can be summed up by the following extract taken from the memoirs of Anna Steenkamp, Retief's niece:

> It is not so much their freedom [of the slaves] that drove us to such lengths, as their being placed on an equal footing with Christians, contrary to the laws of God and the natural distinction of race and religion, so that it was intolerable for any decent Christian to bow down beneath such a yoke; wherefore we rather withdrew in order thus to preserve our doctrines in purity. (cited in Thompson 2001, 88).

This journey, along with their pastoralist way of life, formed the national story of the Boer community and forged the link between religion, 'racial' purity and segregation which were to become vital elements of the apartheid regime. Yet, it must be noted that internal tensions and skirmishes between the various groups who had embarked on the great trek existed, leading to a separation whereby one group settled in the Highveld, while the remaining group preferred Natal. Along the east coast of the country, in the Province that is today known as KwaZulu Natal, hunters and traders of ivory arrived in the early nineteenth century. These traders were agents of Cape merchants and soon established a settlement known as Port Natal (Worden 2007). In 1838 a party of voortrekkers arrived and formed an alliance with the hunters and traders, as well as disaffected African cultivators in the region. After battling with the Zulu for territory

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[10] The term 'voortrekkers' refers to 'pioneers', or emigrants, in English.

upon which to settle, it was in the battle of Blood River that the voortrekkers defeated the Zulu who were under the rule of Dingane. They declared a new Republic of Natalia, which was annexed by the British in 1843[11] (Thompson 2001). As a result, the majority of voortrekkers left, choosing to trek to the Highveld. The emigrants were granted their independence from the British government in 1854 by order of the Sand River and Bloemfontein conventions (Thompson 2001). At the same time, the British, in a move away from their declared policy of the 1840s, which included 'protecting black Southern Africans from disruption by turbulent British subjects' opted for a policy that 'amounted to an alliance with independent white communities against their black neighbors' (Thompson 2001, 96).

Back in Natal, the arrival of approximately five thousand immigrants between 1849 and 1852 from Britain, Germany and Mauritius, secured Natal's status as a 'white' colony (Worden 2007). Around the 1860s indentured labourers from India were brought to South Africa to work on large scale commercial plantations of sugar cane. According to the laws of the time, twenty five women were to accompany every one hundred men transported to Natal, which ensured that soon enough a permanent Indian population would emerge (Thompson 2001). The sizeable Indian population, which grew from the original six thousand people arriving from Madras and Calcutta, resulted in them eventually outnumbering the 'whites' in the region known as Natal (Thompson 2001).

Thus, by the 1870s– which can be considered as a new phase in South African history – the country consisted of 'an imbroglio of peoples of African, Asian, and European origin' (Thompson 2001, 109). The discovery of minerals, most notably gold and diamonds, marked a turning point for development in the country. During this time, 'whites' were conquering formerly independent African communities with the aim of incorporating them into the fast-growing capitalist, 'white'-dominated economy (Thompson 2001). 'Racial' divisions were still fierce and becoming increasingly rigid as the 'white' men retained all political power, with the 'black' African population forced to provide cheap labour. Industry soon became established according to 'racial' lines throughout the region (Thompson 2001). Further divisions and tensions were to be found among the 'white' communities, most notably between the British settlers and the

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[11] According to Worden (2007, 18) the Republic of Natalia was annexed 'in a wave of humanitarian outrage at reports of trekker use of slaves, but also to curb trekker rivalry to British traders at Port Natal, and as an attempt to stem Nguni migration further south which could disrupt the precarious eastern Cape frontier.'

Afrikaner communities. Owing to international competition and local discord, Britain annexed the diamond fields in 1871, followed by the Transvaal Republic in 1877. Furthermore, in 1879 they conquered the Zulu kingdom, which was the most powerful African state in Southern Africa. However, the Afrikaners fought back and in 1881 they defeated British forces. This victory was short-lived, as in 1895 the British government waged the South African war (also known as the Anglo Boer war) between 1899 and 1902 (Thompson 2001).

The war cemented the split between the English speaking and Afrikaans speaking 'white' community. Although Britain had conquered and annexed the republics, they did nothing to modify the 'racial' organisation in this part of the world. The split amongst the 'white' communities was soon politically, if not personally[12], reconciled with the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The founding of this Union, writes Gobodo-Madikizela (2004, 143), 'could be seen as a form of reconciliation following the Anglo-Boer War between the Boers, or Dutch, and the British', as well as being part of the imperialist philosophy of the British. Most notably, this establishment served to exclude 'blacks' from participating in political life, with the understanding that '[P]olitical equality for blacks…was not merely undesirable; it was "'an absurdity."'' (Gobodo-Madikizela 2004, 143). A commission set up in 1905 by the British High Commissioner in South Africa, Sir Alfred Milner, served to lay the foundations of what would later become known as 'apartheid'. Having been tasked to put forward strategies to deal with the "Native question", the commission advised that 'blacks' and 'whites' be segregated and that "locations"[13] be set up for 'blacks' on the peripheries of town and cities (Gobodo-Madikizela 2004). Between 1910 and 1948 the economy was strengthened, while the 'white' English and Afrikaans communities were debating whether they should unite or each vie for political control in order to advance their particular interests. Two of the main events during this time were the projects

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[12] Numerous Afrikaners who had been sent to concentration camps set up by the English never forgave their captors for the harsh treatment they were subjected to. My great grandmother was one such woman who, after suffering the deaths of her sister and mother in the camps, refused to utter another word of English for the remainder of her life. Thompson (2001, 145) supports this when he writes that 'Far from destroying Afrikaner nationalism…the Jameson Raid, coercive diplomacy, military conquest, concentration camps, and bureaucratic reconstruction gave Afrikaner nationalism a powerful stimulus'.

[13] "Locations" are also termed "townships" or "informal settlements" and refer to urban living areas that housed 'black' Africans, Coloured and Indian communities. The apartheid government, under the Group Areas Act, forcefully removed people from areas designated 'white' only areas and placed them in segregated townships. These locations or townships face many challenges including lack of sewerage services, electricity, roads and clean water. Many townships have served as sites for the struggle against apartheid, such as Sharpeville in Johannesburg.

implemented to phase out 'white' poverty, which was becoming increasingly problematic for the 'white' government. This was achieved through industrial growth, the ever stricter colour bar as well as state aid (Thompson 2001). The second important event of this period was the founding of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912. This organisation was to become a key factor in the eventual liberation of South African from the apartheid regime.

2.1.4 The apartheid State

After the Second World War, 'white' supremacy in South Africa was perceived to be under threat as firstly, other African and Asian states began to gain their independence from colonial rule, and secondly, as the demand for the implementation of 'human rights' according to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 gained momentum. As Jack (1953, 445) succinctly puts it:

> Africa is going the way of Asia: to revolution, self-government, and perhaps communism. Revolt is breaking out from the Cape to Cairo, from Morocco to Kenya, as two hundred million Africans refuse to be oppressed by five million whites, not to mention by some of their own people. Of all the areas of reaction and revolt on this continent, the Union of South Africa is most difficult and dangerous, if only because half of the five million whites in Africa live there.

Amidst the growing fear among the 'whites' regarding their minority in numbers in contrast to their 'black' African counterparts, the idea of social and economic equality for all the people living in the land was muted as a direct threat to 'white' privilege. As the authorities had ensured the exclusion of 'non-whites'[14] from the political process through the Constitution of 1910, the all-white National Party won the 1948 elections, giving them the platform from which to engineer a social reality, that of *apartheid*, which denied the majority of the population equal political and social rights to those enjoyed by the 'white' population. While the National Party drew its membership from Afrikaners, and had a strong basis in Afrikaner nationalism (Gobodo-Madikizela 2004), the English-speaking 'white' population significantly benefitted from the resources reserved for 'whites' under National Party rule.

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[14] The term 'non-whites' was used historically to refer to the following ethnic groups: 'Black' African, Asian and 'Coloured'. The use of 'non' is a clear indication of the status imposed upon darker skinned individuals as secondary citizens, the 'other'.

In an attempt to implement their vision of a 'racially', socially and legally segregated society (Gallagher 2004), those in charge rapidly began establishing both legal and institutional infrastructure to promote the separate development of so-called 'race' groups, especially those of 'black' Africans and 'whites', and thereby gain control of both the social and economic systems of South Africa (Chokshi, Carter, Gupta, Martin, & Allen, 1995).

The ideology of apartheid went far beyond 'an interesting sociological experiment' (Brunner 1961, 406), which, according to the 1947 election manifesto of the National Party, can be summed up as follows:

> In general terms our policy envisages segregating the most important ethnic groups and sub-groups in their own areas where every group will be enabled to develop into a self-sufficient unit. We endorse the general principle of territorial segregation of the Bantu and the Whites…the Bantu in the urban areas should be regarded as migratory citizens not entitled to political or social rights equal to those of the Whites. The process of detribalization should be arrested. (Unesco, 1972, 16)

Continuing with the legacy of more than three centuries of systematic discrimination (Finchilescu 2005), the Nationalist party under the leadership of Prime Minister Daniel Malan persisted with a policy of 'unabashed racism' (Jack 1953, 446) at a time when racism was becoming increasingly unacceptable as the basis for policy formulation in other parts of the world. The apartheid regime's overtly racist manifesto gave rise to the implementation of laws that had as their aim to prevent 'blacks' from competing with 'whites' for jobs and so forth (Finchilsecu 2005). Each 'racial' group was therefore encouraged to maintain its ethnic and cultural identity with the call for the prevention of 'detribalization' a clear indication of this. One of the fundamental pillars upon which the apartheid regime was built was the belief that each ethnic group needed to live isolated from any other grouping in order to ensure a harmonious existence amongst all. Apartheid was thus responsible for creating and enforcing the rigid division of the South African society with 'language and ethnicity, read skin colour, being the main pillars of the apartheid divide-and-rule ideology' (Kamwangamalu 2000, 1).

This ideology was supported and justified in certain academic circles, most notably by the South African Bureau for Racial Affairs (SABRA), established in 1948 to bring together 'those who provided academic justification for the apartheid policy' as

well as National Party theoreticians[15]. SABRA was not only influential in contributing to the National Party policy, but was also instrumental in socialising Afrikaner youth through programmes, conferences and lectures that they ran at schools and universities[16].

In her analysis of state practice with regard to 'racial' classification and its epistemological underpinnings in twentieth-century South Africa, Posel (2001a, 88) writes that the system of apartheid remained in place largely due to the 'systematic bureaucratization and normalization of race'. Posel's article notes that it is only more recently that researchers have begun to delve into the conception of 'race' that buttressed the social order of apartheid. Importantly, Posel's article addresses a fundamental lacuna in current literature and offers a more in-depth understanding on the workings of apartheid ideology by focusing 'directly on the notion of race that shaped state policy and practice after 1948 and which facilitated the overwhelming racialization of South Africa society' (Posel 2001a, 88).

Drawing from an array of archival sources, Posel (2001a, 88) argues that while the social engineers behind apartheid certainly took advantage of biological essentialist discourse of 'race'[17], which formed part of the racial 'common sense' permeating particularly 'white' South African society, these engineers 'drew deliberately and explicitly on a conception of race as a socio-legal construct rather than a scientifically measurable biological essence'. The apartheid state's attempt to ensure the effective classification of the entire population into 'racial' groups meant that they could not rely on the time-consuming process of mobilizing and defending scientific definitions of

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[15]

http://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02424/04lv02730/05lv03188/06lv03216.htm

[16]

http://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02424/04lv02730/05lv03188/06lv03216.htm

[17] Both religious discourse and biological essentialism, which were prevalent in Europe at the time, were used by the Boers to support their racist ideology. This is supported by a speech given in 1935 by a future State President of South Africa, Nico Diedrichs:

> God willed that…at the human level, there should be a multiplicity and diversity of nations, languages and cultures and just as it would be a violation of God's natural law to try to reduce all colours to one colour and all sounds to one sound, everything in nature to one dull monotony so it is just as much of a desecration of His law to destroy the multiplicity of nations in the world for the sake of a monochromatic, monotonous and monolithic humanity. (Stent, 1994, 53)

Looking to Nazi Germany and its politicised racism for inspiration, Diedrichs and his followers believed in the possibility of an exclusively white society, while ironically calling for the preservation of diversity within humanity. This diversity was fine, he believed, so long as it did not require actual interaction or integration amongst these diverse groups of people. Furthermore, scientific racism, supported by movements such as that of eugenics, solidified the foundation upon which apartheid was built, arguing for the superiority of certain (white) communities over inferior 'native' communities (Dubow, 1995).

'race' (Posel 2001a). Furthermore, it served the interests of the apartheid regime to ensure that 'Official categories of race were…defined and enacted in ways which connected them closely to factors of lifestyle and social standing' (Posel 2001a, 88)[18]. The interplay between the conception of 'race' based on biological essentialism, and that of 'race' as a bureaucratized social construct, is explained by Posel (2001a, 89) in the following abstract:

> [I]n bureaucratizing the idea of race as a social construct, the apartheid state opened up spaces for this racial common sense to infiltrate the processes of racial classification. The practitioners of racial classification had considerable latitude to interpret the bureaucratic criteria for racial classification in ways that allowed them to draw widely and idiosyncratically on the popular litanies of biological stereotypes, but spared the need for any pretence at scientific rigor in the process.

'Racial' differences were thus conceptualised as a 'bioculturalist mix' (Gilroy 2000, 22), which ensured that 'race' remained an insidious and persistent part of everyday life.

The process of 'racial' classification remains a political as well as an epistemological enterprise. This is evident in that while 'race' remains a pertinent identity concept in most societies around the world today, what it comes to mean in the lived experiences of human beings varies from context to context. In South Africa, the apartheid system of 'racial' classification was, as Posel (2001a) puts it, notoriously distinctive owing to its panoptic scope, in other words, every aspect of one's life was intricately tied up with the way in which one had been 'racially' classified. In a different article, Posel (2001b, 52) stresses this point further:

> Apartheid's principal imaginary was of a society in which every 'race' knew and observed its proper place – economically, politically and socially. Race was to be the critical and overriding fault line: the fundamental organising principle for the allocating of all resources and opportunities, the basis of all spatial demarcation, planning and development, the boundary for all social interaction, as well as the primary category in term s of which this social and moral order was described and defended.

It is necessary to understand how the state was reconfigured after 1948 as this is intimately linked to an analysis investigating the construction, as well as bureaucratization, of 'race' under apartheid (Posel 2001a). While the epistemological basis used to rationalise the existence of distinct 'racial' groups in South Africa drew heavily from dominant schools of thought circulating in other contexts during the twentieth century, in South Africa the conceptualisation of 'race' as 'natural' was highly

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[18] For a discussion about what racial classification did to and within families, see Nair (2008).

successful. This was due to the implementation of overtly racist policies and practices which sought to institutionalise 'race' and notions of 'white' supremacy in an attempt to ensure that apartheid ideology became embedded in the psychology of its citizens. Posel (2001b, 63-66) identities six main 'racial' premises used by those running the apartheid state to embed ideas about 'race' in society and the psyche:

- 'Race' and 'racial' difference as self-evident 'facts' of experience
- The ontology of 'race' as a mix of biology, class and culture
- 'Race' as ubiquitous
- 'Race' as essential rather than accidental or contingent
- 'Race' as the primary determinant of all experience
- 'Race' as the site of white fear

There exists irrefutable evidence showing that there is no scientific basis for the idea that 'race' is a biological phenomenon, yet, the purposely vague fusing of biological and cultural characteristics of various groups have ensured that 'race' continues to play a significant role in determining how people come to see themselves and relate to one another. Thus, while scientific theories of 'race' claimed, for example, that 'Negroes' were endowed with smaller brains than 'Caucasians' (theories which were celebrated in universities and societies of learning as late as the 1930s and 1940s) (Soudien 2008a), it was recognised early on by the social engineers of apartheid that basing 'racial' classification on 'scientifically measurable biological essence' (Posel 2001a, 88) alone was a highly problematic, costly and time-consuming endeavour. Instead, as Posel (2001a) highlights, the apartheid ideologues drew deliberately on conceptualising 'race' as a socio-legal construct, while allowing more 'common-sense' notions of 'race' based on biology to infuse the everyday experiences of 'race' and racism.

2.1.4.1 The legal foundations of the apartheid state

The National Party government systematically began to codify the diverse ethnic communities into 'racial' groups and introduced a series of discriminatory laws which effectively separated the communities in both the public and private domains (Wilson, 2002). The Population Registration Act of 1950 formed the cornerstone of the apartheid

regime's efforts to produce a 'nationally comprehensive and uniform system of racial classification' (Posel 2001a, 89) which served to ensure economic and social segregation of those living in South Africa. While certainly not the only piece of legislation with an important role to play in institutionalising racism in South Africa, the Population Registration Act played a fundamental role in the state's attempt to move away from the flexible and ad hoc way in which people had been 'racially' classified, with the aim of producing a more orderly and rigid system of codification. According to Barnard, Cronje and Olivier (1986), prior to 1950 there was much confusion with regard to 'racial' classification in South African legislature (Nair 2008). In an attempt to streamline the process of classification and ensure uniformity, the Population Registration Act sought to create a uniform understanding of the 'racial' classification system. Needless to say, a variety of definitions regarding 'racial' classification continued to abound. Citing directly from the Act, Section 1, three 'racial' categories were defined as follows:

(1)(iii) "coloured person" means a person who is not a white person or a native

(1)(x) "native" means a person who in fact is or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa

(1)(xv) "white person" means a person who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person.

To be 'racially' classified was first and foremost dependant on appearance, specifically, the colour of an individual's skin. However, the government was aware that looks could be deceiving and so ensured that classification encompassed a broader understanding of what determined an individual's 'race', which included concepts of ethnicity and culture. Posel (2001a), drawing from the work of Suzman (1960, 343), notes that the inconsistent way in which classification's were made were, however, generally drawn from four basic criteria, namely, descent, appearance, general acceptance and repute, and mode of living.

Even though the population was divided up into major ethnic groups, language was still used to differentiate within these groups. It is clear that the apartheid system had a static view of the relationship between language and ethnicity (Makoni, 1996 cited in Kamwangamalu, 2001b), seeing both as bounded and homogenous. Each group was therefore required, once the apartheid classification of people had been completed,

to submit to ethnic absolutism. This can be seen in Section 5(1) of the Act that stipulates:

> Every person whose name is included in the register shall be classified by the Director as a white person, a coloured person or a native, as the case may be, and every coloured person and every native whose name is so included shall be classified by the Director according to the ethnic or other group to which he belongs.

A new proclamation (123 of 1967) that was introduced served to classify 'Coloured' people into seven groups, which included the designation of the 'Indian group' and the 'Chinese group'– people whose national home was in India and Pakistan, or China, respectively. Each individual was then issued an identity card on which her/his 'racial' classification and citizenship or nationality was stated. In the case of 'black' individuals, however, 'the ethnic or other group and the tribe to which he belongs' (13 (5)(b) Act 30 of 1950) was included, instead of the individual's citizenship or nationality. Furthermore, clause 19 (1) of the act clearly stipulated that 'A person who in appearance obviously is a white person shall for the purposes of this Act be presumed to be a white person until the contrary is proved'. No mention is made of whether or not 'Coloured' and 'native' individuals would have received the benefit of the doubt when there 'racial' classification came under question. It is, I believe, safe to assume that they would not have received the same treatment as 'white' individuals in such circumstances.

The promulgation of the Population Act was vital to the project of apartheid as it underscored all other legislation which served to ensure the differential treatment of people living in South Africa, such as where the different 'racial' groups were permitted to live and work. The following table highlights some of the most important legal prescriptions in force during apartheid:

1949 Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act	Prohibition of marriage between 'whites' and other 'races'. Marriages between 'whites' and 'non-whites' were annulled.
The Immorality Amendment Act of 1950	Prohibition of sexual relations between 'whites' and other 'races'.
The Population Registration Act of 1950	Codification of the entire population into 'race' communities.
The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950	Banning of political activity against the government.
The Group Areas Act of 1950	Physical separation of 'racial' communities by allocating specific parts of the country to different communities.
The Native Urban Areas Amendment Act of 1952	The Black African population was required to carry internal passports from the age of 16, which could be demanded by the police at any time.
The Separate Amenities Act of 1953	Provision of separate amenities to Black Africans and whites in public areas and specifically stated that this provision need not be equal.
The Bantu Education Act of 1953	Segregated schooling and curriculum framework along 'racial' lines.
The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956	Ensured legal basis for reserving jobs along 'racial' lines.
The Extension of University Education Act of 1959	Excluded all other 'racial' communities from white universities and established five 'ethnic' universities.
The Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959	The Black African population was classified into eight ethnic groups. Each group had a Commissioner-General who was tasked to develop a homeland for each, which would be allowed to govern itself independently without white intervention.
The Bantu Homelands Citizens Act of 1971	Required Black Africans to become citizens of the homeland that responded to their ethnic group, regardless of whether they had ever resided there or not, and removed their South African citizenship.

Table 1. Various Acts implemented during apartheid which attempted to ensure strict 'racial' divisions in the public and private domains (Source: Gallagher 2004, Nair 2008)

Magubane (1993, 52) highlights the importance of these policies for the apartheid project, the securing of 'white' supremacy, as well as the way in which this ideology seeped into the actions and experiences of everyday life:

> These pillars of apartheid controlled and dictated virtually all aspects of people's lives including their places of residence; ownership of property; movement; access to social and recreational amenities; access to educational facilities; rights of association; and franchise rights. This social engineering of apartheid – separateness – secured a virtual monopoly of power – political, economic etc. for whites.

The extent to which these policies were meant to disenfranchise the 'black' African population by denying them citizenship in the land of their birth is clearly evident from the words of Connie Mulder, then Minister of plural relations and development, who in 1978 stated that:

> There must be no illusion about this, because if our policy is taken to its full logical conclusion as far as the black people are concerned, there will not be one black man with South African citizenship. I say this sincerely, because that is the idea behind it. Why should I try to hide it? That is our policy in terms of the mandate we have been given…[E]very Black man In South Africa will eventually be accommodated politically in some independent new state in this honourable way and there will no longer be a moral obligation on [the South African] Parliament to accommodate these people politically (Mulder, cited in MacDonald 2006, 5).

The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and later the Bantu Self Government Act of 1959 were passed with the aim of establishing 'autonomous' and ethnically homogenous territories where 'black' Africans would reside. Ten Bantustans, also known as homelands, were established in South Africa. Some of them gained independence, including the Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana and Venda, while others received the right to partial self-governance. This independence was not officially recognised outside of South Africa. While segregated territories were not the brainchild of the apartheid government, it was during this regime that it became a prominent and enforced strategy in the hopes of ensuring that the 'white' population obtained demographic majority status in South Africa. Thus, the ultimate goal was for the established Bantu Homelands to gain independence, thereby making the South African territory a combination of separate, self-governed states where each 'racial' community could find their place. The then Minister of Native Affairs (and future Prime Minister of South Africa), Hendrik Verwoerd, claimed that these areas were chosen as they were the 'original homes' of the 'black' people of South Africa. In total, the homelands accounted for thirteen percent of South African territory, much of this land succumbing to erosion and poor for

agriculture (Rembe 2005). Approximately 3,5 million people were evicted, often forcefully, from their homes and relocated to the homelands (Ross 1999). Many of them had never before set foot in these so-called 'original homes'. The Group Areas Act also applied to the 'Coloureds' and 'Indians' living in South Africa. While there were no specially designated 'homelands' for these groups, they were forced out of 'racially' diverse neighbourhoods. This was especially the case in the city of Cape Town where 'Coloureds' were forced to move away from areas where they were residing since this land had now been declared a 'white' area (Ross 1999)[19].
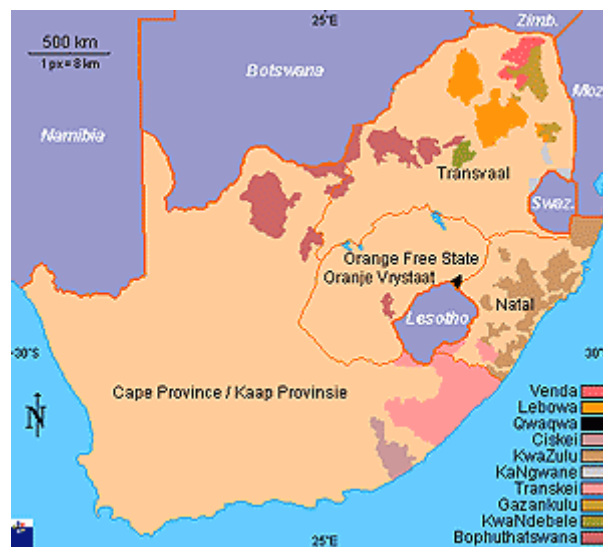
Map 2. The location of the ten homelands in South Africa during apartheid[20]

The project of apartheid therefore centred around two distinct aims. The first was the division of certain groups into self-sufficient tribes through the Homeland policy, while the second aim was to enforce social, economic as well as political inferiority for all those not classified as 'white'. The separation of people into ethnic groupings was, however, not entirely successful due to the complete economic interdependence among these groups. The 'white' population required the labour force of the so called 'non-white' communities to sustain the industrial and agricultural production, while the 'non-white' population needed the job opportunities presented to

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[19] In Cape Town, the area known as District Six has come to symbolise forced removals during apartheid. For more information about the history of this area see: http://www.districtsix.co.za/
[20] Source: http://www.sahistory.org.za/special-features/homelands

them in the so-called 'white' South Africa (Gallagher 2004). Thus, apartheid ideology, as mentioned earlier, clearly permeated every aspect of an individual's life, with:

> [A] formidable battery of laws, regulations, proclamations and judicial interpretation that prescribe behaviour in a vast array of potentially inter-racial situations such as wedding, bedding, dining, entertaining, learning, praying, playing, defecating, voting, resisting, fighting, working; that is the medley of actions and activities that constitute a person's life (Finchelescu 1986, 122).

The political history of South African society has been explicitly structured on the assumption of 'racial' differences and ideas of 'race' are *ipso facto* related to the social reality of the country (Dubow 1995). It was only in 1989 that the country began to accept the possibility of achieving real change after F.W De Klerk was elected State President, especially when he called for the release of Nelson Mandela from imprisonment in 1990. After a series of tense negotiations between leaders of the National Party and the African National Congress (ANC)., the first democratic elections were held in 1994, heralding an official end to the totalitarian regime and marking the beginning of a new era in the country under the leadership of Nelson Mandela and the ANC.

The relatively peaceful transition to democracy resulted in South Africa becoming known as a "miracle" nation with a brilliant future. Racist and segregationist policies stringently enforced under apartheid were rapidly repealed and substituted with new legislated policies based on the principles of human rights, equity and social justice. For the first time in its history the people of South Africa, regardless of the colour of their skin or ethnic identity, could enjoy the right of being a free citizen in the country of their birth. While much has been achieved over the last eighteen years, South Africa remains a deeply divided society (Moodley & Adam 2004), with 'race' still serving as one of the dominant markers according to which society is divided.

2.2   South Africa post-apartheid: The birth of a democratic nation

The time for the healing of wounds has come.
The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come.
The time to build is upon us.
Nelson Mandela, Inaugural address, 10 May 1994

In 1994 Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was inaugurated as the first democratically elected president and head of the Government of National Unity of South Africa. This marked the official end of a 'racially' and socially segregated state characterised by hierarchical ordering and unequal rights and opportunities for its citizens. Legalised 'white' domination had been overcome and new policies and practices seeking to address past inequalities based on 'race', gender and class were implemented. The South Africa Constitution (1996), hailed as one of the most liberal and 'state of the art' Constitutions in the world, provided the framework for the construction of a democratic and just society (Moodley & Adam, 2004). The preamble clearly introduces the new era that began in South Africa post-apartheid, and is worth quoting at length:

> We, the people of South Africa, recognise the injustices of our past; honour those who suffered for injustice and freedom in our land; respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to – Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights; Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law; Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Preamble 1996).

This solid commitment to establish a climate of acceptance and respect and move away from 'the pernicious ideology and practice of racism and racial oppression' (Mandela 1994) marked a turning point in the history of not just South Africa, but the world. One of the greatest achievements was the negotiation of a future of national reconciliation rather than civil war (Steyn 2001). This was a significant achievement considering the 'deeply troubled intercultural and interracial relations' that had become a fact of life for South Africans over centuries (Steyn 2001, xxi). The complex individual and collective psychological adjustments in this changing society have been documented in various studies (Franchi 2003, Franchi & Swart 2003, Jones 2008, Steyn 2003), with subjects being encouraged, post-1994, to rework their social identities through new discursive formations and thereby move beyond constructing identities through a logic of

exclusion. However, contemporary 'identity-work' is taking place with lingering apartheid ideology and discursive formations specifying who one ought to be close at hand. To illustrate this point, Njabulo Ndebele, speaking at a conference hosted by the South African National Department of Education (2001b) reflected on the lack of a common set of values shared by the people living in the country. Reflecting on time spent living in New York, a city characterised by an enormous array of diverse subject positions, he began to question what would happen were fifty thousand South Africans of diverse backgrounds to be simultaneously airlifted and dumped in New York. His thoughts on this matter succinctly bring into focus questions which sociologists, psychologists, educationalists and others have taken up in an attempt to understand the social reality of the people living in South Africa, the issues that unite them and those that divide them.

> I want to speculate further about our fifty thousand compatriots of various backgrounds finding themselves in New York at this moment. What is it that they would bring to this new environment? Finding themselves in a strange land, it is highly likely that they would rearrange themselves into social configurations which offered ready comfort to individuals who immediately recognised themselves as having much in common among them. Without a doubt, they would rearrange themselves, if not physically but psychologically, into two major sub-groups: one white, another black. Whatever individuals in these groups come together in any intersection between the two sub-groups occur, such intersections would not be socially significant. It does not matter that our immigrants are relocating to a new environment six years after the first democratic elections of 1994. This is how they are likely to start out (Ndebele 2001, 100).

Eighteen years have passed since the first democratic elections and people continue to remake themselves, however, this process remains, as Luli Callinicos (Department of Education 2001b, 28) notes, 'painful, or at least uncomfortable'.

In the South African society 'race' remains the dominant approach to difference (Soudien 2004) and continues to form an indelible part of identity formation processes. Thus, other than the theoretical and methodological positioning taken up in this study, this text is located in a particular historical, social and cultural context which has been shaped and developed by 'wider social relations and political cultures' (Bulmer and Solomos 2004, 8). While cultural stratification in the South African society is somewhat similar to other territories that formed part of the European global expansion, the unique 'mix' of the population governed by a minority 'white' supremacy became notorious worldwide as the epitome of 'racial' oppression and segregationist extremism (Steyn 2003).

The move from apartheid to democracy thus meant that many avenues were opened up for exploration regarding how people come to construct their sense of 'self' and 'other'. During apartheid, South African national identity was both exclusionary and divisive and centred on reified 'racial' categories and the ideological framework of 'separate development'. Thus, post-1994, much debate has ensued regarding how best to promote a unified, common national identity, with discourses of 'nation-building' a hot topic across various sectors of society including the media, in political rhetoric, as well as on the sports field (Eaton 2002). Eaton (2002) proceeds to note that even though debates around nation building have abated somewhat, identity politics remain vital and contested. Points of contestation include discussions on 'Afrikaner identity', 'white guilt', the promotion by former President Thabo Mbeki of the supra-national 'African Renaissance' (Eaton 2002) and the widely cited 'Rainbow Nation' ideal first introduced by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. The re-articulation of intercultural relations currently underway in South Africa means new discursive formations, as well as combinations of old and new formations, which provide the conditions for changed subjectivities (Steyn 2003). This has resulted in 'a substantial reframing of the social identities forged within the apartheid certainties, and requires complex individual and collective psychological adjustments as the population moves into an indeterminate future (Steyn 2003).

In South Africa there is a clear Constitutional commitment to building a society on the foundations of non-racism and non-sexism, yet, what this might mean and how this plays out is not well understood. Not overlooking the complexity of the country's apartheid and colonial legacy, the decision taken by the newly elected Government of National Unity in 1994 was to look to the future and the political, cultural, social and educational transformation required to build a strong democratic foundation for the well-being of all citizens. This was no small feat considering that every aspect of life had been so intricately tied up with notions of 'race' and racialisation. Yet, the commitment was established through the promotion of an ideology of 'non-racialism'. However, while government policies post-apartheid call for the provision of 'a better life for all' within a non-racist, non-sexist political, economic and social order (Steyn 2003), as Soudien (1996, 2) importantly notes, 'racial verities die hard'. This is concisely addressed by Mahmood Mamdani (cited in Krog 2003, 201) when he writes that 'liberation deracializes the state, but usually fails to deracialize society'. Society cannot be 'deracialized', however, until a more in-depth understanding is achieved

regarding how people come to inhabit particular subjectivities, the nature of these subjectivities and how they might be disrupted and subverted, resulting in a range of subjectivities being opened up. It is therefore necessary to discuss the axes around which questions of transformation and reconciliation have been, and continue to be, explored. The first axis pertains to the legal reforms necessary to overhaul the deleterious effects of colonialism and apartheid. The second axis centres on the psychological shifts required to promote integration amongst a people severely traumatised by decades of exposure to extremely racist and racialised ideologies and discourses. This calls for an exploration of changes that have taken place at both the macro- and micro-level of society.

2.3. Reconciliation, redress and 'race' in post-apartheid South Africa

The South African Constitution is a cornerstone in the building of a democratic South Africa. While many differences exist regarding which post-apartheid national symbols various 'racial' groups buy into, according to a survey conducted in 1998 'only the new Constitution received high importance ratings from all groups' (Bornman 2006, 383). Perhaps this is as a result of the process carried out in order to draft the new Constitution, which involved South Africans from all quarters. According to Bornman (2006), this process was most likely the largest public participation programme ever implemented in South Africa. The extract from the Constitution cited earlier is indicative of the commitment to unifying the country, and the promotion of human dignity, equality and freedom. Having a strong 'anti-racist' component, the Constitution contributed to the expectation that 'racism' and 'racialism' would become less prominent within the social landscape of a post-apartheid South Africa (Duncan 2003). Besides the legal commitment to respecting diversity, it also serves as a symbol of national unity and transformation along with the introduction of a new South African flag and national anthem. These developments have served the 'nation-building project' and popularised an 'overarching national identity and the formation of a new South African nation' (Bornman 2006, 385). While these new national symbols are centred on the diversity of the South African society, the focus post-apartheid has in fact been on *unity* rather than *diversity*.

Within the milieu of the relatively recent dramatic shift in the socio-political order of the society, people have unsurprisingly begun to rearticulate their intergroup

relations through these processes of reconciliation and nation-building (Steyn 2003). According to Bundy (2000 cited in Van der Walt, Franchi and Stevens 2003, 253), in post-apartheid South Africa 'the dominant discourse came to orbit around postulated common interests and destinies [r]ather than difference, contradiction and antagonism [a]s the fundamental dynamics at work in society'. The promotion of a unified state, and a common identity, is not unusual in the project of national building, as attempts are made to 'overcome and avoid manifold problems associated with heterogeneity and diversity' (Bornman 2006, 385). However, advancing a supra-national identity to replace and/or subsume subnational identities and cultures (Bauman 1998) are controversial, with arguments along the lines of forced membership, conflicting historical experiences and value systems (Bornman 2006).

2.3.1 *Reconciliation, transformation and the building of a nation*

Promoting notions nation-building and reconciliation required establishing discourses to support the 'new' South Africa. The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)[21] in December 1995 was one such attempt. Appointed by President Mandela, the TRC sought to begin the process of dealing with the gross human rights abuses and travesties that had occurred under apartheid. *How* this was to be achieved had to be carefully thought out, as the Nuremburg trial paradigm as a way of dealing with human rights abuses was viewed as more detrimental than beneficial in promoting unity. In his book reflecting on his experiences as chairman of the TRC, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu is quick to point out that the negotiated settlement for South Africa's democracy would never have been achieved had negotiators insisted that all perpetrators be brought to trial. This was echoed by Judge Mahomed (cited in Tutu 1999, 22) who stated that:

> For a successfully negotiated transition, the terms of the transition required not only the agreement of those victimised by abuse but also those threatened by the transition to a "democratic society based on freedom and inequality". If the Constitution kept alive the prospect of continuous retaliation and revenge, the agreement of those threatened by its implementation might never have been forthcoming…

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[21] For a detailed and thought-provoking work documenting the TRC process see the book by Antjie Krog (1998) entitled 'Country of my skull: Guilt, sorrow and the limits of forgiveness in the New South Africa'.

This, coupled with the huge expense associated with trials as well as the notorious representation of the 'white' judicial system within the 'black' community, meant that the Nuremburg trial paradigm would most likely have proven unsuccessful in bringing about any form of reconciliation.

The task facing the newly democratic government was the need to 'balance the requirements of justice, accountability, stability, peace and reconciliation' (Tutu 1999, 23). Thus, when the Commission was set up it promised amnesty to 'all activists, politicians and soldiers, with the proviso that full disclosures be made with regard to their contributions to gross human rights violations and atrocities' (Van der Walt, Franchi and Stevens 2003, 252). Those who came to tell their stories were able to do so in their own words, with facts established on the 'basis of a balance of probability' (Tutu 1999, 26). The TRC did not provide a blanket or general amnesty such as that which took place in Chile when Augusto Pinochet and his colleagues ensured that they received full amnesty for their atrocities before handing over the military junta to that of a civilian government (Tutu 1999). For those deciding on how to deal with South Africa's past, the idea of general amnesty was akin to national amnesia. The hurt and pain suffered by so many could not be forgotten. National amnesia could only serve to re-victimise the victims. Gobodo-Madikizela (2003) points out that for victims the trauma they experienced was embedded in their identity. Through their testimonies victims were thus provided the opportunity to tell *their* stories and be heard. Many gave, or were offered, forgiveness, actions which formed an imperative part of reconciling a nation torn apart by hatred and ignorance. The implications of this process for the country as a whole are summed up in the words of Tutu (1999, 30):

> Our nation sought to rehabilitate and affirm the dignity and personhood of those who for so long had been silenced, had been turned into anonymous, marginalized ones. Now they would be able to tell their stories, they would remember, and in remembering would be acknowledged to be persons with an inalienable personhood.

While the work of the TRC has been both criticised and praised from various quarters (see Van der Walt et al. 2003), Tutu (1999) and Gobodo-Madikizela (2003) – who both worked on the Commission – seem to stress the importance of the process for opening up pathways for dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation in a context where perpetrators and victims needed to learn to live together. This is reiterated by Villa-Vicencio (2000) who argues that healthy dialogue, an essential component of democracy, was facilitated

by the contesting histories and heartfelt exchanges that took place during the TRC hearings.

Other attempts to promote reconciliation and transformation took place within the arena of sports. The rugby world cup in 1995 has been venerated in John Carlin's book 'Playing the enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game that changed a nation', and has been credited for playing a key role in uniting and inspiring citizens across 'racial' barriers. During apartheid the sporting field was fraught with 'racial' tensions, with sports such as rugby becoming synonymous with 'white' supremacy. Yet, with the ardent support of Nelson Mandela, South Africa won the 1995 rugby world cup, having been supported by individuals from all 'racial' groups. More recently, the hosting of the 2010 soccer world cup in South Africa was another attempt to bolster the nation-building ideal in the country. All citizens were encouraged to support this event in order to ensure its success and in so doing gain an oft forgotten (since 1994) sense of proud nationalism. Although appealing to a supranational sentiment through slogans such as 'It's time for Africa', 'KeNako' (translated meaning: It's time) and 'Celebrate Africa's humanity', the aim was once again on *unity*. With the South African flag painted on faces all around the country, even once the South African team, Bafana Bafana, had been eliminated, feelings of national pride ran high. The South African ambassador to the Philippines, Pieter Vermeulen, stated unambiguously that the soccer world cup was integral to the project of nation building: 'When the South Africa soccer team, Bafana Bafana, put on their green and gold jerseys and the crowds come out and support, there's only one nation'[22].

It can hardly be argued that in post-apartheid South Africa the dominant ideology promoted by the government was that of building a nation united across socially constructed barriers of 'race', gender and class, which for so long served as dividing forces. Yet, the danger of instilling such an ideology is that it might serve to obscure social and economic inequalities and everyday experiences of prejudice and discrimination which continue despite people being swept up in 'passionate nationalism' (McKaiser 2010, 10) at key moments in history. McKaiser succinctly questions whether this is in fact not counter -productive in post-apartheid South Africa. Referring specifically to the soccer world cup, McKaiser (2010, 10) notes that:

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[22] The interview entitled 'FIFA World Cup highlights South African nation-building' can be found at: http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/sports/04/27/10/fifa-world-cup-highlights-south-african-nation-building

It is not that a big sporting event cannot occasion a sense of national identity and nationhood. It can. But it cannot constitute national identity and it cannot create national identity. The BIGGEST mistake to watch out for, however, is to assume that just because we feel united, the feeling is underpinned by genuine national identity and nationhood. That need not be the case.

While nation building exercises have been crucial in promoting democracy in South Africa, they cannot be mistaken as successfully ensuring that individuals have overcome their 'multiple experiences of guilt and innocence, justice and injustice, and freedom and suppression' (van der Westhuizen cited in Louw 2004, 14). South Africa is a land of complex political realities which need to be continually interrogated if the project of re-imagining and remaking a society based on wholly different values and practices is to be achieved.

2.3.2   *Addressing political, economic and social redress and equity*

One of the most pressing concerns facing the first democratically elected government was the need for 'racial' equality and redress. Empowering 'racial' groups that were previously marginalised was a key component of legislative changes. Yet, at the same time, capitalist interests were to be protected to safeguard the South African economy. This latter point is particularly complex considering that capitalism was 'blamed for apartheid by much of the anti-apartheid movement', yet today it remains 'taken for granted, unchallenged and unchallengeable by its erstwhile enemies' (MacDonald 2006, 3). This is highly problematic given that economic inequality and levels of poverty have increased since 1994 and that these inequalities continue to be determined along 'racial' lines. MacDonald (2006) points out that most of the economic elite is 'white' (which, importantly, is not the same as stating that most 'whites' are in the economic elite), with the majority of 'black' Africans living in poverty. With the transition to democracy questions around the redistribution of wealth as well as land reform were marginalised. The negotiation of the transition resulted in the National Party surrendering its demand for a power-sharing government to allow for majoritarian political institutions, while the ANC, in exchange, guaranteed property rights, constitutional government and civil liberties (MacDonald 2006). In short, 'the apartheid state gave up apartheid, fantasies of power-sharing, and vetoes, and the ANC gave up dreams of socialism' (MacDonald 2006, 88). It was understood by the people fighting for liberation that political and economic transformation were inseparable, however, when the ANC took up the reigns

it soon differentiated between the two. While demands for political transformation could be satisfied, demands for economic transformation had to be deferred on account of the 'conservatizing logic of negotiated transitions' (MacDonald 2006, 89).

Not surprisingly, while the political economy of South Africa has shifted and changed since the demise of apartheid, it maintains strong ties with notions of 'race' and 'racialism'. This is evident in the Employment Equity Act[23] where 'racial' categories are being renewed due to political and ethical arguments that allude to their importance as a means of achieving transformation. Other legislation that has been passed to avoid discrimination in the work place includes the Promotion of Equity Act and the Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (Nair 2008). 'Race', has out of necessity become a central pillar around which these reforms are being addressed and mediated. Yet, as Posel (2001a, 110) identifies:

> If, as Paul Gilroy argues, "action against racial hierarchies can proceed more effectively when it has been purged of any lingering respect for the idea of "race" (2000, 13), then the residues of apartheid's racial categories remain a daunting obstacle to the pursuit of a non-racial democracy in South Africa.

Practices of affirmative action within the workplace and educational sector are at odds with an ideology of non-racialism considering that it is publically acknowledged that affirmative action policies and practices are 'discriminatory' yet 'necessary to end the oppression of minorities' (Powell 2001, 78). Unsurprisingly, talk of affirmative action is highly polemic and fraught with tension in South African society. This is highlighted by the following extract taken from a conference report dealing with values, education and democracy in the 21st century (Powell 2001, 79):

> In South Africa, even though affirmative action enjoys broad support among the African population, it has received stiff resistance among the whites and some of the other racial minorities. Because there "isn't a subject more taboo in [South Africa] than talking about affirmative action in racial terms" the government is in the difficult position of trying to include blacks without angering powerful whites. For fear of alienating whites, and to avoid the ensuing economic and political problems, it has been quite cautious in undertaking steps necessary to really advance equal opportunity structures. Whites dominate every economic area in South Africa. And because of their huge stronghold of the civil service – with 1.2. million Afrikaners – the government risks a standstill if it alienates white.

The position of economic power and privilege enjoyed by many 'white' South Africans is as a result of an unequal past based on the logic of 'white' supremacy, and

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[23] The Employment Equity Act authorises the preferential employment of three 'designated groups', namely 'blacks', women and the disabled. While not explicitly defined, the category 'black' encompasses individuals previously classified as 'African', 'Coloured' or 'Indian' (Posel 2001b).

opportunities to open up the economic playing field to those disadvantaged by a historically racist regime need to be implemented. Experiences of implementing affirmative action policies in other countries, such as the United States of America, indicate that such legislation is required to ensure that we 'move away from 'racial' hierarchy' and for 'building equity' in a society where certain groups were severely marginalised (Powell 2001, 67).

Redress and reform are thorny issues with which the South African government must continually wrestle. 'If apartheid's racial categories were previously the locus of racial privilege and discrimination, these very same racial designations are now the site of redress – for, how else can the damage be undone and equitable treatment established?' asks Posel (2001b, 51). In other words, how might questions of redress and equity be dealt with without recourse to the 'race' classification system institutionalised during the apartheid years that sharply determined access to resources and opportunities?

Such discussions serve to highlight that 'race' continues to matter in post-apartheid South Africa. Interrogating the usefulness or effectiveness of redress initiatives are imperative considering their dependence on notions of 'race'. In a country where the overarching ideology is one of non-racialism, how do we measure whether political, economic and social equality is being achieved without recourse to the concept of 'race'? Posel (2001b, 51) takes this line of thinking further by asking:

> [W]hat are the consequences of these reiterations? Can we continue to construct our social realities in racial terms – in particular, drawing on apartheid's very own catalogue of race – in ways that transcend the ideological burdens of the past? What are the grammars of racial categorisations post-1994? To what extent, and in what ways, might they be at odds with the project of non-racialism?

More in-depth analyses of the use of 'racial' coding and classification are necessary in order to gain insight into how 'racial' categorisations come into play today, and what this might mean for a society attempting to move beyond the long shadow cast by colonialism and apartheid. Furthermore, it raises vital questions around why keep 'race'? What/who does such a notion serve? Is it possible to move beyond 'race'? Evidently, 'ideas around 'race, racial identities and racial reasoning have become newly politicised as important sites of interrogation and contestation' (Posel 2001b, 67). How individuals come to construct their social realities is intricately tied up with broader notions of ideology, such as that of non-racialism. Yet, since notions of 'race' and

'racial' classification are so deeply embedded in the psychological and social practices of individuals, both deliberate and strategic interventions from the state are necessary in order to 'refashion social relations and dismantle prevailing economic hierarchies' (Posel 2001b, 67).

While much work remains to be undertaken concerning the 'epistemologies and ontologies of racial naming' in contemporary South Africa (Posel 2001b) – a gap which this thesis in small part hopes to address – there have been significant changes within the country to the so–called 'racial' order. This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the workplace and the education sector, as well as residential areas and public spaces. Thus, tensions between discourses of 'non-racialism' and that of 'racialism' present both policymakers, social scientists, as well as people engaging in interactions and practices of daily life, with complex and important dilemmas (Whitehead 2011).

2.3.3 *'Race' and racialism in contemporary South Africa: Interrogating micro-level relations and interaction*

The firm commitment to non-racialism in the post apartheid juridical system is an important step in moving beyond practices of prejudice and discrimination in society. After decades of inculcating racialisation as the basis for all thought and action, it is to be expected that time is needed for the grip of 'race' to be loosened. Changes in South African's 'racial' order are apparent, with increased 'racial' mixing and mobility (Posel 2001b) tied up closely with changes in class structure. Yet 'race' remains a 'major social phenomena' (Bulmer and Solomos 1999, 2) and analysing the form and structure of 'racial' relations and interactions has an important bearing on how people negotiate and construct their identities. Furthermore, such insights allow for a more realistic interpretation of whether or not society is moving beyond old apartheid categorisations and forms of thinking. In the previous section I alluded to the political and ethical arguments of re-inscribing old 'racial' categories as a means of achieving redress and transformation regardless of the commitment to non-racialism. I now turn to the complex site of lived experience and intercultural relations to gain deeper insight into the project of transformation and de-racialisation within society. Non-racialism is described by Vincent (2008, 1427) as a radical position that acknowledges the nonsense of 'race', yet, as she points out, for the majority of South Africans the existence of four distinct 'races' – 'whites', 'Coloureds', 'Indians' and 'black' Africans – remains a

'taken for granted item of common-sense'. Common sense, as accorded by Bauman (1997, 13), refers to 'that rich yet disorganised, non-systematic, often inarticulate and ineffable knowledge that we use to conduct our daily business of life'.

A number of studies and surveys have been undertaken that seek to provide more in-depth insight into how 'race' and 'racial' identities are taken up and inhabited in this post-conflict society. A large-scale and nationally representative survey conducted by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) found that 'race' remained a highly pertinent factor in virtually all aspects of the political and social life of citizens (Gibson and Macdonald 2001). Reflecting on the findings of this survey, Posel (2001b, 50) notes how a 'disturbing proportion of respondents make lifestyle choices and judgements about others that reiterate and entrench existing norms of racial separateness'. Posel (2001b, 50) summarises the key findings of Gibson and MacDonald's (2001) report, shedding some light on the complexity, and at times contradictory nature, of interracial understanding and acceptance:

> While it might be unsurprising that 51 per cent of whites surveyed agreed that 'despite abuses, apartheid ideas were good ones', it is striking that 35.5 per cent of Africans, 34 per cent of Coloureds and 42 per cent of Indians thought likewise. According to the survey, several of the markers of a strong sense of racial distance are more prominent among Africans than whites. For example, 56 per cent of Africans, 33.4 per cent of whites, 26.6 per cent of Coloureds and 41.6 percent of Indians perceived people of other races to be 'untrustworthy'. And 52.7 per cent of Africans found it 'hard to imagine ever being friends with people of other races, along with 18.5 per cent of whites, 12.8 per cent of Coloureds and 19.2 per cent of Indians. 46.8 per cent of African said that they felt 'uncomfortable around people of other races', as did 34.7 per cent of whites, 24.3 per cent of Coloureds and 36.7 per cent of Indians.

Clearly, the politics of 'race' and its impact on the social lives of individuals remains powerful. A weakness of survey data, however, is that it tends to 'fix subjectivity rather than allowing room for self-understandings which may be multiple, shifting and contradictory' (Vincent 2008, 1429). Thus, qualitative studies can provide greater insight into relations of power and inequality and serve as a 'lens through which to view contemporary dominant tropes of race in South Africa as manifested in day-to-day life' (Vincent 2008, 1429). Studies across various disciplines including sociology, social psychology and education show how scholars are taking the need to investigate micro-level interactions among individuals seriously in order to open up debates of how and why discourses on 'race' remain salient, ass well as the consequences thereof. Studies undertaken in educational settings (see Soudien 1996, Dolby 2001, Duncan 2003, Walker 2005) will be explored in the following chapter looking explicitly at the bearing

of 'race' and racialism on the structure of the education sector and what implications this has for interracial contact and interaction.

Studies published in the field of social psychology have been particularly concerned with intergroup contact and relations in South Africa as evidenced in numerous publications (see Dixon and Durrheim 2003, and articles in a special issue of the Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 44, No.2, 2010). This repertoire of work examines 'pressing questions in intergroup relations in South Africa – reconciliation, identity, attitudes, contact, segregation, and ramifications of desegregation' (Finchilescu and Tredoux 2010, 229), a marginalised area of study. Writing from within a social psychological paradigm, it is not surprising that the authors demonstrate much interest in the 'contact hypothesis/theory'. Compared to all the changes since the end of apartheid, Finchilescu and Tredoux (2010, 230) note that the 'increased possibility of interracial contact' has been 'tipped to have the greatest impact on intergroup relations'. The liberation of spaces including, for example, learning institutions such as schools and universities, has resulted in people from all backgrounds mixing freely – with the caveat that socioeconomic or class differences amongst people remain a limitation to 'open access' spaces (Finchilescu and Tredoux 2010). Studies investigating the well-known 'contact hypothesis' (see Allport 1954) have, however, produced mixed results. While Allport specified that contact between groups will only reduce prejudice under optimal conditions, including contact of those with equal status; in other words - cooperative rather than competitive contact 'that holds the potential for real acquaintanceship, and that is supported by social norms and authority'- further studies have identified the need for ever increasing 'necessary conditions' to make the contact hypothesis valid (Finchilescu and Tredoux 2010, 230).

The notion that contact theory could only be successful in a laboratory setting where conditions could be controlled was critiqued by Pettigrew, who showed through his work, and his work with Tropp (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006), that Allport's optimal conditions are more facilitatory than essential for generating positive effects (Finchilescu and Tredoux 2010). Various studies realised in post-apartheid South Africa lend credence to the theory that contact does promote a reduction in prejudice. For example, a study by Swart, Hewstone, Christ and Voci (2010) looked at the effects of crossgroup friendships on prejudice in South Africa among secondary school students. These authors found that crossgroup friendships may play an important role in improving intergroup relations in the South African context. Swart et al. (2010, 326)

believe that culturally diverse educational institutions provide 'individuals from largely racially homogenous communities with the opportunity for engaging in positive contacts with outgroup members' and thereby promote positive intergroup emotions as well as outgroup attitudes.

A study by Vincent (2008) challenges this hypothesis, however, arguing that increased contact does not amount to greater 'racial' integration. Findings from her study amongst undergraduate university students suggest that 'while contact may undermine blatantly racist practices and overt racial conflict, racialized patterns of reasoning continue to exist, often unnoticed and unchallenged' (Vincent 2008, 1426). She attributes this to a power hierarchy whereby 'contact occurs within a context of unequal power relations in which 'whiteness' continues to be privileged over 'blackness'' (Vincent 2008, 1426). This requires the recognition that the space within which contact occurs is not an empty container for social actions. Thus, relations of power and domination are 'inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life' (Soja 1989, 6 cited in Vincent 2008, 1430; see also Dixon and Durrheim 2003). Durrheim and Dixon (2001) point out the danger of ignoring the variable of 'space' when interrogating 'racial' contact. Interpreting racist exclusion as spatial exclusion only serves to naturalise these exclusions 'because of the apparent transparency, objectivity, and innocence of place' (Durrheim and Dixon 2001, 448). Spatial exclusion, as Vincent (2008) states, thus makes segregation appear natural, necessary and thereby difficult to challenge. This, coupled with the 'hegemony of whiteness' (Vincent 2008, 1437) that in many contexts remains intact, raises important questions and concerns regarding the ways in which 'contact' can overcome racism and prejudice towards a long-feared 'other'. In line with this, Soudien (2008a, 9, italics added) notes that:

> While racism, like other forms of discrimination, is based on prejudice and fear, what distinguishes it is the *ideology of white supremacy*, which serves as a rationale for the unequal relations of power that exist between people in South Africa. This is a critical, analytical distinction, as racism is often intertwined with other forms of discrimination, such as social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, language and xenophobia, and uses the latter set of prejudices to justify and reproduce itself.

The privileges of 'whiteness' are particularly intractable to deal with considering that many 'white' people do not think of themselves as 'raced' (Vincent 2008, 1439). Growing up I remember a moment when I clearly thought 'I have no culture' when compared to the traditions and practices of, for example, the amaXhosa alongside whom

I grew up. My thinking was directly linked to my being so-called 'white' and is akin to thinking 'I have no 'race''. This is aptly described by Vincent (2008, 1441) as 'the privileged lack of consciousness of their own race' that many 'white' people experience. Of course, I am now acutely aware of the power hierarchy and discourses of 'white' supremacy in which I was immersed growing up and the effects of this on my thinking and reasoning. This is supported by one of the 'race stories' that Vincent (2008, 1444/5) cites, however, in this case the voice is of someone classified as 'black':

> She always assumed that being what she was was a temporary transition period, that being black would not be her identity forever. Every night before she fell asleep, she prayed for what was of most importance to her then…- that the next morning she would wake up with soft blonde hair that moved in the wind, and eyes of a bright colour like those of the people she encountered every day….She thought all this would change with time, because what she saw every day, who she encountered all day every day, was the norm. White people are the standard, everything else was a deviation. But then, white people didn't register as white people – they were just people, human beings.

Such thoughts and feelings have serious implications for identity formation processes and feelings of self-worth. Her feelings of inferiority echo the words of Frantz Fanon (1992, 224):

> Shame. Shame and self-contempt. Nausea. When people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my colour. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my colour. Either way, I am locked into the infernal circle.

Such feelings need to be acknowledged in a society where sentiments of a united rainbow nation loom large in public discourse. What might appear as superficially friendly contact can in some instances mask deep feelings of superiority or inferiority, suspicions, fear and even hatred. As Vincent (2008, 1448) puts it: 'To regard cordial relations, the absence of overt conflict or physical confrontation as a mark of racial harmony is clearly a mistake'.

Evidently, what these studies all seem to point to what Richard Dyer (1997, 1) terms the 'imagery' of race, whereby 'race' continues to wield power over every aspect of a person's life. The 'imagery' of race can be described as follows:

> The myriad minute decisions that constitute the practices of the world are at every point informed by judgements about people's capacities and worth, judgements based on what they look like, where they come from, how they speak, even what they eat, that is racial judgements. Race is not the only factor governing these things and people of goodwill everywhere struggle to overcome the prejudices and barriers of race, but it is never not a factor, never not in play.

In South Africa, intergroup contact and relations are clearly complex and much work remains to be done in order to better understand what new normative frameworks are being constructed to govern interactions. The emergence of research on the micro-ecology of 'racial' division (see Dixon & Durrheim 2003, Dixon, Tredoux & Clack 2005) that explores 'when and why racial isolation manifests' at the 'level at which individuals actually encounter one another in situations of bodily co-presence', provides promising entryways into gaining a deeper insight into how 'race' and racialism are being reinvented post-1994 and what this might mean for identity development processes. Furthermore, these studies highlight that the 'non-racial' ideal will not be automatically achieved and therefore require both deliberate and strategic intervention and leadership from the state as well as civil society (Posel 2001b, Vincent 2008). Fundamentally, the aim of such processes should be to reconfigure and rework hegemonic practices that serve to disrupt positions of authority and power (Soudien 2004).

CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL POSITIONING OF THE STUDY

3.1 PART I: PROBLEMATIZING THE NOTION OF IDENTITY

3.1.1 Tracing the development of the study of identity

Processes of identity formation have been the focus of study across a wide range of academic disciplines including psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and philosophy. Considering the power that identity concepts have in modern society, it is hardly surprising that identity has been, and continues to be, the focus of much debate and investigation. Influenced by history, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, collective memory, personal fantasies, power apparatuses and religious revelations (Castells 2004), identity is continually being constructed, negotiated and contested in new and challenging ways. A controversial concept, it remains key to discussions of education and how to manage diversity (Vandenbroeck 1999). This is because, as Yon (2000, 1) points out, identities are everywhere and are closely tied up with who we are and what we do:

> [I]dentities made around nation, community, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexuality, and age; identities premised on popular culture and its shifting sets of representational practices; identities attached to fashion and new imagined lifestyles, to leisure and work, and to the mundane and the exotic; identities made in relation to place and displacement, to community and a to a sense of dispersal, to "roots" as well as "routes".

Shaped by both context and history, identities are challenged as societies undergo transformation (Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre 1997). An increase in diversity brings the concept of identity to the fore, as it plays a major role in the social, economic and political landscape of societies. This opens up possibilities for some, while for others it results in new 'boundaries of exclusion' (Yon 2000, 2, see also Pàmies 2011). The way in which people come to identify themselves, and be identified, has ramifications for how they are positioned in society. Weedon (2004) refers to the relational nature of identity when she writes that 'identity presupposes some degree of self-recognition on the part of the subject, often defined in relation to what one believes one is not'. Thus, identities have their 'others' according to which they mark their difference (Weedon 2004, Serra i Salamé 2001). For example, a child born and identified as 'male' or 'female', 'black' or 'white', will have very different lived experiences, heavily influenced by the context within which the child is born. There is thus a continual

interplay between 'how we have been represented and how that bears on how we represent ourselves' (Hall and Du Gay 1996, 4), which needs to be accounted for in any investigation into identity construction processes. In writing about diversity and plurality, Abdallah-Pretceille (2006, 482) notes how the field of intercultural studies has shown that 'notions of identity and culture are only definable in an inter-subjective framework, and are the product of discourses and relationships'. The concept of diversity, set within a spatial, temporal, historical, discursive as well as ideological framework, is therefore a rich and complex notion. Looking at this notion from an epistemological, sociological and ethical point of view, Essomba (2006) provides three reasons as to why notions of diversity have received more in-depth attention. Firstly, the move away from searching for 'natural essences' of a 'divine nature' towards investigating the multiple ways in which subjects differ across contexts has resulted in an increase in the desire to understand diversity rather than negate it (Essomba 2006). Secondly, the understanding of modern societies as complex, fragmented and continually trying to define themselves within an ocean of possibilities has meant that diversity has become a structural feature of social reality (Essomba 2006). Finally, Essomba observes that the notion of the citizen as having equal rights and freedom is built upon the recognition of differences. Recognising the range of factors and processes which together influence cohesiveness and fragmentation within groups (Soudien 2004) is therefore a vital component in any discussion of diversity and integration (Garcia Castaño 2011).

For many, identities can prove dangerous and result in practices of discrimination, prejudice and violence. Amin Maalouf's (1996) work shows the power that identity wields and how this concept has 'given rise to some of the most heated passions and crimes throughout history'. Introducing the notion of *'identités meurtrières'* (murderous identities), Maalouf (1996) draws our attention to how an essentialist notion of identity can give rise to violent conflicts and actions. He warns against the idea that '"deep down inside" everyone there is just one affiliation that really matters, a kind of "fundamental truth" about each individual, an "essence" determined once and for all at birth, never to change thereafter' (Maalouf 1996, 2). Such absolutist thinking clearly negates the complexity of identity, something which each person experiences as s/he attempts to reconcile her/his myriad affiliations according to 'race', gender, nationality, religious and linguistic orientation, ethnicity and so forth. Furthermore, Howarth (2002) points out, the stability of social identities and collective

representations are today increasingly threatened by processes of urbanisation, migration, globalisation and modern technologies. Thus, individuals are continually being forced to interrogate their identities and importantly, their sense of belonging. Identity, as Maalouf rightly asserts, is therefore a messy affair as the 'different aspects of identity merge, reinforce and conflict' (Howarth 2002, 152).

The way in which the concept of identity is understood varies according to the theoretical and methodological frameworks used by social scientists to analyse this notion, as well as the historical, social, political and cultural settings within which it is being interpreted (Hoffman 1998). While the psychodynamic tradition emerged with Freud's theory of identification and includes the work of psycho-historian Erik Erikson, the sociological tradition of identity theory is linked to symbolic interactionism and emerges from the pragmatic theory of the self considered by William James and George Herbert Mead (Scott and Marshall 2009). Communication and language are seen as integral to this theory of self, which holds that the self is a distinctly human capacity which allows people to reflect on their nature and the social world. In line with this school of thought, identification is a process of naming, in other words, a placing of ourselves in socially constructed categories with language holding prime of place in this process (Scott and Marshall 2009). In the work of Erving Goffman and Peter Berger, which appeared a while later, identity is understood as being 'socially bestowed, socially sustained and socially transformed' (Berger 1965, 116). In a more recent review of identity theory and research, Schwartz (2001) traces the evolution of identity as a concept. He writes that debates about questions of identity have been taking place within social science literature for over fifty years, when Erikson (1950) published his work on identity. He traces the legacy of identity from Freud's work on imitation and identification, through Erikson's psychosocial model, Marcia's identity status paradigm, and finally alternative identity models that have been emerging since 1987 (Schwartz 2001). Some of these models have been more directly influenced by the psychological realm, while others, such as the identity capital model developed by Côté (1997), are constructed from a more sociological perspective (Schwartz 2001). Erikson was himself concerned with identity on both the personal and societal level, which is affirmed by Côté who points out that in various psychological as well as sociological disciplines Erikson is credited as being an important influence of theoretical orientations and principles (Shwartz 2001).

While Erikson's writings, which are rich in clinical as well as metaphorical description, have been critiqued for a lack of theoretical precision and rigor (Schwartz 2001), his recognition of the importance of the environment to the question of identity was an important analytical move within psychology. As a result, Soudien (2007, 5) points out, 'few theorists today will talk about youth outside of the social context'. While identity is conceptualised in diverse ways within these traditions, they both challenge an essentialist understanding of identity that suggest it is 'clearly delineated, complete and constant over time' (Vandenbroeck 1999, 19). As Vandenbroeck (1999, 22) goes on to stipulate, the idea has disappeared that there is one authentic 'self' characterised by stable, distinguishable and recognisable characteristics'. This has given rise to the now widely accepted notion that the concept 'identity' is dynamic, complex and fraught with tension, especially as the world becomes more diverse and fragmented. This is supported by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (2001, vii) who write that 'Identities – if they are alive, if they are being lived – are unfinished and in process…identities never arrive in persons or in their immediate social milieu already formed'.

Camilleri (1991) has made important contributions to discussions on identity and argues that identity construction requires much effort from individuals as they continually attempt to harmonise various facets of their identities. This is particularly important in pluricultural settings where people from diverse cultural backgrounds have to co-exist (Roca i Caparà, date not specified). The way in which this is achieved is through the use of '*stratégies identitaires'* (identity strategies) (Camilleri 1990, 1991). Before considering what these strategies are, it is necessary to outline how Camilleri conceptualised the notion of identity. Succinctly summarised by Roca i Caparà (2009, 107) in four points, Camilleri (1990) believed that identity had to be conceptualised:

> …(1) d'una *perspective dinàmica,* com un process que integra les experiències que anem vivint i que anirà modelant u modificant la identitat personal. (2) Una *situació d'interacció*, amb l'entorn: família, amics, grups, societat, cultura, esdeveniments vitals. (3) Una *visió multidimensional i estructural* de la identitat. No hi ha una sola identitat, la identitat de cada persona neix de moltes identificacions. (4) Una *unitat diacrònica* d'una procés evolutiu.

Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre (1997) assert that culture normally provides equilibrium between the pragmatic and ontological needs of an individual; however, in times of rapid social change cultural discrepancies occur. Through the process of migration, for example, the preservation of a coherent identity becomes threatened as the migrant has

to adapt to a new context and a new dominant cultural and social group (Roca i Caparà 1009). This can result in conflict, and Camilleri refers to simple and complex coherence as ways in which this conflict is mitigated. This is explained in more detail by Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre (1997, 55) and is worth quoting at length:

> Serious cultural conflicts can lead to cognitive dissonance and difficulties in the construction of a coherent identity. The construction of identity is a process of reconciliation between the "sameness" of the person in time and space and the integration of new experiences, values, and representations. The term "sameness" not only pertains to physical and psychological traits, but also to the coherence of the value system, what Camilleri (1990) calls "unity of meaning". Incongruence of identity could be the result of a conflict between the pragmatic need for adaptation to a dominant culture and the "ontological" need for self-loyalty. This is what Malewska-Peyre (1978; Malewska-Peyre & Zaleska, 1980) described as "constancy of central values", based on early learning, individual experience and resistance to change.

The identity strategies, which Camilleri and Malewskay-Peyre witnessed while undertaking research on migrants and North African cultures in France, were valuable in a multicultural environment where individuals are under pressure to adapt to their social environment (Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre 1997). These cognitive strategies thus helped them preserve the congruity of their identities.

The experience of racism, xenophobia and/or various other forms of discrimination can result in a negative self-image and lead to what the authors term 'negative identity'. Individual as well as collective strategies are used to counter this and can be seen as defence mechanisms and even patterns of behaviour. An individual who feels that her/his identity is being threatened can adopt a myriad of identity strategies in order to deal with this including self-effacing behaviour, submission, guilt feelings for being what one is, or repression through negation of, for example, experiences of racism (Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre 1997). Another strategy that the authors identify is that of *assimilation*, sometimes referred to as 'passing', whereby an individual attempts to resemble the dominant culture both physically and culturally Adopting this strategy comes at a high price as it more often than not involves mental suppression or disowning all or part of their culture. Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre (1997) assert that the strategy of opposition called *valorization* – accepting or increasing the value of one's differences – is most successful to avoid disparagement. Collective strategies include constructing identities based on equality and human rights rather than restricting notions of 'nation'. Exactly which strategies are adopted depends on both individual and social factors and can include situations of great cultural distance, social

exclusion and discrimination, rapid social change, as well as a threat to personal or national identity (Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre 1997, Pàmies 2011).

3.1.2   Ideology, discourse and identity: A poststructuralist perspective

The work outlined above extends and expands both theoretical and empirical understandings of identity, however, as Schwartz (2001) notes, future identity research needs to explore and augment current work investigating the effects of social-cultural contexts on personal and social identity. To address this requires a critical engagement with postcolonial, poststructuralist and feminist theory that has generated 'new clusters of knowledge', thus opening up the status of identity to 'spatial and temporal mutability, plurality and fragmentation, social and psychic manifestation, and the bounded politics of inclusion and exclusion' (Nayak and Kehily 2006, 460). This moves the discussion away from notions such as 'individual identity' and 'autonomous self' which, as O'Loughlin (2001, 49) points out, are highly problematic as they 'are premised on the assumption that we can separate ourselves from the world and define ourselves independently of it'. Poststructuralist thinking, however, forcefully emphasises the 'constitutive or deeply formative role of language and representation in the making of identity' (Scott and Marshall 2009, 331). Sarup (1993) points out that the preferred term for the person in poststructuralist thinking is 'subject', which signals a decisive move away from humanist conceptions of identity and thereby helps us to conceive of human reality as a construction, as a product of signifying activities which are both culturally specific and generally unconscious. The category of the subject thus calls into question the notion of the self synonymous with consciousness; it 'decentres' consciousness.

This line of thinking serves to further challenge essentialist notions of identity, which maintain that 'autonomy' and 'agency' are central to the identity formation project. According to this approach, children must achieve both a sense of themselves as having 'agency' - individuals making choices about what they do and assuming responsibility for these choices – as well as ensuring that these choices become recognised as 'rational'. Davies (2003, 9b) interprets 'rational' as 'following the principles of decision making acceptable to the group and inside the range of possibilities understood by the group as possibilities'. If identity is understood thus, the way choices are conditioned by prevailing discursive practices are not fore grounded. This is in line with more conventional psychological theories that postulate that an

essential self emerges from intrapsychic processes or, at best, is shaped within very limited caregiver and familial contexts, thus avoiding the complexity of human subjectivity (O'Loughlin 2001). To take account of the complexity of identity requires conceptualising human subjectivity 'as inherently situated and constantly in the process of becoming', thereby acknowledging that 'we constantly name ourselves through insertion into, identification – or possible disidentification – with, and performance of prevailing cultural practices and ideologies' (O´Loughlin 2001, 57). It is therefore imperative that the discursive threads through which subjects experience themselves and others are made visible and that the possibility of agency to the subject is opened up (Davies 2003a,b).

Following poststructuralist theory, which has its roots in Freud, Marx and Foucault (Davies 2003b), in this thesis identity formation is interrogated by looking at the 'constitutive force of social structures and of language as well as the individual person (or subject) and see[ing] each of these in their social and historical context' (Davies 2003b, xx). According to Belsey (2002, 5), poststructuralism is concerned with 'the relationship between human beings, the world, and the practice of making and reproducing meanings'. Language and its function in knowledge production and cultural change are examined by poststructuralists concerned with interrogating traditional accounts of what it is possible to know and what it means to be a human being (Belsey 2002). It is clear that language and its 'symbolic analogues' is so vital to poststructuralists as it is one of the most constitutive elements in our social relations, our thought processes, as well as out understanding of who and what we are (Belsey 2002). Belsey (2002, 7) provides the following example of how, within the poststructuralist paradigm, language comes to take on the meaning that it does:

> Poststructuralism proposes that the distinctions we make are not necessarily given by the world around us, but are instead produced by the symbolizing systems we learn. How else would we know the difference between pixies and gnomes, or March Hares and talking eggs like Humpty Dumpty, come to that? But we learn our native tongue at such an early age that it seems transparent, a window onto the world of things, even if some of those things are in practice imaginary, no more than ideas of things, derived from children's stories.

In this framework the individual subject is not seen as fixed, but constantly in process, being constituted and reconstituted through the discursive practices to which they have access in their everyday lives (Davies 2003b). This ties in with Hall's (2000, 17) use of the concept of identity in a 'strategic and positional' capacity:

> It accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation.

The term 'discourse' is employed in the Foucauldian sense as 'regimens that both shape and are shaped by thought and action', are fluid and changeable, and provide a 'working interpretive space for individuals and groups' (Soudien 2001, 312). Yon (2000) states that subjectivity is achieved through both *talk* and *practice,* which alludes firstly, to the close relationship between the various discourses and representations of identities and secondly, how identities are both made and performed. Identities are thus constructed within, and not outside of, discourse and are 'produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices by specific enunciative strategies' (Hall 2000, 17).

Poststructuralist theories work against an understanding of the world as a simple and unified totality, labouring instead to interrogate and deconstruct the 'profusion of entangled events' (Foucault 1984) which constitute it. In line with Davies (2003b, 15) this conceptual paradigm serves as a means of 'dislocating the press of more usual discourse, a way of unravelling old realities/perceptions and thus making way for new ones'. Questioning knowledge and power within a particular context is integral to analysing the processes by which an individual comes to assume a subject position. This power is evident in the marking of difference and exclusion, through which identity is constructed. Drawing from the writings of Derrida (1981), Laclau (1990) and Butler (1993), Hall (2000, 17) clarifies this idea when he states that:

> This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called it's *constitutive outside* that the 'positive' meaning of any term – and thus its 'identity' – can be constructed.

The notions of ideology as well as discourse play an integral part in providing answers to the questions posed by poststructuralists with regard to the production and sustaining of knowledge and power within a specific context. The force of ideology is stressed by Leonardo (2002, italics in original) who maintains that subjectivity is an *effect* of ideology. Following Althusser (2005, 233-4), ideology is neither false nor true, but a necessary structure realised in discourse:

> Ideology, then, is the expression of the relation between men [sic] and their 'world', that is, the (overdetermined) unity of the real relation and the imaginary relation between them and their real conditions of existence.

The need to critique ideology, discourse, power, knowledge and 'truth' are therefore central components of the work of poststructuralists. As Keohane (2002 cited in MacNaughton 2005, 12) states, 'Poststructuralist perspectives on knowledge push you to contest existing relations of power and to refuse to 'naturalize' them'. This refusal to naturalise is the first step towards challenging the existing order of things and relations of power. Nothing is 'just how it is' or 'natural', as MacNaughton (2005, 22) explains:

> Over time, the social sciences have categorised people by age, by sanity, by gender, by ability, by 'race', by ethnicity, etc. In each category, they have specified normal ways to look, feel and think about gender, 'race', class, ability, age and sexuality…Such categories and norms matter because we use them as we create and maintain social relationships (e.g. families and friendships) and as we organise institutions (e.g. early childhood services, schools, hospitals, clinics, etc.).

Interrogating how subjectivities are constructed through such categorisations, and the ideological and discursive substrate within which these categories are embedded, is imperative if we are to gain a more in-depth understanding of how social relations and institutions are organised and normalised, and how these might be altered to ensure equality and inclusion in the education system and broader society. The implications of this for young children cannot be underestimated as Vandenbroeck (1999) notes that children from an early age begin to develop a sense of who they are as well as what their relationship is to other people. The move that children make at this stage of their life from the private domain of family life to the public domain of the preschool means that they will inevitably come into contact with diverse subject positions and ways of being that support or challenge that which they identify with. Davies (1999, 53), whose research with children has been deeply influenced by a poststructuralist paradigm, asserts that children can, and should, 'be given access to an understanding of the constitutive force of language' as well as the 'possibility of refusing the old subject positions of old discourses'. Children are not exempt from participating in the 'creative constitution of new discourses that open up new possibilities, that encourage the multiplicity that comes so easily to them, and that adults generally work so hard to constrain' (Davies 2000, 53). As will be shown in part three of this chapter, children are too often marginalised in questions which are of direct concern to their lives.

3.1.3   Interrogating 'raced' identities

The data presented in this thesis is framed within a predominantly poststructuralist paradigm as it provides the necessary tools to interrogate a multiplicity of subject positions within competing, and at times contradictory, discourses. Stated otherwise, this approach recognises that the meanings of 'race' are dynamically constituted through social discourse as well as the subjective investment of individuals (Gunaratnman 2003, see also Hall 1996). Gunaratnman (2003) highlights that how people *talk* about themselves is fundamental to the project of examining the ways in which 'race' categories are produced and have meaning in a subject's life. While 'race' and its categories are understood to be discursive formations whereby differences are accorded social significance, as social researchers studying 'race' it is the knowledge that 'such ideas carry with them material consequences for those who are included within, or excluded from, them' (Bulmer and Solomos 1999, 5) that is of central importance.

While data collection methods such as interviews and participant observation are useful in capturing instances and processes of 'race-making', theoretical tools are required in order to make sense of the data. Poststructuralist approaches are useful here in terms of both 'their theoretical assumptions on the nature of order and their practical applicability for the analysis of empirical material' (Leonard 2010, 44/45). This is an important analytical move and ensures that data are not interpreted through the more theoretically limited psychosocial models of 'racial' identity development. The usefulness of adopting a poststructuralist approach in studies of identity concepts such as 'race' is expressed by Leonard (2010, 45):

> Poststructuralism recognizes experience as mediated by the continual negotiation of personal, interactional and social dynamics. As such our personal experiences of, for example, race, are only ever partial, as they are continually ongoing, constructed in and through the diverse contexts of our lives. These fragmented and sometimes even contradictory experiences challenge essentialist or fixed understandings of the relationships between our identities and social categories such as race and gender.

While I speak specifically about 'race' and identity, it must be stressed that the notion of 'race' is not produced in terms of unitary, hermetically sealed, homogenous categories of difference (Gunaratnman 2003), but rather 'interpenetrates *all* contemporary social difference' (Leonard 2010, 46). Other identity categories including

gender, sexuality, class or age are also imbued with 'racialised' meanings, which challenges any understanding of the category of 'race' as a discrete, coherent and stable concept (Leonard 2010). According to Gilroy (2000), the idea of 'racialized' difference is relatively new. It has, nevertheless, come to exert a strong influence on how individuals and communities see themselves as well the world around them.

Thus far I have shown that as societies have become increasingly diverse, various theoretical frameworks have been developed to address the dynamic and variable experiences of people and the processes through which they engage with one another. Education systems have been directly influenced by these changing circumstances and learners and educators are increasingly required to interact with a range of individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Authors working in anthropology, and more specifically the subfield known as the anthropology of education, have been instrumental in conceptualising and empirically investigating the nature of these shifting relations and the political, economic, social and cultural factors that come to have a bearing on them (see Franzé 2007). Fredrik Barth's seminal text *Ethnic groups and boundaries* (1969) has been instrumental in promoting the notion of ethnicity as the social organisation of cultural differences (Jenkins 1999). Most notably, his work supports the notion that ethnic identity 'involves the active maintenance of cultural boundaries in the process of social interaction, rather than a passive reflection of cultural norms' (Jones 1999). Taking up Barth's work within the realm of education, McDermott and Gospodinoff (1981), Erickson (1987) and Alba (2005) address interethnic relations and how they are constructed. While these authors do not necessarily fall within the poststructuralist paradigm, their contributions to discussions of identity and 'racial' and ethnic relations provide important insights for the analysis of the data presented in this thesis as they too work against cultural deficit views promoted in conventional educational research, including professional education and child development research. This problematic deficit view persists in current educational practice with the strong belief that 'cultural "deficits" need to be made up for by remedial instruction in "mainstream" ways of acting, believing and desiring' (Erickson 2011, 30).

I do not intend to comprehensively address the way in which ethnicity has been taken up in anthropological work, as this has already been carried out by other authors (see Cohen 1978; Eriksen 1993; Banks 1995). However, to move this discussion forward it is necessary to outline the work and concepts that challenge a deficit model

of culture and which are of direct relevance to the present study, especially within the realm of intercultural relations in an educational setting.

3.1.3.1 Ethnic-cultural boundaries and borders: Working along the fault line

Analysing ethnic-cultural relations within an anthropological framework requires that one address the notion of 'culture' from the outset, as it 'refers both to patterning in human activity and to the beliefs and standards of judgement by which social action has meaning for social actors' (Erickson 2011, 25). Succinctly put, culture is 'the organization of people's everyday interactions in concrete contexts' (Pollock 2008, 369). Ethnic relations, as Barth (1969) asserted, is, however, more about 'politics' than it is about 'culture'. In other words, Barth maintained that an ethnic group is an entity defined by shared political interests and not necessarily an entity whose members necessarily had cultural practices in common (Erickson 2011). Thus, one cannot look only to cultural content in order to understand ethnic identifications, rather, one needs to focus on the mechanisms of selective cultural inscriptions that define the borders between one ethnic group and another and that establish the rules and patterns of interaction between the in-group and the out-group (Ballestin 2007), or 'us' and 'them' (Erickson 2011). Relations of power are fundamental to the relationships established between ethnic groups, and, as is so clearly epitomised by the South African society, who is considered a *minority* is not always dependent on the number of members pertaining to that group but rather '*una situació en què algun dels trets culturals específics – reals o atribuïts – és utlilizat per forçar-lo a ocupar posicions segregades i subordinades en les relacions de poder*' (Carrasco 2001 cited in Ballestin 2007, 25). Barth's work on ethnic groups and boundaries increased awareness of the concept of culture as something 'changing, variable' and a 'contingent property of interpersonal transactions, rather than an entity 'above' the fray of daily life and somehow producing behaviour' (Jenkins 1999, 88). Significantly, in his later work, Barth (1994) links his earlier theorising with some aspects of the postmodern constructionist view of culture.

Taking up Barth's pioneering insight of social boundaries as essential to ethnic[24] phenomena (Alba 2005) and applying it within the anthropology of education,

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[24] Various attempts have been made to distinguish between 'race' and ethnicity in literature. According to Bulmer and Solomos (1999), the way this has been done varies in the United States (US) and Britain. In the US, these attempts involve distinguishing between 'race' and ethnicity as while 'race' is generally

McDermott and Gospodinoff (1981) note that cultural differences can be treated more or less neutrally as a 'boundary', or non-neutrally as a 'border'. The distinction between the two is described as follows by Erickson (2011, 29):

> When culture difference is treated as a boundary, there is a difference that exists between alternative customary ways of acting, but this difference does not disrupt the conduct of everyday affairs. When culture difference is treated as a border, the conduct of everyday affairs is disrupted. Persons who differ culturally are treated as having differing rights and obligations, just as they are treated at a political border between the two countries.

Using the border between Mexico and the United States as an analogy to illustrate this difference, Erickson notes that while the ability to speak Spanish is an advantage on one side of the border, it can in certain instances be seen as a liability on the other side. Thus, as both McDermott and Barth note, rather than *difference* itself being problematic, it is the 'political loading and symbolism of the difference' – in other words, differing power or interests among groups - that results in conflict (Erickson 2011, 29). These cultural differences demarcate lines of political difference, and when this involves domination or the exercising of power, boundaries can be transformed into borders (Erickson 2001, 39). The transformation of *cultural boundaries* into *cultural borders* depends on how the subjects are allowed to navigate through cultural differences (Erickson 1987). The ways in which differences are taken up politically can be termed *cultural boundary or border work* (Erickson 1987). These concepts become relevant in an educational context where cultural boundaries are constructed as cultural borders as a result of the way in which the school, drawing from a range of options, problematises diversity, which is, in turn, directly influenced by the representations of diversity in mainstream society. While difference does not necessarily give rise to conflict, acting instead as a potential 'resource for conflict', when a cultural border becomes established over a long period of time differences become increasingly extreme on either side (Erickson 2001, 41).

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associated with physical differences – most often referring to divisions between 'black' and 'white' – ethnicity is generally used to refer to differences among Americans of Asian and European descent. In British literature the general trend is to use the two terms interchangeably (Bulmer and Solomos 1999). The diverse political histories of the two societies are most likely the reason as to how these terms are currently used, however, there seems to be an increasing tendency to conflate these concepts into a theoretical principle through the invocation of the concept of 'racialisation', thus seeking 'to identify the processes by which ethnic and other differences are naturalised' (Bulmer and Solomos 1999, 22).

3.1.3.2 Changing boundaries

Drawing on this influential work on social boundaries, Alba (2005) introduces the concepts of *blurred* and *bright* boundaries, which takes forward important discussions regarding the nature and the processes that affect these boundaries. While his work centres on the relatively recent influx of international migrants in a host of countries, it has relevance for this study located in South Africa, as here too boundaries and borders are being drastically challenged and redefined. Linking boundaries with processes of assimilation and exclusion, Alba (2005, 21-22) notes that what takes place in various contexts is crucially dependent on the precise nature of the ethnic boundary:

> Some boundaries are 'bright' – the distinction involved is unambiguous, so that individuals know at all times which side of the boundary they are on. Others are 'blurry', involving zones of self-presentation and social representation that allow for ambiguous locations with respect to the boundary. The nature of the minority-majority boundary depends on the way in which it has been institutionalized in different domains, some of them correlated with an ethnic distinction rather than constitutive of the distinction itself. In turn, the nature of the boundary affects fundamentally the processes by which individuals gain access to the opportunities afforded the majority.

In the past, South African's ascribing to different ethnic or 'racial' groups were well aware of the 'bright' boundary that separated the political minority from the majority. Institutionalised discrimination ensured that these borders were clearly delineated and policed, although not always adhered to, especially in the private domain, while post-apartheid, these boundaries have been shifting and blurring and are continually being crossed in both productive and dangerous ways. However, in some instances they remain firmly entrenched. This point was made evident to me when, while living in a foreign country I was told by a Spanish friend that he had met another South African woman who was residing in the same town as us. He had informed this woman that he knew me (a South African) suggesting that we meet up. This 'black' African woman quickly stated that she was not interested in meeting a 'white' South African. My friend had not mentioned my 'racial' classification and upon hearing this said that I was of 'mixed' heritage (as I consider myself to be). She then expressed an interest in meeting me. Numerous things make this incident thought provoking, not least of which is the very question of ethnic and 'racial' boundaries and borders and how they come to be expressed and experienced in everyday life. The border work in which she was engaged involved avoiding shifting that boundary in any way, shape or form, and she was thus constructing a 'bright' 'race' boundary resulting in practices of exclusion. Alba (2005)

puts it succinctly when he notes that ethnicity, (and for the purposes here, 'race'), is a distinction made by individuals in their everyday lives that come to shapes their actions and mental orientations towards others. Furthermore, it is 'typically embedded in a variety of social and cultural differences between groups that give an ethnic boundary concrete significance' (Alba 2005, 22). While this incident is by no means representative of all current 'race' relations in South African, it does draw attention to one way in which integration might be challenged and inhibited on the personal level, and how an interrogation of boundary processes can greatly augment our knowledge of how these processes work and the consequences thereof.

Determining whether or nor a boundary can be blurred requires an investigation into the way it has been institutionalized, in other words, the 'normative patterns that govern the way that the boundary is manifested to social actors', since these patterns 'determine the social distance between the majority and minority group and the difficulties associated with bridging it' (Alba 2005, 26). These patterns include the domains of power, status, religion, language, 'race' and so forth, which are engaged with regularly in everyday lives (Alba 2005). Thus, as the author goes on to argue, more attention needs to be paid to understanding that boundaries are not all the same (with greater or lesser permeability), that they are constructed from cultural, legal and institutional materials that have been borne out of a particular society's history, and finally, that they are complex and manifest differently in diverse contexts. It follows, therefore, that the context within which identities are constructed (such as that of the school) is intricately linked to the dynamic, heterogeneous and multiple forms that identities assume (Pàmies 2011). In a comparative study of Moroccan and Mexican students in both primary and secondary schools situated in Catalonia, Spain and California, United States of America respectively, Carrasco, Pàmies and Ponferrada (2011) draw attention to how practices of stratification in schools serve to reinforce and complicate, as well as obscure and naturalise, social stratification processes. Through the presentation of numerous case studies carried out in both countries the authors show how the cultural markers of religion (Islam) and language (Spanish) serve as symbols of differences between 'us' and 'them', and are thus viewed as visible barriers that permit the continued focus on the specific characteristics of students. However, their work also shows how the institution of the school is directly implicated in constructing barriers that remain largely invisible and which serve to perpetuate inequality and experiences of failure among the students.

As illustrated above by my experience with a fellow South African, it is not hard to see that 'race' can function as a 'bright' boundary, and nor is it difficult to understand why given the socio-historical construction of group relations in this context. The danger of 'race' as a 'bright' boundary lies in the fact that for subjects with certain phenotypes this boundary then becomes practically uncrossable (Alba 2005). Phenotypical differences have become 'racial' categories that remain salient in many societies around the world and are intricately linked to experiences of prejudice and exclusion or privilege and inclusion. Dominant discourses of difference play an important role in determining the boundary of 'race' and whether it might be constituted as blurred or bright, and therefore structural features of the society need to be taken into account when analysing processes of social boundaries.

3.1.3.3 A caveat regarding the concept of ethnic and 'racial' groups

Any discussion of 'racial' groups requires an interrogation of what a 'groups' really are and how they function. Brubaker (2002, 164) challenges what he terms 'common sense groupism', which he delineates as:

> [T]he tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogenous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis.

In line with this, various theories of social analysis stress that 'groups' are not only socially constructed, but are contingent and fluctuating. Yet, while certain concepts, such as class, have been subjected to analyses which challenge notions of 'groupism', this has not been the case with ethnic groups, which are still 'understood as entities and cast as actors' (Brubaker 2002, 165). This thinking, while commonly found in research data, should not, as Brubaker (2002) argues, inform the *analyses* of this data. This distinction is highly relevant in the present study whereby one of the aims is to deconstruct common-sense thinking about 'race', which risks essentialising and naturalising 'racial' categories (Hirschfeld 1996). As Gil-White (1999, 803) puts it, researchers need to consider themselves as 'analysts *of* naturalizers' and not as 'analytic naturalizers'. Thus, instead of reifying these 'racial' groups it is necessary to think of them in terms of 'practical categories, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive

frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects and contingent events' (Brubaker 2002, 167).

As will be discussed in detail further on in this chapter, thinking about notions of ethnic and 'racial' groups in this way takes into account the political, social, cultural as well as psychological processes that influence the construction of such categories. The term *groupness* – as variable and contingent - as suggested by Brubaker (2002), is usefully employed in this analysis. Furthermore, the terms 'groups' and 'categories' must not be used interchangeably as it is only by maintaining a clear distinction between the two that we can begin to investigate how people and organisations *do things* with categories, such as through using them to identity or classify oneself, or others, or limit access to resources or domains of activity (Brubaker 2002, 169). This can be studied from above or below as Brubaker (2002, 168) clearly articulates:

> From above, we can focus on the ways in which categories are proposed, propagated, imposed, institutionalized, discursively articulated, organizationally entrenched and generally embedded in multifarious forms of 'governmentality' (Noiriel 1991; Slezkine 1994; Brubaker 1994; Torpey 2000; Martin 2001). From below, we can study the 'micropolitics' of categories, the ways in which the categorized appropriate, internalize, subvert, evade or transform the categories that are imposed on them (Domínguez 1986).

Thus, focusing on identity categories allows researchers to delve into how individuals make sense of the world around them without references to groups – be they ethnic, 'racial' or national (amongst many others), unless the aim is to understand the dynamics of group-making as a social, cultural and political project (Brubaker 2002). Substituting Brubaker's (2002) writing on ethnicity with the category of 'race', it becomes evident that as one addresses the *unit* of analysis – 'racial' groups – one ends up questioning the *domain* of analysis – namely, 'race' itself.

3.1.4 Troubling identity formation processes: Positioning the subject using a Butlerian framework

Working with influential theories that deconstruct and destabilize essentialist, normative and 'natural' assumptions regarding identity categories, in the following section I introduce and discuss key concepts which are usefully employed in the interrogation of 'raced' identities. Work by theorists including Lacan, Althusser, Foucault and Butler has given rise to an understanding of the multiplicity and complexity of subject

positions (Baxen 2006). The philosophical-political writing of Judith Butler has been significantly influential in this regard, as she seeks to challenge the ontological status of identity itself (Nayak and Kehily 2006), showing how the process of subject formation must be analysed within specific historical and discursive contexts. Getting to grips with the thought-provoking work of Butler has been a challenging experience, and what is offered here is but one interpretation of her thinking. The absence of 'answers' and/or resolution in her own work is, as it was for Foucault, part of her political project. This approach has, however, raised many questions that need to be urgently considered by anyone interested in deconstructing and destabilizing normative identity categories. The aim is clearly not to provide new categories in the place of old ones, but rather to give weight to the theorization of these categories as unfixed and constructed.

Butler has undertaken a thorough analysis of gender construction and in so doing proposes a new theory of subjectivity (Hey 2006). While her work has received both praise and criticism from gender scholars, feminists as well as gay and lesbian activists (Nayak and Kehily 2006), Butler's writing has provided new spaces to consider how subjectivities are in a continual process of becoming, showing the importance of this practice in ensuring that what is possible is not foreclosed by 'certain habitual and violent assumptions' (Butler 1999, viii). In order to live a nonviolent, ethical relation with 'otherness' requires the transcendence of simple, simplistic identity categories, which in turn requires continually challenging 'the frames of reference within which people speak, think, and live subject categories' (Salih with Butler 2004, 2). Butler's project can thus be described as 'troubling' subject formation in an attempt to show that 'identity is a contingent construction which assumes multiple forms even as it presents itself as singular and stable' (Salih 2004, 2). In this thesis, subject formation is therefore understood as *process* and *becoming*. It is clear, as Salih (2002) points out, that these ideas are crucial to understanding the theories put forward by Butler, in which she takes as a starting point the Hegelian notion of dialectic. By entering into a Hegelian dialectical engagement with categories by which the subject is described and constituted, Butler investigates *why* the subject is currently configured as it is and suggests that alternative modes of description may be made available within existing power structures (Salih 2002). Such identity categories include 'gay', 'straight', 'bisexual', 'black', 'white', as well as notions such as 'truth', 'right' and 'norm' (Salih 2002).

While Butler's writings on the formation of the subject have predominantly focused on rethinking gender, her texts have stimulated important debates on other

concerns in identity politics, including with regards to the category 'race'. It is through the deconstruction of identity categories, such as 'race', gender, class and so forth, that one can begin to question what ontological and epistemological premises support the formation of intelligible types of subjects and what regulatory forces are employed to ensure that they are maintained as such. If, for example, gender is viewed as a 'becoming', and not as a pre-discursive ontological 'state' of being that one simply 'is' (Salih 2002), questions such as 'who and what processes determine these constructions?' and 'how might such constructions work or fail?' need to be addressed. Taking this forward, Butler's work poses other vital questions including: Whom do I oppress by constructing a coherent identity for myself and 'doing' my identity? What happens if our identities 'fail' and might such failures provide opportunities for subversive *re*constructions of identity? How can we tell what is subversive and what merely consolidates power? What degree of choice do we have about how we 'do' our identities?

For Butler, it is the substantive appearance of gender that needs to be deconstructed in order to make visible its constitutive acts which are set within the compulsory frames instituted by the various forces that 'police the social appearance of gender' (Butler 1990, 45). Butler's genealogical investigation into the constitution of the subject shows sex and gender as *effects* rather than the *cause* of institutions, discourses as well as practices, confirming that it is these very institutions, discourses and practices, which create the subject by determining its sex or gender, and not vice versa (Salih 2002). The same could be said for the identity category 'race', whereby 'race' is discursively produced with its *effects* producing the subject. Identity categories are constructed within a discursive terrain which is maintained by powerful 'racialised' ideologies. However, as Butler points out, these dominant ideological matrixes need to be continually restated and affirmed in order to ensure that identity categories continue to appear 'stable' and 'natural'. In other words, the fiction of these normative hegemonies need to be constantly policed to ensure compliance and most importantly, to ensure that they are kept invisible. While at first glance it might seem plausible to stop this repetition as a means of upsetting the regulatory powers, Butler advocates in her earlier work that it is possible to subvert and displace the law by working within the dominant matrix of power (Butler 1990). She notes that it is not possible, nor necessarily a positive thing, to prevent the constant repetition by power regimes of their logic, their metaphysic and there naturalized ontologies, as it is through this practice of

repetition (as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities) that subversive repetition might take place, thereby calling into question the regulatory question of identity itself (Butler 1990).

It must be noted that deconstructing the subject does not amount to its destruction (Salih 2004). Butler confirms this in *Bodies That Matter* where she writes that this deconstruction seeks to interrogate the conditions of the subjects emergence and operation, and not to do away with the subject (Butler 1993). By providing a corollary to Nietzsche's argument against the existence of a 'doer' behind the deed, Butler (1990: 34) postulates that:

> There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results.

The (mis)taking of ourselves as authors is what Althusser (1971) refers to as the process of interpellation. Althusser explains how ideology works in society through the use of what he termed 'ideological State apparatus' and the way in which it *interpellates* individuals, interpellation being the 'mechanisms by which cultural categories and taxonomies structure the subjectivity of individuals' (O´Loughlin 2001, 58). The ideological State apparatus to which Althusser refers can be understood as 'representations of ideas, outlooks and beliefs that are imaginary, or 'distortions' of a scientifically accessible 'real'' (Youdell 2006b, 516). These ideas, which are then translated into actions as well as social practices, come to give ideology a material existence (Youdell 2006b), with one of the key ideological sites being that of the 'school'. For Althusser, it is the police who initiate the call or address by which the subject becomes socially constituted (Butler 1993). The use of the police is twofold as not only do they represent the law, but also serve to bind the law to the one being hailed (Butler 1993). It is only when the social subject has been reprimanded, taking into account that the hailing of the 'one' establishes a given practice as a trespass, that the subject can be formed. As Butler (1993: 121) notes:

> The reprimand does not merely repress or control the subject, but forms a crucial part of the juridical and social *formation* of the subject. The call is formative, if not *per*formative, precisely because it initiates the individual into the subjected status of the subject.

Through being reprimanded the subject receives recognition together with the attainment of a certain order of social existence, in other words, the subject thus moves from an impossible being to the discursive or social domain of the subject (Butler 1993).

It is in this way that we *learn* categories of people and who is excluded as well as included in these (for example, male/female, father/daughter) (Davies 2000). To avoid being classified as an 'impossible being' requires that:

> We learn how to participate in the discursive practices that give meaning to those categories, including the storylines in which various subject positions are elaborated. We learn, more importantly, how to position ourselves in terms of those categories and storylines as though we, in fact, are in one category rather than another (e.g. as a girl and not a boy, or as a 'good' girl and not a 'bad' girl). Finally, we come to see ourselves as having those characteristics that locate us in these different categories, as belonging in the world in certain ways and thus seeing it accordingly. Through this latter process, we become emotionally committed to our category memberships and experience our belonging and not belonging in moral terms (Davies 2000, 44).

However, interpellation is an address that regularly misses its mark, as it requires the recognition of an authority at the same time that it confers identity through successfully compelling that recognition (Salih 2002). It is therefore possible for the law to be refused, and furthermore, ruptured and forced into a rearticulation that calls into question the force of its operation (Butler 1993). This rupturing constitutes a failure of the performative, as interpellation is no longer a simple matter. The discursive demand is now seen as creating more than it ever meant to, 'signifying in excess of any intended referent' (Butler 1993, 122). There is an interesting ambivalence created here, whereby the interpellating calls function not only as violating, but also enabling – what Spivak has come to call 'an enabling violation' (Butler 1993, 122). The agency of the subject being 'hailed' is thus seen in that the one who opposes construction is in effect always drawing from that construction as a means of articulating its opposition. Succinctly put, Butler (1993, 122-3) claims that:

> [T]he "I" draws what is called its "agency" in part through being implicated in the very relations of power that it seeks to oppose. To be *implicated* in the relations of power, indeed, enabled by the relations of power that the "I" opposes is not, as a consequence, to be reducible to their existing forms.

The agency which allows for resignification to take place, thereby challenging the power of the discursive command, exists, which adds weight to Butler's claim that the person, the author, has not been lost in her theoretical project of performativity. The subject is an agent precisely becasue s/he is not inevitably bound to respond to the names by which s/he may be addressed (Salih 2004). Agency begins, therefore, 'where sovereignty wanes (or is given up) and it always resides within a law that is multiple, myriad and self-proliferating' (Salih 2004, 10). This is in line with what Davies (1999)

identifies as the 'dual aspect of subjectification', namely, that a subject is simultaneously constituted through discourse, as well as one who can go beyond those processes. Davies is therefore in agreement with Butler (1995, 46) who writes that:

> [T]o claim that the subject is constituted is not to claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition for its agency. For what is it that enables a purposive and significant reconfiguration of cultural and political relations, if not a relation that can be turned against itself, reworked and resisted?

While much feminist thought assumes that there is a 'doer' behind the deed, in other words, an agent which can exercise agency and thereby initiate a transformation of relations of domination within society, Butler (1990) rejects this as she proceeds to show that there can be nothing 'before', 'outside' or 'beyond' power. There is no 'original' of which something can be deemed a 'copy': Thus, 'the parodic repetition of "the original"…reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original' (Butler 1990).

3.1.4.1 Butler's theory of performativity

Questioning the interplay between social construction and biological essence, Butler's work develops the concept of performativity, which, as Morison (2011) notes, has been highly influential. Butler's work traces 'the process by which we become subjects when we assume the sexed/gendered/ 'raced' identities which are constructed for us (and to a certain extent by us) within existing power structures' (Salih 2002, 2). Through engaging with Althusser's notion of subjection and Foucault's notion of subjectivation, Butler is able to offer important insights regarding the processes through which the subject is performatively constituted as well as the subject's potential to act willfully (Youdell 2006b). For Butler, as introduced in her work *Gender Trouble* (1990, xv):

> [P]erformativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.

Thus, this concept is described as 'the idea that identity does not prefigure action but is constituted through action, discourses or the words we speak and behave' and can be considered a 'new theory of subjectivity' (Coffey, Connolly, Nayak and Reay 2006, 422), whereby the concept of gender is seen as a reiterated social performance rather

than an expression of a prior reality (Salih 2002). Butler therefore challenges the idea that gender can be read as either essence or socialisation, stressing that it is the 'consequence of the performative (i.e. recurring) 'citations' of gender thought as actions' (Hey 2006, 439). Extending Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) claim that 'one is not born but rather becomes a woman', these reiterations, called 'citations' in Butler's later work, are instituted through the stylization of the body and can therefore be understood as 'the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self' (Butler 1988, 519). A key contribution by Butler has been to 'challenge conventional social constructionist ideas and thinking on subjectivity', by suggesting that 'identity is a type of 'doing' that is only made manifest at the point of action' (Nayak and Kehily 2006, 459). According to Butler (1993, 107):

> Discursive performativity appears to produce that which it names, to enact its own referent, to name and to do, to name and to make…a performative functions to produce that which it declares.

Butler therefore argues that 'the subject must be performatively constituted in order to make sense *as* a subject' (Youdell 2006b, 517). Butler's theory of performativity hinges on the critical poststructuralist notion that the subject is an *effect*, rather than a *cause*, of discourse and serves to conceptualise what Hey (2006, 439) calls 'the paradox of identity as apparently fixed but inherently unstable'. Thus, for Butler, the notion of gender is an illusion which is sustained by the continual replication of norms that, imperatively, materialise that which they govern (Hey 2006). As a means of elucidating her thinking, Butler draws on linguistic notions of performativity including J.L Austin's speech act theory and Derrida's deconstruction thereof (Morison 2011). For Butler, 'within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names' (Butler 1993, 13). An example of perfomativity as citationality is the speech act that actually *does* what it says, such as 'I now pronounce you husband and wife' (Felluga 2011). Here, a person with authority changes the status of a couple through making this statement. Thus 'a speech act can produce that which it names, however, only by reference to the law (or accepted norm, code, or contract, which is cited or repeated (and thus performed) in the pronouncement' (Felluga 2011, no page number specified).

Hegemonic social conventions and ideologies come to have a powerful effect on shaping who we are and how we exist in our worlds. This is achieved through normalising certain practices as 'good' and 'acceptable', while others are deemed as undesirable. In other words, while normative matrixes are produced and reproduced around the principle of inclusion/exclusion, it figures that in order for there to be an 'insider', in other words those who abide by the norms of, for example, heterosexuality, there must also be an 'outsider', which itself needs to be delineated. This thinking has important implications for thinking through how identities, and more precisely, how bodies and psyches, come to be 'raced'. Miscegenation is one example of how foreclosure[25] acts to determine what is considered viable and clearly stipulates what will be rendered as beyond logical possibility. In this case, the 'white' subject comes to realise that her/his very viability as a subject stands to be undone should s/he come to relate to closely to a 'black' person. In other words, 'it's when you suddenly realize that a white subject assumes that its whiteness is absolutely essential to its capacity to be a subject at all'. (Butler in Salih 2004, 333). Social organization under apartheid was one way in which the 'fiction of those subjects' (Butler in Salih 2004) were kept intact. This use of foreclosure to make apparent how power establishes what is to be considered intelligible, and what *not,* brings into play the psychoanalytical aspects of thinking around subject formation. Foreclosure operates, therefore, not only byexcluding certain identity categories, but by erasing them altogether. If, for example, the social world of a 'white' person is built on notions of white supremacy, the idea of entering into a relationship with someone classified 'black' would be unthinkable. The same applies to a homophobic environment whereby presenting oneself as gay or lesbian would be considered unimaginable; as going against the 'natural' order of things (in other words, the heterosexual order). Butler temporalizes foreclosure in order to reiterate that while we are socially constituted in a limited way and through certain limitations, this does not mean that we are constituted *for all time* in this way (Butler cited in Salih 2004, 334):

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[25] The notion of foreclosure can be found in psychoanalysis, and is attributed to Lacan who said that the subject is produced on the condition of foreclosure, in other words, that any subject would always lack self-understanding, would always be radically unknowing about her/his origins (Butler in Salih 2004). For Butler, unlike most Lacanians which hold that the foreclosures which produce the subject are fixed in time or can be seen as a founding moment, the subject is always produced through certain kinds of foreclosures – 'certain things become impossible for it; certain things become irrecoverable – and this makes for a temporarily coherent subject who can act' (Salih 2004: 333, interview with Butler). Butler therefore differs from what she terms 'the Lacanian doctrine of foreclosure' by making the notion of foreclosure a social one.

> [I] am clearly born into a world in which certain limitations become the possibility of my subjecthood, but those limitations are not there as structurally static features of my self. They are subject to a renewal, and I perform (mainly unconsciously or implicitly) that renewal in the repeated acts of my person. Even though my agency is conditioned by those limitations, my agency can also thematize and alter those limitations to some degree. This doesn't mean that I will get over limitation – there is always a limitation; there is always going to be foreclosure of some kind of another – but I think that the whole scene has to be understood as more dynamic than it generally is.

The need to work from within the violating, yet enabling constructions by which one is called, is vital if such constructions are to be resignified by challenging their conditions of violation. The 'performative appropriations' that Butler calls for here have given way over time to what she calls 'a performativity proper to refusal', stated otherwise, 'the strategic *rejection* rather than occupation of some (but by no means all) hegemonic, heterocentric, and racist norms, depending on whether they are entrenched or vulnerable to resignification' (Salih 2004, 9). This is in line with her mode of political thinking whereby rejection and resignification are key components of 'affirmative deconstruction' – where a concept may be put under erasure *and* played at the same time (Salih 2004).

3.1.4.2   *'Racialising' the embodied self*

> Although social scientists refer to gender as a "factor" or a "dimension" of an analysis, it is also applied to embodied persons as a "mark" of biological, linguistic, and/or cultural difference (Butler 1990, 12-13).

> [A]s a locus of cultural interpretations, the body is a material reality which has already been located and defined within a social context. (Butler 1986 cited in Salih 2002, 74).

The body is 'a process of materialization that stabilises over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter' (Salih 2002). Any study or discussion about 'race' needs to address the question of embodiment, as the machinations of 'race' cannot be understood without an interrogation of the materiality of 'race' (Riggs and Augoustinos 2005). The importance of the body as a site of investigation is also highlighted by Butler when she writes that normative constraints not only produce but also regulate various bodily beings (Butler 1993). Linking the performativity of gender to the question of the materiality of the body, Butler (1993, 2) begins by stating that 'sex' is by no means a simple fact or static condition of the body, but 'a process whereby regulatory norms materialise 'sex' and achieve this materialization through a

forcible reiteration of those norms'. While acknowledging that what constitutes the fixity of the body (its contours, its movements) will be fully material, she stresses that *materiality* will be rethought as the effect of power, indeed, as power's most productive effect (Butler 1993). In this way Butler comes to show that once 'sex' is understood in its normativity, the materialisation of the body will not be thinkable apart from the materialisation of that regulatory norm (Butler 1993). In her attempt to draw attention to the identities and bodies that currently matter, as well as those that do not, Salih (2002) points out that Butler adds 'race' to the equation regarding what contours the body.

While discussions of 'race' are largely absent from *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler acknowledges that normative heterosexuality is not the only regulatory regime at work in the discursive production of identity (Salih 2004). Salih (2002, 92) raises key questions which are central to the present study, which, although focussing on the identity category 'race', is framed within Butler's work on performativity and the formation of the subject:

> Can race, like sex, sexuality and gender be cited and re-cited in ways that reveal the vulnerability of the terms of the law of appropriation and subversion? Is race an interpellated performative, and is racial identity something that is 'assumed' rather than something one simply 'is'? Would it be possible once again to alter the terms of de Beauvoir's statement and affirm that 'one is not born but rather one becomes black/white?' Or could the word 'race' be substituted for 'sex' in Butler's description of *Bodies that Matter* as a 'poststructuralist rewriting of discursive performativity as it operates in the materialization of sex?'.

For Butler, 'sexual and racial difference are not discrete axes of power, and sex and gender are by no means prior to race' (Salih 2004, 3). What then of her theory of performativity and its relation to the issue of 'race'? Butler responds to this question in the 1999 preface of the reprinted edition of *Gender Trouble*:

> The question of whether or not the theory of performativity can be transposed onto matters of race has been explored by several scholars…Of course, Homi Bhabha's work on the mimetic splitting of the postcolonial subject is close to my own in several ways: not only the appropriation of the colonial "voice" by the colonized, but the split condition of identification are crucial to a notion of performativity that emphasises the way minority identities are produced and riven at the same time under conditions of domination. I would note here not only that racial presumptions invariably underwrite the discourse on gender in ways that need to be made explicit, but that race and gender ought not to be treated as simple analogies. I would therefore suggest that the question to ask is not whether the theory of performativity is transposable onto race, but *what happens to the theory when it tries to come to grips with race.* (Butler 1990, xvi-xvii, italics added).

Framing this study within a Butlerian framework is not an attempt to transpose her work on subjectivity and performativity onto 'race', but attempts to follow her advice and

explore what happens when it tries to come to grips with 'race'. Analysing the work presented in this thesis through a Butlerian lens therefore allows for an interrogation of the performativity of 'race', in other words, how 'race' is interpellated by 'racialising norms' (Salih 2002). Just as heterosexuality requires homosexuality to 'constitute its coherence', so 'whiteness' needs 'blackness' to establish 'racial' boundaries (Salih 2004). This raises the following questions: How does the 'call to race' take place? What is the ideological and discursive terrain in which this occurs? And how might this be destabilized? Butler's (1987) theorization of identity categories as 'originating activit[ies] incessantly taking place', means that it will be possible to 'subvert, disrupt, and refuse those activities, thus de-instating dominant heterosexual and racial epsitemes and forcing them into crisis' (Salih 2004, 2/3).

The way in which 'race' has come to mark the human body is central to the influence it exerts. As Gilroy (2000, 53) acknowledges:

> [T]he modern human sciences, particularly anthropology, geography and philosophy undertook elaborate work in order to make the idea of 'race' epistemologically correct. This required novel ways of understanding embodied alterity, hierarchy, and temporality. It made human bodies communicate the truths of an irrevocable otherness that were being confirmed by a new science and a new semiotics just as the struggle against Atlantic slavery was being won.

The ways in which 'race' has been mapped onto the body through scientific discourses that used select physical characteristics to identify and differentiate between individuals was central to establishing an 'us/them' binary so integral to promoting colonialism and slavery. Gilroy (2000, 35) identifies some of these characteristics when he writes that:

> Bones, skulls, hair, lips, noses, eyes, feet, genitals, and other somatic markers of "race" have a special place in the discursive regimes that produced the truth of "race" and repeatedly discovered it lodged in and on the body.

While the use of visual determinants marked on the body (Alcoff 1999) is surely one of the most salient aspects of 'racialised' identity, 'race' also came to reflect so-called innate qualities of people, including their intellectual, psychological as well as moral, qualities (Lorimer 1978 cited in Gunaratnman 2003). As was demonstrated in the previous chapter of this thesis, South Africa was especially sympathetic to the eugenics movement which promoted the scientifically based discourses on 'race'. A land with such a diverse population was a ripe breeding ground for the promotion of scientific racism and the desire to formalise ideas of alterity. This was taken to the extreme as

seen in the following example given by Dubow (1995 cited in Gunaratnman 2003, 11) in his important work on scientific racism in South Africa.

> Dubow (1995), in a discussion of scientific racism in South Africa, has shown how indigenous Khoisan peoples, known in derogatory terms as 'Hottentots' or 'Bosjemans', were an icon of 'Otherness' in Western/Northern racial thinking. The brutal treatment of Saartjie Baartman, a black Khoena woman, in the name of research in the early nineteenth century, has become legendary in symbolizing the connections between the eugenics movement, colonialism and slavery. Known as the 'Hottenton Venus', Baartman was just one example of how 'the growing curiosity of the scientific and general public in Europe was to be satisfied by the exhibition of live human species' (Dubow 1995, 23). Baartman was brought to London, where she was displayed in a cage in Piccadilly. Later, in Paris, her body was observed and drawn when she was still alive, dissected when she died at the age of 25, and her skeleton, brain and genitals displayed in the Museé de l´Homme in Paris for 150 years.

Nelson Mandela formerly requested France to return her remains to South Africa, and they acceded to this request in March 2002. While the differentiation and control of 'racialized' bodies marked practices and discourses within colonialist contexts, contemporary research on 'race' and ethnicity is often characterised by political concerns regarding questions of cultural and national identity and belonging (Gunaratnman 2003). This view is supported by Back and Solomos (2000) who write that in current racist discourse, 'race' is often coded in terms of 'difference' and 'culture'. With increased diversity come increased experiences of difference, often accompanied by conflicts based on 'racial', ethnic or national identities (Bulmer and Solomos 1999). In light of this, more research is focusing on investigating the changing morphology of 'racial' and ethnic relations from a variety of theoretical and empirical perspectives (Bulmer and Solomos 1999).

3.1.4.3 Passing for 'white', or is it 'black'? The story of Sandra Laing

When identities fail to conform to norms of cultural intelligibility (Butler 1990), they are inevitably located outside of them. The restriction of identities to binary pairs is one way in which such norms are invoked, as to *be* something results in *not being* something else. A Butler (1990, xxi) espouses, 'How must we rethink the ideal morphological constraints upon the human such that those who fail to approximate the norm are not condemned to a death within life?'Butler's reference to 'morphological constraints' is particularly relevant when thinking about 'race', as it is largely 'non-negotiable' and if a subject does therefore not possess what is the discursively desired morphological characteristics, for example, 'white' skin, then one is doomed to a 'death

within life'. If the norm is whiteness, then how do those who can never hope to meet this norm live? How then do we synthesis and integrate 'anomalies' such as epitomised by the movie *Skin* (2009), a biographical film about Sandra Laing, a South African woman born to pro-apartheid white parents but classified as coloured during the apartheid era because of embodying 'African' traits. It was only in 2009 when the movie 'Skin' was released that I became aware of the story of Sandra Laing. I was struck by the fact that I had not heard about her story before, namely because I felt that it was such a clear way to show the ambiguity and inherent non-sense of the concept of 'race' as an ontological given. Here was Sandra Laing, born at the height of apartheid to 'white', Afrikaner parents – and she was 'black'. Her younger brother, too, was born with so-called 'black' characteristics, namely darker skin and tightly curled hair, while her older brother displayed 'white' morphological characteristics. Claiming that Sandra's appearance was the result of an interracial union among their ancestors, her parents insisted that she was indeed their child. Judith Stone (2007), in her exploration of Sandra's story, narrated in the book *When she was white*, writes about the hardship that the family suffered amid claims of adultery by Sandra's mother. From a young age Sandra experienced what it meant to be 'different' in a society so 'race' obsessed. Persecuted at the all 'white' school she attended by both teachers, pupils, and their families, at the age of ten she was removed by the police and re-classified as 'coloured'. In her teenage years Sandra eloped with a 'black' man, which resulted in her parents disowning her. As Stone (2007) poignantly notes: 'The young woman, who had only known the privileged world of the whites, chose to begin again in a poor, rural, all-black township, where life was a desperate, day-to-day struggle against poverty, illness, and a legal system designed to enslave'. The government at the time would change Sandra's 'racial' classification three times in four decades, and her 'travels back and forth across the color line' reveal the 'cruelty, lunacy and arbitrariness' of the 'racial' policy so reverently defended during the apartheid years (Stone 2007).

Stories such as that of Sandra Laing bring squarely into focus the categories by which we come to see the world, and show that such categories are indeed far from being 'real'. Yet, the effects of such categorisations are very real indeed. Through Sandra, the *reality* of 'race' is put into crisis, as shown in the government officials attempt to classify her according to the four 'racial' categories by which all people living in South Africa came to be labelled, namely 'black', 'white', 'coloured', or 'Asian'. She 'failed' the pencil test, yet there she stood with a birth certificate which

stated that both her parents were 'white', which, by default, should 'make' her 'white'. Sandra was thus unwittingly challenging one of the most fiercely policed discursive categories of the time. In effect, she was seen as challenging the 'racial' codes that established what was and was not classed as intelligibly human, and through this challenged the 'ontological field in which bodies are given legitimate expression' (Butler 1990, xxv).

Sandra Laing was sacrificed in the name of 'racial purity' in order to ensure the maintenance of the 'racial' norms established during the apartheid years. There was no 'category' into which she fit, and in order to preserve the 'white' hegemonic norms of that time, she underwent a 'death within life' – losing her family as she sought belonging, and temporarily found it, with her 'black' husband and his family. However, in one scene of the film it is evident that she is seen by her resentful and embittered husband as being the cause of his misfortunes, ironically, for being 'white'. Her life was characterised by her constant struggle for belonging in a society which made no place for those who did not fit into the hegemonic 'racial' matrix that determined who one was and where one belonged.

Referring to Foucault's (1980) introduction to *Herculine Barbin, Being the Recently Discovered Journals of a Nineteenth-Century Hermaphrodite*, Butler writes that 'Herculine is not an 'identity', but the sexual impossibility of an identity' (Butler 1990, 32), and points out that the presence of male and female anatomical parts is not the scandal, but rather:

> [T]he linguistic conventions that produce intelligible gendered selves find their limit in Herculine precisely because she/he occasions a convergence and disorganization of the rules that govern sex/gender/desire.

In much the same way, the obvious inability to 'racially' classify Sandra Laing upset the rules that governed the 'race' classification system in operation in South Africa during apartheid. Being 'uncategorizable' disrupts the regulatory norms and is a clear indication of their precariousness. Herculine, much like Sandra Laing, therefore 'exposes the postulation of identity as a culturally restricted principle of order and hierarchy, a regulatory fiction' (Butler 1990, 33). Butler's writing on the 'metaphysics of substance, intelligibility and the regulation of attributes' (Butler 1990, 33), serves as a means of interpreting how Sandra effectively resisted assimilation into a ready made framework. The response was to alter this framework in order to establish coherence

again (but the cracks were already showing) – which was done by legislating that children born to 'white' parents were by default 'white', even if their physical characteristics suggested otherwise. This was a means of expanding the substantive categories of 'race' to include possibilities that had hitherto been excluded, which is, in other words, the contingent creation of coherence through the regulation of attributes (Butler 1990). What all this comes to show is that the ontology of substance is not only an artificial effect, but superfluous (Butler 1990, 34).

The story of Sandra Laing does not only represent the construction of 'race' as fiction and embedded in dominant ideological and discursive matrixes which seek to establish identity as fixed and 'natural', her story also signifies the *embodiment* of 'race', in other words, how 'race' countours the body and so establishes those identities and bodies that currently 'matter' and those that do not (Salih 2002). Thus, there is a need to focus on specific embodied practices and interrelations in research as a means of detailing how difference is produced and has effects within specific contexts (Gunaratnman 2003).

While 'race' is no longer considered by most as a biological fact, such as remains the case with constructs of 'sex' and 'gender', it remains one of the most naturalized discourses available for making sense of the world (Yon 2000). It this remains a strong socio-political and psychological construct. What makes 'race' such a peculiar beast is that various genealogies of 'race' have shown that its attachment to biology is in fact relatively new (Yon 2000). For Yon (2000), the recent practice of substituting biological explanations of 'race' with cultural ones signals a return to older, more strict forms of classificiation, what is being termed 'new racism'.

> "New racism" is a term that was coined to describe the shift from crude forms of scientific racism based on biologically determined social hierarchy to racism premised on belief in immutable cultural differences (Yon 2000, 11)

The changing face of 'race' and its workings in society indicate that it is indeed an intractable discursive category which continues to wield regulatory power, in other words, power to define the way that we as social subjects make sense of the world. This newer form of racism has many faces. According to Yon (2000) it can be wrapped up in a language of 'values', 'incompatible cultures', 'complex differences' and many more, all forms of discriminating without employing the term 'race'. In this way, 'race,

articulated through the codes of nation, culture, and identity, divides those who belong from those who are made other' (Yon 2000, 12). The violence of 'race' norms affect people's everyday lived experiences, and reinforces the urgent need to critically deconstruct how 'race' as a discursive category functions within society and why it continues to wield such power. What gives 'race' its power as a discursive category is how it is very much lived as an embodied experience. As Henry Louis Gates Junior writes:

> It's important to remember that "race" is *only* a socio-political category, nothing more. At the same time – in terms of its political performative force – that doesn't help me when I'm trying to get a taxi on the corner of 125th and Lenor Avenue (cited in Salih 2002, 64).

In this example Gates illustrates how 'race' as a discursive category is mapped onto bodies and lived materially. Its very real effects, such as seen in Gates' difficulty in hailing a cab, are what make 'race' a dangerously naturalized discourse. This calls for more attention to be paid to personal experiences and the 'embodied materiality of everyday life', which are powerful themes in, for example, the Black Consciousness tradition of critique (Hook and Howarth 2005, 506). The writings of Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness movement stress the relationship between the ideological and discursive terrain and its influences on lived experience. Writing about South African society during apartheid, Biko (1988, 27), who was acutely aware of the psychological and embodied aspects of 'racial' oppression, states, 'My friendship, my love, my education, my thinking and every other facet of my life have been carved and shaped within the context of separate development'. Recognizing how the notion of 'race' had been employed during apartheid to affect the very formation of his identity by foreclosing certain ways of living, he spoke out against what he called an *oppression of the mind*, famously stating that 'the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed' (Biko 1988, 68). The consequences of this domination include self-negation, complexes of inferiority and the creation of what Biko saw as a 'false understanding of ourselves' (1988, 52).

3.1.4.4   *Notions of performativity and discourse in educational research*

Butler's work in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter* are primarily philosophical-political rather than, as Hey (2006, 448) acknowledges, 'a researcher's commitment to a

theoretical-empirical practice'. While she does not work with 'fleshy agentative human ethnographic subjects' (Hey 2006, 448), there are many poststructuralists who, inspired by her writing, have done so. Hey (2006, 448) is one such sociologist and as she explains:

> Researchers intellectually and politically sympathetic to the postmodern idea of performativity have taken the potential of her insights, but in accepting the alterability and agency of identity, have added a greater explanatory weight to this idea(l) because they have paid analytical attention to how and where and under what conditions this occurs. They have been able to take up the abstract ideas of performativity and citationality to show the shifting material and cultural limits of alterability itself.

The usefulness of Butler's work for educational ethnographic studies is further recognised by Coffey, Connolly, Nayak and Reay (2006, 421) who note that 'Judith Butler has perhaps been unique and important in bringing together a variety of social philosophies and critical theories, mainly from France, that educational researchers and sociologists of education use'[26]. Authors working in the sociology of education have, for example, 'troubled' identity showing how it emerges as fictive, performative and heteronormative (see, for example, Mac an Gail 1994). Others have explored Butler's theory of subject constitution within the 'spatial and temporal context of school and schooling' (Butler 2006, 529), thus applying her thinking to empirical studies. Butler (2006) recognises that ethnographic studies provide an opportunity for exploring the activities through which gender is instituted, and also how it stands a chance of being *de-i*nstituted or instituted differently. She also acknowledges that the practices and discourses of children and adolescents serve as an important site in which to explore how heteronormativity comes to take hold. Stressing the value of studies looking at this time of life as a means of gaining a more in-depth understanding how norms become established, as well as what strategies emerge which serve to aid a subject in escaping this strengthening grip, Butler (2006, 533-4) writes:

> What a child or young adult says might well bring into visibility the predicament of inclusion and exclusion as well as the difficulty of living that predicament or paradox. To understand this, we have to listen carefully to what is said through verbal utterances, but also to what the body says and does (or does not say or does not do) as well as how the body appears (or fails to appear, sometimes seeking to cancel its own appearance). We can only understand the discursive scene of subject constitution in light of these problems of embodiment, social norms and visual

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[26] See the special edition of the British Journal of Sociology of Education Vol. 27, No. 4, September 2006 which is a collection of articles devoted to examining Judith Butler's work and its contribution to the Sociology of Education.

signification, and within the temporal modalities of anticipation, desire, fear and the spatial modalities of constraint, support and incitement.

Here Butler brings our attention to the importance of language and embodiment within the discursive space of the classroom, since what can be heard and seen are to her primary lessons in any school. Since the domains of saying and showing are regulated, yet open to a number of interventions, it is apparent that to understand the way that children become constituted as subjects requires an investigation into what is being 'said' and 'shown' in this setting.

3.2 PART II: IDENTITY, DIVERSITY AND EDUCATION

Few would argue against the understanding that in today's rapidly changing world notions of identity and what it means to live in an increasingly diverse world should be at the centre of any educational project. This is stressed by Hoffman (1998, 324) who writes that, 'To speak of education in the 1990s is inevitable to speak of identity…in many ways identity has become the bread and butter of our educational diet'. Globally, education systems face many challenges as a result of increasing diversity, which has resulted in what Besalú (2002) terms the 'triple rupture' of critical postmodernity, namely epistemological, cultural and personal ruptures. These ruptures have had a profound effect on pedagogical practices, leaving educational institutions in a situation of dejection and perplexity as a result of the break down of the fundamental principles on which they were previously based. Many studies focus on the way in which diversity is 'managed' in the education system and suggest or promote 'models' of how to foster social integration and interaction. I propose, however, that it is necessary to look beyond this and deconstruct how and why learners and educators (as well as other stakeholders in the education community) come to take up certain subjectivities and position themselves in various ways in relation to one another. I am not suggesting that the principals of these 'models' are not sound, or that they cannot bring value to the educational context, rather, I am adopting a more politically charged position in asserting that in order to seriously engage in the work of changing practices of exclusion, discrimination and prejudice requires a thorough engagement with the ways in which identities, which are the basis for these very practices, are taken up and ritually invested in.

In contemporary society, as Gillborn and Mirza (2000, 6) put it: 'There are few parts of the education world that are not directly affected by the multiethnic nation of our society'. Many children attend 'racially' and culturally diverse schools, and it can be guaranteed that those that do not will meet people from a range of backgrounds as they go out into the world beyond the school door. While the challenges confronting educational systems differ from context to context due to spatio-historical processes, there can be little doubt that the overall aim of any contemporary educational project should be the construction of a more just and equitable society (Maiztegui-Oñate & Santibáñez-Gruber 2008). This is no easy task taking into account that learners may enter the system speaking different languages, having different histories and

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geographical origin, and presenting with special needs, among other things (Maiztegui-Oñate & Santibáñez-Gruber 2008). In societies, such as South Africa, where 'racial' separation in schooling experiences was, until recently, the norm, investigation into how transformation towards a 'non-racial' education system is taking place and what this means for all involved, is paramount.

In a report by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (Unesco 1996), learning to live together was identified as one of the foremost issues in education today. Education has a vital role to play in the personal and social development of individuals, communities and societies. The ways in which this process is taken up and implemented within education systems varies widely and depends largely on the commitment of those involved to promoting equitable and just education for all. To achieve this requires a move away from viewing the education system, and the school in particular, as somehow removed from the environment within which it is located. As Mclaren (1995, 30) points out:

> Schooling always represents forms of social life and is always implicated in relations of power, social practices, and the privileges of forms of knowledge that support a specific vision of past, present and future.

It is therefore not only necessary to transform attitudinal discrimination, but to reconstitute the deep structures of political economy, culture and power in contemporary social arrangements (Mclaren 1995). Pedagogy needs to be grounded in the importance of the 'other' and necessitate the development of a common ground for linking the notion of difference to a publicly shared language of struggle and social justice (Giroux 1988 cited in Mclaren 1995). Mclaren (1995) writes that critical pedagogy challenges the often uncontested relationship between school and society. In this way critical pedagogy argues that schools operate mainly to reproduce the discourses, values and privileges of existing elites (Mclaren 1995). However, the function of these discourses and values are to perpetuate the social system and prevent the social transformation and self-empowerment of those presently disempowered. For this to take place, a radical shift within the school system would need to occur, hence the desperate need for educators and learners to be reflexive and critical and thereby challenge the classroom reality, which is in itself 'socially constructed [and] historically determined and mediated through institutionalised relations of class, gender, race and power' (Mclaren 1995, 35).

3.2.1 Theoretical approaches to 'race' and schooling

Pollock and Levinson (2011, 1-2) note that anthropologists of education have a deep interest in 'the fate of young people, about their enculturation and socialization, and about habits of human behaviour and relationships of power that are taught and challenged in schools as cultural sites'. Taking this further and linking directly with the work presented in this thesis, anthropologists of education are also concerned with:

> [H]ow identities and identifications are taught and shaped, anywhere, at any age; we care about how people learn and use language; we care about everyday negotiations over the effects of past histories; we care about dynamics of control, power, and inequality that shape everyday lives in societies (Pollock and Levinson 2011, 2).

The multidimensional emphasis to learning and teaching in both formal and informal educational settings, in other words, the emphasis on both the explicit and implicit teaching of values, beliefs as well as communication styles, has, according to Erickson (2011) distinguished anthropologists of education from other more psychological or sociologically orientated researchers who study schools and learning. As alluded to earlier, this field of study arose 'partly as a culturally relativist critique of the "cultural deficit" view in professional education and child development research' (Erickson 2011, 29). However, as Erickson notes, this deficit view remains strong as much conventional educational practice serves to entrench, through the use of rules, the correct (or mainstream) way to act, believe and desire. Thus, students who are 'different' and learn supposedly 'deficit' ways of 'being' at home would, according to this line of thinking, benefit from adapting to ways of acting, believing and desiring that fit with the hegemonic set of norms promoted through schooling.

The present study does not aim to investigate the educational achievement of learners, which is a key focus of many ethnographic studies looking at 'race' and schooling. However, the theoretical approaches adopted in such studies draw attention to the need to examine the ways that 'race' is taken up in society and perpetuated by institutional and societal structures. Thus, what follows is a discussion of some of the most influential theoretical approaches taken up in sociocultural studies of 'race' and schooling, with a particular emphasis on approaches that are most beneficial to the present study, namely critical race theory and more recent work on 'race' talk and silence.

3.2.1.1   Cultural-ecological theory

While not a central tenet of the present study, the cultural-ecological theory developed by John U. Ogbu offers some important insights regarding integration in the post-apartheid classroom. Interested in cultural boundaries, Ogbu's work addresses why some minority groups are able to successfully cross cultural boundaries and/or opportunity boundaries and do well in school, while other minority groups are unable to do so successfully (Ogbu 1987). This work on minority education led to the development of the concepts of 'voluntary minorities' (immigrants) and 'involuntary minorities' ('cast-like' minorities) (Ogbu 1987). These concepts have been taken up by various ethnographers of 'race' and schooling (see Bartlett, McKinley and Brayboy 2005).

In his cultural-ecological theory, Ogbu argues that the engagement and performance of minority students in school is influenced by two key sets of factors, namely system factors and community forces (Ogbu 1999). System factors refer to the historical and contemporary treatment of minority groups by the larger society and by schools, while community forces are the minority group's interpretations as well as collective response to its treatment (Gibson and Koyama 2011). Given the peculiar history of South Africa, the term 'involuntary minority' is perhaps the most beneficial when investigating the relatively recent desegregation of schools. While legally all schools are now desegregated, Nkomo, Chisholm and McKinney (2004) note that it is the formerly 'white', 'coloured' and 'Indian' schools that have experienced the most demographic profile changes. While there has been a 'migration of students' since desegregation, especially the move of 'black' African students to historically 'white' and Indian schools in search of 'quality education', the choice concerning what school to attend is affected by various factors (Vandenyar 2010). Two of the most prominent factors are high school fees at former Model C[27] schools, and the phenomenon of 'bussing in' education, which involves a large number of 'black' students being transported by bus from 'black' African informal settlements and neighbouring suburbs to schools located in middle class suburbs that were formerly classified as 'white' and Indian areas (Vandenyar 2010).

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[27] Model C schools were, during apartheid, schools for 'whites' only. While in the democratic South Africa this has fallen away, this term is still used to distinguish among schools, as former Model C schools generally have better facilities and more resources than other government schools. http://schools.coe.ru.ac.za/wiki/Former_Model_C_Schools

The present study took place in a historically 'white' school that towards the end of apartheid began to open its doors to all South Africans. According to Ogbu's typology, the incoming students, namely the 'black', 'coloured' and 'Indian' students, can be considered as 'involuntary minorities' within this context, as they were previously prevented from integrating into mainstream society and were 'relegated to menial positions' (Ogbu 1987).

Ogbu (1987, 321) asserts that these minorities 'differ from the dominant group in culture, language, and social or collective identity'. Involuntary minorities are thus characterised by *secondary cultural differences,* which he defines as:

> [T]hose differences that arise *after* two populations have come in continuous contact or *after* members of a given population have begun to participate in an institution controlled by another population, such as the schools. In other words, secondary cultural differences develop *as a response to a contact situation*, especially a contact situation involving the domination of one group by another (Ogbu 1987, 322).

Ogbu (1987) notes that there are specific features of these secondary cultural differences that must be taken into account by educational anthropologists attempting to understand the actions of children considered as involuntary minorities. The first feature is *style,* and studies have been undertaken which describe the cultural differences of involuntary minorities in terms of cognitive style, communication style, interaction style and learning style (see Ogbu 1987). This feature links to the following, namely *cultural inversion*, which Ogbu (1987, 323) refers to as the tendency for involuntary minorities to:

> [R]egard certain forms of behaviors, certain events, symbols, and meanings as not appropriate for them because they are characteristic of members of another population; at the same time, the minorities claim other (often the opposite) forms of behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings as appropriate for them.

Owing to their experience of oppression, and the collective and enduring nature thereof, as well as knowing that they cannot easily escape from their 'birth-ascribed membership in a subordinate and disparaged group by "passing"', it is likely that involuntary minorities will develop an oppositional social identity (Ogbu 1987, 324)

While Ogbu's theoretical framework became very prominent in the anthropology of education and has been hailed as 'arguably the most influential and controversial approach in sociocultural studies of race and schooling' (Bartlett et. al. 2005, 362, Carter 2006), it has been criticised. The shortcomings identified include Ogbu's

dichotomous typology as being too simplistic (Serra i Salamé 2001). As addressed earlier in the chapter, there is a real concern regarding the idea of 'groups' as well defined categories that can be compared among one another. Stated otherwise, cultural-ecology theory has been criticised for being too deterministic, for not acknowledging the fluidity of ethnic and 'racial' identities and for undermining the importance of human agency (Foley 2005, Foster 2005). Ogbu has also been taken to task for his reluctance to engage class theory as well as contemporary theories of 'race' and ethnicity, which maintain that racializing is a cultural process and that 'race' is not an inherited, fixed term (Foley 2005). Erickson (1987, 2001), while acknowledging Ogbu's contribution, maintains that student resistance is not only a result of a group history of oppression but can also result from alienating circumstances of teaching and learning within the school. While these criticisms need to be taken seriously, few scholars would deny Ogbu's insight regarding the importance of attending to the historical 'racial' experiences of minority groups as well as the interaction between community and system forces (Bartlett et al. 2005).

3.2.1.2   *Racial Formation Theory*

Taking up a more nuanced understanding of 'race' as a sociopolitical construct, Michael Omi and Howard Winant developed the racial formation theory. For Omi and Winant (1986, 56), 'racial' politics entails 'both a discursive or cultural initiative, an attempt at 'racial' signification and identity formation on the one hand; and a political initiative, an attempt at organization and redistribution on the other'. Thus, 'racial' formations encompass social and cultural initiatives to define the meaning of 'race', as well as political and economic schemes to disseminate power along 'racial' lines (Bartlett et. al 2005). According to Omi and Winant (1994), 'race' cannot be seen as only an ideological construct or as an objective condition. Thinking of 'race' solely as the former denies the reality of 'racialized' societies and its impact on people's daily lives, while thinking of 'race' solely as the latter denies the problematic of 'race', namely, who fits into which 'racial' classification (Ladson-Billings 1998). According to Bartlett et. al. (2005), the primary contributions of racial formation theory include its processual, change-oriented model; its simultaneous attention to multiple levels of 'racialization' and signification (including the discursive, cultural, political, economic); as well as its

insistence on analyzing the intersection of 'race' with other factors such as class, gender, and nation, without ignoring the significance of 'race' as a system.

This work offers important insights in the study of 'raced' identity formation in a school setting as it strongly promotes the position that 'concepts of race structure both state and civil society', and significantly, that 'Race continues to shape both identities and institutions in significant ways' (Omi and Winant 1994, vii).

Education scholars that have taken up the position put forward by Omi and Winant (1994) on the social constructedness of 'racial' distinctions include McCarthy (1990, 1997), Lewis (2003) and Marinari (2005) (cited in Bartlett et. al. 2005). McCarthy uses this framework in his investigation of the cultural politics of curricular reforms, while Lewis adopts this framework as part of her analysis of 'race' as a product of schooling as well as the 'racialization' of people in and through schools (Bartlett et. al. 2005). Marinari's work centres on Korean immigrants and American born Koreans and uses racial formation theory to show 'how these students engage in competing 'racial' projects of neutrality and visibility to embrace and/or contest the dominant' (Bartlett et. al 2005, 364). In South Africa, the history of colonization, apartheid and the anti-apartheid movement have all shaped the construction of 'raced' identities (Farquharson 2007). As such, the ideology of 'white' supremacy is integral to understanding 'racial' hierarchies, which themselves remain central to South African society (Farquharson 2007). Accordingly, it is critical race theory which offers the greatest scope for understanding contemporary attitudes and actions which together construct 'raced' identities in educational settings.

3.2.1.3 Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) emerged from within the United States legal domain where it served to challenge the positivist and liberal discourse of civil rights (Ladson-Billings 1998). Arguing against the slow place of 'racial' reform, CRT purports that today, 'race' still matters, and that while it is recognised as having no biological basis, it remains a powerful social construct and signifier (Ladson-Billings 1998). Introduced into the field of education in the mid-1990s, CRT as an approach has gained much support from educators, while also being subject to critique by those who feel that racism is getting more attention than class divisions (Gillborn 2008).

Challenging the way 'race' and 'racial' power are constructed and represented; CRT has given rise to numerous critical lines of thought including Latino/a Critical Race Theory, Queer-Crit, as well as Critical Race Feminism (Gillborn 2008). While the majority of work being undertaken under the rubric of CRT is in the context of the United States, as Gillborn (2008) notes, there is no reason as to why the insights generated from this approach cannot be transferred to other post-industrial societies. Considering that one of the main aims of CRT is to interrogate how a 'regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of colour have been created and maintained in [society]' (Crenshaw et a. 1995, xiii cited in Vandeyar 2010, 346), South Africa would seem like a ideal place to apply the CRT approach given its history of 'white' supremacy and 'racial' segregation and its current transformation towards 'racial' integration. Yet, there are important differences and particularities between the discourses circulating in the South African and North American context. Such differences include, as Vandeyar (2010) points out, the framing of integration issues within a desegregation and multicultural framework in the US, while South African scholars generally speak of inclusivity and integration. Before exploring the application of CRT within the field of education I will briefly outline some of the key conceptual and methodological tools of CRT as outlined by Gillborn (2008).

Recognising the dynamic and complex character of 'race'/racism and its opposition in contemporary society, CRT scholars have been careful to avoid putting forward a 'rigid set of unchanging theoretical tenets' (Gillborn 2008, 31) and speak instead of 'basic insights' (Delgado and Stefanic 2000) and 'defining elements' (Tate 1997). Yet, as CRT has expanded, so has its conceptual toolbox, resulting in lines of analysis that generally appear in work using CRT (Gillborn 2008). This includes the use of storytelling and counter-storytelling (see also Ladson-Billings 1998), the notions of interest convergence and contradiction-closing cases, and Critical White studies and White Supremacy (Gillborn 2008). This last line of analysis is particularly relevant to the context in which my dissertation is located and will be explored in depth.

3.2.1.3.1   'White' people, 'White' supremacy and studies of 'Whiteness'

First and foremost, a distinction needs to be made between what is meant by 'white' people' and the study of 'Whiteness'. This is best made by Leonardo (2002, 31), who writes that, 'Whiteness' is a racial discourse, whereas the category of 'white people'

represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin colour'. A critique of 'Whiteness' is therefore 'not an assault on White people per se' but rather an 'assault on the socially constructed and constantly reinforced power of White identifications and interests' (Gillborn 2008, 33). 'White' people can therefore be actively involved in deconstructing 'Whiteness', however, apart from being rather uncommon, this is no easy task as it requires the individual to continuously trouble both their actions and locations (Gillborn 2008). Yet, as Stovall (2006, 251-2) points out, the responsibility for changing the status quo of 'racial' discrimination and prejudice rests largely on the shoulders of 'white' folk:

> Whites should be included in the focus on White privilege in that the responsibility of education of other Whites rests heavily with them. Their experiential knowledge of the construct enables them to unpack the intricate and subtle functions of White privilege and its various rationales.

In a similar vein, Frankenberg (1993, 6) argues that dealing with racism should not be merely an option for 'white' people as 'racism shapes white people's lives and identities in a way that is inseparable from other facets of daily life'. A highly influential work in this regard is that of Peggy McIntosh (1992) whereby she unpacks the 'invisible knapsack' of privileges which 'white' people enjoy on a daily basis solely as a result of their belonging to the dominant 'racial' order. Since many of the privileges accrued are not consciously recognised by those benefitting, some scholars prefer to speak of 'White supremacy' in place of 'White privilege'. This is done in order to avoid, as Leonardo (2004, 138) notes, the image that domination is 'happening behind the backs of 'whites', rather than on the backs of people of color' and thus taking on an 'image of domination without agents'. This is complicated by the invisibility of principal characteristics of 'white' identity and the prevailing idea that 'white' people, unlike others, are not 'raced' (Dyer 1997).

Furthermore, 'white' supremacy is not only about fundamental political groups that outwardly espouse 'racial' intolerance and hatred as made evident by Frances Lee Ansley (1997, 592):

> [By] 'white supremacy' I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are re-enacted daily across a broad array of institutions and social settings.

Interrogating 'whiteness' is integral to identifying social practices and discourses that 'white' people draw from as they construct their 'raced' identities (Davis 2005). To do this requires uncovering the hidden means by which the power wielded by 'white' identity and its associated privileges come to be constructed, reworked and maintained.

Leonardo (2002, 32), drawing from the work of Frankenberg (1993) and Roediger (1994) outlines some of the central characteristics of whiteness, including: 'the unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a 'racial' experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other such evasions'. While these points make reference to the broad contours of whiteness, Gillborn (2008) argues that there is a more powerful understanding of whiteness that is offered through research on the interplay of identities at the level of the individual. Drawing on the theoretical work of Butler, as I have done earlier in this chapter, Youdell (2006) makes evident the need for a 'particular understanding of how power operates in and through the creation of different subject identities' (Gillborn 2008, 170). Through her analysis of teenage identity–work in school, Youdell speaks of acts of reiteration and reinforcement and how these serve to strengthen and legitimize certain identities (Gillborn 2008). While there remains some scope for resistance, the power of these processes is tremendous. Referring to what she terms the 'performative constitution of identity', Youdell highlights the 'ways in which race and racism are constantly re-inscribed in the endless mundane yet powerful matrix of raced talk and actions' (Gillborn 2008, 170). Drawing on Butler (1997), who writes that '[b]eing called a name is…one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language', Youdell (2006a, 44) notes that:

> This does not infer that the address conveys a 'truth' about the one addressed. Such interpellations are not understood as being descriptive; rather they are understood as being 'inaugurative': '[i]t seeks to introduce a reality rather than reporting an existing one'.

Following this line of thinking, it is the performative constitution of particular identities that provides whiteness with its deep-rooted and invisible status - the re-enactment and reinforcing of enduring 'racialized' and racist discourses and actions (Gillborn 2008).

Bonilla-Silva (2006) writes that 'whites' develop powerful explanations, which become justifications, for contemporary 'racial' inequalities in order to resolve them of any responsibility for the status of political minorities. These explanations include notions of colour-blindness, which as Bonilla-Silva (2006) identifies, are central to

maintaining and safe-guarding 'white' privilege, and concomitantly the 'racial' structure of a society. In his study deconstructing the notion of colour-blindness in contemporary USA, Bonilla-Silva (2006) identifies four central frames of colour-blind racism: *abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism* and *minimization of racism*. What constitutes these frames is outlined briefly in the table below.

Central frame of colour-blind racism	Explanation
Abstract liberalism	Uses ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g. 'equal opportunity', idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g. choice, individualism) in an abstract manner to explain 'racial' matters
Naturalization	Allows whites to explain away 'racial' phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences (e.g. idea that people 'gravitate towards likeness')
Cultural racism	Relies on culturally based arguments to explain the position of minorities in society (e.g. 'blacks have too many babies')
Minimization of racism	Suggests discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities' life chances (e.g. accuses minorities of being 'hypersensitive' to 'race', or for 'playing the 'race' card')

Table 2. An outline of the four frames central to colour-blind ideology (Source: Bonilla-Silva 2006, 28-9).

It is important to note that these frames are used in combination with one another rather than in pure form, and those employing them use them with varying degrees of emotional intensity (Bonilla-Silva 2006).

While studies on minority 'white' identities show that whiteness itself is a fragmented category, this line of thinking has very usefully, and importantly, drawn attention to the fact that 'race is an experience and name which touches us all, whatever we may think' and that 'understanding the ways in which it touches us differently is the key to revealing its power (Bhattacharyya 1999, 80). This understanding is imperative in contemporary societies where 'whiteness' is positioned as normative and people are

ranked and categorized according to a myriad of conceptual categories which are generally either associated with a privileged ('white') identity or a disadvantaged (Other) identity (Ladson-Billings 1998).

3.2.1.3.2   *The shape-shifting of 'Whiteness' in post-apartheid South Africa*

It is necessary to understand 'whiteness' in both global and local dimensions in order to recognise how these interact and support each other in order to maintain seemingly innocent, but in fact reactive, sites where 'racial' advantage is normalized (Leonardo 2002, Steyn 2003). Such an approach was adopted by Steyn (2003) as she explored how discourses of 'whiteness' are constructed and perpetuated in post-apartheid South Africa and the effects of this on subjectivities. Steyn (2003), whose work is hailed as seminal in this context (West 2008), makes apparent that along with the end of apartheid came the need for 'white' people to reframe 'self' and 'other' within the new political and social dispensation. She warns against thinking of 'white' South Africans as a homogenous group, making a clear reference to the English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking divisions, but also to divisions within these groups. Collectively, however, 'white' people remain economically powerful and educationally advantaged and 'can still dominate the flow of discursive influences that define how issues are interpreted' (Steyn 2003, 6). Looking at the particular discourses – what she terms *white talk* - in two of the largest circulating mainstream newspaper columns in South Africa, Steyn (2003) argues that 'whiteness' is always in tension because it runs counter to all the premises on which it is usually based. This results in 'emotional dissonance' as it is built on 'the emotional load of whiteness evicted from paradise, whiteness on the edge, off-centre' (Steyn 2003, 7). This perceived weakness of the position of whiteness in South Africa has transformed it from being controlling into being manipulative (Steyn 2003). As times change, so do discourses, discursive formations and positionings. As Steyn (2003) shows, in South Africa whiteness has changed strategies. Exceptionally tenacious, whiteness 'does not give up; rather, it realigns, re-organizes, reframes – reflecting, sadly, the tenacity of race as a way of organizing the social not only within this country, but also within the global project that operates across continents' (Steyn 2003, 271). Some of the signifiers, or nodal points, that Steyn (2003) suggests include: *transition, reconciliation, the New South Africa, Africa, Afrikaner, the past, the future,*

democracy, rights. There are in turn linked to other signifiers which 'white talk' attempts to fix, namely, *white, civilization, standards, non-racialism, African Renaissance* (Steyn 2003, 272, Steyn and Foster 2008). How people chose to engage with these signifiers is intricately linked to the responsibility they feel for what has taken place in this society and their commitment to questions of social justice. Worryingly, Steyn (2003) writes that while in 1996 participants in her studies of whiteness acknowledged that they benefitted from the apartheid system whether or not they had actively sought this help, by 2003 this no longer seemed to be the case and denials of these benefits were becoming rampant. If 'white' subjects are choosing to ignore their part in entrenching and perpetuating 'white' supremacy, they risk converting current blurred borders into bright ones; effectively shutting down many avenues for intercultural dialogue and exchange. Gillborn (2008), referring to a conference presentation that he gave to a predominantly 'white' audience about critical race theory and white supremacy, notes the *silence* with which he was met. No questions, no queries – just silence. He notes that this is not an unusual experience for him, in other words, he asserts that when he speaks to predominantly 'white' audiences about how 'white' people are actively implicated in the situation he is often met with complete silence (Gillborn 2008). Mills (2003, 190), an important contemporary 'race' theorist, supports this experience when he espouses that:

> [T]here will be characteristic and pervasive patterns of not seeing and not knowing – structured white ignorance, motivated inattention, self-deception, historical amnesia, and moral rationalization – that people of color, for their own survival, have to learn to become familiar with and overcome in making their case for racial equality.

Making another vital point, Steyn (2003) points out how difficult it is to pin down whiteness with those attempting to do so often labelled as oversensitive, paranoid or politically too radical to be taken seriously. With democracy new ideological positions have opened up and are accessible for troubling and rearticulation. Opportunities are presented everyday for people to understand the ways in which society remains 'racially' organised, and the effects thereof. As Steyn (2003, 282) notes:

> It is equally certain, however, that the opportunity to grow in humanity, to establish dialogic, intersubjective relationships with "others", to break through the narrow confines of privileged assumptions that stunt insight into the social construction of the interrelated dynamics of poverty and wealth, abound in current post-apartheid South Africa as perhaps nowhere else.

Many *white talkers* continue to grasp at the worldview of the old privileged order and thus experience themselves as the 'remnants of a lost country, a home from which they have been debarred' (Steyn 2003, 275). This sense of loss is bolstered by international discourses of whiteness, which serves as a counterbalance to the perceived weakness of whiteness is the South African context (Steyn 2003). Whiteness is not going anywhere anytime soon, as recent studies on the salience of 'white' subjectivities in South Africa show. Dolby's (2001) ethnographic study undertaken in a school setting shows how 'racial' identities continue to largely determine social divisions, while Durrheim's (2005) work demonstrates practices of contemporary spatial segregation between 'racial' groups on a local beach. Furthermore, a report by the 'Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Insitutions'[28], highlights that an ideology of 'white supremacy' serves to distinguish 'race' discrimination from other forms of discrimination and serves rationalise unequal power relations that exist between people in South Africa (Soudien 2008a).

In September 2011 a discussion raged in a national newspaper, the Mail and Guardian, after a 'white' philosopher at Rhodes University – Samantha Vice[29] – wrote an article detailing her feelings of shame and regret for past and present privileges. As McKaiser (2011a) wrote: 'She is grappling with what it means for her to be a white person in a country that is still deeply racialised, deeply political and deeply unjust.' This debate about the moral burden of 'whiteness' (Vice 2011) met with 'an outbreak of self-righteous outrage'. This was not only because she espoused that 'white' people were not in a position to criticise the current government considering the damage done under apartheid, but also because she dared to suggest that:

> [I]t is appropriate for whites to feel shame at their white identity, given its destructive legacy and the way it continues to shape us. Of course, we did not choose to be born white but that does not stop us from benefiting from it still – in ways that are far subtler that merely social and economic. We move easily about a world made in our own image, validating our own values and beliefs and sustaining our own comfort, unimpeded by the kinds of structural and systematic challenges black people face daily. That is something to feel ashamed about (Vice 2011).

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[28] This committee was commissioned by the then Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, to investigate discrimination in public higher education institutions following a recent spate of racist actions on campuses around South Africa.

[29] See Vice, S. 2010. How do I live in this Strange Place? *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 41 (3): 323-342.

Vice's views were first taken up in the public sphere by Eusebius McKaiser (in *Die Burger* in June and the *Mail and Guardian* in July), who applauded Vice's honest account. The responses to McKaiser's article were, as noted above, predominantly defensive and abusive and included calls for Vice to commit suicide and be labelled as stupid and neurotic (Vice 2011, McKaiser 2011a). Furthermore, angry shouts of denial have gone so far as to declare that '…the vast majority [of whites] have acquired whatever wealth they have through the same means as their counterparts in the rest of the world: through hard work and enterprise' (FW de Klerk Foundation, cited in Matthews 2011). This is laughable as it not only suggests a severe blindness to what Vice is speaking about, but also puts forward a very peculiar interpretation of history (Matthews 2011). The 'white privilege' that Vice refers to is not only about the material benefits afforded those with paler skin, but also about the systematic validation of whiteness through the 'presentation of white people and of features and characteristics associated with white people as normal and desirable' (Matthews 2011). This was brought home to me when I moved to Cape Town to undertake fieldwork and in the process of finding a place to rent I was informed by the real estate agent that she does not like to rent accommodation to 'black' people, as they are likely to 'move in with their whole family', 'wreak havoc' and 'show little respect for the place'. She went as far as confiding in me that she will tell 'black' people that the house has already been taken in order to prevent them from moving in. This type of behaviour is no secret and is acknowledged, alongside other practices that serve to privilege 'whites' (Matthews 2011). Echoing Heywood's (2011) reaction to an experience whereby a fellow 'white' individual lamented that previously 'white' suburbs were now all-'black' and not good places for 'whites' to reside, my heart sank.

McKaiser (2011a,b) does not agree with Vice's view that 'white' people have no place in trying to shape the current political landscape owing to their severe lack of credibility as moral watchdogs, since 'whites' are not able to avoid interracial contact that conditions their 'whiteness'. 'White' people are, after all, citizens in the same country as their 'black' counterparts and this implies a right to participate in public political processes and complain about corruption (McKaiser 2011a). He therefore calls for people, 'black' and 'white', to engage with each other publically and politically, suggesting that 'whites' adopt practices of reflective self-awareness rather than a vow of silence as Vice promotes (McKaiser 2011b). While they may differ on certain points, both Vice and McKaiser are both deeply concerned with the response to their engaging

critical conversation. Vice (2011) acknowledges that she may be wrong in her conclusions, but asserts that the debate generated indicates that:

> [T]his is a conversation we urgently need to have in this country and that my critics lack the good faith, empathy and calm heads that it would require. It has certainly brought to the surface the intense and personal nature of race and identity in this country.

This statement is supported by Heywood (2011) who calls for an interrogation of 'the souls of white folk' and the need 'to turn a searching eye on ourselves'. McKaiser also (2011b) draws attention to how sensitive these issues are in contemporary South Africa:

> The violence, the thoughtlessness, the personal attacks and the ungenerous imputation of unflattering motives to myself and others for simply wanting to engage in critical conversation about identity has left me gobsmacked.

With such evidence there can be little doubt that in South Africa 'we have work to do' (McKaiser 2011b) on questions of identity and 'race'.

3.2.1.3.3 *Critical Race Theory and education*

What does all this mean for education and the project of transformation and integration? In South Africa the notion of what is a 'good' school remains intricately bound up with 'white' interests, values and customs (Steyn 2003, Soudien 2010). In line with this, Soudien (2007, 443), in a historical analysis of integration in South African schools, notes an asymmetry whereby 'white people are positioned 'as bearers of preferred knowledge and black people, by contrast, as the embodiment of an inferior understanding of the world'. As illustrated above, there is a noticeable silence around issues of 'whiteness' in society in general, and in discussions of integration and inclusion in the education system, in particular. This is problematic because, as Davis (2005, 2) asserts, not troubling white discourses limits 'any attempts for genuine educational practices that aim to challenge discrimination and oppression as white educators fail to see how they are part of oppressive white discourses that in turn, influences pedagogical practice'. These challenges, faced by education systems globally, have led to various scholars taking up CRT and applying it to the field of education. Speaking of critical race pedagogy, Solorzano and Yosso (2000) note that its aim is to interrogate 'racially' structured rules for social participation, while Leonardo (2002, 46)

asserts that partnering global studies of whiteness with critical race theories highlights 'the racialized core of knowledge production in schools'.

Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate (1995, 47) were instrumental in applying critical race theoretical approaches to education in the United States of America, 'where discussions of race and racism continue to be muted and marginalized'. Ladson-Billings (1998, 18) argues that CRT provides a 'powerful explanatory tool for the sustained inequity that people of color experience'. Referring to key areas in the educational domain, namely, curriculum, instruction assessment, school funding and desegregation, Ladson-Billings (1998) illustrates the relationship that can exist between education and CRT. For example, looking at the official school curriculum she asserts that it is a 'culturally specific artefact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script' (Ladson-Billings 1998, 18). According to Swartz (1992, 341), this master scripting:

> [S]ilences multiple voices and perspectives, primarily legitimizing dominant, white, upper-class, male voicings as the "standard" knowledge students need to know. All other accounts and perspectives are omitted from the master script unless they can be disempowered through misrepresentation. Thus, content that does not reflect the dominant voice must be brought under control, *mastered*, and then reshaped before it can become a part of the master script.

This scripting results in the muting or erasing of stories told by marginalised groups when such stories challenge the dominant culture's authority and power (Ladson-Billings 1998). This ties in with the color-blind perspective referred to earlier and lumps non-dominant groups together as a homogenized 'we' in order to celebrate diversity; an acute reminder of the problematic multicultural perspective[30] (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995, Ladson-Billings 1998). Through this examination of curriculum, along with an examination of the role of race in instruction assessment, school funding and desegregation, Ladson-Billings (1998) argues that schools fail to realize the academic advantages enjoyed by 'white', middle-class students. Thus, while presenting itself as 'open and fair', the education system is in fact privileging the perspectives and interests of 'white' people over those of other less powerful groups (Gillborn 2008).

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[30] Ladson-Billings (1998) recognises the valuable conceptual thinking behind the multicultural education approach as put forward by James Banks, Carl Grant and Geneva Gay, amongst others. However, she asserts that since these ideas have taken root in classrooms across the country, multicultural education is now only 'a shadow of its conceptual self', with teachers prompting students to sing 'ethnic' songs, eat ethnic food and do ethnic dances instead of engaging them in 'provocative thinking about the contradictions of U.S. ideals and lived realities' (Ladson-Billings 1998, 22).

A debate between more Marxist orientated scholars and critical race theorists in the United Kingdom has been taking place with regards to the centrality of 'class' and 'race' to social justice issues in education. Mike Cole (2009a) criticises CRT scholars, most notably David Gillborn, for putting 'race' ahead of class as the dominant form of oppression in society. Challenging CRT's focus on the notion of 'white supremacy' and Gillborn's supposed assertion that this should replace the concept of 'racism', Cole (2009a, 113) argues that 'white supremacy' fails to explain the continuity of racism over hundreds of years as it does not 'connect to modes of production and developments in capitalism'. His main arguments against the notion of 'white supremacy' centre on four points: 1) that it can direct critical attention away from modes of production, 2) that it homogenizes all white people together as being in positions of power and privilege, 3) that it inadequately explains what he refers to as 'non-colour-coded racism', and 4) that it is totally counter-productive as a political unifier and rallying point against racism (Cole 2009a). Addressing points one and three in this article, Cole suggests that a more productive analysis requires adopting the Marxist concept of racialization and notion of xeno-racialization (Cole 2009a). This latter term is a derivative of the concept of xeno-racism introduced by Sivanandan (2001) that refers to non-colour-coded racism.

In a response to Cole's article, Gillborn (2009, 125) argues that 'there is a strand of reductionist Marxist analysis that has generated critiques of CRT characterised by over-simplification, misunderstanding and misrepresentations of the approach'. Making reference to the diverse and radical perspectives that critical race theorists have regarding the role of 'race'/racism in present-day education, Gillborn (2009, 126) stresses that while CRT does have central tenets which serve to characterize it, there is no 'unitary or dogmatic account of how things are and how they must be'. Cole's (2009a) position is confusing, as while he calls for more engagement between CRT and his understanding of Marxism, he acknowledges in the third footnote of his article that his own view is that CRT and Marxism are basically incompatible[31]. Cole's argument, echoed across the Atlantic by Antonio Darder and Rodolfo Torres, seems to be a patronising attempt to 'commen[d] critical race scholars while effectively rejecting out of hand the entirety of CRT in education' and through this affirm 'faith in a particular class-reductionist version of Marxism' (Gillborn 2009, 128). Critical race scholars have

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[31] This contradiction is also highlighted by Gillborn (2009).

argued elsewhere, for example, that 'CRT-with its insistence on exploring both the ideological and material manifestations of racism-could be used to explain the *important connections between race and class* in American schooling' (Lynn and Parker 2006, 266, my emphasis). Thus, Cole's (2009a) understanding of CRT seems very limited and suggests a severe lack of engagement on his part with the work of critical race scholars. For example, his observation that critical race theorists want to replace the term 'racism' with 'white supremacy' is, as Gillborn (2009, 129) succinctly puts it: 'just plain wrong and obviously so'. Continuing, Gillborn (2009, 129) writes:

> One of the core defining features of CRT is the central role that it accords racism: I note this in the 2005 article that Cole quotes (Gillborn, 2005, p. 492) and it is the *first* defining element of CRT that I discuss in my book (Gillborn, 2008, p. 27). The word 'racism' appears around 270 times in that book, clearly denoting that far from being a concept that I want to erase, it occupies a central role in my work.

Gillborn's critique (2008) is, therefore, aimed at mainstream notions of White supremacy and not of 'racism', as Cole (2009a) suggests. In his response to Gillborn's critique, Cole (2009b) defends himself, and more specifically his Marxist framework of analysis, labelling Gillborn's (2009, 30) response as a 'caricature, misrepresentation and dismissal of Marx and Marzism'.

Such 'theoretical struggles' (Preston 2010) indicate 'fault lines' in thinking about social justice issues that can be, although not necessarily, productive. Such engagement can of course also result in 'rhetorical game-playing' (Gillborn 2009, 127). Needless to say, it is incorrect to 'caricature critical race theorist as being preoccupied with 'race' and Marxists…by 'class'' (Preston 2010, 116). It is not within the scope of this thesis to present an in-depth analysis of Marxist and CRT and their use in education, however, I believe that while CRT in education remains in its early stages, using it as an interpretive tool in qualitative research provides plenty food for thought about how societies are structured, the inequalities that persist and the difficulties of promoting social justice[32].

While critiques of this approach are not to be ignored, the complexity of the issues at hand means that no one theoretical standpoint is able to sufficiently address all the questions that have been, and still will be, raised. This being said, CRT has much to

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[32] For a review of research on CRT in education in the USA see Lynn and Parker (2006).

add to current debates around 'race', racism, citizenship and diversity that are taking place in both the public and private domains in South Africa[33].

3.2.1.3.4   *Wrestling with 'race': 'Race' talk and silence*

The final theoretical approach to 'race' and schooling that I would like to address is that of 'race' talk and silences, which Bartlett et. al. (2005, 367) defines as 'examin[ing] how and when individuals and institutions discuss issues of race and racism, and the consequences of such race talk in racial formation processes'. Looking at how people do and do not talk about 'race', scholars working within this paradigm are particularly interested to know what kinds of conversations take place in what type of settings (Bartlett et. al. 2005). The work of Pollock (2001, 2004) has been particularly interesting in this regard as instead of looking at what a 'racial' category '*meant* in some internal fashion', she examined '*when*, in the institution of schooling, people drew lines around [individual students] that categorized them as race-group members' (Pollock 2004, 10). Building on the work of other scholars in the field (including Omi and Winant 1994), Pollock (2001) argues that researchers who are interested in 'race' matters in schools often approach their field sites 'having assumed the very existence of clear-cut race groups'. They then proceed to investigate the school performance of these groups. Pollock (2001, 2) is particularly interested in taking 'a more self-conscious look at the moments when Americans talk bout achievement in racial terms – and the moments when we do not'. This line of thinking offers much promise for studies on 'race' and schooling in South Africa, especially because, as Pollock (2001) shows, many educators, administrators and policymakers delete 'race' words from any talk of achievement, concerned that not doing so would amount to practices of racism.

How, when and *if* 'race'-labels were used was highly variable in Pollock's study. While students frequently employed 'race'-labels in public arenas, adults were most likely to speak in de-raced language 'as if race didn't matter' – and did this with the 'very topics for which they privately suspected race mattered most problematically' (Pollock 2001, 3). This, Pollock (2012 cited in Bucuvalas) asserts, often forms part of the 'race' talk dilemma whereby people do not want to invoke 'racial' labels to indicate

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[33] An example of the way in which CRT might help educational scholars, educators and learners in 'thinking through different ways of conceptualizing intercultural education and the difficulties of changing the western-derived models of school which have become global' in the South African context is to be found in Vandeyar (2010, 345)

that to them 'race' does not matter, however, by *not* doing so can result in the perpetuation of 'racial' inequalities. In other words, 'while talking in racial terms can make race matter, not talking in racial terms can also make race matter' (Pollock cited in Bucuvalas 2012). It is therefore necessary to pay close attention to the ongoing disputes over the relevance of 'race' in which many people in the school community are engaged. Identities are recognised as highly complex and not reducible to social concepts alone such as 'race', gender, nationaliy, sexuality and so forth. Yet, these concepts simultaneously work to promote/inhibit many aspects of everyday life, including school performance, interpersonal relationships and the like. Pollock, alongside other authors in her edited volume, *Everyday racism* (2008), suggests that educators 'invite students to explore complex identities *and* consider racial group experiences' (Pollock 2008, vii-viii) through a variety of approaches and with the aim of creating equitable educational opportunities (Jewett and Schultz 2011). Dietz and Mateos Cortés (2011, 505), drawing on the work of Pollock, suggest that one valuable way this could be done is through:

> [A] more complex and multilayered, ethnographically informed approach to how diversity, ethnicity and racialization are perceived not only by policymakers and curriculum designers, but by teachers and students inside classroom interaction.

This type of approach, which requires that scholars do not exercise 'colour-blindness' or 'colourmuteness', remains one of the greatest challenges facing sociocultural scholars of 'race' and schooling (Bartlett et. al. 2005).

3.2.1.4   Transformation in education: From apartheid to democracy

As highlighted in Chapter Two, the South African Schools Act of 1996 makes a clear commitment to establishing a quality education system which fosters respect for cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. These commitments are echoed in both the Founding Provisions and the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution (No. 108 of 1996), which clearly stipulates that the new democratic society must be both open and equitable, thereby ensuring that the fundamental rights of all human beings are met. Writing about de-racialisation and integration within the South African education system post-1994, Khosa (2000) acknowledges that policy alone is not sufficient to deal with matters regarding integration and that individual teachers, students, and caregivers

will need to commit themselves to welcoming diversity. The need to assess in what ways equality in education can be achieved in schools catering to a diverse body of learners is supported by Simó (2011), who details the steps and consequences of the process undertaken by the municipality of Vic - a town located in Catalonia, Spain - with regards to the integration of young children from immigrant families into the education system. To facilitate the integration of these learners educational authorities instigated changes in education policies including, for example, the creation of 'l'Espai de Benvinguda Educativa (EBE)' and distributing students across all public and subsidised schools in Vic (Simó 2011, 149). Simó critically analyses the implications of such practices for the educational community as a whole and shows that such policies need to work with multidimensional measures that facilitate the inclusion of various agents across a range of levels. Thus, while educational policies are fundamental in shaping the social composition of schools:

> …el compromise de totes les families, i també les de classe social més benestant, a l'hora de valorar de forma positive l'heterogeneïtat en la composició social de les escoles, és fonemental per fomentar la cohesió social (Simó 2011, 159)

In South Africa, it is particularly important to challenge and address prejudices and stereotypes held by those working in the education system who, prior to 1994, were subject to apartheid education policy. As Richard Shaul (2006, 34), writing the foreword to the 30th anniversary edition of Freire's classic work *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, notes:

> There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes 'the practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

Following the segregationist principles upon which apartheid was based; schooling was provided separately to the four major 'racial' groups, each governed by a separate state department (Mentz & van der Walt, 2007). 'Black' African schools were severely under-resourced and understaffed with the aim of education being to limit rather than realize students' potential (Gallagher 2004). Not only did these disparate education systems function to keep people of so called 'races' physically separate, they were aimed at preparing learners for their respective 'station' in life, with the 'place' of the school-educated 'black' person in the South African society severely restricted:

> The education of the white child prepares him for life in a dominant society and the education of a black child for a subordinate society. There are for the white child no limits, in or out of school. For the Black child there are limits...They form part of the whole social and economic structure of the country, and it serves no purpose to act as if they did not exist (Prof. Edgar Brookes cited in Mayer 1980, 24).

Schools served as sites where children were taught that they were fundamentally different to the racial 'other' and that their social positioning in this society was dependant on their skin colour. Schools had, and continue to have, an impact on young people's identities and how they are shaped (Soudien 2001). This relationship, between schools and identities, remains complex post-apartheid as schools become more integrated and learners are confronted by both local and global messages regarding who they ought to be. Yet, while post-1994 subjects have been encouraged to reinvent themselves through a process of reconciliation and nation building (Steyn 2003), they do so with lingering apartheid ideology close at hand. This is noted by Soudien (2001, 312) who writes that:

> The official ideology of the post-apartheid government is to promote non-racialism and a new inclusive South Africanism. The identity construction tensions in the system, however, have not disappeared…schools in the new South Africa, and the students and teachers inside them, continue to struggle with the disparate messages about who they are and who they ought to be.

In contemporary South Africa, educators, confronted by diverse learner compositions, are required to overhaul their approach to education and their teaching styles (Le Roux 2000), while learners are expected to interact and integrate – crossing previously demarcated and heavily policed boundaries of 'racial' classification. The difficulty of this project cannot be underestimated, as the central tenet of apartheid ideology was the idea that each 'racial' 'group' was divinely invested with biological and cultural qualities which were fixed, impermeable and timeless (Soudien 1996.) As Soudien (1996, 1) notes, 'For more than four decades, as a result, young people were schooled and socialized in their own distinct universes'. With the downfall of apartheid these segregated schools were legally opened to all students regardless of their 'race' under the newly formed non-'racial' National Department of Education. However, as Botsis (2010, 6) succinctly points out, 'mere racial 'representivity' is not enough for integration and transformation, because the very categories we aim to integrate, drag with them their own baggage and complexity, steeped in the ideological substrate of apartheid'. In South Africa, as Jansen (2009) observes, no knowledge has been as

forcefully transmitted to children from their parents pre- and post-apartheid as that of the notion of 'racial' purity.

The fundamental shift within the education system post-apartheid centred on transforming learning centres from centres of oppression to places where the diverse backgrounds of all are respected. The importance of respecting cultural diversity is a central component of Unesco's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), which calls for the acknowledgment of otherness in all its forms. This Declaration emphasises the important role of education in promoting awareness of the value of cultural diversity and the need to improve curriculum design and teacher education to ensure the facilitation of intercultural dialogue. After 1994, however, educators and learners were faced with the considerable challenge which arose out of the drastically changing political climate, however, almost no one had been trained to teach in pluricultural and multilingual settings in a democratic style. In contrast, the majority of people had grown up and been educated under the apartheid system in an 'extremely authoritarian, oppressive and divided era' (Early Learning Resource Unit 1997, 3). Twenty years on, South Africa, and the education system, remains deeply divided and 'racial', socio-economic and gender oppression continue to mar daily life.

In 2001 then Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal noted that

> [R]ecent media and research reports suggest that despite major advances achieved since the first democratic elections, the educational experiences of a number of learners in South African schools are still dominated by the spectre of 'race'. This is despite the fact that we have dismantled the apartheid legislative framework that institutionalised racism in the education system' (Department of Education 200b1, 1).

Schools, as sites where complex issues overlap as competing agendas and perspectives come into contact (Samoff 2008), have been tasked with addressing transformation within the South African society. Working within a framework of non-racialism and non-sexism, schools are undergoing a fundamental reconceptualization of their identity and role in a new democracy (Samuels and Stephens 2000). The commitment of learning centres to decisively contribute towards assisting each and every individual to construct healthy personal, as well as social identities, is highlighted in the South African Schools Act which stipulates that the past system of education be replaced by one that will:

> [R]edress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the State…

Yet, with a long history of 'racially' segregated schooling the radically altered educational policies have not entirely displaced the 'race' norms which apartheid ideology and discourse institutionalised. Investigation into how transformation towards a non-'racial' education system is taking place and what this means for all involved is paramount. Yet, as Callinicos (Department of Education 2001b, 28) points out, 'teachers who value reconciliation and nation-building are loathe to stir up tension amongst children who are undergoing new and often difficult social skills in a still polarised and divided society'. What of these children growing up in a democratic South Africa? What effect does the continuing divisions on the one hand, and the discourse of 'non-racialism' on the other, have on how they come to see themselves and those around them?

3.2.1.4.1   *Research on 'race' and schooling in South Africa*

Previous studies on 'race' and schooling in South Africa that emerged in the late seventies critically emphasised 'the functionality of apartheid schooling in the transmission of specific 'racial', class and gender characteristics' (Soudien 1996, 34). Kallaway's (1984) edited volume, *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans,* as well as the acclaimed work by Christie and Collins (1982), assert that socialization is a process that is determined by structural forces which manifest themselves in families, institutions, schools and so forth. Other work such as Dube's (1985) *Racism and Education in South Africa*, together with the studies by Kallaway and Christie and Collins, show that in effect schooling during apartheid was organised to produce difference, be it of 'race' or class or both. While opening up the discussion about 'race' and schooling in important ways, studies such as those were based on a structural-functionalist position which served as the over-arching framework for understanding the complexities of society. Soudien (1996, 35) writes:

In seeking to account for the relationship between schooling and students, the terrain on which these explanations operated was that of the macro-system. How the discourse was meditated was not a concern of the approach. Seldom were explanations constructed from research conducted within small-scale settings involving individual people.

Exploring 'on the ground' and in detail how students engage with 'the project of domination', Soudien's studies, alongside work undertaken by Unterhalter et. al. (1991) and Christie (1990), highlight that 'students show astuteness in their assessments of matters such as 'race', gender and class' (Soudien 1996, 37). Thus, while the work confirmed much of the macro-inspired theory regarding 'race' – that young people have without a doubt been influenced by the 'racial' messages inherent in the curriculum – there is a rich diversity of thought amongst young people in relation to apartheid, segregation and other notions (Soudien 1996, Dawson 2007).

Yet, it was psychologists that clearly illustrated the impact of apartheid from the perspective of subjects 'on the ground'. In his seminal international study entitled '*The political life of children*' (1986), Coles shows how children, from a young age, are aware, often painfully so, of their 'place' in society. Coles dedicates a chapter in his book to the story of 'race' and nationalism in South Africa and illustrates how politics enters our lives early on and plays a fundamental role in how we come to see ourselves, others, and our place in the world. Starting in 1974, Coles travelled regularly to South Africa for more than a decade and interviewed children classified 'Black', 'Coloured' and 'White' in this 'beleaguered, tormented, utterly perplexing country' (Coles 1986, 180). His haunting, yet instructive, findings show how children were acutely aware of the 'racial' ideology and discourses circulating in society during this time and how they served as a force of subjection. The following two extracts refer to Coles's observation of children classified as 'White' and 'Coloured' respectively:

Even Afrikaner children, for all their racial pride in being white, will use a black crayon to outline themselves. What else – a white crayon? They know intuitively that white is a poor color when "definition" is the issue – to set oneself apart (to use a word!) from the whiteness of the paper. Occasionally a child will then make a point of filling in his or her face with orange – to emphasize whiteness. But most Afrikaner children, like their white counterparts all over the world, simply assume that the paper's whiteness is also *their* whiteness, or the whiteness of the person they are drawing (Coles 1986, 204-5).

At first I am a bit alarmed – this jumble of colors on this child's skin. Eventually, I will learn from her and others that many "colored" children in South Africa are quite confused about their situation – at a loss to know what to think, or draw or paint, as they try to get their (racial) bearings in this life. This confusion takes explicit form in the ways in which they color themselves colored, in the conflict of colors, actually, one sees in so many of their drawings (Coles 1986, 205).

Dawes and Finchilescu (2002) confirmed through their study that apartheid has had a real effect on the way in which young people come to see themselves, other young people as well as the broader social environment. The impact of this on social practice and intergroup relations is perhaps most effectively conveyed by quoting two students from their study (Dawes and Finchilescu 2002, 42), the first of which is a 'white', middle-class Afrikaner who asserts that:

> I am part of the Afrikaner nation which stands for its rights. I am white. I think the nation and the country is in a mess. Why should blacks and whites live together? Why was FW De Klerk chosen as State President? Why was Nelson Mandela released? De Klerk has allowed them to take over the country and to do with it what they have done elsewhere, break everything and burn everything. This South Africa does not have a future! PS: The new South Africa stinks!

The second extract, from a sixteen/seventeen year old 'black' subject reads:

> I am an African from South Africa; a black African who has cried and fought for many years for my country. We Africans are the only suffering nation. This is our land not the whites. People of South Africa it is time for peace…Oh Africans how long are we going to suffer in our land. Imagine in our own land. Why! Why we blacks. Why not whites why not coloured why not the slams (Muslims) or any other nation?

Many more examples are provided in this study which, as the extracts above show, are indicative of the hardness of the boundaries that young South Africans constructed around their identities during apartheid and around the time of transition. The subjectivities of young people, Soudien (1996) notes, are clearly and intricately bound up with the 'racial' inscriptions imposed by the apartheid regime. With regards to schooling, he asserts that 'it functions in the classroom and day-to-day business of life as the strategic means by which knowledge of who we are…is constantly reinforced' (Soudien 1996, 55).

   McKinney (2010) takes this thinking further as she employs poststructuralist theorizing of discourse and identity in her research on questions of 'race' and schooling in South Africa. McKinney interrogates the assimilationist findings of many studies on school desegregation post-1990, arguing that learners are taking up numerous discursive positionings, suggesting that 'learners are changing the culture of the school and expanding, rather than replacing their identity repertoires' (McKinney 2010, 192). While McKinney does not dispute that South African schools have been desegregated with an assimilationist agenda, she is interested in taking a more in-depth look at how learners from non-dominant groups engage with the school context. Her more nuanced

understanding of desegregation in an education setting has also been influenced by studies undertaken in other countries where, as discussed above, questions of identity construction and school performance among minority groups remains a major concern. Critiquing the assimilationist ideology within the US context, Carter (2006, 309) argues that 'subordinated groups can both believe and engage in education fully and still critique the norms of assimilation that exist in most schools'. For Carter (2006), it is the *cultural straddlers*, those that are able to operate as 'strategic navigators' across diverse contexts, which are most successful at this. While McKinney's study does not focus explicitly on the notion of 'race', her work highlights the need to undertake nuanced ethnographic work that describes and analyses the discursive positioning of learners as they move across distinct worlds and take up and perform various identity positions.

3.2.1.4.2   Official, Formal and Informal discourse framework

In this study, ideology, discourse and power are interrogated in order to highlight how the 'doing' of 'racialized' identities is conditioned by the structural organisation of society as well as institutions such as schools. Without interrogating the complex process of subject formation - working from the premise that in South Africa identities are discursively constructed within a 'racialized' matrix of power - very little will be done differently post apartheid. A key function of this research is, therefore, to explore these 'disparate messages' that children receive regarding 'who they are and who they ought to be'. Soudien (2001, 312), in line with Butler's thinking, highlights the importance of making discourses part of the analysis as it provides a 'working interpretive space for individuals and groups and are fluid and changeable'. The analytical framework developed by Soudien (1996, 2001) which is based on three significant discourses in education, namely the *official*, the *formal* and the *informal* – are usefully employed here. The Official discourse is the product of intense contestation and arises out of the struggle for political hegemony. Soudien adds that this is, however, dominated at any one moment in time, by the ideologies, views and perspectives of whichever political group holds power. With the end of apartheid, the new democratically elected government sought to rewrite the Official discourse in place during apartheid which was embodied in the curriculum, official government policy as well as the physical ordering of everyday life through policing, regimenting, and hierarchalising mechanisms (Soudien 1996, 2001). This discourse was physically

embodied through schools created as 'black' African, 'coloured', 'white' and 'Indian'/ 'Asian'. In overhauling this oppressive discourse, the anti-apartheid government implemented a human-rights based constitution and laws aimed at outlawing all forms of discrimination (Soudien 1996, 2001). Schools could no longer deny students access on 'racial' grounds, however, as Soudien (2001, 312) notes:

> Significantly…much of the physical landscape and the curriculum remained in place after the new government came into power. The Official discourse thus changed but it did so within the context of the physical and curricular grip of the old order.

Alongside the hegemonic official discourse one finds other discourses which exist as points of contradiction within the dominant discourse. However, these discourses fall predominantly outside of the Official order and are represented in public and private forms of both behaviour and thought. Two such discourses that Soudien identifies as existing in schools he terms Formal and Informal discourses. Formal discourse is defined as 'that to which the school as a community seeks to commit itself', while the Informal discourse is characterised by 'the world of social relationships which young people inhabit, associated with their social, cultural and leisure interests' (Soudien 2001, 312). These three discourses work together to produce the discursive terrain on and through which young children engage in identity-work. Interrogating, through the Official, Formal and Informal discourse framework set out by Soudien, how and why children 'do' their 'raced' identities as they do them, will allow me to gain insight into the identity construction tensions which exist in a post-apartheid classroom and playground.

3.3   PART III: IDENTITY FORMATION, YOUNG CHILDREN AND EARLY SCHOOLING

3.1.1   Positioning young children in research

The question 'what are we to make of children?' has been posed since the earliest Socratic dialogues (Jenks 1992) and is intimately related to the need to engage critically with the complexity of both epistemological and methodological questions and concerns that arise in the research process (Christensen and James 2008). Notions of the 'child' and 'childhood' are social and historical constructions which at different points in space and time have come to mean different things. Jenks (1992, 9) points out that after centuries of debate a consensus has still not been reached over the issue of children or childhood:

> Whether to regard children as pure, bestial, innocent, corrupt or even as we view our adult selves; whether they think and reason as we do, are immersed in a receding tide of inadequacy or are possessors of a clarity of vision which we have through experience lost; whether their forms of language, games and conventions are alternatives to our own, imitations or crude precursors of our own now outgrown, or simply transitory impenetrable trivia amusing to witness and recollect; whether they are constrained and we have achieved freedom, or we have assumed constraint and they are truly free – all these considerations, and more, continue to exercise our theorizing about the child in social life.

The different approaches adopted by researchers are based on a variety of disciplinary and epistemological positions – psychology, sociology, history, anthropology as well as applied research in a variety of fields (Christensen and James 2008). Each line of enquiry has in turn shaped the understanding of how young children see, experience, and act in their worlds (Gigengack 2008). How children are discursively positioned in the social world needs critical interrogation to understand how this positioning influences how children are treated. The deconstruction of notions of the child and childhood are in line with the poststructuralist work of Judith Butler (1990) who calls for the emergence of 'the subject' to be interrogated, asking through what processes subjects come into existence. Studies looking at the ontological state of these two notions have brought to light various assumptions which serve as the basis upon which these notions are founded. Through his genealogical analysis of childhood, Jenks (1992) is able to challenge the routine definition of the 'child' as the 'natural meaningful order of being', and shows that our understanding of children and 'childhood' is not an ontological given. The suspension of these notions as 'real' and 'truths' allows for the

interrogation of why 'child' and 'childhood' came to mean what they did (and do), whose interest this serves, and how these notions are maintained. Perhaps the most obvious way in which the identity categories 'child' and 'childhood' are constructed to seem like fixed universal categories is through the 'crystallization of conventions into institutional forms like family, nurseries, clinics and schools, all agencies specifically designed to process the status as uniform entity' (Jenks 1992, 11). As an effect of these institutions, the child thus emerges in contemporary culture as a formal category as well as a social status accompanied by programmes of care and education. Jenks (1992, 12) shows how everyday language in contemporary societies serves to further entrench these categories as 'natural' by speaking of 'being a child, having been a child, having children, having to relate to children'. In her analysis of gender, sex and sexuality, Butler (1990, 1993) makes similar arguments for the need to suspend these categories as ontological states, and to see them rather as discursively produced categories. Thus, as stated earlier in this chapter, Butler's thinking on the constructedness of identity categories is useful in destabilising and deconstructing a range of concepts which have over time become 'naturalised'.

Woodhead and Faulkner (2008) note that contemporary researchers are able to draw from a diverse array of frameworks as well as methods in order to situate children in research. However, the dominating paradigms framing child studies are development psychology and sociology, in particular, the sociology of childhood[34], which emerged in the 1980s and broke with the assumptions of development psychology and socialization frameworks. According to James and Prout (1990), developmental psychology provides a framework of explanation regarding the child's 'nature', and has been instrumental in promoting the concept of the 'naturalness' of childhood itself. The following table schematically contrasts the assumptions underlying these two dominant approaches.

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[34] Thorne (1998) notes that this field has close ties to both the history and anthropology of childhoods, indicating the blurring lines between disciplines and the inability to define 'the child' strictly according to one paradigm.

Developmental Psychology	Sociology of childhood
Roots in biology; naturalizing of the child; tendency to universalize and to work within epistemological and methodological traditions associated with positivism.	De-naturalizing of age and age relations; emphasis on the social construction of childhood (ties to constructionist views of family, gender, race). Tendency to work within interpretive traditions of social research.
Children framed in terms of a-historical "becoming" (adults in the making), e.g. in theorizing stages of development and in viewing the present in terms of likely outcomes or "endpoints".	Attention to children as actors in the present and in historical, contingent time. Emphasis on children's agency and voices.
Starts with the individual and moves to social and historical contexts, often in ways which sociologists find inadequate.	Starts with the social and moves from there to individuals. Emphasis on social relations, contexts, meanings and social structure.
Tied to professional practice, e.g. child therapy, testing, pedagogy – tradition of making normative judgments.	Anchored primarily in the world of research – cautious about making non-native judgments; action focused on politics and policy rather than intervention at the individual level .

Table 3. Contrasting assumptions underlying two dominant approaches to understanding children. (Source: Thorne 1998, 104).

3.1.2 Theories of child development (Piaget and Vygotsky)

Drawing on developmental psychology, constructivism maintains that children are active and obtain information from their environment in order to construct and organise their interpretations of the world (Corsaro 2005). The constructivist approach is perhaps best represented by Piaget's theory of intellectual development (see Ginsberg and Opper 1969) and Vygotsky's socio-cultural view of human development (Vygotsky 1978). Piaget's work is the most influential example of the constructivist paradigm (Woodhead and Faulkner 2008), and centres on analysing the evolution of knowledge in children. Such thinking led him to carry out many empirical studies of children and their development. His work is particularly interesting in that it has generated much debate, giving rise to numerous critics as well as supporters. Piaget's work has been criticized for focussing predominantly on individual development (Boocock and Scott 2005; Corsaro 2005), with the researcher Margaret Donaldson (Woodhead and Faulkner 2008)

claiming that Piaget's experimental context and tasks were so far removed from children's normal, everyday experience that it was difficult for them to relate to and understand these tasks. Donaldson and her colleagues, in modifying some of Piaget's experimental tasks, were able to make them more meaningful and claimed that under more favourable circumstances, the reasoning displayed by young children was much more sophisticated that Piaget maintained (Woodhead and Faulkner 2008). Furthermore, it was recognised that what appeared as children's faulty, immature reasoning was in fact an indication of 'children's ingenious attempts to create sensible meanings for what are, to them, nonsensical situations and contexts' (Woodhead and Faulkner 2008, 26). While the experimental approach gained some credibility thanks to the work of Donaldson and others, it remained the case that valuable aspects of a child's thinking went ignored. The rich, inner and social lives of children, as evidenced in observing their play, for example, suggests that their thinking is multifaceted and does not always follow logic or reason as suggested by Piagetian approaches (Engel 2005). It must be acknowledged that while various aspects of Piaget's studies have been critiqued, he had a deep respect for children and listened to them closely. As a result, he has been credited for being ahead of his time in 'encouraging children to talk freely, thus allowing their thinking to unfold and reveal itself to an attentive researcher' (Woodhead and Faulkner 2008, 25). In several ways, Piaget's goal – to encourage greater respect for young children's ways of thinking – remains central to present day sociological studies with children.

While Corsaro (2005) holds that constructivism generally moved theory and research in developmental psychology in the right direction, James and Prout (1990) are more scathing about the work of how theories of child development have in fact imposed particularly western conceptualisations of childhood for all children, effectively concealing that childhood is a social construction. The first problem that James and Prout (1990) identify with this approach is the focus on 'development' as well as three themes related to it, namely, 'rationality', 'naturalness', and 'universality'. Moving beyond psychology to influence the sociological and socio-political contexts of the study of childhood, the authors note that 'the concept of 'development' inextricably links the facts of immaturity, such as dependence, to the social aspects of childhood' (James and Prout 1990, 10). Their criticism of Piaget's work links directly to their criticism directed at the dominant development approach to childhood (James and Prout 1990, 11):

> In Piaget's account, child development has a particular structure, consisting of a series of predetermined stages, which lead towards the eventual achievement of logical competence. This is the mark of adult rationality. Within such a conceptual scheme children are marginalised beings awaiting temporal passage, through the acquisition of cognitive skill, into the social world of adults.

The main concern of these authors is that Piaget is making an individual child into the 'universal', suggesting that all children are represented by his theory. Furthermore, they stress that Piaget's work has become orthodoxy in that it lies at the heart of educational practice and serves as the foundation upon which much work on child development is carried out. While constructionist theories provided a lens through which to refocus sociological studies of children and childhood, especially since they saw the child as an active agent, they focused predominantly on developmental outcomes. Constructionist theories thereby failed to take seriously the 'complexity of social structure and children's collective agency' (Corsaro 2005, 27).

3.3.3 Traditional socialization theories

Socialization theories make use of two different models, namely the deterministic model and the constructivist model (Corsaro 2005). Influenced by the dominant philosophy of individualism, the deterministic model focuses on addressing the appropriation of the child by society, in other words, the child is trained to eventually become a competent and contributing member of the society (Corsaro 2005). In line with this thinking, children adopt a predominantly *passive* role in their own socialization (Boocock and Scott 2005), hence the use of the term 'deterministic'. This model gave rise to two approaches, the functionalist models and the reproductive models, which differed primarily in their views of society (Corsaro 2005).

Functionalism was popular during the 1950s and 1960s and considers societies and social groups as systems of interrelated parts that work together in relative harmony without producing persistent conflicts that cannot be resolved or regulated (Boocock and Scott 2005). With regards to children, functionalist models focused on the superficial aspects of socialization: 'what the child needed to internalize and which parental child-rearing or training strategies were used to ensure such internalization' (Corsaro 2005, 8). The focus, therefore, was on looking at what children should *become*, on how they should be socialised in order to ensure the continuation of a functioning society. Some authors, such as Talcott Parsons, went as far as stating that children

should be considered a threat to society and must therefore be shaped and moulded to fit in (Corsaro 2005). Until socialization had occurred, children were considered unruly beings that were capable of destabilising social norms designed to maintain the social system. According to this model, adults were given power over children (exercised through reinforcements and punishments) to ensure that the supposedly ordered and coherent society was maintained. This served to reinforce other regulatory powers that were responsible for 'naturalising' norms perceived as integral to a functioning society. This view was supported by authors such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bernstein (1981), who argue that the internalization of the functional requisites of society could serve as a mechanism of social control, which leads to the social reproduction or maintenance of, for example, class inequalities (Corsaro 2005, 8-9).

The second subsidiary approach within the deterministic model are as reproductive models. With functionalist models losing favour, reproductive models focused on the advantages and disadvantages experienced by those with more or less access to cultural resources (Corsaro 2005). Reproductive theorists look at the differential treatment of individuals, such as in the educational system, which serve to support the dominant class system (Corsaro 2005). While these models duly recognise the effect of social conflict and inequality on the socialization of children, they stand to be critiqued, along with functionalist models, in a number of ways. Corsaro (2005, 9) highlights some of the main concerns of these deterministic models:

- Overconcentration on the outcomes of socialization
- Underestimation of the active and innovative capacity of all members of society
- Neglecting the historical and contingent nature of social action and reproduction
- Simplifying highly complex processes
- Overlooking the importance of children and childhood in society.

The idea that children passively internalise what is going on around them in society is highly problematic, and fails to take account of the intricate and complex ways in which children act on, and can bring about, changes in society. While children and childhood are undermined by such theories, Parsons' labelling children as a 'threat' opens up

interesting avenues for discussion regarding how necessary it may seem to some to patrol the boundaries of social norms and values which are perceived as giving society its structure and thus ensuring its maintenance. Theories of socialization were therefore based primarily upon adult concerns for the reproduction of social order (James and Prout 1990).

The notion that 'children are the future', a commonly used phrase, suggests that they are still *in the process* of becoming fully recognised beings, in other words, adults. This is succinctly addressed by Jenks (1992, 13):

> From within a variety of disciplines, perspectives and sets of interests childhood receives treatment as a stage, a structured becoming, never as a course of action nor a social practice. The kind of 'growth' metaphors that are used in discussion about children are all of the character of what is yet to be, which is also presupposed; thus childhood is spoken of as 'becoming', as a *tabula rasa*, as laying the foundations, taking on, growing up, preparation, inadequacy, inexperience, immaturity and so on. Such metaphors all seem to speak of a relation to an unexplicated but nevertheless firmly established, rational adult world. (Jenks 1992, 13).

It is clear that the main purpose of theorising the child as Jenks describes above is to reinforce and maintain the normative structure of the adult/parent world. If the logic of the child/adult binary is applied to the above excerpt, then it is apparent that if the child is spoken of as 'becoming' then the adult has 'become'; if the child represents inadequacy, inexperience and immaturity, then the adult is defined by adequacy, experience and maturity. As Jenks (1992) notes, the sociological world has been structured around models of human conduct, which is essentially personified by adulthood. According to Jenks (1992), attempts to understand the 'child' and 'childhood' are based on two positions which are each dependant on the other for its existence – namely the position of the 'child' and that of the 'adult'. According to the conceptual frameworks that influence children's representation (Christensen 1994), it is only possible to theorise about the child by juxtaposing this identity category with that of the adult. This positioning has resulted in the negative recovery of 'child' in this relationship, which is comparable to the relationship between the anthropologist (the self-styled civilized man) and the savage, where the anthropologist 'knew' the savage to be different to himself and thus worthy of study, in the same way that the child is different and in need of explanation (Jenks 1992, 10). Since it is the adults who have the power to define and regulate the concept of the 'child', it figures that the child has in effect become the 'other' to which the adult can compare her/himself. This understanding of adults as having regulatory power over how children are defined is

imperative for our understanding of how children are positioned in the classroom, for example, where adult authority is regularly exercised and moreover, deemed necessary for control. The archetype of the child is therefore sustained in numerous ways, including through language and institutions which all serve to patrol the boundaries around childhood and social status, and express the control component exercised in the framework of that social system (Jenks 1992). It must, however, be noted that the constant need to patrol these boundaries indicates their precariousness and therefore provides the child with the agency to subvert the categories by which s/he is routinely defined. This follows Butler's thinking in that she shows, via gender, that although norms are designed to govern interaction, they need to be continually recited and performed, opening up the possibilities for them to be recited differently. It is evident that any analysis involving children requires the opening up of the boundaries that have been placed around the experience of childhood, 'whether such boundaries are common-sensical, educational, psychological, medical or biological in type' (Jenks 1992, 10). In this way the meaning of childhood, as constituted in discourse, can be interrogated. An important starting point is the understanding that the child is constituted purposively within theory in order to support and perpetuate the fundamental versions of 'man, action, order, language and rationality within particular theories' (Jenks 1992, 23). Children are being more widely recognised as active agents in the construction of social worlds, as actors in their own right who are 'engaged in making sense of and recreating the social worlds they inherit' (Stephens 1995, 24). This has been a crucial shift in the sociology of childhood, because as James and Prout (1990, 14) identify, 'Failure to be harmoniously socialised into society's functioning meant, in effect, a failure to be human'.

3.3.4 Towards a poststructurally informed conceptualisation of young children

Pence and Nsamenang (2008) indicate that around the same time that psychology and child development were being subjected to a poststructrualist critique, the field of sociology was experiencing an increased interest in the child, with the publication of an edited volume by Chris Jenks (1982) entitled *The Sociology of Childhood.* This work drew from other disciplines including history, psychology and literature and in the introduction Jenks lays the foundation of what was to become the 'toushstone of an emerging sociology of childhood literature' (Pence and Nsemanang 2008, 16), thereby

distinguishing it from child development literature. This helped establish a tradition for studying children and childhood in the field of sociology (Corsaro 2005) and included a marked increase in discourses on notions of the child and childhood. However, this development was slow to come about as evidenced by a survey of textbooks, scholarly journals, and theoretical work that documented the 'negligible place children occupy in sociological writings' (Ambert 1987, 17 cited in Boocock and Scott 2005, x) as late as the mid-1980s. Things began to change when, by the late 1980s, funding was made available to an esteemed researcher of childhood, Qvortrup, alongside other European colleagues, to develop a series of forums to investigate 'Childhood and Society', which in turn led to the publication of *Childhood Matters* (Qvortrup et al. 1994), the founding of the journal *Childhood*, as well as the creation of a thematic group to address childhood issues in the International Sociological Association (Pence and Nsamenang 2008). While Corsaro (2005) questions why children were for so long ignored in the discipline, Qvortrup (1993) believes that they have in fact been more marginalised than ignored. As voices representing other marginalised groups such as women and minorities began to be considered, so more attention began to be paid to the lives of children (Corsaro 2005). This process of marginalisation is reflected by the subordinate position that children have in many societies, as well as theoretical conceptualisations of childhood and socialization that often neglect 'the current lives, needs, and desires of children' (Corsaro 2005, 6).

As discussed above, much like notions of identity, the concepts of 'child' and 'childhood' are the effects rather that the cause of institutional practices and discourses circulating in a given society. In concurrence with various authors who adopt a poststructuralist paradigm within which they make sense of their experiences with young children, I believe that the young child:

> Is not innocent, apart from the world, to be sheltered in some nostalgic representation of the past reproduced by adults. Rather the young child is in the world as it is today, embodies the world, is acted upon by the world – but also acts on it and makes meaning from it. (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence 1999, 50-1).

As alluded to earlier, children have been positioned, alongside women, as 'muted groups' in studies of society. In other words, as James and Prout (1990, 7) point out: 'The history of the study of childhood in the social sciences has been marked not by an absence of interest in children…but by their silence'. In order to challenge the marginalisation and silencing of children in the research process, new paradigms have

been introduced as a way of countering traditional theories on socialization (James and Prout 1990). The aim of these emerging paradigms is to consider 'children as people to be studied in their own right, and not just as receptacles of adult teaching' (Hardman 1973, 87). Across the social sciences child agency and reflexiveness regarding her/his social and political world have been undermined, but it is encouraging to see that increasingly children are being positioned as dynamic agents who can reflect, resist and reinterpret their social worlds.

Working from what was thus seen as the inadequacy of developmental psychology and its inability to frame childhood as a social construction, James and Prout (1990) put forward what they termed an 'emergent paradigm' in the sociology of childhood, a new interpretive frame for contextualising the early years of human life. The gradual increase in awareness that the meanings of 'child' and 'childhood' might differ across time and space served to destabilise models of child development and socialisation (James and Prout 1990). One of the biggest obstacles facing any destabilisation of these models is the fact that thinking about childhood extends beyond sociology and into the everyday lives and practices of people. Ideas of socialisation are, for example, evident in the practices of educators, and have become what Foucault terms 'regimes of truth' (James and Prout 1990). The usefulness of Foucault's work in thinking about the positioning of children in society is described by James and Prout (1990, 23):

> He suggests that these operate rather like self-fulfilling prophecies: ways of thinking about childhood fuse with institutionalised practices to produce self-conscious subjects (teachers, parents and children) who think (and feel) about themselves through the terms of those ways of thinking. 'The truth' about themselves and their situation is thus self-validating. Breaking into this with another 'truth' (produced by another way of thinking about childhood) may prove difficult.

Since notions of childhood are embedded in a matrix of significations, one of the main theoretical tasks for developing any new way of thinking about children and childhood requires taking a critical look at what this matrix consists of and how it is regulated. The tools for this can be drawn from current poststructuralist thinking. In line with this thinking, different discourses of childhood constitute children and childhood in different ways, in both academic knowledge *and* in social practices and institutions (James and Prout 1990).

The idea that subjects are constituted within and through discursive practices brings together the individual/society binarism that characterises socialisation and child

development theories. This bringing together of the individual and society represents the dissolution of distinct boundaries between sociology and psychology as, write James and Prout (1990), discourse is conceptualised as traversing social institutions, practices, everyday life and subjectivity. While James and Prout (1990, 26) believe that sociology and social anthropology might retain their distinctive concerns by focusing on the 'effects of discourse in the constitution of practices and institutions rather than of subjectivity and psychic processes', this is not, I believe, a particularly fruitful or even possible endeavour. It is essential that these boundaries are continually blurred in order to open up ways of thinking about questions such as those of subject formation. Butler (1990) makes this point clear when she notes that in order to not lose sight of the 'pscyhic life of power', various modes of analysis need to be adopted in the interrogation of the forces of subjectification. This is supported by Hook and Howarth (2005, 510) who call for a much more varied and diverse approach to be adopted in psychological research looking at subject formation:

> If it is the case that subjectification precedes psychological subjectivity – and the most rudimentary themes of Marxist and poststructuralist analysis suggests it is – then we cannot presume an autonomous psychological individual above and beyond social/material forces which constitute their subjecthood. For this reason critical social psychological forms of analysis need to be more multi-disciplinary, more multi-perspectival than has traditionally been the case.

While an in-depth analysis of childhood is not the main objective of this thesis, the discussion above serves to ground this study firmly within childhood studies, starting therefore, by showing how children are theoretically positioned in this study. Their position is based on the understanding that there is no 'real child' or any 'authentic experience of childhood' (James and Prout 1990, 27), but rather, that different discursive practices produce different childhoods across time and space. While the ethnographic study presented here does not pretend to get closer to any 'truth' about children or childhood, it aims to provide insight into the life-worlds of young children and how they actively 'do' their identity work. This work of 'situated interpretation' has aimed to give not only agency, but voice, to children often marginalised and silenced in research practices.

Our understanding of identity formation processes in young children is closely linked to how notions such as 'children' and 'childhood' are conceptualised. Traditionally, identity formation in young children has been perceived as being about processes of development, socialisation and enculturation, however, contemporary

theories of identity formation are more cognisant of how children construct and reconstruct their identities within a specific context, and how they come to 'negotiate multiple, shifting and sometimes competing identities, especially within complex, multi-ethnic and multicultural contexts' (Brooker and Woodhead 2008, ix). Children participate in and create complex social worlds in both innovative and creative ways (see Opie and Opie 1959; Corsaro 2005).

Analysing how young children construct and negotiate their 'race' identity is by no means a new idea. The pioneering work of authors such as Dr. Kenneth and Mamie Clark paved the way for an exploration of what living in a highly 'racialised' society might mean for the identity formation of young children (Clark and Clark 1939). According to Van Ausdale and Feagin (1996), the social sciences have been examining children's attitudes toward 'race' since the 1930s. The literature, which includes research in the areas of in-group 'racial' and ethnic orientations (Aboud 1977, Spencer 1987), attitudes toward others (Williams and Morland 1976), as well as how 'race' is used in friend selection (Schofield and Francis), shows that, as Ramsey (1987) notes, 'racial' identification and group orientation are pertinent issues in the lives of children. More recently, authors generally working within the field of sociology have begun to seek children's views about these matters in a more detailed and nuanced fashion. The recognition that children are competent social actors who actively create and negotiate meaning in a number of ways including, for example, through social relations, stories and play, have led researchers to explore with children what 'race' might mean to them and why (see Van Ausdale and Feagin 1996, 2001; Connolly 2008; Corsaro 2003). Departing both theoretically and methodologically from previous research, the latter authors shift away from traditional child development theory as a means to explain their findings, and make use of participant observation to collect data for their respective studies. Connolly (1998), Van Ausdale (1996) and Van Ausdale and Feagin (1996, 2001) have done extensive work on young children and the formation of 'racial' and gender identities. Both use Piaget's model of child development to demonstrate that a particular understanding of how children develop can come to influence how identity formation in the early years of life is understood. For example, according to this model, five to six year old children are located within the 'pre-operational stage' of child development which sees them as socially incompetent and lacking the basic skills to appreciate the perspectives of others (egocentrism), to look beyond the immediate to see the bigger picture (centration) and to think logically and rationally (lack an appreciation

of reversibility and conservation) (Connolly 1998). Van Ausdale's study (1996; Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001) challenged the notions that young children were either unable to know 'race' or ethnicity due to their egocentric stage of cognitive development, or that where 'racial' or ethnic concepts were found to be in use, the children were using them 'only in imitative, naïve ways, with little or no awareness of the wider social meaning' (Van Ausdale 1996, 2). Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001, 5) challenge this school of thought that maintains that children are:

> [C]ognitively incapable of either feeling or expressing certain social concepts in a serious or meaningful way unless they receive active adult instruction. Meaningful understanding of major social abstractions such as race, ethnicity, gender, or class does not develop in children until they are at least grown to elementary school age. In effect, then, young children cannot 'do' race or ethnicity in a serious or meaningful way.

Earlier research on these effects was based predominantly on simplistic psychological testing[35], and while in more recent times qualitative studies have been undertaken (predominantly in the United States of America and Europe), many of them present an 'all too simple and restricted understanding of the nature of racism in children's lives' (Connolly 1998, 4). This can, in many instances, be attributed to the researcher's preference for traditional child development models and socialisation theories. Connolly (2008, 174) stresses that:

> It is not surprising that researchers who have this as their starting point would also be led to see the children of this age as being passively socialised into the pre-existing racial and gender identities that have been set for them. In contrast, accepting young children's social competence and agency offers a very different way of understanding the impact of race and gender in their lives; one that focuses on the active role that the children themselves play in appropriating, re-working and reproducing particular racial and gender identities within the specific contexts that they find themselves.

This is supported by the work of Van Ausdale (1996, 1) who takes this further when she asserts that 'according to previous research, before about seven to eight years of age the use of 'racial' categorization does not enter children's social repertoire'. However, studies by early childhood researchers increasingly confirm that children as young as three years are 'racially' conscious and are able to display negative attitudes towards people from different cultural backgrounds (Van Ausdale 1996, Van Ausdale and Feagin 1996).

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[35] Here Connolly (1998) makes reference to attitudinal tests and sociometric analyses. In relation to attitudinal tests, he gives the example of offering a child a white or black doll and drawing conclusions as to the nature of their racial attitudes from the colour of the doll they chose.

Poststructuralism, post-colonial theories, and theories on white privilege have been employed to challenge the more prevalent lines of inquiry of cognitive developmental psychology and sociocultural perspectives (MacNaughton 2006) which have dominated our understanding of children and their engagement with the world around them. This is vital to understand the ways in which the discursive environment opens up or limits subject identification for young children, as well as the 'pedagogical implications of this way of thinking' in order to create classroom communities where the processes of identity formation, integration and empathy can be fostered (O'Loughlin 2001). This is especially pertinent to explore in the education system, as Danish early childhood researcher Stig Broström (2002) notes that children who make the transition to the education system successfully will 'feel suitable' in their new setting. 'Feeling suitable' comprise of various aspects and includes the child *looking* suitable (and not too different from other children), *dressing* suitably, *speaking* suitably (and not in a language no-one understands), *behaving* suitably, *eating* suitably, and *playing* suitably. What is defined as 'suitable' is determined by prevailing ideologies and discourses in societies as well as educational communities.

Young children entering the formal education system come into contact with an array of subject positions that are bounded by both implicit and explicit norms and practices which define who and what represent socially intelligible subjects. In this formative period of a young child's life they are continually exposed to the operation of regulatory power that demarcates what constitutes legitimate subjectivity, and this relates closely to children's performances in schooling (Coffey et al. 2006). This notion of performativity, that is, 'the idea that identity does not prefigure action but is constituted through action, discourses or the words we speak and behave' (Coffey et al. 2006) forms the theoretical matrix of this ethnographic study on young children's 'racialized' identities in a post-apartheid public school.

3.3.5   Interrogating 'raced' identities in early schooling

Framed by such a paradigm, questions on the impact of, for example, 'race' and gender in the lives of young children focuses on 'the active role that the children themselves play in appropriating, re-working and reproducing particular 'racial' and gender identities within the specific contexts that they find themselves' (Connolly 2008, 174). Children growing up in today's world need to be well-prepared to live with difference

and have their perception of self and others continually challenged as people lay claim to a multitude of origins and diverse histories. My interrogation of the complex experiences of children at an early schooling site required a constant questioning regarding how it was that they constructed themselves and others, especially in relation to the identity concept 'race', and what part educators, the school and the broader society played in these processes. This required that I trouble old and new discourses that served to position children, and educators, in particular ways, and explore how the research participants made use of these discourses in active, diverse and occasionally subversive ways. While the young children who form part of this study were born more than ten years after the end of apartheid, they are engaging in identity-work in a discursive environment where 'race' remains a fundamental part of both personal and social identities. Yet, as outlined earlier in this chapter, no identity concept is static, and how 'raced' identities are taken up, negotiated, expressed and subverted in a dramatically altered political, social and economic landscape – that of post-apartheid South Africa – remains a largely unexplored domain.

Understanding these processes of how young children become 'raced' is imperative, since several studies have shown that children as young as three years display 'racial' prejudice and act on it (for a review see MacNaughton 2006), while early childhood provides an opportune moment to create positive awareness about diversity (Lee and Van Keulen 2007). Furthermore, children are aware that differences in skin colour, language, gender and physical ability are connected with privilege and power (Aboud 1988; Derman-Sparks 1989). In stratified societies prejudice in children appears to be more pronounced (Aboud 1988), which can negatively influence the formation of identities, as well as physical self-concept in young children (Katz 1982). Researchers investigating 'racial' identity seem therefore to support the understanding that the impact of 'race' and racism, alongside questions regarding 'racial' issues, is felt early on in childhood (Tatum 1997).

Studies exploring how 'race' is worked and re-worked in early childhood are predominantly from the United States of America and Europe (see Connolly 1998). This is reiterated by Mac Naughton (2006) who, in presenting an overview of different schools of thought on respect for diversity in early childhood, notes that about ninety percent of the work that she drew from to compile the review originated in the United States of America. Mac Naughton (2006) acknowledges that the history of 'race relations' within a specific country will signify the specific ways in which 'race' is

taken up, and worked with, in the process of subjectivication. It is therefore imperative that before practices promoting respect for diversity are implemented an understanding of regional nuances and specificities are achieved. MacNaughton, Cruz and Hughes (2003) point out that in Australia almost no empirical or theoretical knowledge exists that details how preschool children construct their understandings of diversity as well as their sense of self. The work that has been undertaken reveals, importantly, that children know that how they categorize people matters to adults; that skin colours matters to them, and that this directly affects their engagement with early education as well as their relationships with others (see MacNaughton 2001; MacNaughton and Davies 2001).

In South Africa, there is a growing body of research which recognises the agency and role of children in society (Barbarin and Richter 2001; Bray and Brandt 2005; Gooskens 2006; Ramphele 2000; Reynolds 1989; Reynolds 1995; Ndebele 1995). Furthermore, as the work of, for example, Coles (1986) and Stephens (1995) shows, paying close attention to children's lived experience of daily life can tell us a lot about what is going on in the world around us. A study undertaken by Dawes and Finchilescu (2002) looks at issues of the psychological aspects of 'racial' identity and prejudice amongst children post-apartheid, while work by Christie (1990), Soudien (2001, 2007) and Dolby (2001) focus on identity construction and schooling centred on youth. These latter two studies show that questioning how learners negotiate identity categories and schooling in the New South Africa is imperative to understand processes of integration and transformation. Soudien (2007) has undertaken extensive work analysing the complexity of 'race', gender and class in the lives of contemporary South African youth, and has shown that school's play an instrumental role in the identity formation process of adolescents. He points out that schools 'struggle with this role' having received no significant help in dealing with this, and it is therefore still common to find incidents of racism in many schools (Soudien 2007, xv). Youth, are, however, not passive or powerless in this process:

> …many young people, in these schools where they are meeting each other for the first time, are rewriting the country's racial script and introducing new and innovative ways of managing their identities.

In Dolby's (2001) ethnographic study looking at the construction of 'race' amongst youth in post-apartheid South Africa, she notes that an acceptance of the multiple constructions of 'race' and racism raises important questions regarding the design as

well as the focus of educational research that examines these and other identity categories. She stresses the value of such work as seen in the following excerpt:

> If we are to understand and intervene in the ways in which race functions within a school setting, it seems imperative that we ask questions about what race is, and how it circulates, reproduces, and changes in that environment (Dolby 2001, 115).

Further afield, the work of Serra (2004, 2006) looks at questions of identity, ethnicity and violence among youth attending an ethnically diverse high school in Catalonia, Spain. While he observed firsthand the serious consequences of practices of racism ranging from insults to aggressions and fights, racist discourses gave rise to numerous other forms of violence that were not necessarily physical but also psychic or material (Serra 2004). This recognition spurred him to take a closer look at 'how racist rhetoric was hegemonic, encouraging more general forms of violence' (Serra 2004, 444). It is imperative to note, however, that that in many instances there was in fact little or not contact among local and so-called immigrant individuals (Serra 2004). Self-segregation was therefore a frequent practice in this setting with students expressing no desire to get to know those deemed 'other'. Such discourses of exclusion served to sanction the acts of physical violence carried out by particular students against so-called immigrant individuals (Serra 2004).

Soudien, Dolby and Serra are aware of the complexities of 'race' and how it manifests and is performed in the daily lives of youth, however, very little work has been undertaken which attempts to achieve a similar understanding of these complexities of 'race' among young children in South Africa. This is perhaps because, as Woodhead and Brooker (2008, 1) note, 'Traditionally this has not been seen as important for this age group'. Yet, the increasingly diverse settings in which children find themselves can result in experiences of exclusion or discrimination as a result of inequalities rooted in the social and economic circumstances of families and communities. 'Racial', gender and class discrimination can all impact on the identity formation process and affects the young child as much as it does any other group. The position which I put forward in this study exploring how young children come to take up 'raced' identities in post-apartheid South Africa is that we need to pay particular attention to how this category is discursively constructed and imbued with meaning within the school setting. The categories of, for example, male/female and 'black'/white' have been constructed through social and linguistic structures of which

bipolarity is a main feature. Davies (2003, xi), writing about gender identity in young children, notes that 'the assumption of bipolarity of physiological difference…serves as the ground on which social selves are constituted'. This is in line with poststructuralist theory which deconstructs that which has been defined as 'natural' showing that these 'facts of the real world' are a metaphysical construction (Davies 2003). Moving away from this bipolarity is necessary if we are to account for the hugely complex and unfinished process that *is* the subject. Carrim (2001, 50) notes that one of the greatest challenges facing sociological studies on identity is 'the paralysing, and at that, unhelpful, logic of bipolarity'. Bipolarity is best represented as an either/or approach and is rarely unable to conceive of something as being 'both' simultaneously (Carrim 2001). These binary modes of thinking, in line with modernist thought, makes invisible the complex way in which all the elements interact simultaneously in the subjects identities.

CHAPTER 4   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

4.1   Why ethnography?

One thing remains constant about our humanity – that we must never stop trying to tell stories of who we think we are. Equally, we must never stop wanting to listen to each other's stories. If we ever stopped, it would all be over.
Behar (2003, 37).

In order to engage with young children on questions about their social realities and lived experiences, an ethnographic research approach was adopted. Resting on an epistemological stance that 'if you want to understand someone's world, you have to get inside it' (O´Reilly 2009, 67), ethnography provides the researcher with an opportunity to obtain detailed and nuanced insights into the life-worlds of the research participants. Of course, the complexity of the social world makes this a messy business and what follows in these pages is by no means a definitive account of how children come to construct and negotiate their 'raced', gendered and class identities on a daily basis in a public school setting. Fetterman (2010, xi) points out that 'ethnography is more that a 1-day hike through the woods. It is an ambitious journey through the complex world of social interaction', making the field both a 'chaotic and hugely complex place' (Blommaert and Jie 2010, 1). Indeed, immersing myself in the life-world of the five and six year old children, their educators and caregivers, highlighted the complexity, the confusion, and the intricacies of what they spoke about, their fears, dreams, power relations and the ways in which they saw the world and interacted with one another. This is not least because, as Blommaert and Jie (2010, 3) succinctly put it:

> People are not cultural or linguistic catalogues, and most of what we see as their cultural and social behaviour is performed without reflecting on it and without an active awareness that this is actually something they *do*. Consequently, it is not a thing they have an opinion about, nor an issue that can be comfortably put in words when you ask about it. Ethnographic fieldwork is aimed at finding out things that are often not seen as important but belong to the implicit structures of people's lives. Asking is indeed very often the worst possible way of trying to find out.

The ethnographic tool of participant observation permits the researcher to move beyond 'asking' and thus glean insight into the ways in which participants perform cultural and social behaviour and what this might mean. Ethnography has its roots in anthropology yet, as disciplinary boundaries have shifted and become blurred, it has been influenced by, and employed in, other areas of study such as sociology and education. The study

presented in this thesis is well suited to an ethnographic approach as it provides the opportunity to look at human interaction as a cultural process rather than individual psychology (Spindler and Hammond 2006). This is an important distinction as education and its processes are currently located within complex, globalised societies. The importance of moving away from an individual and social analysis to a cultural one in the field of educational research is strongly advocated for by McDermott and Varenne (2006, 13), who call for 'a transformation of the individual and social by emphasizing the activities of persons working together with pre-existing resources that they reconstruct through their interaction'. Furthermore, as Franzé (2007, 11) asserts, when education is understood as a framework within which processes of transmission, reproduction, appropriation and transformation of objects, knowledge and cultural practices occurs, researchers are positioned to get closer to 'la comprensión de los flujos, influencias, tensiones y contradicciones entre los procesos socioculturalies generales y los escolares'.

The value of adopting a cultural analysis approach within educational ethnography is that it takes into account 'everyone *and* their history *as they continue to make it*', which means that 'problems are not just the result of old causes; rather, they are continually remade under new conditions, even by those who seek specifically to remediate them' (McDermott and Varenne 2006, 14 italics in original). This analytic move is in line with Butler's poststructurally informed thinking which also calls for a move towards analysing the cultural world that 'conjures up such persons to be talked about' (referring to, for example, failures, women, African Americans)' and therefore beyond often taken for granted dichotomies such as male/female, black/white 'that simplify the world without taking into account the principles that organize it' (McDermott and Varenne 2006, 15). Historical understanding plays an integral part in ethnographic studies, shedding light on the various ways in which the setting and the relationships formed there have been, and continue to be, socially constructed. Thus, writing about ethnographic practice, Varenne and Koyama (2011, 56) remind us to:

> First, direct your ethnographic gaze on the issues of everyday life in their full emotional valence; then, follow unflinchingly the leads one discovers towards the historical conditions that people cannot escape, even as they seek to transform them; and, finally, write about all this without short changing either the factuality of conditions, or the efforts of the people to figure them out.

Here, the links between everyday life and the historical conditions that have come to shape it are acknowledged as intricately linked: it is not possible to understand the one

without exploring the other. Furthermore, the continual attempts to transform these conditions can be considered the 'doing' of, for example, identity work, where constraints and possibilities serve to bring about or impede change. Yet, whether or not people successfully disrupt and so reconstitute these historical conditions, the consequences of doing so / not doing so are experienced in everyday life. Encouragingly, as Rockwell (2011, 72) recognises, 'a new generation of scholars with an interest in observing what happens in schools and classrooms approach their sites with a deeper knowledge of context and history than was true some decades ago'. In South Africa, where cultural and social processes have relatively recently been fundamentally transformed, it would be near impossible to explore what is currently taking place in schools and classrooms without an in-depth understanding of the history of the country and her people. However, this in itself needs to be positioned within a rapidly and continually transforming globalised world.

The present study is located within a subset of the anthropology of education, namely, the ethnography of schooling, which includes the studies of schools and/or classrooms (McDermott and Raley 2011). According to McDermott and Raley (2011), the ethnography of schooling has, necessarily and importantly, offered an alternative to more mainstream educational research, a practice which continues to this day. While there are exceptions, ethnographies of schooling serve to disrupt 'normal' assumptions espoused by many psychologists, social scientists and policy experts who work from inside the system (Franzé 2007; McDermott and Raley 2011). George Spindler (1955, 1974) was instrumental in developing this subfield of the anthropology of education as well as what he terms 'classroom ethnography', affirming the need to be cognisant of the fact that children's behaviour must be seen as 'a result of complex interaction of child culture[36], adult culture, individual striving, and situational culture (the rules, expectations, and assumptions that emerge and stabilize in any continued social setting)' (Spindler 1982, 312).

Díaz de Rada (2007) draws attention to the challenges facing school ethnographers by pointing out that the way in which ethnography develops social reality is contrary to the ways in which social reality is constructed in bureaucratic institutions

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[36] The term 'culture' can be described as 'the organization of people's everyday interactions in concrete contexts' (Pollock 2008, 369). For a detailed discussion of 'culture' in the anthropology of education, and the need to use the word with care, see Erickson (2011).

such as the school. The 'ideological axes' that de Rada (2007, 205/6) maintains constitutes school bureaucracy centres on three key principles, namely:

a) *instrumentalist*, because it works under the assumption that the school is an educational device, that is, an instrument, that can, to a great extent, be isolated from the concrete social conditions that produce it;

b) *individualist*, because it believes that the only possible subject of school learning is the individual, extracted from his concrete contexts of social life; and

c) *universalist*, because it assumes that, once the universe of action, generally a nation-state or a nation, is defined, both school procedures and curriculum content will be valid for each and every person in this universe.

It is evident that working from such a basis is incongruent with ethnography, which aims to investigate 'practical and theoretical relations among and within human institutions' (Díaz de Rada 2007, 210), and in which taking account of context it crucial (Velasco and Díaz de Rada 1997). Acknowledging the existence of such ideological differences is vital to this study which employs ethnography precisely because it allows for a different interpretation of the subject and relations among subjects, the connection between the school and the broader environment, as well as the notion that the education on offer suits everyone in the system.

Linking the specific actions and experiences taking place in the classroom and on the playground to the broader context within which this all takes place, helps to ensure that a situated study of discourse is located within broader social and cultural processes. Rather than refer to micro- and macro-contexts, Nespor (2004 cited in Rockwell 2011) suggests that ethnographers work towards an interplay of multiple time/space scales. While I am in agreement with Nespor, for the purposes of clarity I will refer to the micro-context (the school setting) and the macro-context (the broader society), but this should not be seen as a clear cut dichotomy. In other words, these two contexts to which I refer do not stand alone and my separation of them here is artificial. This approach is well articulated in the following extract from Blommaert and Jie (2010, 19):

> When someone says 'yes sir' this is a microscopic, almost trivial thing. Context tells us, however, that this innocuous formula draws on enduring systems of power and authority in our society, as well as on gender roles and structures, ideologies of politeness and etiquette…'.

The interweaving of the macro- and micro-contexts in this speech act is informative and aids understanding with regards to how something as outwardly straightforward as 'yes sir' or 'I do' as iterated in a marriage ceremony, is located within much broader relations of power and ideology. This raises another key point, namely, that ethnography is not an evaluation, rather, the aim should be *understanding.* As Spindler (1982, 313) points out: 'It is not a matter of how *well* a system or program or a classroom works; it is a matter of how it *does* work'.

4.1.1 *Exorcising the ghost of generalization: The nature and role of ethnographic research*

In ethnographic studies, as with qualitative studies more generally, it is neither possible nor desirable to make claims of generalizability with regards to the findings of the study. Indeed, to judge ethnography based on it's 'ability to generalise betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of both its aims and underlying philosophy' (Connolly 1998b, 123). While ethnographic research has been criticised for its inability to be generalised, the strength of employing such an approach is precisely because it has as its aim to understand and identify particular cultural practices and complex social relations within very specific contexts. Thus, as Bing (2005, 52) makes clear 'its underlying intepretivist philosophy, with its focus on the meaning that individuals and groups attach to their own and other's actions, requires that ethnographic research be intensive and small scale'.

The notion of power is central to the ethnographic endeavour as St. Pierre (1999, 269) reminds us:

> [E]thnography and the subject are organized in relation; thus neither can be secured in advance of such relations. We may have some idea of what each category, ethnography and the subject is before we begin our projects, since definition, even poststructural definition, are available in the discourse of ethnography; but each ethnographic project is necessarily different from the next because the participants and their cultures are different.

Furthermore, as St. Pierre (1999) reiterates, even studies undertaken within the same culture or setting will produce different, but no less valid, representations Drawing from

the work of Laurel Richardson (1990, 1994), St. Pierre (1999, 272) crucially adds, and I agree, that:

> I could, and perhaps will at some point, produce several different representations from that data for different audiences. That is to say, there is nothing particularly privileged about that interpretation; it is not necessarily truer than another.

Yet, while findings from one study cannot be directly applied to other similar contexts - such as is the case with the findings generated in my thesis - they remain a valuable and growing resource for educational practitioners and researchers, thus enabling them to 'think critically and question their taken for granted assumptions and/or current practice' (Connolly 1998b, 136). Ethnography is thus an inductive science and as a result works from empirical evidence towards theory. As Stuart Hall (in Yon 2000, x) notes, it is meant to enrich, rather than produce concepts and theories. The great merit, however, of using ethnography as a fieldwork methodology is that 'it shows in detail and in depth how subjective meanings mediate the micro-social processes involved in everyday social life in something approaching their natural settings' (Hall cited in Yon 2000: x).

I can make no claims, therefore, that the research presented in this thesis is representative of other Grade R classrooms set within public schools in South Africa. Grand theories of 'race' in early schooling can also not be read off my ethnographic study, however, what can be taken from this work is an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the myriad ways in which social relations, cultural practices and discursive positioning comes to inform specific 'raced' practices in an educational setting.

4.2   Positioning ethnography and the ethnographer

This section addresses both the practical ways in which this ethnography proceeded, as well as what might be considered the more elusive and obscure aspects of an ethnographic inquiry, including how contexts ooze with power (Katz 1992) and how the researcher is inescapably a part of the ethnographic journey from start to finish. Relations of power infuse every aspect of ethnography including obtaining access to the research site, relationships among research participants as well as with the researcher, construction of speech and embodied acts, and so forth. While I follow a predominantly

linear approach as I present how I went about doing this ethnography, following Bhana (2002, 67) I attempt to struggle against the 'normalizing boundaries and categories' that suggest that it is possible for research to be tidy and straightforward. I do this by continually asserting how power is central to, and operates in, the research endeavour. Furthermore, I am guided by St Pierre (1999, 268) who asserts that:

> Poststructural critiques encouraged me to trouble the traditional description of the subjectivity of the ethnographer as a conscious, present, rational, stable, unified, knowing subject who enters the field (some place "out there") with a fairly well-framed research problem and a fairly well-articulated research design, who plugs the action into that pre-existing grid, follows the linear process of research from data collection to analysis to representation, and – presto! - produces some truth about a culture.

Ethnography, as both 'practice and text', has over the last fifty years been critiqued, especially with regards to the notion of the 'Western colonial ethnographer studying exotic natives' (St Pierre 1999, 266). This troubling of ethnography is an attempt at resignification (see, for example, Bhabha 1994, Clifford 1988, Geertz 1983), and to account for the conditions and effects that result from the ethnographic project. Deconstructing ethnographic practice is therefore not only integral to the process of undertaking ethnography, but also ensures that the ethnographer pays close attention to the fractures in the classical categories of 'fieldwork, textwork, and headwork' (Van Maanen 1995, 4). St Pierre (1999, 268) takes this further when she writes that 'deconstruction enables a rhizomatic rather than a linear imagination, one that invites an interrogative rather than a declarative mode'. This rhizomatic approach, first introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), has been taken up and usefully employed to deconstruct foundational concepts in educational settings (see, for example, MacNaughton 2004 and Leafgren 2007). These foundational concepts, often seen as 'truths', are as Foucault stated, intricately linked with power and its effects on us (MacNaughton 2004). It is necessary, therefore, to critically reflect on how these so-called truths have been established, how they persist and change form, and whether or not they are of any value.

The heart of ethnographic research is generally considered to be fieldwork, yet the location and duration of this work varies considerably. While there is no clear cut 'how-to' formula regarding the undertaking of an ethnographic study, it precludes undertaking research as a detached and passive observer (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995). Instead, through participation the researcher becomes immersed in the day to day

happenings and events, observing how people respond to these experiences, while simultaneously experiencing this for themselves. As Lee and Lutz (2005, 11) observe, 'as researchers, we cannot separate ourselves from the society we seek to understand; we too participate in shaping and representing the society in which we live'. The broad qualitative focus of this research has been especially useful in that such an approach focuses on located meanings (Bhana 2002) that allow for the 'development of substantive areas of concern and research questions in the ongoing design and development of the research' (Mac an Ghaill 1994, 174). While I entered the field having a general understanding of what it was that I was hoping to investigate, through my regular and complete participation I began to become more focused and increasingly aware of the myriad ways in which various theories pertinent to my research topic spoke to what I was observing in the field.

Blommaert and Jie (2010, 2) note that the general sequences of fieldwork can be viewed as 'pre-field preparation, entering the field, observation, interviewing, data formulation, analysis, the return from the field'. These somewhat linear conventions were, broadly speaking, the way in which my ethnographic study unfolded. The process is of course much more detailed and chaotic than this excerpt from Blommaert and Jie suggests, and many of these details will be addressed throughout this chapter. Suffice to say that my main task as ethnographer was 'to observe, to ask seemingly stupid but insightful questions, and to write down what is seen and heard' (Fetterman 2010, 9). This is in line with Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007, 1) definition of ethnography:

> We see the term as referring primarily to a particular method or set of methods. In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.

While I have previous experience doing qualitative research in a range of early childhood settings in South Africa, I had no connection to Table Mountain Primary School before embarking on this study. This lack of familiarity meant that I had to pay particularly close attention to the activities taking place at this site as I participated in daily routines and developed relationships with the people in this setting. At the same time as establishing myself as a participant in this context, I was furiously observing what was going on as much as I could. Emerson et al. (1995, 3) acknowledge that while

an ethnographer certainly attempts to take in as much as s/he can from the setting in which s/he is immersed, the ethnographer will, instead,

> [D]evelop certain perspectives by engaging in some activities and relationships rather than others. Moreover, it will often be the case that relationships with those under study follow political fault lines in the setting, exposing the ethnographer selectively to varying priorities and points of view. As a result, the task of the ethnographer is not to determine "the truth" but to reveal the multiple truths apparent in others' lives.

The perspectives that an ethnographer chooses to adopt depend on many factors, including the probable audience of the work produced. Reflecting on the writings of Spivak (1993), St. Pierre (1999, 279) writes about the influence of what she terms 'imaginary response' on the ethnographic process, which she describes as follows:

> Thus, data collection is not a free space but a contingent one that can be influenced by the anticipated response of people I really do not know. Of course, I then may choose to interpret those data in certain ways, using certain analytical tools according to the discourses I believe will be intelligible to that imaginary audience.

Therefore, it is not possible for there to be a single correct representation of an ethnographic study, as every step of the journey is 'organized within relations of power, real or imagined' (St. Pierre 1999, 279). The impact of the ethnographer on the research setting also has a direct influence on what takes place. According to Emerson et al. (1995), the 'consequential presence' of the ethnographer, as defined by Clarke (1975), should not be seen as contaminating what is being observed and the data that is being collected. On the contrary, 'first-hand relations with those studied may provide clues to understanding the more subtle, implicit underlying assumptions that are often not readily accessible through observation or interview methods alone' (Emerson et al. 1995, 3). Ethnography is thus a valuable strategy when undertaking research with children (Corsaro 2003). In section 4.3.3.1.1 I detail the advantages, as well as the challenges, of becoming a participant in the life-worlds of young children.

4.3. The research design

4.3.1. Selecting a research site

Given the educational overhaul post-apartheid and the implementation of Grade R, I decided to focus my study on young children attending Grade R in a public primary

school in Cape Town in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The city of Cape Town is the second most populated city in South Africa with a population of approximately three million people.
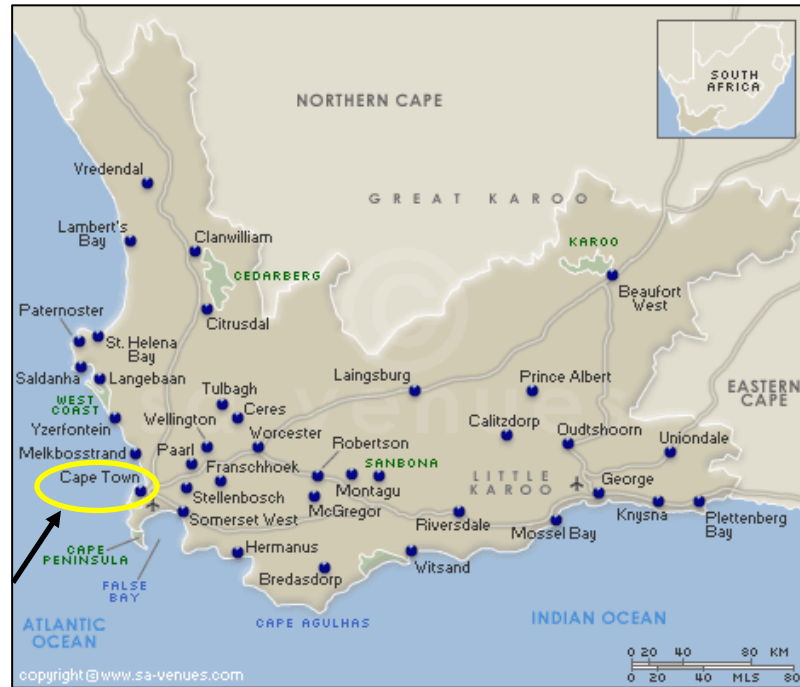
Map 3. The research site

The main languages spoken in Cape Town are IsiXhosa, Afrikaans and English. There is also an increasing immigrant population, primarily from other African countries. Cape Town, while considered a melting pot of people from diverse cultural backgrounds, remains largely segregated in terms of where people live, work and socialise.

Purposive sampling was used to select a school to participate in this inquiry. This meant that I chose Table Mountain Primary school based on my specific needs (Cohen and Manion 1994), which included, for example, location and diversity of the student body. I therefore sought out a school with a 'racially' and culturally diverse group of learners and focused on finding a public school where English was the medium of instruction, as English is my mother tongue. I speak Afrikaans fluently and have a basic understanding of IsiXhosa, however, since I was focusing on getting as much nuanced ethnographic data as I could from active young children who were largely on the move around the playground and classroom, I decided that it was best to find a site

where English was the language of learning and teaching. This did not mean that all the children attending the school would be English mother-tongue speakers, in fact, the children at Table Mountain Primary came from diverse linguistic backgrounds. My decision to undertake research in a public school was motivated by the fact that public schools adhere to, and are governed by, public policies and the national curriculum. My search for a suitable research site was further narrowed down according to location. While I have spent time working in the surrounding areas of Cape Town[37], it is not always safe for a lone researcher to do so. In the past I have always been accompanied by someone who knew the area well and was comfortable navigating the confusion of streets and neighbourhoods. Schools located in these areas were therefore not eligible for selection for this particular research project. As such, schools located in the townships were not 'researchable' (Blommaert and Jie 2010, 21) in that it was impossible to ensure that I would not be exposed to danger while in the field. Much research is needed in the areas that I deemed, for my purposes, as not 'researchable', and there are currently various projects underway. However, the advantage afforded an organisation when carrying out research in these areas is that they have established relationships with key players in these areas. Since I was going in 'cold' (wanting to work at an unfamiliar site), and alone, I was limited in the choice of areas in which I could move about freely and safely.

To undertake research in public schools in South Africa requires authorisation from the provincial department of education. Furthermore, the department maintains a database listing all public schools and their contact details. I therefore approached the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) requesting a list of co-educational public primary schools in the 'Metro Central district' of Cape Town. The WCED sent me a detailed list of 147 schools that included the school's name, district, contact details (telephone number, email address – when applicable), and the number of learners enrolled for pre-Grade R (also known as Grade 0), Grade R and Grade 1 per site. Twenty six schools were removed from the list as they either had no Grade R pupils or were single sex schools. This list was narrowed down considerably by focusing on schools that were located in or around a particular set of suburbs in Cape Town. These areas are home to predominantly middle-class families, yet children are often sent from nearby informal settlements to attend these schools. This area is dominated by private

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[37] Here I refer specifically to the so-called informal settlements or townships across Cape Town.

schools, with only a handful of public schools. The decision to focus on these areas was that schools here generally employed English as the language of learning and teaching and historically catered to 'white' learners. The histories of these schools, as well as the influx of learners from diverse racial backgrounds post-1994 has meant that they are facing enormous challenges as they seek to balance their old traditions and practices with their relatively new and diverse student and teaching bodies.

At the end of narrowing down the list of schools I was left with a total of ten schools. I contacted each school in order to confirm that they offered Grade R and to enquire about the language of instruction at the school, and whether or not they were interested and open to having me undertake my research at their school. Of the ten schools originally contacted, I was not able to contact or speak to the relevant person about my queries at three of the schools. I left numerous messages with the reception officer and sent various emails, but I never heard back from them. I was able to speak to the directors of the remaining seven schools. One school was an Afrikaans medium school, while another two expressed interest in my research but felt that there were already too many adults in the Grade R classroom as pre-service teachers from a local University were interning at their respective schools. This meant that there was a teacher, a teacher's assistant as well as various pre-service teachers working with the children at any given time. The remaining four schools were both interested and willing to host me as a researcher at their schools. I therefore set up appointments to visit each school in order to get a better picture of the set up, as well as the diversity of the learners. I had enquired about the diversity of learners during the telephone conversation with the Principals, but had kept my questions down to a minimum. I felt that it would be more opportune to go and visit the schools myself. 'Race' and questions of diversity remain a sensitive topic in the South African landscape. Thus, I decided to discuss learner backgrounds with the educators face-to-face in order to learn more about the diversity of learners at each school.

The four schools I visited all catered to children from the surrounding areas as well as further afield. The diversity of the learners varied from school to school bit it quickly became clear that it is still difficult to find a school that is diverse in terms of the learner's background, religion, language and 'racial' grouping. For example, one school catered to predominantly 'coloured' children who were Muslim. The Grade R class was representative of this, with all the children bar one being 'coloured'. The exception was a boy from the Democratic Republic of Congo who was away visiting

family the day of my visit. The school that I chose to work at was the most diverse in terms of its learner profile (this will be addressed in more detail further on), however, it was the school's commitment to working with diversity, integration and transformation issues that was most significant in my decision to choose Table Mountain Primary School as my research site. The school had, towards the end of 2009, set up a diversity working group to discuss and address the challenges of being a 'diverse school' in post-apartheid South Africa. This active engagement with issues of diversity went well beyond 'race' and set the scene for a study which would include looking at how to work through the challenges of having become a 'diverse school' in a relatively short space of time. None of the other schools I visited had a similar initiative in place, which, as I indicated in Chapter three, is not surprising (see Khosa 2000; Gallagher 2004; Mentz and van der Walt 2007).

4.3.2 *Table Mountain Primary School: Adult gatekeepers and gaining access to young research participants*

The first time that I phoned to enquire about undertaking research at Table Mountain Primary School I was put in touch with Gillian[38], the head of the Reception Year class. There were two Grade R classrooms, with approximately twenty five learners in each class[39]. Gillian taught the Lions, while Heather, the other Grade R educator, taught the Rhino's. At our first meeting Gillian explained that approximately 60 percent of the students in Grade R were 'white' (English and Afrikaans speakers as well as speakers of North European languages[40]), with the remaining 40 percent made up of children classified as 'coloured', Indian, and 'black' African, as well as children with one or both parents coming from a range of continents including Asia, Africa, and Europe. Gillian explained that in order to ensure that both classrooms were diverse, the children were divided up at the beginning of the school year (before they arrive and without the knowledge of the caregivers) according to religion, 'race', language, and background. Both classes could therefore be considered 'racially' and 'ethnically' diverse. Gillian confirmed that the school had a diversity working group and was fully committed to promoting intercultural education and integration in the school and wider community.

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[38] Pseudonyms are used for all research participants to ensure anonymity.
[39] During the year one child left and two new children were enrolled in Grade R.
[40] In order to ensure the anonymity of the children and the educators in this study, certain details are purposefully vague.

She seemed enthusiastic to host my research in Grade R and offered to set up a meeting with the school principal, Margaret, in order to ensure that she was on board with my proposed research. Having met Margaret and organised my research stay at Table Mountain primary, I was able to attend a seminar hosted by the school for families of learner's regarding issues of diversity. This seminar took place shortly before I was to begin fieldwork and was a good opportunity for me to gain insight into what was taking place in relation to questions of diversity and integration. The panel consisted of educational experts from a local University as well as other schools that were grappling with diversity, integration and inclusion in the South African education landscape. Furthermore, it served as an opportunity to hear what family members thought about these topics in relation to their children's educational experience. This meeting will be discussed in Chapter five of this thesis. This meeting also served to make contact with important gatekeepers including the school councillor and other members of the diversity working group.

A formal meeting with Gillian and Margaret provided me with the opportunity to negotiate and clarify the logistics of my research. We discussed and edited the draft consent form for the families of the learners, which I had sent to both Gillian and Margaret, along with my research statement, in anticipation of this meeting. An example of the consent form can be found in annexure one of this thesis. Both Gillian and Margaret commented on the research statement and were therefore familiar with my research questions and methodology. This input was both valuable and motivating as the expressed interest in my research topic and noted that it was both timely and necessary. It was clear that the topic was important to them both personally and professionally as educators and leaders in a multicultural school. It was decided that I would be based in Gillian's classroom for structured activities, but that I would be free to engage with all the children during indoor and outdoor free play times. Consent forms were therefore sent out to the families of all fifty learners. Gillian expressed some concern at my proposal to spend five days a week collecting data as there were already two adults in the classroom (herself and a teaching assistant). I explained my need for continuity and very importantly, my desire to *not* be treated as an authority figure in the school. This approach, following the work of Mandell (1988) on adopting a 'least-adult role' in the preschool setting, as well as the work of Van Ausdale and Feagin (1996), was vitally important to gain access to the social worlds of the young children. This put Gillian at ease and she readily agreed to my proposal. I stressed my desire to keep open

and honest communication, which was maintained throughout my time at Table Mountain Primary. Finally, it was decided that Margaret would assist me with gaining access to any school documents that I might need, and I was given permission to attend the diversity workshop for Table Mountain Primary staff and other such events as they arose. Other 'terms and conditions' that were discussed included that I briefly present my research objectives to the school educators and write up a brief about my research to submit to the diversity working team to ensure that they were familiar with me and my work. This ensured that my attendance at school functions (including the workshop, meetings etc.) was understood.

This meeting proved to be key in clarifying each party's roles and responsibilities and working through our respective concerns. Furthermore, it served to reinforce the congruence between what gave impetus to my study and what was motivating Table Mountain Primary's in-depth analysis and reflection on issues of diversity and transformation in their school. Table Mountain Primary, according to Margaret, was trying hard to move beyond a superficial understanding of diversity in order to tackle the harder, more intimidating aspects of diversity which need to be interrogated, even though this is often an uncomfortable and for some, anxiety ridden, process. Taking this into account, it was vital that I established a relationship of trust and open communication with key members of this school community before entering the field. In more classic ethnography time spent in the field can range from six months to two years (Fetterman 2010). I spent eight months undertaking fieldwork (May to December) in 2010. Once I received permission from the principal to conduct my research at Table Mountain Primary school I submitted my request to undertake research to the Director of Research Services at the Western Cape Education Department. I received the necessary approval from the department, a copy of which can be found in annexure two of this thesis.

4.3.3   Ethnographic research methods

Ethnographic data comes in various forms and includes observations, interviews, field notes, and visual data such as photographs, drawings, videos and audio recordings (Lincoln and Guba 1985). I made use of all the above-mentioned approaches (except video recordings) to collect the data I felt were pertinent to this inquiry. For this particular study I required a research methodology that was both child-focused and

participatory, and thus chose to make use of multiple methods which would allow me to 'work with children and the key adults in their lives in a flexible and reflexive way'[41]. Adopting an ethnographic approach is in line with work being undertaken in the new sociology of childhood. According to Ames, Rojas and Portugal (2010, 14), ethnography 'permite a los niños una voz más directa en la producción de datos sociológicos de la que es usualmente posible a través de diseños experimentales o encuestas'. By implementing such an approach the researcher is better able to focus on the roles that the children play as well the significance that they accord their lives (James and Prout 1990). Using an ethnographic framework in studies focusing on early schooling is particular useful, as Ames et al. (2010, 14) point out:

> [E]l uso de la etnografía en la escuela había permitido que en este espacio como en pocos, fuera posible enfocarse en las interacciones entre actores, entre los cuales niños y niñas contaban también y no eran considerados como objetos pasivos de las estructuras educacionales y sociales que moldeaban sus vidas, sino como activos participantes con culturas, experiencias y subjetividades propias que contribuían en la creación y reproducción de cultura (Willis 1988).

Participant observation with young children served as the focal point of this study, and therefore much of the data collected were obtained through my interactions and conversations with these children. Since educators play a crucial role in teaching and learning processes, I conducted and tape recorded unstructured interviews with key staff members. I also engaged in informal ethnographic conversations with various family members as they dropped their children off at school or collected them at the end of the day. In order to provide more family members with the opportunity to engage with questions about how young children come to construct 'raced' identities, I sent out a brief questionnaire for them to complete. While many family members expressed enthusiasm about this, the return rate of the questionnaire was very low. Apart from collecting various documents for analysis, I also took photographs of the school site in order to provide details of the school that I consider relevant. These varied strategies are discussed below.

4.3.3.1 Description of participant observation

During my time at Table Mountain Primary School I engaged with, and collected extensive observations of, approximately fifty young children aged five or six years and

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[41] http://www.younglives.org.uk/what-we-do/research-methods/qualitative-sub-sample-research

their educators over an eight month period. In classical ethnography this time period is considered sufficient to be termed a long-term ethnography (Fetterman 2010), however, the length of data collection was also determined according to time and financial constraints. The school year in South Africa starts in mid/late January and runs until December (there are slight provincial variations). I spent five days a week at school for approximately seven hours a day. The school hours were from 7.30am until 12.30pm for the children, and until between 3pm and 5pm for the staff. All of the children went home at 12.30pm bar for four children who remained for aftercare and were joined by children from the primary school at 1.30pm. I was often approached by caregivers to chat about my work at the end of the school day, and I also stayed at school after the kids had left in order to chat to Gillian and the other staff members. Afternoons in the field consisted of various activities such as browsing through and compiling documents housed in the main school building (it was preferred that I worked on-site as there was only one copy of much of the important historical documents), carrying out in-depth interviews with key participants, and writing up field notes. It must be noted that while ethnographic research is best approached in an orderly fashion, it is undoubtedly at times both unplanned and chaotic, and when unexpected situations or opportunities arose, I adapted my research plan accordingly.

My observations took place in a variety of contexts, some where adults were almost always present such as inside the classroom, and others where adults were rarely involved, such as during free play times and in the playground. While a teaching assistant was always responsible for watching the children during outside free play, the assistant would sit on a chair located outside the front door of the preschool. The kids very seldom played around where the adult was sitting and the adult could not see around the sides of the building, which left these areas invisible to adult supervision. This effectively meant that the adult on duty was hardly ever within earshot of what the children were saying and often doing. The adult was approached when a child wanted to 'tell on' or complain about the hurtful behaviour of another child, or when someone was physically hurt (see below for a diagram of the preschool outdoor layout).
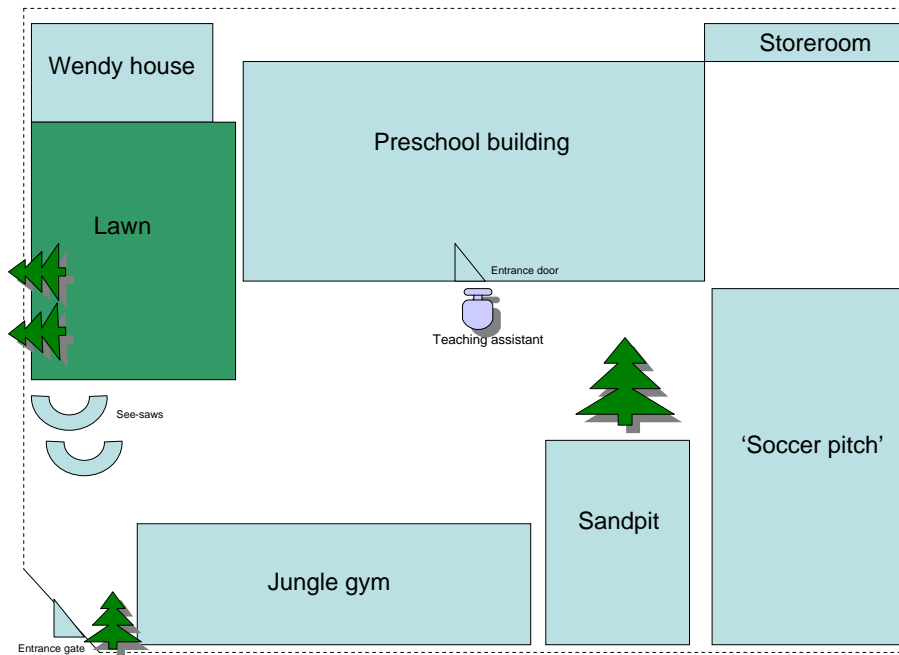
Figure 1. Outdoor layout of the Grade R building at Table Mountain Primary School

The lion's classroom, where I was based, was divided up into particular areas including the fantasy corner, the reading corner, the mat, and the art activities area (see the diagram below). I observed the children in all the play areas, both indoors and outdoors.
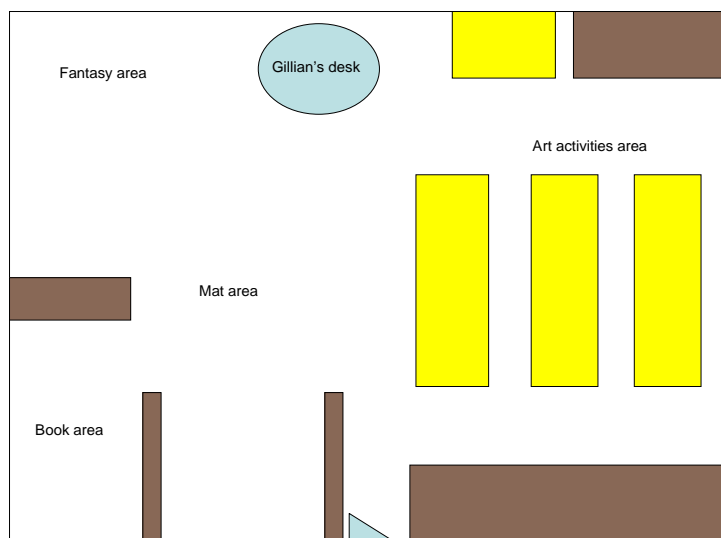
Figure 2. Division of the classroom into activity areas

The days were loosely structured and started with the children's arrival and free play until around 8.30am. A bell was then rung which signalled 'line up time'. The children formed two distinct lines outside the building (one for the lions and the other for the rhino's) and were required to keep quiet, stop fidgeting and await instructions from the teacher. Once the teacher had outlined the first activity of the day, which varied from doing morning ring in the classroom, to having a music lesson, to engaging in a reading activity with older pupils at the main school, the children were instructed to use the toilet if necessary, wash their hands, and then make their way to where they had been instructed to go. Once the specified activity had been completed the kids would sit on the mat and the teacher would explain the lesson for the day. This would usually be followed by an art activity. Around 10am the children would be allowed outside for snack time and free play. If the weather was bad snack time would be held in the aftercare room, which was not a pleasant experience as it was cramped and we were constantly being reminded not to make a mess for someone else to have to clean up. Fortunately this did not happen very often. Around 10.30/45am the bell was rung again and the two lines formed. An educator would once again instruct the children to use the bathroom and wash their hands and the kids would predominantly make their way to their respective classrooms to complete their art activities or play games indoors. Towards the end of the day the children would sit on the mat for story time. There was always time for free play before the school day officially began, as well as once the school day had ended and the children were waiting to be collected.

4.3.3.1.1 *Learning from and with young children: Negotiating access to the social worlds of children*

Choosing to carry out research with young children requires that the researcher carefully consider *who* to engage with and *how* to engage them. The fact that Table Mountain Primary was committed to an in-depth exploration of transformation and integration meant that it was fairly straightforward to find common ground with the adult educators and the school principal about my research objectives and what I hoped to achieve. However, since it was the young Grade R children who took centre stage in the ethnography, I had to ensure that I gained access to their social worlds. The children, as will be shown below, were their own gatekeepers, and I therefore needed to justify my desire to interact with them in a way that displaced the dominating adult/child modes of

interaction to which both the children and the adults in the preschool were accustomed. Had I not been successful at convincing them of my status as a non-sanctioning adult within the preschool setting, I believe that I would have been forced to become more of a passive observer rather than an active participant in their daily actions. Not surprisingly, the membership role of an adult participant observer in research with children is, as Adler and Adler (1987) and Mandell (1988) point out, a key methodological concern. Access to children in such a research endeavour is multi-layered and involves various stakeholders. While I have outlined the gatekeepers within the educational setting, I also needed to ensure that the children's caregivers were content with me spending intensive amounts of time with their children. Apart from a formal consent form that I distributed to all the caregivers, I understood that transparency and being available for regular engagement with caregivers would greatly facilitate my fieldwork. Thus, I was sure to be visible to parents when they arrived to leave their children at school as well as when they came to collect their children at the end of the day. A few parents would occasionally ask me about aspects of my research or tell me about what was happening at home that might be of interest to me. I also encouraged Gillian to talk to caregivers about questioning me should they want to know anything about my work with their children. Throughout my fieldwork I maintained open lines of communication with caregivers and felt a tremendous amount of support for my work from them.

The decision to undertake research with children in the preschool setting was important because, as Kurban and Tobin (2009) note, these children have moved beyond the family circle into the more public world of preschool and are thus experiencing the elaboration of their identities in a context outside of their immediate family circle. Thus, 'the preschool is not and cannot be a site which is immune from the tensions and discourses that circulate in the larger society…none of us are immune from reflecting and reproducing our society's discriminatory thoughts, words and actions' (Kurban and Tobin 2009, 33).

Swain (2006), writing about field research roles, states that these 'will range along a continuum from complete passive observer to complete active participant'. My objective, which was to gain as much detailed information regarding how young children *do* 'race' in their daily lives at school, meant that I would need to gain access to their everyday interactions with one another, their thoughts and actions, in 'settings that few adults are privileged to observe' (Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001, 38). Researchers

have written about the challenges of being an adult trying to fit into the 'world' of children, especially younger children (see Fine and Sandstrom 1988, Mandell 1988, Thorne 1993, Connolly 1998b, Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001). Physical size is, of course, a drawback, as is age; however, the greatest challenge remains the power dynamics between adults and children, of which children are acutely aware. Thus, as Mandell (1988, 435) argues, 'even physical differences can be so minimized when participating with children as to be inconsequential in interaction'. While the children were by no means oblivious to my size, it did not seem to be the major obstacle to having them accept me as a playmate or friend. This is demonstrated by my actions and the children's responses during my first day in the field:

> Around 8.30am Gillian and the substitute teacher called the children to line up outside. I decided to stand in the line and see how the children would react. I received a few curious stares, but no one said anything. Gillian introduced me saying 'we have a special visitor with us who is going to be joining us for a while at the school', where after she asked me to introduce myself. I said that my name was Jaci and that I would like to join them (the children) at school for the rest of the year, learning about what they do. I asked them what they thought about that and I received feverous 'yes's' from both of the class lines. There were a few whoops and cheers, while some children continued to look at me a bit confused. One girl ran out of the line straight to me and said 'but you won't fit on the jungle gym, you are too tall' and giggled. I responded with 'mmm, you have a point, but what if I do this' and I bent down and sat on my knees. The kids thought this was great, with one or two calling my bluff saying that that won't work, but the others laughed and began comparing their height to my newly acquired height (they were happy when they realised that they were taller than me!). I suggested that they let me try play on the jungle gym which they thought was a splendid idea. (Field notes)

Although my height was obvious to the children it did not seem to prevent them from thinking of me as a potential playmate. This was made apparent to me when, after having been at school for three days, two parents expressed great surprise that I was 'Jaci'. Both parents, having been informed by their respective children that there was a new child in their class, noted that the only characteristics that their children had identified about me was that I was new to the school, that I was a girl, and that I was tall. One parent said that his daughter, when speaking about me had said: 'Jaci – she's the new kid in our class…that big kid' (Field notes). Neither of the parents had any idea that I was an adult (at first I was surprised that the parents had not realised who I was considering that they had signed the consent forms regarding my research with their children, but I had used my full name on those forms). In a similar way to my height, the children were curious about my age and we discussed this during snack time as we sat outside in the playground:

Someone asked me how old I was and I asked them to guess. Someone shouted out 50, another 40 and yet another 100 and 99. The children thought this was great and Catherine sitting next to me said that her grandmother had died at 92, when she was supposed to reach 93 and that that was very close to 100. Esme guessed 22 and when I said that they were getting closer to my age they continued counting…23,24,25,26,27,28, whereby I said yes. Then someone said, 'she's five!' and I said that sounded even better, and do they think that I could be five. One child responded with a 'no', but the others all said 'yes' and that I could be five if I wanted to be. I then asked how old those standing around me were and they said five or six. (Field notes)

One of the most challenging aspects of gaining access to the social worlds of children is that of authority and thus, power and privilege (Fine and Glassner 1979, Thorne 1993, Eder and Corsaro 1999). The power that adults wield over children is continually employed as a strategy to control their behaviour, and children try to avoid the 'sanctioning adult', especially when they are up to something that they know the adult will not approve. This was made visible to me before I even began my fieldwork when, upon visiting the school for the first time, I saw a boy carrying around a squash racket with the handle pointing forward while making shooting sounds. Upon seeing him I smiled and he, turning red, quickly responded 'This is *not* a gun!' It was clear to me that at the school the children were not permitted to play with imaginary guns, which was confirmed by Gillian in our meeting a short while later. This boy did not know who I was, yet he knew the school rules and that I, being an adult, had the power to sanction his behaviour. It was precisely such a reaction that I was hoping to avoid during my fieldwork and this was only going to be possible as long as I was not seen to have authority over the children with whom I was interacting. Van Ausdale, who undertook classroom observations in her study, notes that she 'made a conscious effort to play down or eliminate the researcher/adult role and to remain non-authoritarian and supportive in her interactions with the children' (Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001, 40). While Van Ausdale established herself as 'a combination of playmate and listener for the children and as a teacher's aide for the adults' (p.45), I was careful *not* to be seen as a teacher's aide, assistant or helper as much as possible. I worked from the premise that the less I was associated as close to the teacher, the higher the probability that the children would accept me in my position as non-sanctioning adult. Again, the importance of such as approach was made clear to me during my first day at school where the question of whether or not the children could trust me quickly became a central issue:

The principal of the school had suggested that I meet the staff during break time at 10.30am. When it came time for me to go, I told the children that I needed to go to the main school for a short meeting but that I would be back very soon. They asked why I had to go, and Josh said 'she

is going to see the principal to tell her that we are naughty'. I realised that although in my opinion I might seem to be fitting into the role of child ally, I was still viewed as an authority figure with the power to 'tell on' the children. Perhaps they were feeling vulnerable, that I was trying to infiltrate their group to have insider information about them. I told Josh that he was wrong. In fact, I was just going across to meet the principal and introduce myself to her and the other teachers, much like I had done with them. This seemed to put them at ease and they began to give me advice as to how to conduct myself at the meeting. For example, Esme said that I should be polite and kind, while some of the others said that I should just say 'hi' and 'bye' and come straight back. Josh (perhaps still worried that I would say something that I shouldn't about them) suggested that I did not even need to go into the office, I could just stick my head around the door and say 'hi' and then leave. (Field notes)

The need to develop trust with children when undertaking research with them is vital. Children lack power in many aspects of their lives (Lansdown 1994) and are keenly aware of the myriad ways this plays out and can affect their daily lives. Spindler (1992) was acutely aware of such dynamics and in his educational ethnographic study he placed himself in the position of a third or fourth grader in the classroom. By following assignments and receiving help from curious children he was less threatening and more familiar to the children in this study. Eder and Corsaro (1999, 527) stress the importance of avoiding adult roles of authority, as in this way 'children gain by not having an additional authority figure in their lives as part of participating in the study'. It is not surprising then that children have some difficulty in accepting adults in a non-directive role for, as Mandell (1988, 442) writes, 'Adults…are almost never found in children's activity areas, including sandboxes, swings, climbers, or playhouses'. In contrast, these were all the activity areas that I could be found in on a daily basis. The need for me to behaviourally demonstrate that I was serious about joining the children in their daily lives can be read from the following interaction, again documented during my first day at the school:

I decided to return to our earlier discussion about whether or not I would be able to play on the jungle gym. It was pretty sturdy, made of wood, and it looked like it could easily withstand me climbing all over it. I began by following a child up the 'stairs' (some wooden planks nailed into a wooden pole at an angle) and climbed over a bar onto the landing. The children were impressed by this, telling me to climb up using both my hands. Someone then suggested that I slide down the slide, which I duly did. I went down faster than the two previous girls (most likely given my greater weight). I then climbed back up the tyres and heard shouts from below suggesting that I slide down the fireman's pole. I asked them to explain to me the best way to do this (it was really quite high) and they told me to wrap my legs around the pole and hold on. It took me a little while, but eventually I got down to shrieks of hooray!

While I did interact with Gillian and the other staff, I was careful to have any lengthy discussions with them only after the children had left for the day. This strategy was important as highlighted for me when, after being at the school for a week and having

made much progress with being accepted as another playmate, Gillian suggested that I read for story time. This presented a dilemma as I did not want to disappoint Gillian, however, I knew that this would place me in an unwanted authoritative position with the children. Since Gillian effectively had the power over my work at the school I did not want to seem non-cooperative and so I took up my place on the chair, while all the kids were on the mat. As I picked up the book the children began to chant 'Look! Jaci is the teacher! Jaci is the teacher!' The children regularly played a game with one another whereby whoever sat on the chair was the teacher and those who remained seated on the mat were the children who were not allowed to talk or interrupt the 'teacher'. I denied this and continued with the story. Once the kids had left for the day I explained my dilemma to Gillian and she immediately understood. The next day I was back on the mat with the kids and throughout the remainder of my stay I was very conscious of avoiding any clear authority positions such as the one discussed. Although this was not always possible, after a while the children seemed to accepts the 'situationally variable dimensions of my role' (Mandell 1988, 446).

By breaking down, as much as possible, the barriers between children and adults, including age, physicality and relations of power, the ethnographic researcher will be privy to a more detailed and nuanced picture of the lives of the children s/he is studying. As Fine and Sandstrom (1988, 17) note:

> To the extent that the researcher can transcend age and authority boundaries, children may provide access to their "hidden" culture (Llewellyn 1980, Knapp and Knapp 1976). The friend role is conducive to the development of trust, although this trust must be cultivated by the researcher.

Taking this discussion further, the authors then go on to state that:

> The key to the role of friend is the explicit expression of positive affect combined with both a relative lack of authority and a lack of sanctioning of the behaviour of those being studied. (Fine and Sandstrom 1988, 17).

During my second week at school an incident took place that suggested that my status as a non-sanctioning adult was accepted, at least by some children. The following extract from my field notes describes what took place:

> As snack time comes to an end I find myself sitting with Dirk and Sophia. Dirk tells me that he knows something that his uncle has shown him and then giggles. I figure that it is something 'naughty'. At first he says that he can't tell us, and asks Sophia if she knows what he is talking about. When she says 'no', he decides to tell us. Looking around, he keeps his hand in his lap as

he slowly begins to lift his baby finger, followed by his ring finger and finally his middle finger, finishing with only the middle finger showing (effectively giving us the finger). He looks pleased with himself and tells us that he shows this to his uncle every time that he sees him. I ask him what his uncle says and Dirk replies that he laughs. (Field notes)

Dirk did not seem concerned about me sanctioning his behaviour, which he knew was not generally acceptable to adults. He was fully aware that he could not brazenly show me and Sophia what he wanted to show us, even though he could do so with his uncle. In this moment Dirk felt powerful and not constrained by the adult-child relations that generally consist of an authoritative adult and a subjugated child.

Ethical considerations and responsibilities must be taken into account when working alongside research participants (Mandell 1988, Eder and Corsaro 1999, Bertrán 2009, Ames et al. 2010 amongst others) It must be noted that even though I avoided taking up an authority position with the children, I was prepared to get involved in any situation that presented a child with physical harm, which might have called for me to act as sanctioning adult. This was, however, not necessary as the teacher's or assistants were quickly alerted to any such instances, either by myself or another child. There were times where it was difficult not to sanction the behaviour of children, such as when they were excluding other children from games and the like, however, this drew my attention to the taken for granted adult belief that 'we know what's best for children'. By *not* getting involved and watching how children negotiated and discussed issues amongst themselves, as and when they arose, was a fascinating lesson about how they were learning important social skills. For example, the children were very clear that each game they played had a 'leader'. At times this leader was explicitly named, while other times this leadership was just assumed to belong to the child who had started the game. During my first few days of fieldwork I watched as these leaders either allowed new kids to join the game being played or denied them access, and was surprised by how almost without fail any child wanting to join a particular game would seek out the leader and ask permission to join in. Eventually I asked one of the kids about this as she responded 'you see, if we keep saying yes to people the game will get to big. We won't know who's *on* and who we must run away from'. This was a strategy to keep control of the game and thereby to continue to enjoy playing it. Following the unstated rule of requesting permission was clearly understood by the children as a necessary step to

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keep enjoying the game[42]. There were, of course, times when children, myself included, were excluded while others were not, which was biased behaviour in some instances based on 'race' or language or gender differences. The point of this example, however, it to illustrate that while children can indeed be nasty (through the explicit exclusion of certain people and not others), their actions are more complex than they outwardly appear. This means that certain behaviour, which might be interpreted as purely exclusionary, was not always meant as such as was in fact a means to maintain control. Having observed how children worked to maintain control of social activities I was struck, again and again, by how often a sanctioning adult would demand that children play with one another and not exclude anyone, even though this inclusion might ruin the game itself. Not once did I observe an adult ask the children the reason for the exclusion. In such instances the leader of the game would be angry with the child hoping to join in, as they had in effect undermined the leader of the game by appealing to the adult's power to supervise and sanction children's behaviour.

Since I am an active person, it was no trouble for me to partake in almost all the physical activities that the children were either required to do or chose to do (including climbing the jungle gym, doing obstacle courses, playing running games, engaging in sporting activities and so forth). I believe that this physical engagement allowed to me to fluidly enter their games and activities. Young children are exceptionally active and while I returned home exhausted after a day in the field, it was a highly rewarding experience. Numerous anecdotes were collected as we ran around the playground, tried to score goals in a soccer match and swung on the monkey bars, which could not have been gathered had I been sitting on the sidelines observing. As Mandell (1988, 438) succinctly puts it when referring to her own research with children, 'My role as least-adult included undertaking a responsive, interactive, fully involved participant observer role with the children in as least an adult manner as possible'. While I became a 'complete active participant', I was careful not to lose track of the need to listen and watch the children in order to gather the necessary data. However, I strongly believe that becoming a full participant in the daily activities of the preschool allowed me to rapidly gain the status of a non-sanctioning adult.

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[42] Corsaro has done extensive work analysing preschool children's resistance to allowing other children access to established play routines, showing how instead of being seen as troubling to the adult, this behaviour functions as a 'protection of interactive space' (see Eder and Corsaro 1999).

Being a novelty at the school was a challenge during the first few weeks, particularly for structured activities. Upon arriving at school children would 'claim' their position next to me, or on my lap, for morning ring. At first I accepted this and when we sat on the mat I would allow whoever had asked to seat themselves in their claimed position. However, this very soon caused some tension between the children and I decided to adopt a 'no booking place' policy and tried to ensure that I was one of the last one's to sit down for morning ring or at the tables for art activities so that I would need to take up one of the few open places. This solved the disputes and also allowed me to move around amongst the children.

Another important challenge to adult researchers working with young children is the difficulty 'to challenge the deep assumption that we [adults] already know what children are 'like', both because, as former children, adults have been there and they regard children as less complete versions of themselves' (Thorne 1993, 407). However, it is clear that no adult can claim to 'have been' where a child is at this point in time and space. By documenting what children are saying and doing and by discarding the notion of children as passive recipients of adult training and socialization (Thorne 1993), this thesis supports the findings of studies showing that young children are intuitive and ingenious as they negotiate their social lives and its meaning with those around them.

4.3.3.1.2 *Capturing participant observation data*

Capturing data using a participant observation approach was challenging in this energetically charged environment. Since my intention from the beginning of fieldwork was to build trust and rapport with the children I decided not to write down notes in front of them. I was concerned that they would think I was keeping a note of who was being naughty. I kept a notebook in my bag and wrote down observations during trips to the bathroom, when the children were out of the classroom (getting their snacks, washing their hands etc.). Thus, in the beginning, recording observations was primarily achieved after I had left the school for the day. I would then expand on the numerous conversations, thoughts, actions and so forth that I had been privy to during my time in the field. After two weeks of this I decided to introduce a small notebook to record key observations: In this way I was able to keep more detailed observations and anecdotes. Naturally, this required that I made use of the notebook in front of the children during our time in the playground and classroom. In the beginning, the children were curious

as to what I was writing down (in fact, one boy did ask if I was writing down that he was being 'bad'), and were a bit sceptical of the book. I explained that I was making notes about what we were all doing and saying. In order to be as efficient as possible I used shorthand when jotting down notes and so most of what I wrote down was illegible. Thus, children were not able to recognise their names in the book. While some kids found this intriguing and insisted on drawing me a picture of themselves in my book, others were less concerned and showed neither interest nor contempt for it. During the first week that I introduced my notebook a group of seven children began to write long lists of things, such as the names of the children at school, ingredients needed to bake a cake and so forth. None of them were literate yet, so they would often ask me to help them write these lists. Two kids took the practice of capturing data much more seriously and came to school armed with their own notebook and pen in hand. Occasionally they would open their books and jot something down. There could be no denying that the introduction of my notebook influenced some of the children's activities. However, after about a week my note taking became common place, with the children no longer commenting on or mimicking this behaviour.

Writing up these notes into detailed descriptions of the day's events took place everyday. My notes were greatly expanded on as I recalled all that I observed and. This process is in itself integral to ethnographic research as it comes to represent what has been observed. Emerson et al. (1995, 8) point to the recognition that 'field notes involve *inscriptions* of social life and social discourse. Such inscriptions inevitably *reduce* the welter and confusion of the social world to written words that can be reviewed, studied and thought about time and again'. Thus, writing down field notes is a selective process that filters and transforms that which has been witnessed – the events, people and places – into words on a piece of paper (Emerson et al. 1995). The linearity of written text means the complexity of embodied discourse is reduced, even though numerous attempts are made to capture, for example, nonverbal cues. Yet, as Emerson et al. (1995, 10), drawing on Geertz's (1973) well-known term 'thick description', explain, it is through 'deep immersion – and the sense of place that such immersion assumes and strengthens- that enables the ethnographer to inscribe the detailed, context-sensitive, and locally informed field notes'. Thus, the ethnographic account presented here has been formed as part of an interpretive process whereby I, as ethnographer, convey my understanding and insights gained from my immersion into the lives of my research participants. Writing field notes, often considered 'invisible' work, is the 'primordial

textualization that creates a world on the page and ultimately shapes the final ethnographic, published text' (Emerson et al. 1995, 16).

Apart from jotting down notes, I also made use of a digital voice recorder to record discussions that were run by the teacher about a specific topic (for example, 'People living in South Africa'). This device was easily set up and did not distract the teacher or children. Owing to the multivocal nature of classroom discussions, some of the recordings had moments of distortions as people shouted and spoke on top of one another. I therefore continued to take notes simultaneously in order to unravel and make sense of some of these distortions as best I could. The visual data that I captured included photographs and drawings made by the children. The photographs were useful for capturing inventories of objects such as the bulletin board, the contents of the book case, the daily programme schedule, policies that were displayed on the walls of the classroom, posters and pictures.

4.3.3.2   Interviews, ethnographic conversations and questionnaires

a) Interviews

In order to gain deeper insight into the 'raced' and 'racialised' discourses that permeated the Table Mountain Primary educational community, interviews were conducted with staff members and diversity working group members (see Table 4 for details about interviewees). Through these in-depth, semi-structured interviews I was able to explore various discursive threads pertaining to my research. This included questioning the participant about they know, live and engage with 'race' in their own lives, this educational setting and in the wider community. Although I had prepared an interview question sheet before conducting any of the interviews, I used these questions as more of a guide. The duration of the interviews varied with the average interview lasting one and a half hours. The shortest interview lasted approximately one hour and twenty minutes, while the longest interview lasted approximately two hours. McMillan and Schumacher (2001, 443) define in-depth interviews as 'open-response questions to obtain data of *participant meanings* – how individuals conceive of their world and how they explain or 'make sense' of the important events in their lives'. Through these interviews the participants were thereby able to express their thoughts, beliefs and perspectives about the world in which they live and work, in their own words. With the

information obtained I was able to bring together and interpret the data and formulate explications based on the details of the respective interviews. The interviews were centred on open-response questions relating to the research objectives. However, as Rubin and Rubin (1995) point out, each research participant is different and relates to the researcher in a distinct manner. I therefore adopted a flexible approach whereby, although steering the interview at times to ensure that I obtained the necessary data, the general tone was conversational and allowed for the participants to speak about what they felt was important. Although a challenging exercise, if researchers are capable of directing the conversations to answer the research questions, the interviews can capture an in-depth look at the reality of each participant (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

With consent from all the participants I audio taped the interviews, which I then transcribed as soon as possible after the event (usually the same day). Knowing the interview was being recorded allowed me more freedom to concentrate on what was being said and how it was being said. Interview elaborations also formed a fundamental part of the interview process. These elaborations consisted of my self-reflections in relation to my role as researcher, the rapport which I had established with the participants, interviewee's reactions and any other additional information which I believed was important to the study. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) note that this is a crucial time for reflection and elaboration on the data obtained and assists with establishing quality control for valid data. Apart from the formal interviews I conducted, I also had the opportunity to converse with other staff members after school was out for the day. This was on an informal basis and provided better insight into the observations that I was making in the classroom and on the playground.

All the interview participants were female and all where 'white', bar one, who was 'black' African. The impact of these 'raced' identities on the interview process struck me from the first interview that I undertook, forcing me to reflect upon and 'trouble' my own identity. Relations of 'race', class, gender and power are in play in complex ways when one interacts with others. Viewed through a poststructural lens, my effect on the research and its effect on me is an integral part of the process and one that needs to be acknowledged. Theoretically, I was fully aware of this, however, in practice, I soon began to realise just how complex and fraught with tension sharing experiences with others in such a study (focused particularly on 'race') can be. For example, being a 'white' woman who had grown up under apartheid and had attended an all 'white' primary school, meant that when discourses of whiteness were invoked to explain or

rationalise a thought or an idea, it was assumed that I would 'get it'. I was treated like an insider and at times encouraged to perpetuate the invisibility of this ideology by making myself complicit with these ideas. This evoked a strong (but silent) reaction in me, whereby I felt a strong repulsion to being made complicit with such lines of thought. Having spent much time immersed in literature detailing lived experiences of 'race' and racism, I was actively analysing statements for a deeper meaning, for that which often runs beneath the level of conscious intent or awareness (O'Loughlin 2009). My knee-jerk reaction to these troubling situations which arose in the interview process would momentarily blind me to what was being discussed as I thought up ways to dismiss what I was hearing. It took plenty of mental effort in such moments to suspend judgement and really listen to what was being said. Reflecting on these incidences after the interview was completed reinforced my understanding about 'race' has come to form an intricate part of my life in terms of my social interactions, access to experiences and cultural understandings and personal privilege and power. Attempting to engage with, and interrogate, 'race' through the interview process, yet simultaneously reconstituting it, was a frustrating experience that I spent much time reflecting upon. This is in line with what Swain (2006) experienced in his own ethnographic study when he acknowledges that 'Like any researcher, it is impossible to ever escape one's histo-biographical background'. Bhana (2002, 78), too, notes how interacting with the research participants in her study forced her to look inward at her own life: 'In reading their lives I was forced to re-read my own thus blurring the public/private boundaries and working to reconstitute myself". The blurring of my own experiences and thinking with those presented by the research participants pushed me to reflexively engage with the data and to continually 'trouble' my identity and those put forward by others. Thus, in exploring issues that centre on questions of social justice, oppression and resistance, such as 'race', 'my politics have been woven into my multiple identities' (Lund and Nabavi 2008, 27). Herwitz (2003, 106/7) would no doubt agree with my statement as he cautions:

> Race, a virtual fetish item in South Africa, veers between being an item of direct confrontation and one of hostile silence. It is something every South African lives with every day, although not in the same way; something every South African learns to ignore, subdue, maintain, resist, subvert, capitalize upon, identify with, refuse, displace, proclaim, split off.

Apart from these in-depth interviews, I also conducted structured interviews with educational and early childhood development specialists. These interviews took place

before I entered the field and were particularly useful for orientating me towards pertinent literature for my study as well as highlighting the ways in which questions about diversity, transformation and identity have, or have not, been addressed in the education and early childhood sector in South Africa.

b) *Ethnographic conversations and questionnaires*

Ethnographic conversations were used to engage various members of the educational community in discussions about themes being investigated in this study. According to Spradley (1979), ethnographic conversations can be likened to casual, friendly conversations whereby some ethnographic questions are introduced. This approach was most usefully employed with the caregivers and the Grade R teachers and their assistants. Many of these conversations took place in short bursts or in passing. I would make use of any opportunity to engage with these participants by asking a few ethnographic questions. There was nothing formal or forced about these interactions and I felt that it was a convenient way to establish rapport while simultaneously gaining insight into the topic I had chosen to study. Occasionally caregivers would find me before or after school, or when a parent-teacher meeting was being held, to tell me anecdotes about their children which they felt would be pertinent to my study. I greatly appreciated this, as not only did it provide me with more insight into what the children were thinking and doing, but it also showed me that these caregivers were interested in this topic. Furthermore, the teachers and teaching assistants would often make brief comments to me about something that they saw or overheard from the children, which I would pick up on again and discuss with them in more detail once the children had left school for the day.

Towards the end of my fieldwork I was approached by a parent who asked if I would consider sending out a brief survey to ask caregivers how they felt about my work and to give them the opportunity to reflect on questions of 'raced' identity formation in young children. I took this advice and prepared a questionnaire that was sent home with the children of the classroom in which I was principally based. The return rate of the questionnaire was low (eleven out of twenty five questionnaires were returned) and thus not analysed in detail in this study. Instead, the thoughts of caregivers are infused into the findings presented in Chapters five through eight.

4.3.3.3 Document analysis

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001, 502) 'documents are records of past events...written or printed materials that may be official or unofficial, public or private, published or unpublished, prepared intentionally to preserve a historical record or prepared to serve an immediate practical purpose'. Documents, therefore, constitute a rich source of information about people, programmes and organisations (Patton 2002). As a qualitative researcher one is in a unique position to study documents in relation to the analysis of the social practices of daily life in which these documents are constructed and utilized. This therefore serves as another means by which meaning is given to activities through which each person reconstructs, sustains, contests and changes her or his social reality. However, Patton (2002, 499) indicates specific challenges regarding document analysis. These challenges include:

• Obtaining access to documents
• Understanding how and why the documents were produced
• Determining the accuracy of the documents
• Linking the documents to other sources, including interviews and observations
• Taking apart and demystifying institutional texts

The documents analysed in this study include official documents as well as personal documents. The official documents include those published by the South African government, the national and provincial Departments of Education, as well as documents produced by Table Mountain Primary School. Personal documents, defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2001) as any firsthand document which describes the experiences, beliefs, knowledge and values of someone, include anecdotal records, lesson plans, and comments of observations made by educators and caregivers about the children. The documents analysed in this study were especially useful for shedding light on processes that took place prior to the start of my fieldwork. Some examples of such documents include the School's mission statement, strategic plan, policies, curriculum related documentation, the history of the school, the weekly newsletter, and documents pertaining to the diversity working group. I used the documents to assist me with positioning the school within the broader framework of my work on 'race', transformation and integration in schools.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD	PRINCIPAL RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Participant Observation	- Children - Educators - Teaching assistants
In-depth semi-structured interviews	- Grade R educator - School principal - School councillor who is also a member of the diversity working group - Grade Four educator who is also a member of the governing body, the diversity working group, and a parent of a Grade R child attending Table Mountain Primary - Representative of the Parent Forum who is also a member of the diversity working group
Structured interviews	- Educational specialists - Early childhood development specialist
Ethnographic conversations	- Children - Educators - Teaching assistants - Caregivers
Questionnaires	- Caregivers
Document Analysis	- Government documents such as those from the national and provincial department of education - School documents including the history of the school, the mission statement, school plan and policies, strategic plan, curriculum documents, school webpage, weekly newsletter - Diversity working group documents including anti-bias update, educator workshop documents, parent-teacher meetings and discussions

Table 4. An overview of the data collection methods employed and the principal research participants

4.4 Research objectives

Analysing the varied and complex ways in which young children negotiate their identities is vitally important if we are to gain a more in-depth understanding of how 'raced' identities are (per)formed in the education system, and how this affects 'racial' tensions and divisions. This requires unpacking if and how discourses of 'race' and identity have been transformed in the post-apartheid education system; how young children position themselves as subjects in this discursive context; and what practices sustain and transmit dominant discourses in the classroom environment. Through what activities is 'race' instituted? Can it be *de*-instituted or instituted differently in the classroom? Essentially, and here I adapt Soudien's (2008b) thinking with regard to cognition, this study analyses how we take the social and the way in which the social operates and locate it within and in relation to how children position themselves, and are positioned, as subjects, particularly in relation to 'race'. In line with this, this study aims to address the following objectives:

a.) Identify discourses of 'race' circulating in the socio-political context of post-apartheid South Africa, the public school and the Grade R classroom and playground in particular.

b.) Interrogate how the 'raced' identities of learners in the Grade R classroom are shaped and (re)produced within this discursive terrain as seen through their linguistic and embodied practices and performances, particularly in relation to their stories, social practices, friendship patterns and drawings.

c.) Analyse moments of troubled positioning in relation to 'race', and how these are resolved.

4.5 Data analysis

Through an analysis of the data collected I offer an interpretation of the discursive practices – both verbal and embodied – of children and educators as they engage in 'raced' identity-work. I thereby seek to describe and analyse the discursive interactive positioning of the children and educators in official, formal and informal discourses.

These three discourses intersect and are pivotal in making, unmaking and remaking 'racial' positions (Walker 2005), yet this complex process is 'seldom stable, continuous or seamless' (Soudien 2001, 313). According to Walker (2005), these discourses constitute a discursive field and as they collide, compete or collude to give meaning to the world and organise social institutions and process. They also offer the individual a range of modes of subjectivity (Weedon 1997). In a deeply 'racialised' society that is consciously striving towards a different present, 'students are likely to make complicated and more or less conscious investments in choosing some subject positions over others, in becoming and being one kind of person rather than another' (Walker 2005, 44). How children and educators represent themselves is, as Walker's study with university students shows, important to understand the ways in which 'race' circulates in the official, formal and informal discursive spaces.

Analysing data that is in the form of discourse presented as text in field notes and interviews requires an interpretive analysis rather than making use of more traditional classroom discourse analysis tools (McKinney 2010). The poststructuralist influence on this work, more specifically with regards to conceptions of identity, discourse and agency, has resulted in a deconstructive consideration of the data. Following St Pierre (2000), deconstructions are seen as poststructural ways of examining discourse in order to uncover what seems to be 'natural' within cultural constructions. Deconstruction is therefore 'about looking at how a structure has been constructed, what holds it together and what it produces' (Bhana 2002, 87). It is a powerful tool to bring to light unquestioned assumptions about a topic or an idea and is critically employed in this study where troubling discourses and 'raced' identities is the main focus of the work. This approach has been, and remains, a fruitful way of deconstructing issues of difference and 'race' as highlighted through the work of, among others, Hall (1996), Rattansi (1999) and McKinney (2010).

The notion of positioning developed by Davies and Harré (1990, 43) has been particularly useful in this analysis of how identities are constituted, as it focuses attention on the 'dynamic aspects of encounters'. Positioning is defined as 'the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines' (Davies and Harré 1990, 48). Davies and Harré describe two kinds of positioning: interactive and reflexive. While the latter might also be termed self-positioning, the former refers to a subject being positioned by another's words (McKinney 2010). Thus, while subjects can

actively position themselves within already existing 'racial' and gender scripts, for example, positioning may also occur interactively as subjects are positioned by others. This is addressed by Davies and Harré (1990, 46) as follows:

> An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly, who one is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others' lives. Stories are located within a number of different discourses, and thus vary dramatically in terms of the language used, the concepts, issues and moral judgements made relevant and the subject positions made available within them.

It is not difficult to see the parallels between such a position and that of feminist poststructuralist theory, specifically, the understanding of the force of discursive practices, the myriad ways in which subjects are positioned through those practices, as well as how an individual's subjectivity is generated through learning and using particular discursive practices (Davies 2003a, Davies and Harré 1990, Potter and Wetherall 1988; Weedon 1997).

4.5.1   Organizing and interpreting the data

Having identified that I wanted to undertake my study using a poststructurally informed theoretical framework, I spent much time before entering the field reading available literature to get a better grip of this fascinating and complex line of thinking. While I by no means had everything solved when I entered the field, I felt that I had a deeper understanding of the research questions I was hoping to address as well as the varied methods that I would need to employ in order to collect data that would speak to my questions. Analysis continued, however, as I repeatedly went back and forth between the field and the data looking for contradictions, clarifications, and the way to gain a more in-depth understanding of what the research participants were saying and doing, as well as what discourses were continually being produced. This iterative process of analysis is common to the educational ethnographer and takes place daily as s/he writes up her field notes, transcribes interviews and so forth.

In this study, as is common practice in ethnographic research, data analysis took place throughout the data collection process. Fetterman (2010, 3) articulates the need for such a strategy when noting that:

An ethnographer is a human instrument and must discriminate among different types of data and analyze the relative worth of one path over another at every turn in fieldwork, well before any formalized analysis takes place. Clearly, ethnographic research involves different levels of analysis.

While the notion of different levels of analysis is usefully employed here, it by no means suggests this was a linear or straightforward process. The analysis of qualitative data is always messy as the researcher attempts to untangle the knots of language and action, what has been heard, observed and experienced. Unlike more positivist studies, ethnographic studies are flexible and self-corrective in terms of the research questions, data collection methods and data analysis procedures. This does not mean that there is no initial analytical framework according to which the ethnographer begins to organise the data (Eder and Corsaro 1999). Rather, the ethnographer attempts to 'balance between structure, disciplined by the research problem, and flexibility, disciplined by the goal of understanding the informant's point of view' (Miller and Sperry 1987, 4 cited in Eder and Corsaro 1999, 525).

Writing down all that I had experienced and observed - a central tenet of ethnographic research (Emerson et al. 1995) - took place as soon as I had left the field. Many notebooks were filled with scribbled notes as I sat waiting for the train at the end of the school day expanding upon all the notations I had jotted down throughout my day in the field. These notes were then typed up on the computer on the same day, and as I read through them preliminary ideas and categories were marked down. I also kept a journal which was used to record daily research activities, decisions regarding the selection of data, emergent themes, new research ideas, problems that came up during the data collection phase and so on.

As Rapley (2007) points out, the analytical process reflects both theoretical and pragmatic concerns. For the descriptive analysis, I made use of thematic categories drawn from literature and the research questions. Reading through my field notes and transcribed interviews I systematically searched and organised accumulated materials (Bogden and Biklen 2003) and divided the information into analysis units, each one with what McMillan and Schumacher (2001, 468) call a 'chunk of meaning'. In this way I was able to generate topics, which were initially noted down in the margin of the script. Once this had been completed for all the data sets, I listed the topics on a separate sheet - using the Microsoft Excel programme. I then compared all the topics for

duplication and overlapping meanings. I grouped together topics that were similar, each with their own smaller sub-categories. As data analysis continued, I looked for developing patterns among the variables by adopting the *constant comparison* technique (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Once the topic and subtopics had been refined, I took a clean data set and applied the provisional classification system which I had developed. By engaging in this process I was able to identify which topics occurred repeatedly, as well as which unique topics arose that I felt were important to the research purpose. Once the topics had been sufficiently reduced and refined, the next step was to develop the topics into categories. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) a category is an abstract name that represents the *meaning* of similar topics. It is important to note here that certain topics may form part of more than one category as one topic may have several connotations (McMillan and Schumacher 2001). By modifying categories as was deemed necessary and sorting data into these categories, I was able to look for patterns in the textual materials. This was facilitated by comparing and contrasting categories and topics. Looking for these *patterns of meaning* was an exhaustive exercise as I moved back and forth between the data, the topics, the categories and my own personal hunches as to what the data was telling me. Triangulation was a very useful tool here as I used different data sources, situations and methods to see what patterns continued to emerge, while, at times a single event or occurrence was significant in itself and was therefore labelled as meaningful. It must be noted that word processing programmes were fundamental to transcribing interviews, keeping track of field notes as well as coding text for purposes of indexing and retrieval (Angrosino 2007). Regarding the theoretical analysis, I considered emerging patterns in light of existing literature in order to demonstrate how my findings related to the interpretations of others (Angrosino 2007).

4.5.2 Strategies to enhance the validity of the study

In qualitative studies it is according to both the data collection and analysis techniques that claims of validity are made (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). There are a number of strategies which can be used to increase the validity of a study. In order to enhance the validity of my research study, I adopted a strategy of continually moving back and forth between an emic and etic perspective (Angrosino 2007). Furthermore, a multi-method strategy was adopted. This allowed for triangulation during data collection and

analysis, which increased the probability that my findings would be compatible with a great variety of data. Other strategies which we employed included using participant verbatim language in order to illustrate participants' meanings, thereby ensuring that their voices were neither lost nor oppressed. During the data collection phase I made use of voice recorders and photographs to ensure that the information obtained was accurate and provided a relatively complete record. Finally, a strategy called 'member checking' (McMillan and Schumacher 2001, 410) was utilized, which involved me as the researcher frequently confirming observations and participants' meanings with individuals in a casual and informal manner. This was greatly facilitated by undertaking long-term fieldwork as it provided me with numerous opportunities to explore and clarify confusing or conflicting findings.

CHAPTER 5   TABLE   MOUNTAIN   PRIMARY   SCHOOL: THE JOURNEY TOWARDS INCLUSION, INTEGRATION AND TRANSFORMATION

5.1   A brief historical background of Table Mountain Primary School

Table Mountain Primary School has a long history as it has been providing education to children for over one hundred years. To protect the anonymity of the school not all historical details will be divulged, rather, the main purpose of this discussion will be to provide information regarding the structural setup and conditions at the school. This overview is important as various categories of schooling exist in South Africa, often dependant on where the school is located. Schools based in rural areas, townships or urban areas differ greatly with regards to access, infrastructure, quality and the diversity of educators and learners. Furthermore, within these areas differences exist. For example, in Cape Town, formerly 'white' schools remain the best-resourced schools and are seen as being synonymous with quality education. The majority of these schools are located in former 'white'-only suburbs, which, while now desegregated, remain home to middle and upper class families. While the majority of learners who attend such schools come from families who can afford to pay the high school fees, there are learners who live in economically marginalised townships located far away from the schools. These learners are occasionally recipients of bursaries offered to promising students by the school, are subsidised by families who can afford the fees, or attend the school owing to great sacrifices made by caregivers who want to ensure that their children receive the highest quality education available.

5.1.1   Schools in the Cape region: A historical overview

In the mid-1800s, before Table Mountain Primary school was established, there were discussions about what a public system of education in this geographical area would look like. A few individuals involved believed that in such a system there should be 'no consideration of race, colour or creed, despite the existence of a social colour bar'[43](Table Mountain Primary school historical document). This idea was, however, not taken up by those with authority, who believed that 'the children of "merchants,

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[43] This citation is not fully referenced as it contains the real name of the school participating in this study. Thus, for reasons of anonymity, I only provide a partial reference.

farmers and magistrates" needed a different education from that of Hottentots or heathens' (Table Mountain Primary school historical document). Of course, the children of the 'merchants, farmers and magistrates' were 'white', while the 'Hottentots and heathens' was a direct reference to the children of the KhoiSan, 'coloured' and 'black' Africans. By 1982 the school remained all 'white' and was steeped in traditions in line with English colonialist practices. An example of this is the day where teachers and learners came to school dressed in attire typical of the nineteenth century, hosted elegant tea parties as they embroidered tablecloths or played croquet. This is reminiscent of my own school days, which included a 'Shakespeare day' whereby pupils from different grades dressed up and put on plays written by Shakespeare, partook in maypole dancing and were entertained by the string ensemble that played a variety of classical music. These types of days were typical of English speaking 'white' schools and many of these traditions have not changed at all, or not very dramatically. At Table Mountain Primary, the author notes: 'It was heartwarming to see that the manners and demeanour of the children was as elegant as the clothing and picnics' (Table Mountain Primary school historical document). Girls were only admitted to the school at the turn of the twentieth century and were kept separate from boys as was the general norm at the time. Girls and boys would sit apart in class and would play in segregated divisions of the playground. According to the Table Mountain historical document, in some Cape schools there were separate entrances for boys and girls.

During this time public schools were divided up into separate categories, which included 'European', 'Coloured' and 'Native', and later, 'Non-European' and 'Indian' (Table Mountain Primary school historical document). Although learners were officially segregated, there were some 'white' children who attended Mission schools or so-called 'coloured' schools, and vice versa. According to a school inspector at the time, 'the poorer the children were, the more likely they were to attend the nearest school, irrespective of race' (Table Mountain Primary school historical document). However, the School Board Act No 35 of 1905 called for the compulsory education 'of all children of European extraction…being between the ages of six and fourteen'. The Act went on to stipulate:

> Should the people of other than European parentage or extraction in a school district desire to have established for their children a public undenominational school or schools, they shall first approach the School Board by Petition signed by at least 50 parents of children other than European parentage and descent residing in the district, and thereafter the Board shall communicate such desire to the Department, which in conjunction with the Board, may proceed

> to establish such school or schools which may be managed subject to control of the School Board by a School Committee as provided in this Act.

While there were clearly more obstacles facing 'non-European' children hoping to attain education, the boundaries were not yet as rigid as they were to become under apartheid. This is evidenced in Article 69 of the Act, which stated that if there was a place in a European school, this could be filled by non-European children on the condition that the School Committee passes a resolution in favour of such children attending. Under such circumstances attendance at the school would be compulsory for the child/ren in question (Table Mountain Primary school historical document). How often this actually occurred is, however, unknown.

In the Cape there was a clear bias towards the British Empire. For example, libraries were stocked with books which, apart from differing according to the classification of the public school, centred on the works and reference books such as the 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', Blackie's 'Home and Colonial Library', 'How England saved Europe' and 'Deeds that won the empire'. There was almost nothing on South Africa or works by South African authors, which includes Dutch and later Afrikaans titles (Table Mountain Primary school historical document). British cultural symbols and language, including the 'white' settler identity were thus powerfully promoted and, together with the segregated schooling system, served to reproduce 'race' and class hierarchies (Bhana 2002).

5.2   Table Mountain Primary School today

The area in which Table Mountain Primary is located is an important commercial and residential neighbourhood consisting of approximately fifteen thousand residents. An affluent area, it was designated as a 'whites' only suburb during apartheid, which forced the 'coloured' residents living there at the time to leave. It remains a predominantly 'white' area (around 80 percent), however, since the end of apartheid there has been a trickling in of other 'racial' groups into the area - approximately 10 percent 'coloured' residents, 7 percent 'black' African residents and around 4 percent 'Indian' residents.

Catering to around seven hundred learners, boys and girls, Table Mountain Primary offers classes from the Reception Year (Grade R) to Grade Seven. Generally speaking, children enter school around age five or six, and move into high school around the age of thirteen. Since 1994, the learner demographic profile at Table

Mountain Primary has changed dramatically. The current 'racial' composition of the school is 11 percent 'black' African learners, 36 percent 'coloured' learners, 10 percent 'Indian'/'Asian' learners, and 43 percent 'white' learners.

As regards the staff, there is a Principal, three Deputy Principal's, thirty Grade educators, other specialised educators including an art educator, a librarian, music educators, remedial educators, a counsellor, a Xhosa educator, as well as administrative and ground staff[44]. The school fees for Grade R are approximately R20,000 per year, and are slightly reduced for the higher Grades[45]. On the whole, the school allows for an exemption from fees for up to ten percent of the learners as a measure to enable low income families to access the school. According to the school, the majority of learners who attend are from the surrounding suburbs, however, a fair number travel from farther away. The school is very involved within the educational community, especially with regards to working with government education departments on a range if issues such as, for example, curriculum development and implementation. It offers a diverse extra-curricular programme including numerous sporting activities and various cultural committees. The average class size across Grades ranges from between twenty five to twenty nine pupils. The teaching staff consists of predominantly 'white' educators, with a few 'coloured' educators and one 'black' African Grade teacher. The Xhosa teacher is also 'black' African. The school is well secured with school gates locked at all times other than when children are dropped off or collected. Anyone visiting the school is required to sign in on their arrival and out on their departure.

Table Mountain Primary refers to itself as a diverse school with the aim of providing learners with the highest quality education in order to develop their full potential as members of society in the twenty-first century. In line with this, the core values are defined as:

- ❖ A commitment to quality
- ❖ Ecological responsibility
- ❖ Equity
- ❖ Mutual respect and tolerance
- ❖ Holistic educational development

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[44] Ground staff is a collective term referring to caretakers of the gardens, sport fields, swimming pool, buildings etc., as well as the cleaning staff.

[45] The fees have increased at an average rate of over 14 percent per year over the past twelve years and are attributed to increasing costs of, for example, educator salaries.

❖ Relevance to our time, our society, and the children's needs and aspirations.

Accordingly, the rights of the educational community at Table Mountain Primary include:

❖ Mutual respect and dignity
❖ Tolerance, freedom from racism, sexism, ageism, religious and political bigotry
❖ Freedom from exploitation and neglect, and from emotional, verbal or physical abuse
❖ Information concerning the education process and freedom to express opinion on matters affecting the educational process
❖ A fair hearing
❖ The best holistic education possible in a caring, safe and comfortable environment
❖ The best working conditions possible for teachers and pupils, with parental and management support

The educational community also has responsibilities to uphold, and these include adhering to the strict code of conduct and school rules, using socially acceptable language and paying attention to the person who is speaking, being punctual and wearing the correct school uniform. Learners, specifically, are subjected to stringent behavioural norms such as in corridors and stairways: keeping left, no running or eating; in assembly: lining up quickly, leading in and sitting quietly; responding appropriately (such as clapping), standing for the principal; in the playground: no littering, no dangerous games or interfering with the games of others; in the bathrooms: keeping everything clean, respecting the privacy of others and no games or horseplay. Other rules abound that pertain to property and sport or extra-mural outings. At Table Mountain Primary these rules are enforced through a system of rewards or penalties and include gold stars, honour marks, certificate and prizes as well as more general acknowledgement for outstanding behaviour as observed by teachers.

5.2.1   Policies and practices promoting social justice

Table Mountain Primary makes a strong policy commitment to diversity within the educational community as evidenced by their admissions, gender, language and religion policies. For example, citing the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution of 1996, as well as the South African Schools Act of 1996, the school's admission's policy acknowledges that every child has a basic right to education and that there is a need to redress the results of past 'racially' discriminatory laws and practices. Furthermore, this policy states that no learner will be discriminated against because the caregivers are unable to pay the fees, or because they do not subscribe to the school's mission statement. Thus, the aim of enrolment is to reflect the heterogeneity of the South African society. These points are, however, conditioned by various factors including that the child being enrolled is deemed school ready by qualified Foundation Phase teachers, an educational psychologist or a remedial teacher (The Grade R teachers are particularly implicated in this), and that admissions are to be judged on what is considered as being in the best interest of the child. In other words, every application is judged on its merit as determined by the Principal in consultation with other professionals.

The gender policy states that the school aims to achieve a gender ratio of 50:50, that learners should not be prohibited from participating in any activity owing to their gender, and that the school is committed to being sensitive to gender issues, raising awareness thereof, and avoiding the use of stereotypes and generalisations around gender roles. The language of learning, teaching and assessment[46] is English, which is taught as the primary language. Due to the school's commitment to develop multilingualism, additional languages are offered as subjects from Grade One; namely Afrikaans and isiXhosa. In the classrooms that I visited there were always a number of posters in Afrikaans on display. To further promote their commitment to multilingualism, assemblies are held once a term in Afrikaans and Xhosa. Since Xhosa remains the most underrepresented language, other ways of promoting it include highlighting a Xhosa sentence for four weeks a term, placing this sentence in visible places around the school and asking learners to guess its meaning over the intercom. In classrooms, educators are encouraged to make use of all three languages, especially

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[46] The language of assessment for the subjects Afrikaans and isiXhosa is not English.

with regards to 'greetings' and 'thank you's'. Afrikaans and Xhosa books are available for consultation in the school library. The language of communication with caregivers is generally English. The school publishes a weekly newsletter in English, which caregivers are encouraged to read as it contains information about important dates, upcoming meetings and so forth. Language support is offered to pupils whose home language is not English, while the Xhosa teacher provides advanced Xhosa language work and teaching for pupils whose home language is Xhosa. Due to major curricular reforms in education over the past two years, Table Mountain Primary states that in Grades four to seven it is no longer viable to offer a second additional language and that after much deliberation it has been decided that Xhosa will still be made available to learners, but only through their participation in voluntary tutor groups.

Finally, the school's policy on religion maintains that it promotes values of tolerance and respect for all forms of faith and culture. Hence, the school does not offer religious education whereby children are divided into groups for instruction in their specific religions. Rather, through the programme of Life Orientation children are exposed to information concerning world religions and therefore learn about a large diversity of faith systems. According to this policy, religious instruction and observation fall into the domain of the family and home. Given the school's 'white', Christian background, in the past assemblies would include a Christian message. Today, assemblies include messages which are of a universal nature. However, when specific religious events take place the school highlights particular celebrations and observations in order to promote respect for a variety of religious customs and as a way of celebrating difference. As a way to mitigate class and religious differences among learners, the children are not permitted to wear jewellery or clothing reflective of their beliefs. Children are permitted to miss school on important religious days that are not national public holidays, and it is encouraged that people should be sensitive to the needs of children during important religious periods, such as fasting. With regards to the special dietary needs of particular religious communities, the school ensures that the tuckshop[47] stocks both meat and vegetarian snacks, and due to the large number of Muslim learners, all the meat at school functions is halaal, unless learners and parents are informed otherwise. In order to deal, with and resolve, conflicts that arise in the

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[47] This is a food kiosk that sells a variety of goods to children during their break times.

school setting, mediators are assigned. Their job includes managing issues such as bullying, sexism, 'race' discrimination and so forth.

The school also promotes outreach activities that include assisting, for example, the elderly, those who are economically disadvantaged and the disabled. An example of this is a holiday club that was run during the school holiday by Gillian at Table Mountain Primary school. This programme involved two learning and care centres located in socio-economically disadvantaged informal settlements surrounding Cape Town. These children and their educators and caregivers were invited to spend time in the classrooms, use the outdoor equipment and engage in art activities that included painting, baking and beading. This holiday club was coordinated by Gillian in conjunction with the mother of two Grade R children who is heavily involved in supporting the participating centres. These activities are seen as important for the school to engage is, as the principal, reflecting on this programme, states that: 'Table Mountain Primary once again breaks down cultural and socio-economic divides to celebrate the diversity of our country in a relevant and caring manner!' The Grade R mother who organised this club was also responsible for the 'fruit drive' in Grade R, whereby learners each brought a piece of fruit to school on Tuesdays, which were then distributed to these learning centres.

The school's strategic plan (2010/2011) was drawn up by the School Governing Body in conversation with staff and caregivers. This plan, not intended as a final statement about the direction of the school, aimed to provide a summary of what has taken place in terms of action and reflection within the school community. This document highlights the challenges facing learners in a highly globalised, technologically advanced and competitive world, and the particular challenges facing education in South Africa. It also explicitly refers to the consequences of educational dysfunction in South Africa, such as poor Grade 3 and Grade 6 literacy and numeracy scores, and the deepening of educational inequality. The document highlights Table Mountain Primary's strength's including its strong academic outcomes and its status as a top primary school in South Africa, as well as its ability to successfully compete in the international arena.

5.3 Addressing diversity, inclusion and transformation at Table Mountain Primary School

It is apparent from the mission and vision statements, policy documents and strategic plans referred to above that the school is promoting a culturally diverse educational community. While this is seen as one of the main strengths of the school, and the reason families gave as to why they have chosen to enrol their children here, it has given rise to numerous challenges. To address these challenges requires the inclusion of the wider school community. Accordingly, school documents, such as the strategic plan, stipulate that one of the priorities of the school is diversity and inclusion. In line with this, key points in a document drawn up by the school governing body concerning inclusion and diversity at Table Mountain Primary stipulated the following:

❖ A commitment to being an inclusive school
❖ To establish an ethos of tolerance, commitment, anti-bias and non-bullying
❖ To accept, respect and cater to unique views, capacities and needs
❖ For members of the school community to feel common ownership and pride
❖ For cultural values to be recognised as an integral part of the school

Questions of inclusion and diversity clearly have a direct bearing on other important issues such as, for example, the financial implications of inclusion, and the policy of residence in 'catchment areas'[48].

5.3.1 The diversity working group

Attempts to create a school community consisting of a wide range of learners from diverse 'racial', religious and economic backgrounds is mediated by recourse to equality. Thus, as stated in the strategic plan:

> We also want to be a school where no one group within the school community exerts a predominant influence but where all members of the school community feel a common ownership and pride and can recognise themselves and their cultural values as intimately part of the school.

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[48] In order to provide the children of their domestic workers with access to better quality education, some employers pay for them to attend schools such as Table Mountain Primary. However, these children are not necessarily residents in the catchment areas as many of them reside in informal settlements.

As part of this commitment to fostering respect for diversity and transformation, the school put together a working group towards the end of 2009 to develop the expertise of the school community with regards to Table Mountain's unique situation. The stated aim was to embark on a process of conscious analysis and reflection in an attempt to create awareness and recognition of diversity. The term 'diversity' was used to refer to various differences experienced by learners including:

❖ Different age groups of learners
❖ A wide range of learning potential/multiple intelligences
❖ A wide range in levels of physical growth/emotional maturity
❖ Different cultural groups and value systems
❖ Different scholastic achievements/backgrounds
❖ Differences with regards to degrees of stimulation during early years/in home environment.

The working group was a result of an initiative that emerged from the school's parent forum and included representatives from the school governing body, the parent forum, the principal, other staff members including the school counsellor, as well as education and diversity experts from the wider community. The aim of the working group was to get people involved in discussions of how transformation could be achieved, the direction in which this was to be taken, as well as to ascertain the need for staff training on questions of diversity. While this initiative did not emerge directly from the staff members, they were to form an integral part of this process. Thus, after consultation with staff members across all the Grades, bar Grade R, the following training needs were identified:

1) To develop an understanding of intolerance displayed through technology
2) To receive in-depth information on cultural differences and practices (listening, respect towards women, use of eye contact, sitting or standing when an elder enters the room, greetings, practices including fasting, wearing beads and bracelets and henna on hands)

3) To gain knowledge of the impact of differences in family values and factors such as upbringing, lack of supervision, parental discipline style, social class issues, modelling, and xenophobia and language barriers

4) To inculcate acceptable socialising skills such as respect for others and tolerance of difference

5) To receive training in mediation techniques so that staff know how to address issues immediately and effectively

6) To identify the symptoms or indicators of prejudice on the school premises.

The first point was addressed by having an independent counsellor give a presentation first to staff, and then to Grade 6 and 7 learners and their caregivers, on the role of technology, cyber bullying, the dangers of abuse, as well as the inappropriate use of technology. It was decided that the remaining training needs identified would be addressed through three workshops with staff members, a panel discussion with experts from the local university and school community, as well as discussions with children during their life skills lesson. An application for funding was made to the provincial department of education for anti-bias training with Persona Dolls, which was to be provided for the Foundation Phase teachers. This funding was, however, not forthcoming and the training was therefore cancelled. To ensure that families felt included in this process and actively participated, newsletters were sent out explaining what Table Mountain Primary was hoping to address through this process, and feedback was provided by members of the diversity working group to the parent forum and the governing body. The involvement of families was crucial, as many staff members expressed that the inculcation of values such as respect for others and tolerance of difference comes from the home environment and should be supported by the school. Therefore, a need was expressed to find common ground with regards to diversity and inclusion and to get families to commit to promoting at home what educators were trying to address at school. It was noted that while these more formal steps were being taken to address diversity at the school, this was continually being complimented by other processes such as initiatives taken by individual educators. This was recognised as an essential component of this process.

The journey that was embarked on at Table Mountain Primary to address questions of inclusion, diversity and transformation was deeply insightful regarding the tensions that arise in a multicultural context. The discussion that follows centres around

the formal series of actions that the diversity group implemented in their interrogation of diversity and inclusion. The overarching objective of these actions, as defined by the group, was *to create a deeper understanding of concepts and contextualising the process of developing an inclusive environment at Table Mountain Primary.* The first formal action to be presented will be the panel discussion entitled 'Transformation at Table Mountain Primary', which included three education specialists from the university and school setting who have experience working with transformation in the education sector. The second formal set of activities is the diversity workshops that were undertaken with the staff and run by an anti-bias trainer.

5.3.2 'Transformation at Table Mountain Primary': Input from the wider educational community

This two hour panel discussion was hosted by the diversity working group and was aimed at staff members and the families of learners. For the purposes of anonymity, the three panellists will be referred to as Mr X, Mr Y, and Ms. Z. The event, which took place one evening in the school hall, was widely advertised (for example, in the school's weekly newsletter) and was attended by eighteen staff members and thirty eight caregivers. No learners were present. While the majority of caregivers in attendance were 'white', there were a number of 'Indian' and 'coloured' caregivers, as well as one 'black' African caregiver. Walking around the school foyer before the meeting began, I noticed that the glass cabinets that lined the foyer were filled with old black and white pictures. What struck me straight away was that all these pictures were of 'white' girls and boys. Taken in a bygone era, they were proudly on display for all who entered the school to see.

5.3.2.1 Feel it. It is here

The title of this section is a direct reference to the soccer world cup, which was being hosted in South Africa the year I was undertaking fieldwork. It is also indicative of one of the main threads of the panel discussion, namely, that questions around diversity, inclusion and transformation are integral to contemporary South Africa and education. Most of the participants fully agreed that it was time to move into the future by moving mindsets, and accepting that this is something for which there are no clear answers.

Now is the time for re-imagining, recreating and reinventing – ourselves, our relationships and discourses of diversity and difference.

A pertinent finding that emerged from the discussion was that 'race' and difference remain highly relevant in both institutional settings and personal lives, largely due to the historical paradigm in which many people still think and act. Thus, there is no escaping that discourses of diversity remain deeply embedded in the fabric of South African society and come to have a direct bearing on processes of identity formation. Accordingly, it was suggested that debates about diversity, inclusion and transformation move beyond just 'mouthing these platitudes' (Mr. X) and attempt to translate 'talk' into action (Ms. Z).

These discourses and the beliefs and practices that put them into effect need to be discussed through dialogue, however, people a) avoid these questions or remain silent about them (Mr Y, parent 11, staff member 2) or b) display aggression and defensiveness when these sorts of questions are raised (Mr. Y). There is a need to critically and actively engage with difference and diversity in the South African society, in schools, classrooms and at home. However, it remains, however, a subject that is not prioritised, as pointed out by Mr Y who noted the very low turnout at the evening's discussion and stated that what is needed is an exploration into why more people are not interested in these discussions. While it is acknowledged that difference comes to sit on us in a multiplicity of ways, 'race' remains one of the primary discourses around which difference comes to be defined. As Mr Y notes, 'we have chosen this *one* thing – skin colour – and connected attributes to it definitively – for example, intelligence – that there are more clever 'whites' than 'blacks'. The danger of this thinking is infinite'. Furthermore, the fact that there are no models which can lead the way forward means that it is through a process of trial and error that those grappling with how to undo the relevance of 'race' must proceed (Mr Y).

5.3.2.2 *'Where we come from we DO NOT want to go back to'*

The discussion was primarily concerned with education and what challenges exist regarding transformation in this setting, and what the way forward might be. Firstly, Mr Y made it clear that there is no roadmap to follow with regards to creating an inclusive environment. As with 'race', there are no easy answers or quick fixes. Zimitri Erasmus

(2001, 26) has written about the need to re-evaluate 'racial'-relations of power and their effect on contemporary life, and the commitment to transformation that this requires:

> The challenge for all South Africans is to begin to recognize racist sentiments and practices as part of our everyday reality and the shaping of all our selves. It is to relinquish the desire to leave the past behind and instead, to start processing the past with due regard to the powerful emotional burden which accompanies it: feelings of anger, guilt, betrayal, shame, pain and humiliation. A progressive, transformative politics cannot be based on a denial of the past. The realization that no one South African can claim a moral high ground, that all of us have been profoundly wounded and shaped by the past, is more likely to provide the ground for creating new identities.

Echoing Erasmus, Mr Y states that a starting point for this journey is accepting that today our histories remain a large determinant of success and are therefore 'holding us hostage'. The need to engage with history is vitally important as Foucault reminds us, as the past and the present are both intimately and politically connected and have a direct bearing on one's thinking and one's being in the world. Thus, as MacNaughton (2005, 147) points out, Foucault makes clear that 'we should not ignore the past if we wish to understand the present'. These histories, which in South Africa have been hugely misleading, need to be addressed. For example, speaking of the achievements of Table Mountain Primary School and the recognition it receives as being one of the outstanding schools in the Province, there is the danger that it makes people complacent and prevents them from questioning who the school really serves and to what effect. Plainly stated, Mr Y argues that 'we need to give up the idea of a 'white' school as representing the apex of our achievement…we need to move away from 'white' standards'. A 'black' caregiver suggested that this process has to involve the 'black' community who were not taking an active role in their children's education. Since she was the only 'black' caregiver in attendance, she argued that there was a need to 'think about what these parents' absence might mean', suggesting that 'maybe 'black' parents are content with 'white' parents deciding things for them' (Caregiver 11). It was therefore the responsibility of the *entire* school community to push the boundaries and disrupt old patterns, thereby creating new spaces and ways of thinking in and through which caregivers express what they want for their children (Dr Y). Therefore, engaging with histories –and there are many - serves to open up ways to 'understand the discursive struggles, the different forces, the gaps and the contradictions that produced our pasts and that overlap with our present' (MacNaughton 2005, 148). We do not interrogate

history to understand the past, rather, as Foucault believed, we do it to understand the present and find new possibilities in it (Alvesson 2002).

5.3.2.3   Redefining the public school

A question was raised as to who the *public* was that the school serves. Class structures are an integral part of this since Table Mountain Primary caters predominantly to the middle-class. According to the specialists, a public school should aim to push boundaries, especially with regards to what public it is working for. According to Mr Y, there is a need to move schools beyond mindsets of private good and self interest and ensure that as a school community we are helping each other as well as the children 'break through these difficult structures which steer us to imagine possibilities in only one way'. At many former 'white' schools there is a strong emphasis on the 'proud history' of the school. This was certainly the case at my own school, as well as at Table Mountain Primary where staff members have made statements to this effect and where yearly celebrations of its history take place. Yet, this comes to generate an unspoken norm about how things are and should be done in this context. Those who do not partake in reciting this norm are most likely classified as 'other' as they refuse or are unable to become the norm (Mr Y).

5.3.2.4   Discursive knowledge, representation and belonging

Discourses of 'whiteness' have intricately shaped contemporary beliefs about self and 'other'. As Ms Z asserts, learners not classified as 'white' who find themselves in predominantly 'white' environments often feel the responsibility to be exceptional. This ties in with what Mr Y noted about 'race' being linked to attributes such as abilities. For example, by coming first in class s/he directly challenges the belief that 'whites' are cleverer than 'blacks'. However, it is likely that this child will be seen as an 'exception' and not as a direct threat to the norms and practices that support the belief that 'white' learners are better achievers. Thus, as part of the school's introspection process it is necessary to interrogate and trouble these norms, which might result in having to come to terms with the fact that this history is *not* that proud. A 'white' father with two adopted 'black' children – one in Grade One and the other in Grade Two – reflects on the impact of this on his children's' identity and sense of belonging:

> I feel that I interrogate this on a daily basis…my children's teachers are almost all 'white'…this challenges my kids immensely in this society because in the mirror my kids are 'black'. Why can the Xhosa teacher not be 'white' and the English teacher 'black'? (Caregiver 8)

The idea that 'race' is representative of so many other aspects of one's identity shows the power that this notion continues to wield in our thinking. Picking up on the caregiver's comment above, Mr X, a 'black' man, takes this thinking further through reference to his personal experience, and shows that the traps that have been set for us regarding skin colour and what our attributes and roles can/should be are still active:

> It is funny that the parent should use this example, as I have had direct experience with this. At a school where I was working, we held a parents evening and I greeted one parent and began to talk to him about his daughter. The parent looked very confused and eventually said: 'but my child doesn't do Xhosa'. I had to explain that I was the English teacher. (Mr X)

These two examples show how the borders around 'racial' classifications that were so vital to the apartheid project need to be, and on occasion are, directly challenged. Yet, too many examples abound that reflect the concerns of the father in the extract above, while situations that serve to challenge dominant thinking patterns (for example, that English teachers are all 'white' and that Xhosa teachers are all 'black') are still too few.

Another parent expresses his concern about how the culture of the school impacts on his child in a way that is not congruent with the child's home life:

> I want the best education for my child…but this comes at what price? My child comes home and speaks with a different accent. (Caregiver 2)

This father has seen first hand the ways in which a school serves as a site where identities are shaped. The lack of congruence between this environment and that of the home has resulted in identity tensions that are not easily or quickly resolved.

5.3.2.5   *The desire to educate children differently*

The relationship between education and identity formation processes is, therefore, complex. One way to gain deeper insight into what these tensions are, what gives rise to them and how they might be resolved, is through engaging with the wider community and determining how the school can reflect and share knowledge from all quarters. All the caregivers who attended this discussion stated that they wanted a different education

for their children than the education that they received as children. This was expressed by caregivers across the 'racial' board:

> We need ways to take this forward - remember the pencil test? I was moved from one school to another because of the Group Areas Act…Children still talk in terms of 'black' and 'white' children – how can we avoid this? (Caregiver 1)

> I am really hoping that my children have a different experience to myself at school! We need to be much more direct…conscious…and think of practical solutions in order to get through boundaries, such as those between [middle class suburb where school is located] and the townships. (Caregiver 3)

> I feel ill-equipped to help my children, who are in Grades One and Four, with diversity and integration. I grew up in the 1970s/80s and went to an all 'white' school. My children still see what I saw – 'white' teachers and 'black' ground staff at school, and the 'black' helper and gardener at home. (Caregiver 10)

Caregivers also directly related their experiences, or rather the lack thereof, of forging interpersonal relations with people from diverse 'racial' groups and the lingering effects of this. Themes that emerged from comments made by four 'white' caregivers included that they only had 'white' friends; they did not want to have friends from other 'racial' backgrounds just to feel more inclusive; and that they would really love the opportunity to connect and make friends with other people, but they do not know how (Caregivers 4, 5, 6, 7). An 'Indian' caregiver reinforced the idea that divisions in terms of interpersonal relationships ran deep, however, he believed that through children connections across 'racial' boundaries could be made:

> I grew up without 'white' friends and at my workplace I have no 'white' connections. Children are the one's that are going to teach us…our kids are invited to birthday parties of children of different 'races' and these are the places that parents then become friends.(Caregiver 12)

There are clear generational differences between the schooling that caregivers experienced, and the schooling that their children are now receiving. Yet, these caregivers are acutely aware of some of the similarities of the educational experience, and this is of great concern to them. Children are still classifying people according to their 'race', there remains a clear division between the 'have's' and the 'have not's', and the social structure of society – which children encounter both at home and at school - remains somewhat reminiscent of the old order.

One of the most dominant themes to emerge from the discussion was that children are directly affected by the ideologies and discourses that give rise to the 'racialised' scripts according to which many people think and act. Furthermore, children were seen as the torchbearers of transformation and the speakers, staff members and

caregivers all expressed the need to engage in diversity and identity work for the sake of the children. Importantly, all three speakers highlighted that studies have shown that prejudice and stereotyping begin in the preschool years, and therefore need to be addressed early on.

> Well meaning adults tell children to *ignore* differences and focus on similarities, but an examination of differences is *critically important* to understand and embrace diversity. (Mr. X)

Only two attendees, both staff members, drew on the discourse of children as innocent and/or ignorant, stating that:

> We [caregivers] grew up segregated…the children will help us normalise…children just see the physical and it is us [adults] with all our baggage that assume that they are making a judgement [when they use 'race' classifications]. (Staff member 2)

> Kids are going to be leading the way, while adults are caught in traps, mindsets. (Staff member 1)

The last two comments suggest that children are free of the ideological and discursive constraints which caregivers feel caught up in. Some participants, while recognising that much has changed for children over the last twenty years, seem more hesitant about claiming that children are free from the baggage of apartheid. This was reinforced by Mr Y who explored identity formation in South African youth, notes that 'while children are doing better, they still often get it wrong'. He illustrates his point with two examples. The first pertains to a group of soccer players who, at a local match, told him that they were playing for the 'apartheid cup'. While the youth treated this as a joke, Mr Y stresses that this is *not* a joke and has real effects on the lives of children today. The second example refers to his own daughter who studied Xhosa for five years and today cannot speak a word thereof. He argues that this is not as a result of an incompetent Xhosa teacher, but rather a reflection of learning challenges shaped by the past. Thus, he encourages educators and caregivers to 'help children break through these difficult structures which steer them and us to imagine possibilities in only one way' (Mr Y).

Vincent (2008) has explored how the history of contact among the people living in South Africa affects the present. She writes that while the youth may not have experienced apartheid first-hand, they are still the recipients of residual knowledge that is, as Botsis (2010) notes, socially transmitted and reproduced. This ideological

knowledge is exceptionally powerful as is can 'function as a tacit logic for making sense of current social changes, which often leads to a reinstantiation of white hegemony and normativity' (Botsis 2010, 50). Accordingly, gaining a better understanding of identity formation processes in children and youth is integral to any attempts to address diversity and difference in schools. Exploring children's inventiveness around these topics allows for old and new discourses of 'race', class and gender to be understood and moments of troubling identified. What children believe, how they act, their friendships and their sense of self are all domains where it is possible to assess how we might move beyond pseudo-integration and achieve real transformation. Yet, as MacNaughton (2005, 71) reminds us, 'We ask children to do things we find difficult to do'.

5.3.3   *Implementing diversity workshops with staff members*

Three workshops with staff members were planned for the second half of the school year. These workshops were run by a trainer, Ms. Krishna, who had over twenty years experience working with educators through anti-bias training and was currently the diversity coordinator at a local primary school.

The first workshop was attended by the majority of staff members, which included the teaching, administrative and ground staff. This served as an opportunity to introduce the topic of diversity, set out the workshop objectives, and discuss what everyone hoped to gain from these discussions. According to an internal document, the goal of this first workshop was to explore attitudes, biases and so forth, and get staff to feel some level of comfort talking about the topic of diversity. Positive anonymous feedback from the staff about the workshop included that: 'it brought out some of the pre-conceived ideas about certain people', 'Ms. Krishna knows what she is doing', 'our facilitator was doing great', 'I realized that I am not as 'diverse' in my thinking as I thought I was and that I am prejudiced in a number of areas'. Negative criticism of the workshop included going beyond allocated time, being boring, superficial and not adding anything new, as well as one comment stating that they did not enjoy the offensive views of others. Staff was also encouraged to provide suggestions for the second workshop that were then passed on to Ms. Krishna. These anonymous suggestions included:

- I would like practical ideas/ solutions / tools for difficult situations that may arise in the classroom or at break time between learners. For example, during the fast a pupil taunts another with their lunch, 'you're not a Christian because you steal'

- Practical examples: we could look at issues that affect us directly as teachers and brainstorm ways of dealing with those. For example, a letter from a gay parent at the school who objected to forms that stated 'Mother' and 'Father' when her child had two mothers. Assumptions are so often made that all people conform to "the norm" in terms of their sexual orientation or in their decision to conform to a religion - maybe we should address these assumptions

- Dealing with parents who feel their culture/ religion takes preference over that on which the school is based

- Our parents need workshops more than ever now in these times as our mixed colour families, same sex parents, divorced, normal, single, all find themselves in the same position as we find ourselves and they have no idea how to handle situations so they impart what they think is the right thing to say or do and more often than not – that is what we are trying to mediate in our classrooms

- Perhaps some sharing of our real experiences, confusions or fears. Is this too soon?

In the second workshop, which is discussed in depth in the following section, a *critical incident* (Connolly 2009) took place with regards to the challenges of teaching and learning in a diverse setting. This incident served to highlight the tensions that arise when different beliefs and values come into direct contact, when subjectivities are interrogated, identity positions questioned, and power and privilege threatened. The outcome of this workshop, as well as the feedback from staff, resulted in the third workshop being cancelled.

5.3.3.1   *Unpacking a loaded concept: Diversity*

The second workshop consisted of teaching and administrative staff only, as the ground staff, having attended the first workshop, had decided that they did not want to attend as they felt it was not beneficial to them. I asked one of the ground staff members at the Grade R school why they did not attend and she stated simply that 'it was not for them'. Scheduled for a Friday afternoon, the two hour workshop was preceded by lunch in the staffroom, which was provided by the school. I went over to the main school building to join the staff for lunch and heard comments from various teachers regarding their lack of desire to attend the workshop. Many expressed that their Friday afternoons were very valuable to them and that they would insist that the workshop not overrun its allocated time. I then made my way to the school library where the workshop was being held along with the rest of the staff. Once everyone had taken up their seats the school counsellor opened the workshop with a brief presentation, which included feedback from the first workshop. It was clear that the staff wanted more practical ideas – 'tools for teachers' as one educator put it – to deal with problematic situations that arose in the classroom and on the playground.

Ms Krishna took the floor and began by speaking about the Persona doll approach, which she believed was a wonderful tool for fostering an anti-bias approach and included the following benefits: opportunities for sharing experiences, fears and worries; sharing information about who we are through stories, as well as dealing with identity. Persona dolls have been used in diverse contexts and are advocated as a useful way to promote understanding of diversity and difference among young children growing up in socially diverse environments (see MacNaughton and Davis 2001, Moreno and van Dongen 2007). For example, Md Nor (2005) writes about the use of Persona dolls in Muslim early childhood settings and reminds 'white' educators to pay attention to the complex issues that develop in cross cultural work. Ms. Krishna referred to this approach as one way in which educators could deal with the more practical concerns of conflict that arose in pluricultural settings. Moving on from this, She outlined the agenda for the workshop which included a discussion around defining diversity and inclusion, the anti-bias approach as well as other approaches to diversity. Ms Krishna noted that while she had touched on these topics during the first workshop, she would be expanding on them.

5.3.3.2 *Diversity <u>does</u> make a difference and it <u>matters</u>*

Ms. Krishna stated that while the journey around questions of diversity and inclusion began long ago, it was now beginning to intensify within the education sector and society as a whole. The workshop participants were asked to brainstorm what the term 'diversity' encompasses and the following figure indicates the different aspects of identity that the participants referred to:

differences

contradictions

richness

paradigm shifts

DIVERSITY

variety

seperate

conflict

groups

ASPECTS *of diversity*

- Gender
- Race
- Culture
- Status
- Position
- Ability
- Attitude
- Class
- Cultural experiences
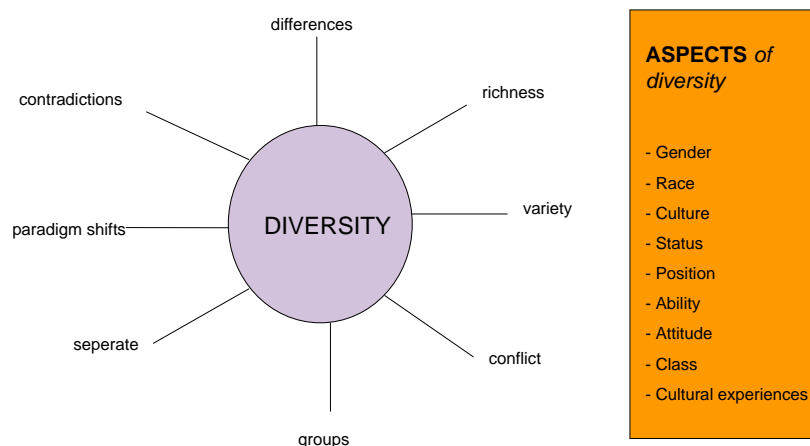
Figure 3. A breakdown of what educators believed the term diversity encompasses

Ms. Krishna reiterated that diversity is a loaded term with many aspects that need to be considered in everyday practice. She provided the following definition of diversity:

> Diversity extends well beyond race. It encompasses a number of dimensions and aspects including ability (mental and physical), age, ethnicity and nationality, gender, geographical origin, language, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical appearance, situational and health factors.

Interestingly, this definition begins by stressing that diversity is *much more* than 'race'. This has become somewhat of a disclaimer that many people make when they want to speak about diversity and social justice issues in the South African context and is

another reminder of how, in this society, identity has become intricately linked to the notion of 'race'. At this point in the discussion a Grade One educator told the story of two 'black' boys who were fighting. One of the boys was from a large informal settlement and the other was from a middle-class suburb. The main reason that they were fighting was because they were from very different class backgrounds, even though they were both Xhosa. This appeared to confuse the educator as she thought that coming from the same 'ethnic' group would be a reason for cohesion and not exclusion. The educator, as a result of this incident, believed that the children were acting according to a social status hierarchy, which led to practices of inclusion and exclusion. Thus, coming from a wealthy background was more highly valued than coming from an economically disadvantaged one. Ms. Krishna used this example to stress the need to talk to children about difference, especially since when this is not discussed, subtle messages are conveyed to them regarding who/what is valued and who/what is not. By way of example she pointed out that there is a need for 'multicultural crayons', in other words, crayons that include a variety of skin colour tones. She refers back to past schooling experiences where the beige colour crayon –used to colour in a picture of the body parts of someone who was considered 'white' – was called 'flesh'. This was very problematic as Ms. Krishna, who considers herself 'Indian', argues: 'But whose flesh are we talking about, because it certainly is not my skin colour!' This comment piqued my interest in finding out what the Grade R children were calling their crayons and the following week I asked them about this. These findings are discussed in Chapter six.

5.3.3.3   *Where is the line? Resistance to see 'Otherwise'[49]*

Up until this point the workshop had elicited few comments from the participants. Ms. Krishna then moved the discussion forward by introducing the second point on the agenda, namely, 'approaches to diversity'. The first approach she mentioned was that of *assimilation*, which she defined as: 'to be absorbed into, to become like, to make similar', and it is around this point that things began to get heated. A comment from an educator alluded to the defensiveness that Mr Y spoke about during the meeting panel discussion:

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[49] The term 'Otherwise' is borrowed from the work of bell hooks (1987).

> Look at the issue with, say, black children and language. The parents *choose* this school for their kids *knowing* what it offers, what it's about…why then do parents complain? If I wanted to send my kids to a township school then I couldn't expect them [the township school] or ask them to teach my children English. (Staff member 1).

This statement set the tone for the remainder of the discussion, which centred around a comment that another educator made later on, namely, 'Where is the line?' (Staff member 2). In other words, the educator questioned how much the school needs to compromise their values and practices to accommodate others who do not agree with the ways things are done. Ms. Krishna responded to this staff member by asking:

> But would you send your children [to a township school]? There is pressure on former white schools to deal with diversity and less so in other schools. These schools look at things from a white, Christian, middle-class perspective. What we need is to take a critical look at the ethos of these schools.

The fact that this staff member has a 'choice' regarding where she sends her child to school is exposed as representing a position of privilege, which few South African's enjoy. Yet, this choice is less constrained for her than for other families from different cultural backgrounds who have the economic means to send their children to Table Mountain Primary. This is because for the child of the staff member there is a better fit between the culture of the home and that of the school, while for children from different cultural backgrounds, although their families want them to have access to global opportunities through accessing quality education (and English), the fit between home and school is not necessarily easy or comfortable. As MacNaughton (2005) writes, the culture of the school matches certain people's 'truths', their values and ways of seeing the world, better than others. These 'truths' are very powerful as people invest in them both emotionally and politically (MacNaughton 2005). Furthermore, it needs to be questioned whether or not caregivers are really aware at the outset what the school culture is, as so much is 'hidden' curriculum and silence owing to the fact that those in power are often *themselves* unaware of the normative framework within in which they work. How then are families to gain a deeper understanding of what the school is about? The staff member's irritation regarding caregivers' complaints once their children are enrolled (and therefore have better insight into what experiences are provided in this setting) suggests that challenging hegemonic values and practices is heavily discouraged. Thus, as (MacNaughton 2005, 46) acknowledges, 'finding spaces in which to 'speak your truth' as a caregiver can be a struggle'.

5.3.3.4 Troubling 'whiteness'

Ms. Krishna's suggestion that former 'white' schools have more responsibility to deal with their position – especially owing to the fact that they were one of the main bastions of 'whiteness' and privilege during the colonial and apartheid years - elicited a strong reaction from many participants who accused Ms. Krishna of 'looking at things from only one side'. A few teachers attempted to silence discourses of 'white' privilege and power that Ms. Krishna exposed, by introducing a discourse of 'quality education'. They asked Ms. Krishna if there is a problem with the quality of education that the school provides its learners, which is what they felt Ms. Krishna was criticizing. Echoing Mr Y's earlier warning about not only equating good academic achievement with being a 'successful' school, Ms. Krishna pointed out the lack of 'racial' diversity in teaching staff , which elicited loud objections from the participants, some of whom stated that they felt attacked by such statements. John, a 'white', male educator from Europe interrupted with comments about schools being forced to employ people of colour and the lowering of standards. He also voiced his discontent with Ms. Krishna's supposed lack of rapport, especially considering that she works with diversity issues on a regular basis, as well as her inability to see things from 'their' perspective. His use of 'their' positioned him as the patriarchal 'white' male who feels that he can voice with authority what other staff members are supposedly thinking. When Ms. Krishna questioned what she called his outburst as well as his aggressive body language, the exchange degenerated and the atmosphere became increasingly tense. Ms. Krishna stated that she would no longer speak to John about this due to his defensiveness and tense and aggressive body language. She concluded that it was not fair to the rest of the participants if they kept having a go at each other. Ms. Krishna asserted her authority as the facilitator of the workshop and argued that it was her prerogative to stop any discussion and move forward. John was clearly agitated by this response.

This exchange, which some staff members referred to as 'the John issue', served as a reminder that issues around diversity illicit many strong feelings and emotions not easily dealt with. Staff feedback collected after the workshop indicated that this incident was a pivotal moment in the discussion about diversity. For some it signalled the deep and troubling discourses which inhibit dialogue in a multicultural setting and, taken further, could have served as a valuable tool to addressing how such obstacles might be addressed:

> Ms. Krishna didn't stick to her agenda but facilitated the discussion - it can't be too cerebral, we need to address what really makes us fear "other".

> It was useful in terms of the reflection on my own biases and views about my experience of living in this country at this time and being in this school and the various ways in which I am able to tolerate diversity and 'otherness'.

> The discussions around various approaches of practical concern and positioning was useful in that it placed it in the everyday context of the workplace but also brought reflection on how ideas are constituted.

> The "differences of opinion" did get people talking, so what IS positive is that discussion is happening and it has certainly given me lots of food for thought - which has been fantastic.

However, for others this encounter left them feeling angry, as expressed by their negative comments:

> I was furious. I learnt nothing new.

> I was disappointed that the workshop became tense and uncomfortable.

> I am scared of that MS. KRISHNA lady.

> I was very angry about it for quite some time afterwards

> Unfortunately, I left feeling disappointed and frustrated. She failed and wasted our time.

> At the start of the meeting the perception was created that Ms. Krishna did not react well to the feedback about the first which set the tone for the rest of the afternoon, and she appeared negative/ resistant at the outset of the session.

> Made me think - for example - no 'skin colour' for blacks/ coloureds.

From the feedback from staff it was clear that the majority of the comments were unfavourable. Drawing from these comments the school counsellor highlighted several themes that emerged, all pertaining to the facilitator: 1) the facilitator as taking offence to other people's views, 2) the facilitator as having preconceived erroneous assumptions about Table Mountain Primary school, 3) the facilitator as showing a lack of professionalism, and 4) the facilitator as racist and prejudiced.

5.3.3.4.1 *The powerful struggle to keep 'whiteness' intact*

The 'John issue', coupled with the overwhelmingly negative feedback from staff towards the facilitator, suggests that the predominantly 'white' staff were resisting an interrogation of the unexamined norm of 'whiteness'. This is not surprising if one

considers, as Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997) has done, that most of the 'white' staff have gone to school, lived and worked in predominantly 'white' settings and thus think of themselves as the 'racial' norm. This leads to a lack of conscious consideration of their 'white' privilege and systematically conferred advantages. They believe that they are capable of being colour-blind and free of prejudice and see racism as the prejudiced behaviour of individuals (what some staff members suggested about Ms. Krishna) rather than as 'an institutionalised system of advantage benefitting Whites in subtle as well as blatant ways' (Tatum 1997, 95). This is precisely what McIntosh (1989, 12) refers to when she writes that 'I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, but never in invisible systems conferring unsought racial dominance on my group from birth'. In the workshop discussion Ms. Krishna was drawing attention to 'whiteness' – centring it – and this was uncomfortable and unfamiliar territory for many staff members. Some staff members believed that Ms. Krishna was speaking about *all* 'white' people as privileged:

> She makes an assumption that if one is white, blonde and has blue eyes one grew up necessarily privileged which is often not the case.

I do not believe that Mr. Krishna was explicit enough about the theoretical framework within which she was working (that of 'whiteness' and 'white' privilege), which left room for misinterpretation. However, it is also likely that Ms. Krishna did not feel the need to be too blatant about this point as Table Mountain Primary has always been, and remains, a very privileged institution which is likely to be staffed by individuals who, given the history of the country, are likely to have led privileged lives. This ties in with frustration that many 'white' people feel for being seen as a group member, rather than as an individual (Tatum 1997). This is particular difficult for 'white' people who have generally been steeped in the dominant ideology of individualism. Thus, unlike other 'racial' groups, 'white' people are seldom seen as representing their entire 'race' group. The notion of being seen as an individual goes hand in hand with the idea of meritocracy – a notion that is gaining more currency among 'white' people in South Africa. As highlighted in Chapter three, this is clearly evident in statements such as that of the F.W. de Klerk Foundation (cited in Matthews 2011), which argues that: '…the vast majority of [whites] have acquired whatever wealth they have through the same means as their counterparts in the rest of the world: through hard work and enterprise'.

The further we move away from 1994, the easier it becomes to invoke meritocracy and a denial of 'racial' privilege, as evidenced by the work of Steyn (2003).

5.3.3.4.2 Defensiveness, aggression and 'racial' amnesia

The dissociation of 'white' individuals from their group membership is another example of the privilege that they enjoy in a society in which their image is normative. Citing Nathan McCall's writing in his work *Makes me wanna holler: A young black man in America*, Fisher (2007, 3) points out how 'white' people and those from other 'racial' groups live with 'race' on a daily basis and experience this in opposing ways:

> I told Danny I did not have a choice in the matter. "You can sit around and intellectualize about race when you want to, and when you get tired of it you can set it aside and go diving or hang-gliding and forget about it. But I can't. Race affects every facet of my life, man. I can't get past race because white folks won't let me get past it. They remind me of it everywhere I go. Every time I step into an elevator and a white woman bunches up in the corner like she thinks I wanna rape her, I'm forced to think about it. Every time I walk into the stores, the suspicious looks in white shopkeepers' eyes make me think about it. Every time I walk past whites sitting in their cars, I hear the door locks clicking and I think about it. I can't get away from it, man. I stay so mad all the time because I am forced to spend so much time and energy reacting to race. I hate it. It wearies me. But there is no escape, man. No escape".

John, along with other staff members, were not prepared to view their 'whiteness' as personally and socially significant, which is made evident by John taking up a discourse of superiority –such as his suggestion that schools who are forced to employ people of colour will face a drop in standards. The way in which he positions himself is supported by those around him who not only fail to implicate John as anything *but* the victim, but heavily criticise Ms. Krishna for putting him in this position. John's status as 'victim' is reinforced when he states that:

> The meeting was a racist attack - the very person who should be embracing all cultures and races, seemed to want to deny me (a white male) an identity.

Ms. Krishna, however, expressed that she felt attacked and disrespected. She recognised that this incident was shocking for his colleagues to watch and that this resulted in them empathizing with him and directing their anger at her instead. The feedback from staff clearly indicated their irritation with Ms. Krishna:

Ms. Krishna's attack on John and bringing it up again on closing…it was uncalled for and very unprofessional on her behalf. She got SO defensive; she attacked him, insulted him; the John outburst was unpleasant; she was rather aggressive when addressing John.

Being a facilitator you must expect anything from different individuals who come from different cultures and environment.

John was seen by some staff members as embodying just another point of view that should have been respected, while for Ms. Krishna, John's comments oozed with power often abused by 'white' males who feel entitled to aggressively and arrogantly make their statements, even if it means derailing the workshop process. It was clear from the reaction of staff members sitting around me that they agreed with John's position and therefore, not surprisingly opted to 'close ranks' and protect this position. The staff feedback confirms this as, although Ms. Krishna had been explicitly invited by Table Mountain Primary to carry out these workshops, after workshop two they wrote that:

Ms. Krishna doesn't know enough about the staff at Grove and came in with her preconceived ideas of where we are at.

She was trying to completely change/convert our school and staff in one swoop instead of trying to get a better understanding of what our school is all about and is capable of.

For a person who doesn't know much about our classes and doesn't know much about what a job we are doing, to come to us and tell us that we have to practically change everything we are doing, is quite insulting.

Some things she said showed very little insight into where people were coming from or from our situation as a school.

Ms. Krishna acknowledged that her expectations of the staff were unfair, yet they were based on Table Mountain Primary's reputation and it being highly regarded in terms of its commitment to diversity. The panel discussion meeting outlined earlier in the chapter left Ms. Krishna with the impression that there was conscious reflection and a deep interest in exploring how to facilitate transformation at the school. In the workshop, however, the attitudes and comments of some of the staff members left her feeling frustrated and annoyed by the slow rate of change in South Africa and in education, especially regarding awareness around questions of transformation. This is not an uncommon experience for people working in the field of anti-racism. Faye Crosby (1997) reveals that she too has felt impatient with those who suffer under the illusion of 'imaginary white disadvantage', but argues that those fatigued by this need to push forward and continue for the sake of wanting a better world for children. While there certainly are staff members who believe in the diversity project at Table Mountain

Primary, and acknowledge the personal and institutional introspection that forms a necessary part of this, it appears that other staff members do not want to interrogate this too closely. Working from what Ms. Krishna terms an 'anti' stance makes it extremely difficult for people to take a step back and see their way of doing things and their belief systems as only one way among many – not *the* way. It is increasingly difficult post-apartheid to ignore the inequalities that pervade everyday life, resulting in a continual sense of discomfort for those who feel a sense of shame and guilt for past atrocities and an understanding of the social significance that 'race' continues to have. The instinct, as both Mr Y and Tatum (1997) argue, is to turn away from this in order to avoid being uncomfortable and is demonstrated by the following comments made by some staff members who believe that discussions around diversity are passé:

> It's time to move on.
>
> It has now been dealt with as much as it can be.
>
> Too much energy has been spent on diversity
>
> There are more pressing issues to deal with in our school.

These suggestions to stop talking about diversity when clearly much remains to be discussed, alludes to a desire to stop challenging and questioning the normative framework within which these people live and work. This call for silence around diversity and transformation might also be seen as a call to 'get back on!', which Tatum (1997, 100) describes as the social pressure from the 'white' community to stop noticing racism and its attendant consequences. Ms. Krishna noted that it might have been easier for staff members to hear what she had to say if she were 'white'.

For some, being provided with practical solutions to deal with problems of diversity in the classroom was all that they were hoping to gain from these workshops. According to some participants Ms. Krishna had not provided sufficient practical solutions to their diversity 'problems', in other words,she did not offer tangible solutions as to 'how to fix it'. This 'band-aid' approach and assuming that the problem will just go away once the solution has been implemented is an example of the simplistic thinking that Ms. Krishna did not expect from these participants.

5.3.3.5 *In the best interests of the children*

After the incident with John, Ms. Krishna moved on to state that this discussion needed to centre on whether or not what is taking place in the classroom, on the playground and in the staffroom is in the best interests of the children attending Table Mountain Primary. Since many families send their children to the school specifically because of its claim as being an education centre that welcomes diversity, there is a need to assess who the school is serving and how it is serving these diverse learners. In the discussion that followed, two important points made by educators were picked up on by Ms Krishna:

> What about kids who want the security of cultural similarities, by being in a setting with which they can identify? (Staff member 2)

> Where is the line? Up until what point do *we* have to keep compromising and changing for *other* people…when is it enough? When can we say – here is the line, this is what we can offer, take it or leave it. (Staff member 3)

Showing the support garnered by the statement made by educator 3, other staff members:

> Exactly! Where *do* you draw the line? When can one say 'enough now'! Who makes those decisions – who has the power to make those decisions? (Staff member 4)

> When do we not allow ourselves to be bullied into changing to suit *their* demands? (Staff member 5)

The facilitator responded to these statements by asking:

> What is the underlying fear that I am hearing? It sounds like people are worried about losing control, are fearful of the unknown, in other words, *where's this going to go*. (Ms Krishna)

Another staff member suggested that educators feel overwhelmed and that they will start chasing their own tails if they have to address the huge diversity that makes up the learner body and their families. Ms. Krishna referred back to education under apartheid and reiterated that in contemporary South Africa there is a responsibility to education - an education system that wrestles with different perspectives and world views. This prompted another strong response from a staff member:

And about this line…what about Christians? We have celebrated Eid, Diwali, the Jewish new year, what do you call it…umm…[someone says 'Rosh Shashana']…ja, Rosh Shashana, and what about Christian days? We don't get them off. (Staff member 5)

Taken aback, Ms. Krishna responds by stating:

But you have Christmas and Easter…two of the longest holidays…most public holidays *are* Christian holidays. But one overlooks those because that has become so normalised…this is the challenge.

These statements are indicative of the 'us' and 'them' mindset that is still pervasive in intercultural exchanges in the country and serves as a major obstacle to engaging not only in dialogue, but compromise. The notion of drawing a line is very powerful and illustrative of the desire to construct clearly defined borders around which rules and patterns of interaction can be established (Ballestín 2007). The public school post-apartheid has witnessed a drastic redefinition of boundaries and borders. The nature of these boundaries, as Barth, Erickson and Alba have all shown, are fundamental to determining who can access opportunities. It is for this reason that the normative patterns which determine how and why these boundaries and borders are established need to be continually interrogated.

5.3.3.6 Families and the home environment: A challenge for staff members

Rather than troubling the notion of borders and boundaries, staff members appear to want to redefine and reinforce them. This is supported by the reflections of some staff members who, after the workshop, suggested that the following issues were perhaps the most pressing ones:

The question of parents coming to a school and expecting the school to change or provide certain things because of their situation, was very interesting and an important issue that would be interesting to discuss further.

Discussions of how to get parents' involvement already at intake to support Table Mountain Primary's policies and value system so that they do not come afterwards to make demands for change.

Importance of getting the parents more involved, as they often undo/ undermine what we try and instil here at Table Mountain Primary.

Fears of standards dropping due to admission policy and the admission of weaker children, when we don't have the capacity and it has a negative impact on 'excellence'.

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Fears of losing the individuality of Table Mountain Primary as has happened at other schools where one cultural group dominates the others.

Admitting children who have no sense of belonging here.

Given the opportunity, it appears that these staff members would hastily undertake a project of assimilation whereby all those who attend this school would be required to fit in to the dominant culture of the school. Rather than seeing such practices as an act of asserting a sense of 'racial' and cultural superiority, this project would be defined using, for example, the discourse of high quality education as well as discourses of multicultural education whereby each cultural group has the right to assert and follow what they believe in. Families who do not wish to identify with the dominant culture of the school are encouraged not to attend this school. Of course, not all staff members feel this way. One educator interrogates this assimilation discourse by questioning what it is really all about, albeit in a roundabout way:

Some black Africans in schools including Table Mountain Primary have lost their identity because of this so called "culture" which in effect means "what we do at Table Mountain Primary or so-called 'white school culture' is better than what you have in your '[black African] culture'". Have we accepted these learners just for window dressing?

Leaving aside for the time being the question of whether or not 'black' African children are 'losing' their identity, this educator recognises the existence of a dominant school culture resistant to change, even though the learner body is 'racially' diverse. This line of thinking is supported by another discussion central to the workshop that focused on the disjuncture between the home and school environment and the consequences of this for maintaining the school culture:

A lot of our problems come from the homes! Parents are often the ones to blame. It's in the home that one needs to learn values etc.

The parents and their perceptions and the way that they treat some of the staff has to be dealt with. Parents and their attitude to staff and the fact that the kids are not getting moral guidance at home is a huge problem. Staff should only have to reinforce the values taught at home, but we are trying to initiate the discussion.

The parents are very interested in maths and not about values, attitudes…in other words the things that can't be 'seen'. The curriculum does not focus on values, rather on technical skills.

Most of the staff members nodded their heads in agreement with these statements and Ms. Krishna responded by pointing out the need to engage with families as they too come with apartheid baggage. She pointed out that many of these families placed their children into the education system without dealing with their own difficulties regarding their personal experiences in this very system. Considering that people are extremely sensitive to this, it is imperative that staff members engage with people who differ from them, thus moving away from the easier route of sugar coating real issues and experiences of exclusion. Engaging families in a discussion of the common values that the school wants to promote would be an important place to start with regards to the struggles that staff members deal with when facing the expectations of these families. Ms. Krishna stressed, however, that these sorts of engagements must not only involve the families of children labelled as 'at-risk', but all families.

The workshop ended rather abruptly as time ran out, however, the school principal succinctly summed up that which Ms. Krishna had been trying to get across:

> Today we got a bit uncomfortable, but that is good. We are a public school with political intentions, but we are also semi-private. We need to deal with the baggage of being a former Model-C school…we need to be *courageous.* There is a real *aggression* in our society – competition is serious, at all costs. So how can we ever really get respect for diversity? Table Mountain is considered a 'top school' – but does that mean just academically? We need to unpack this – there also needs to be an emphasis on emotional intelligence.

This final statement suggests that the road towards transformation has been traversed more so by some than by others. For example, feedback from some staff members made explicit reference to the need for regular in-service training for all staff, which deepens the understanding of prejudice reduction practice; that staff were not above the exclusion of others illustrated by practices of eye rolling, harsh critique, passive-aggressive attitudes and the like. Finally, several staff members made the point that individuals need to address these issues within themselves before successfully addressing this with children:

> There needs to be a lot more of these discussions as they are pertinent to the way staff members are able to engage with each other and children, rather than making superficial assumptions that all think the same and assuming that their various responses and practices are necessarily helpful, relevant and meaningful to the people they are put in place for.

> I understand that the staff still need to do a lot of unpacking- How can we facilitate this without getting stuck in a downward spiral? There still needs to be an opportunity to face our own fears and prejudices otherwise it will become a pseudo community.

> Some staff members have issues with race, religion, sexual orientation etc, but perhaps we'll all think more about it in the future and be honest with ourselves just because we've had these workshops.

The varied points at which people find themselves on the diversity continuum make it extremely difficult to address the notion of identity and social justice issues. However, this should not be used as an excuse to avoid deconstructing these complex issues.

Once the feedback from the workshop had all been collated it was decided that Ms. Krishna would not be invited back to carry out the third workshop as planned. The reasons cited for this decision included that Ms. Krishna had lost credibility because of the issue with John, that she was not able to offer practical solutions regarding the staff members' diversity concerns, and because as an outsider she was not in a position to understand the diversity concerns at Table Mountain Primary. It was therefore established that future workshops would include 'cultural consultants', such as inviting and Imam to address staff, and that more practical solutions would be sought to address prejudice and intolerance in the classroom and with families. Notably, Tatum (1997, 196) has challenged the format of a workshop as a method to deal with diversity issues, stating that 'We need to move away from single, isolated workshop and move towards strategic and integrated programmes that support professional learning'. She is not alone in her thinking as Cooper and Boud (1997, 2) note that contemporary research on teacher learning and change indicate that the one off in-service workshop is the 'least effective way to excite learning change in teachers'. This suggests that it is not only the content, but also the method, that largely determines whether or not change can be effected.

Thus far, these findings shed light on the broader discursive framework within which staff members at Table Mountain Primary are working as they engage with notions such as 'race', diversity, identity, transformation and integration in the contemporary education system. I foreground these discourses as they have a direct impact on the 'pedagogical ideologies and teacher practices' (Bhana 2002, 74) which come to permeate the classroom, playground and relations with learners. What has emerged thus far is a *fundamental rub* – the need for urgency in dealing with complex diversity concerns, while at the same time ensuring effectiveness, which, as has been shown, takes time and involves much work at both the personal and institutional level.

5.4   Conclusion

This chapter presented the background of Table Mountain Primary school and more importantly, the impetus for undertaking diversity work in this setting. Using a poststructurally informed analysis of the panel discussion and the diversity workshop I have presented fragments of different discourses through which notions of diversity, 'race', identity and children are produced and regulated. Schooling is associated with these discourses in complex and contradictory ways, and it must be noted that these discourses do not stand alone; instead, they must be considered as dynamic and interdependent. The data presented here foreshadows the complexities of identity and 'race' among educators and children that are analysed in more detail in the chapters that follow. While the interest in, and commitment to, managing diversity is an important step towards changing oppressive relations of power, too often hegemonic discourses are left intact and untroubled. While 'race' is by no means the only identity concept which is implicated in this process, it remains a common sense identity category that is intricately bound up with power, privilege, oppression, inclusion and exclusion. Thus, what I attempt to show in this chapter is that understanding the discourses within which participants in this study live and work is vital since 'discourses privilege particular ways of knowing, thinking and living' (Bhana 2002). By exploring these discourses we are able to better understand the ways in which young children are positioned, and position themselves, in relation to 'raced' identities within this particular setting.

CHAPTER 6 FORMAL AND INFORMAL DISCOURSES SHAPING 'RACE' POSITIONING AT TABLE MOUNTAIN PRIMARY

In this chapter I will present the data obtained from four in-depth interviews that I conducted with members of the diversity working group. By undertaking interviews with these key members of the Table Mountain educational community I was able to delve deeper into the discursive threads that come to bear on how diversity is understood and taken up at the school. While by no means exhaustive, these interviews help glean insight into educational, social and political power relations that come to shape student identity formation processes (Walker 2005). In the previous chapter I identified 'the discourse[s] to which the institution seeks to commit itself as a community' (Walker 2005, 43). Here I continue to interrogate formal as well as informal discourses, which intersect in numerous ways to make, unmake and remake positions of 'race' that individuals come to assume. Problematising this complex psycho-social process opens up avenues to explore the 'racialised' scripts according to which identities are formed and shaped, and acknowledges the effect of particular historical experiences on the construction of the subject. The aim of this analysis is not to apportion blame for the current state of affairs, but rather to better understand the ways in which the notion of 'race' and racism mutate and come to directly bear on social interactions. This is an important project given the possibility that 'apparently democratic forms that entrench privileges of opportunity [are] likely to be racially shaped', but also affected, as Walker (2005, 49) continues, 'by social class/wealth and gender'.

I drew from the research questions and objectives to construct some general themes that I wished to cover during the interviews. These themes pertained to the salience of 'race' in South Africa and in education, discourses of difference and diversity, and how the diversity working group aims to work with educators, learners and their families on questions of identity, diversity and difference. Writing about the need for a cultural analysis, McDermott and Varenne (2006, 20) state that there needs to be a focus on *when* categories – such as 'black' and 'white', male or female - are made relevant, in what circumstances, and by virtue of what work. Thus, through these interviews I aimed to achieve a more robust understanding of these processes and what it means for the children attending this school. What follows is a description of the

common themes that emerged across the interviews, as well as themes that, although not necessarily shared by the interviewees, shed light on what is taking place and how, within the framework of formal and informal discourses, 'race' positioning comes to be constructed, negotiated and reshaped. Thus, in line with the work of Bhana (2002), my aim here is not to theorise individuals, but to identify discourses that frame notions such as diversity, identity, 'race' as well as children and childhood. At times I draw from a range of interviews to represent a discourse, while at other times a single interview is sufficient to reflect a particular discursive position.

6.1   The 'taking over' effect

Table Mountain Primary is clearly committed to diversity as seen through its policies and practices outlined in Chapter five. However, it is not immune to the challenges that arise in a multicultural environment. While these challenges include momentary acts of prejudice and discrimination, they are also deeply emotional and psychological. Having grown up and been educated under apartheid, participants wrestled with how to move beyond the ideological framework of 'white' supremacy and privilege that had dominated their lives. Some were able to do this more successfully than others.

A central theme to emerge from the analysis was what one participant termed the 'taking-over' effect. This so-called effect was a principal point of discussion in all the interviews and while it alludes to various discursive threads, it principally refers to the fear associated with the influx of learners and their families who do not share the culture of the school. Exactly what participants saw the 'culture of the school' as being was hard to pin down as one participant pointed out: 'it isn't *one* thing'. Thus, exploring what participants were referring to when speaking about the 'taking over' effect served to demonstrate what they believed provided the school with its identity. This was described by Ellen as a particularly difficult task for former 'white' schools. She stated that while researching the process of school desegregation post-1994 for the diversity working group, she found scant information regarding how 'white' people have been affected by the change of 'racial' demographics in education:

> There was a real lack of information on white schools, the feeling that people there have on those coming in, 'taking over'. Information that I found mainly addressed black students' movement into white schools. [Ellen]

Ellen continues to distinguish between 'white' schools and 'black' schools and as became evident as the interview progressed, the 'white' schools were automatically associated with higher standards in education. Discussing Ellen's work at a former 'white' school prior to joining Table Mountain Primary, she stated that the school had undergone dramatic demographic changes post -1994 – from being an all-'white' school to becoming a school attended almost exclusively by 'coloured' learners. She stated that this change resulted in a drop in standards at the school; something she believed was a real threat to all desegregated former 'white' schools.

6.1.1 'Whiteness' threatened: Privilege, power and loss

Working within a 'WhiteWorld' (Gillborn 2008), Ellen draws upon discourses of 'whiteness' that emerges regularly in both popular and academic writing on the topic of desegregation and transformation in South Africa, as alluded to in the previous chapters. This is supported by Ellen's statement:

> I really think that there needs to be a study done on the experiences of white people. I haven't seen any such thing. You know, those privileged during apartheid, such as myself, we lived in a society that was *clean, white, safe*. We went to segregated schools, we would go to the post office and there one would stand in the queue for whites with five people, and on the other side would be the queue for black people, with twenty seven people in line. So you would be attended to quickly and efficiently and off you would go. The public toilets for 'slegs blankes'[50] were always clean, or you would travel by train in first class and while you knew there was a third class on the other side, you knew you didn't have to go there. Now the toilets are dirty, unsafe and you can't use public transport anymore. You can't take a bus or go on the train like you once could. This represents *huge loss* to people, and this serves as the backdrop for all that is happening today. Someone needs to look at what *losses* were suffered and how this affects people today. [Ellen]

The emphasis on *loss,* especially what 'white' people lost when apartheid ended, is intricately tied up with the perceived threat of the 'other'. The security, comfort, privilege and power that 'white' people enjoyed under apartheid is no longer automatically considered a God given right bestowed upon all subjects classified as 'white'. The binary system on which Ellen draws is seen through her stereotypical association of the category 'white' to 'clean', 'safe' and ordered, while the category 'black' is associated with 'dirt', insecurity and chaos. Dramatic changes in the South African society's structure are intricately bound up with feelings of fear and discomfort

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[50] In English this translates into 'whites only' and was a common sign found on public property and in public spaces that were for the exclusive use of 'white' people during apartheid.

that she experiences. The above extract suggests a serious lack of reflexivity about the norms and privileges of power that shaped inter 'racial' relations for over three centuries in South Africa. Instead, there is a yearning for the 'erasure of the discomforts of race' (Walker 2005, 50). This discomfort is as a result of 'white' privilege and power being threatened, when in the past it could be taken for granted and enjoyed. These feelings of discomfort can be productive if they serve as a catalyst to challenge subject formation as directed by apartheid ideology and classification, yet, this is complicated by the fact that 'whiteness' remains, to a large extent, a privileged signifier globally (Leonardo 2002). As the authors working with Critical Race Theory have highlighted, it is imperative that a deconstruction of 'whiteness' form part of any pedagogical project. The reason for this, as Leonardo (2002, 31) demonstrates, is due to the fact that '[T]hese structural features filter into micro-interactions between students and teachers'. Ellen would have a difficult time working together with students to 'name, reflect on, and dismantle discourses of whiteness' (Leonardo 2002, 31). To do this would require that she disrupt and dismantle the very discourses that she privileges. Yet, as Leonardo (2002, 31) suggests, the benefits to 'white' people of critically analyzing the implications of 'whiteness' are enormous and includes their being able to 'come to terms with the daily fears associated with the upkeep of whiteness'.

6.1.2   Who is the 'Other'? Fear in the face of change

In an attempt to move beyond a discourse of 'whiteness', which Ellen seems to know is a slippery slope where privilege and power are directly associated with oppression and violence, she states that the 'taking over' effect is also an issue for groups who share the same 'racial' identity, but differ in their religious beliefs. This has, according to Ellen, given rise to numerous conflicts:

> Parents are also asking: 'How diverse should we get?' You see, there is a big fear here in Cape Town about the Muslims…that they are 'taking over'. There is this belief that if they become the majority then they will do things to suit themselves…it's like this issue about the kids leaving early on a Friday to go to Mosque. The teachers are asking how they are to deal with this…should they not teach their classes because the Muslim kids will miss out and get behind…but this is not fair to the other kids who are here to learn. Why should they not be taught during that time? But it's not the white parents that are wary of the Coloured Muslims, because actually they haven't had much contact with them so they don't really have any fear about them 'taking over' as such…it is the coloured Christians, the 'Chris coloureds' as they say. They are the ones saying all this. You see, they have experiences of the issues. This creates a huge amount of resistance, aggression…this fear. People can be extremely nasty and rude…it can really be something quite disturbing.

In this extract Ellen once again suggests that there is a general discourse circulating about being taken over by the 'other' that comes to play out in the school environment. While she denies that 'white' families are in this instance concerned with the 'taking over' effect, this is contradicted by her personal account of loss of privilege presented earlier. This is supported by the suggestion that 'white' families are unfamiliar with the group that is being perceived as threatening and that this is the reason as to why they are not 'wary' of where this could lead. In no instance does Ellen position 'white' people as the 'Other', which, as Mazzei (2008, 1125) notes is not surprising considering that 'white' people's experience living in a world of white privilege has 'severely limited their ability to see or express themselves as "Other"'. These 'silences' are, as Pollock (2004) candidly shows, significant. Another participant, Miranda, reiterated the fear of a Muslim take over, and importantly, suggests that this is a current concern that will morph into other concerns over time as the school's identity is challenged:

> I mean at one time it was a Muslim issue…at one point, we had an influx of Muslim families…a lot of fears, which were general fears that 'oooh, we might be taken over…as a Muslim school'…there *is* that…and we moved on from that… and then it was another issue…[Miranda]

The attempts to define how diverse the school currently is and how diverse it needs to get is directly associated with the discussion on 'where is the line?' that took place in the educator workshop. This suggests that there exists a resistance to change regarding what seemed to have worked in the past and with which Ellen comfortably identifies:

> People are questioning the identity of the school…there is a lot of insecurity and fear, a sense that people are trying to hold on to what they believe is dear to them. [Ellen]

Confronting the unknown through troubling what has for so long been considered normal and natural ways of doing things is extremely difficult. Reflecting on the anti-bias approach, Biersteker and Pillay (2005) point out that it tends to give rise to strong and painful feelings. Not surprisingly then, people are holding on to what is familiar to them without consciously reflecting on whether or not this is meeting the needs of the contemporary educational community as a whole. This is a challenge that, according to Jane, other schools with similar histories to that of Table Mountain Primary face:

> I think that a lot of them [former Model C schools] are trying to preserve their 'whiteness'…some schools have 'tipped', so there is no… you know, there are very few schools that are really diverse…and I don't even know at high school level…I think probably [name of a local high school] is similar…they don't tip to one race or another…cause they can tip quite easily from one side to either white, or brown or black. [Jane]

The 'racial' make-up of a school is highly significant for its diversity status, and many former 'white' schools are working hard to keep a 'racial' balance among its learners. Schools that can successfully manage this are considered as richly diverse schools. To *not* manage this successfully could be seen as a slip in standards as these schools pride themselves on being the most sought after educational centres in South Africa. This is indicated by Miranda who attended a so-called 'black' school herself but who was able to go to a former 'white's' only college to obtain her teaching degree. The following two statements indicate the value placed on the education received at a former Model C school, and what it might mean if more schools lean away from their historical ties with 'white' South African society:

> I had the amazing opportunity when I was at school to be put together with children from Model C schools and private schools in this programme, which started in Grade 10 until Grade 12, where you were exposed to a whole lot of things…from theatre, to discussions…and debates and questioning things…and taking responsibility and making your own decisions and taking the initiative and those types of skills…so that was *my* advantage, that when I moved into College I had had that experience and I didn't feel any smaller than any of the other people that I was with…and then I'd look at my counterparts who are from the township schools ['black' schools] and who had never had that experience…how they struggled with it…<u>because some ideas are fixed…the idea that white people are better…with some people are fixed…and it is *very* hard for them and there is nothing you can do…especially the older generation…but you also find that within our age group it's *still* there, the kind of difference</u>…it was either to defer or to be slightly rebellious or to like ignore them. [Miranda]

> I did my teaching practical in [a predominantly 'white' suburb of Cape Town]…and I did another teaching practical in [a predominantly 'black' suburb of Cape Town]. I struggled in the latter…um…clearly because I came from a Model C college and there when the bell rings you go to class. So I struggled with the ethos of the school and the kind of no sense of urgency, no sense of 'you need to be in class' type of thing…[Miranda]

The fear that the standard of education will drop if former Model C schools become too diverse gives rise to the 'taking-over' effect that participants identified as a real challenge in this multicultural setting. From the first extract above it is clear that this fear is tied up with concerns of power and the loss of a privileged position that former Model C schools have enjoyed, and to a large extent continue to enjoy, as they are held up as the apex of quality education in South Africa. This fear, as another participant,

Kate, identifies, is intricately tied up with the discomfort that is felt in a context where discourses of diversity have been prioritised.

> I am looking for an eclectic environment, a diverse environment…on every level…but there is a terrible *fear* about 'what if *they* take over'…about what if Muslims take over…now they want their children not to do sport in the afternoon because they are fasting…so there is an inability to see the person…there is this terrible fear of 'if we allow this, then what?'…this is my feeling…there is a difficulty to engage in whatever issue presents itself at that moment…it becomes 'shit, we're losing the reins here…like runaway horses…just going'…if we allow *this* then *that*. [Kate]

In such a diverse country it would be near impossible to avoid a clash of values, beliefs or practices on a regular basis, which in turn is clearly forcing educators to consider their 'race' identity and position and the implications of this for their teaching practices and interpersonal relations. Engaging with difference can feel like dangerous work resulting in feelings of fear and loss. For many 'white' people the risk of loss of privilege, comfort and identity is very real, yet, as Mazzei (2008) points out, this cannot be used as a strategy of avoidance.

6.2   Naming and examining discourses of 'race'

From the interviews it emerged that fixing boundaries to create borders is seen as a necessary and viable solution to dealing with the continually shifting terrain of difference and diversity. Yet, where to construct, and how to enforce, these borders is a matter of constant debate and negotiation. While concepts such as 'race' and class do not always operate exactly as they once did, they remain highly relevant in contemporary society. This has a direct impact on how 'racial' incidents are identified and dealt with in the school environment. Many discourses around difference can be identified from the discussion with members of the Table Mountain Primary educational community. While of central import in this thesis is an exploration and analysis of discourses of 'race' circulating in this environment these discourses are intricately tied up with, and articulated through, numerous other discourses. One such example is the attempt to naturalise these boundaries and borders justifying segregation through claims of such practices being 'normal' and 'natural'.

6.2.1 Normalising practices of 'racial' segregation

Having interviewed numerous educators in order to gain a clearer understanding of what issues around diversity were affecting the school environment, Ellen began to question whether it was not in fact a natural part of life to segregate into distinct groups:

> I have heard some teachers question and ask 'but isn't it a natural thing for children from the same background to interact…why should we force them to mix?' And I must say that I have wondered the same thing. [Ellen]

In the context of this interview the differences in 'background' that Ellen was referring to were centred on 'race' and religion:

> You know, I often think about human nature, and the intrinsic need for everybody to feel that they belong somewhere. When children get to Grades 1,2,3 and start to want to look like those who share the same value system as them – it's such a strong thing. So is it really such a bad thing for children to group together with those they identify with…those from whom they can get their sense of belonging. You see it all the time in the playground with white children sitting with whites, black kids with other black kids, Muslims kids together etc. And then you get the 'outcasts', those kids who aren't considered popular who all form their own group, and they are a mixed group of kids. So grouping together is human nature perhaps. [Ellen]

Equating value systems with 'racial' and religious affiliations, and making a direct reference to the embodiment of these value systems, Ellen suggests that it is the sign of healthy identity development to group together in ways that seem 'natural', with skin colour serving as an obvious point of identification or disidentification. Writing about identity development in adolescence, Tatum (1997, 52) makes reference to what she terms 'racial' grouping or 'clustering by race'. She points out that this strict grouping according to 'race' is not common in early childhood where more flexibility is shown with regards to crossing 'racial' boundaries. Tatum attributes this to the search for personal identity that intensifies in adolescence, and suggests that thinking of oneself as 'raced' is particularly common among 'black' youth. This is due to the fact that the world is structured in such a way that 'black' individuals are acutely aware of their 'raced' identity, while 'white' people are at more liberty to avoid thinking of themselves in 'racial' terms (Tatum 1997). Thus, self-perception is intricately shaped by the messages, such as those of 'racial' privilege and power, which are transmitted by the wider community. In South Africa, where 'race' remains a central identity concept, children are keenly aware of how their 'raced' positioning affects how they relate to one another. As will be show in the following chapter, before they reach adolescence,

children are already engaging in 'raced' identity-work. According to Tatum (1997), one's own life experience plays an important role in determining how 'racial' identity development unfolds. Since one's life experience is dependant to a large degree on context (which is itself constructed by histories, social relations, politics, economics, cultural beliefs and practices, the media and so forth), it makes sense that the degree to which children think of themselves and others in 'racial' terms is highly variable. Referring to 'racial' identity development in 'black' individuals, Tatum (1997) draws on the work of William Cross to show, for example, that 'race'-conscious parents – in other words, parents that actively seek to encourage positive 'racial' identity through the provision of positive cultural images and messages about what it means to be 'black' – can help reduce the impact of the often negative view that the dominant society has of 'black' people.

While 'racial' grouping or clustering might not be unusual given the structure of societies such as South Africa and the United States of America, it is not necessarily desirable. Rather than reflecting *normal* behaviour, it reflects the continuing 'racialised' social relations that prevail beyond the school door. It is problematic in that it suggests that children are working within a very limited definition of what it means to be 'black', 'white', 'coloured' and so forth, and that these definitions are based largely on cultural stereotypes (Tatum 1997). It is important to note here that I am not suggesting that it is wrong for 'racial' groupings to form as a space to 'share one's experiences with others who have lived it' (Tatum 1997, 70). This is supported by Tochluk (2010) who advocates for the establishment of groups such as AWARE-LA (Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere-Los Angeles) as a space where 'white' people can discuss and interrogate their experiences of what it means to be 'white' in the USA. Yet, while these experiences can be valuable to the process of troubling 'raced' identities, in schools that aspire towards democratic education goals there needs to be an active engagement with patterns of self-segregation. Meaningful interaction across 'racial' or other boundaries matters because, as Tatum (1997, 212 italics in original) notes: 'diversity is not the end in itself. [I]t is not *just* about being friends. It *is* about being allies and becoming effective agents of change'. To move towards establishing a more just system requires that education become transformative and that it provide learners with the ability to engage across lines of difference. This ability is a valuable skill for individuals who have to live and work in an increasingly complex and pluralistic world.

6.2.2 Now you see it, now you don't: 'Race' and racism at Table Mountain Primary

Although a somewhat artificial distinction, I asked participants for examples of what they termed 'racial' incidents that took place at school. This was a necessary move as participants were generally quick to dismiss 'race' as being an issue at the school, yet when asked to reflect on this they were able to identify how issues of 'race' continually resurfaced. This did not always indicate moments of tension, but was also reflective of processes of identity formation that learners and educators were engaged in. However, it is not always clear to the participants how to distinguish between what might be termed a 'racist' remark or interaction and what might be seen as someone engaging in identity work. Through her statement, Jane shows the ambiguity of thinking in 'race' terms and that while the desire to move beyond 'race' is strong; there are serious, and perhaps dangerous, repercussions to ignoring it:

> So for me it's been an experience and I really work hard at trying to understand people as people, not because of their race, or their colour or their creed…and working on that. Um, there was a stage when I thought that I was quite clever that I was blind to colour, but I don't know if it is so clever to be blind to colour . I thought…if you had to ask me the number of kids in my class that were brown or white or whatever, I wouldn't have known. But, maybe that's because I was seeing them as people and not as people of colour, or race, or creed…but that has for me been quite an interesting development in my own self. [Jane]

Jane is wrestling with how to avoid ignoring 'race' and its consequences while simultaneously attempting to avoid privileging this concept by allowing it to become the focal lens through which she sees the learners. This contradiction is a common feature in the lives of educators who are continually attempting to manage contact and 'knowing' in schools (Soudien 2007c). Gunaratnman's (2003) work on this suggests that some people adopt a fact-file approach to 'race', while others see 'race' as a marker of alterity, but not in a necessarily negative way. This is illustrated in the following interview extract, which further demonstrates the belief that 'race' identification is a natural process:

> There was a group of Grade 7's last year that said 'oh, he went to play with the coloured boys' and it was a coloured child telling me that…and that also made me realise that it wasn't a racial thing, it was a…it could have been the 'soccer boys' or the 'cricket boys'. It was a grouping…immediately I thought ooh, that's a hell of a racist comment to make, but it wasn't…it was a label…so when as adults we take that on and think ooh, how dare you! You know, because of our history…so that's something that we are very aware of. [Jane]

Taking this thinking further, Mangcu (2003, 9) points out that Jane is not alone in wrestling with this dilemma, stating that:

> [A]s a young black parent who grew up during apartheid, I am often torn by two clashing instincts. On the one hand, I want my children to understand the history that has informed our collective political and social identities as black people. On the other hand, I want them to be able to define their world as they see it, and that is as autonomous being, unburdened by my issues.

Unlike Mangcu, Jane does not suggest that there are benefits to discussing the history of oppression and what it might mean for how one sees other people as well as oneself. Thus, for Jane, to promote the official discourse of non-racialism requires no direct reference to, or interrogation of, historical relations and experiences. This is not all that surprising since this would involve highlighting the less than proud history of the majority of 'white' people in South Africa. In this way, the leap from an officially 'raced' to an officially 'non-racial' society can serve to obscure the practices and processes that take place in between these two opposing positions.

Miranda also believes that too much is often read into incidents' where 'race' labels are used. In the following statement she justifies her take on the matter when she states that she was supported by the parent of the offended child:

> I mean we had a small incident where one child called another one a 'fat whitey'. Now…for that child…I can tell you right now, he didn't mean it in a racial way…that was what the child looked like and in his eyes the child was fat…and when we called the mom in, she thought we were blowing it out of proportion a bit…but she wasn't anti… she listened and she wanted to know the 'why' behind us calling her in and explaining…and then the process moved on from here…the boys had been spoken to before so we had to bring it to the class because the class had experienced it as well…cause the boy didn't say it privately. So, [name of mediator] came, took a class, and did a lesson with them about that and why it's not acceptable and how the two boys had worked on it and that it's now over…we're moving on. [Miranda]

Firstly, naturalising 'race' identities this participant suggests that 'racial' labels are a common sense way for learners to describe one another without racist intent. Miranda's assertion that she 'knows' without a doubt what the child meant when he uttered these words, suggests that she is working within the discourse of 'children as innocent' to matters such as 'race'. It is highly likely that the boy's mother is also working within such a discursive framework, believing that such an incident is of little importance in her child's life. Finally, while it is significant that the entire class was involved in discussing the matter and how it affects their social relations, the idea that 'now it's over' suggests that everyone should forget about it and move on.

From the extracts above it is clear that a distinction is made between 'race' as an identity marker and 'race' as employed to discriminate against or prejudice someone. In the case of the former, 'race' is easily assimilated and hardly questioned as it is seen as both relevant and important for healthy identity development. Furthermore, these educators are not at all surprised that notions of belonging and grouping together are naturalised in a society like South Africa. Jane, who took time during the interview to reflect on the diversity journey that Table Mountain Primary has embarked on, and how these questions have affected her own life, begins to recognise how easy it is to normalise the idea that 'race' segregation is natural:

> I have recently been quite blown away about how brainwashed we were as a younger…as that generation…and how much we were denied richness, because of our own experiences and things that we just accepted as normal, and not wrong and not necessarily not liking or disliking or thinking people were lesser…it was just normal, that was what life was like. [Jane]

Kate, while not entirely disregarding the discourse of 'segregation as natural', goes a step further to suggest that a conscious effort needs to be made in order to change such practices and to break down what she believes are barriers to fulfilling and healthy interpersonal relationships:

> Ja, [grouping together] is not wrong…and it could be natural…but in the face of where we live and the huge separation that we carry, what are we doing that is *proactive* towards getting to know the other? So I wouldn't…if it was up to me I wouldn't act *against* it…I would say this is natural and this is normal, BUT, *what am I doing for these groups to know each other*…because *that* is where the richness lies…and if I don't do anything then I am equally responsible for the level of separateness that continues in this country. [Kate]

Furthermore, Kate acknowledges the need for people to take responsibility for their interactions with those they see as different from themselves. Here she invokes the notion of agency and the opportunity that individuals in this context have to engage with others who do not share their cultural beliefs and/or practices. There is, of course, the acute possibility that people will not assume this responsibility given their deep feelings of fear, yet Kate does not accept this as a viable possibility. Yet, as Kate highlights, getting others to recognise the significance that this normalised discourse of 'race' groupings has on the daily lives of learners is a challenge:

> Part of my issue at Table Mountain Primary was when I challenged them to consider why these learners are just forming their own groups and they would say 'because research shows that it's about them being comfortable in a homogenous spaces'. [Kate]

Kate reiterates her belief that more needs to be done to bring different groups into meaningful contact with one another. With the 'racial' legacy of apartheid ideology still infusing many social interactions, engaging with the 'other' requires a conscious look at what paradigms come to frame one's understanding of the 'other', and how these paradigms might be opened up to interrogation. Such an approach is vital in any context where people are engaged in a daily and ongoing struggle regarding the continuing relevance of 'race'.

As shown, the use of 'race' labels is normalised as being part and parcel of how learners interact. There is thus a strong move to not place more importance on the use of 'race' labels than is warranted, in other words, participants stress that the use of 'racialised' scripts in these ways is harmless, while suggesting that when racist incidences occur they need to be dealt with:

> We just recently had a racist [incident], but we haven't dealt with it yet…we have a black guy calling a white guy…a black American child making racist slurs against a white child…so it was an interesting 'flip'…but we haven't unpacked that one yet because mom is overseas. [Jane]

Firstly, what constitutes a racist slur is not clearly defined and the difference between 'race' labelling and racist slurs is not further delineated. What is of interest to the participant above is that the racist slur was uttered *to* a 'white' child *by* a 'black' child and not vice versa. This reaffirms the benefits of 'white' privilege that have generally served to protect 'white' people from being the object of racism, making the above incident extra-ordinary. For Kate, incidents' where 'race' is invoked are highly productive moments which need to be harnessed. Thus, she believes that it is important to play with the 'race' identities of self and others and that it is the responsibility of educators and families to deepen and not limit learners' understanding of the nuances of 'racial' meanings:

> A lot of the time it is adults putting upon children, rather than knowing when to be flexible enough to know when to cut them some slack. So, another example that came up I think last year…was a group of Grade 7s…a group of Coloured children sitting in the front quad chatting and then the soccer coach walked across and then a young guy in this deep voice shouted across: 'hey Mr so and so…we see you have a whitey girlfriend…that's cool hey!' or something like that and…so I presented this to the diversity forum and I said 'here is an amazing example of what teacher's could talk about in the classroom, here is a life skill…and what I was angling at was to say, 'guys, tell us about what you see when you see so and so has a white girlfriend…tell us what you are thinking and tell us what that means for you…and engage…with the children…have a discussion…The response from one educator was 'that is unacceptable behaviour…that shows no respect, they need to be disciplined'. So, there is an issue of…I'm not only talking about 'race', I'm talking about where do they come from, where do they grow

up…what's influenced them, what's their community, and…what are their attitudes…while someone else's interest is 'discipline', 'unacceptable behaviour'. [Kate]

In this way discourses of 'race' can be juxtaposed with other discourses of, for example, class and sexuality, and opened up to contestation and negotiation. Examining 'race' and the myriad ways that it is taken up and used in everyday discourses of identity and belonging is essential to gain a more in-depth understanding of the complex power relations involved in acts of representation and naming (Skattebol 2003). Skattebol (2003) goes on to point out that in many instances pedagogy is more concerned with affirming differences in ways that address negative stereotyping, rather than with negotiating the meanings and values associated with semantic markers of difference. Educators have enormous power as gatekeepers to manage contact and knowing in schools and maintain borders between categories *or* serve as political interventionists in the negotiations of power that are a main feature of border crossing practices (Skattebol 2003). Teaching practices, albeit not intentionally, threaten to silence learner's knowledge when they do not engage them in conversations about such discursive practices and what it means for their lives.

6.3   Engaging with diversity

While questions of diversity and 'race' continue to affect the personal and social identities of people living in South Africa, the participants all felt that there is an acute lack of engagement with these issues. This resonates with Robinson and Jones-Diaz's (2000, 103) research that points to a contradiction in educators approaches to cultural diversity as while they attach importance to assisting learners in understanding about cultural and 'racial' differences, 'opportunities to deconstruct and critique dominant discourses associated with inequality, racism, and discrimination were rarely taken up or even considered significant'. Before addressing the question about what is taking place in schools such as Table Mountain Primary, it is necessary to outline the thoughts that the participants expressed with regards to how diversity, difference and transformation are dealt with more widely.

Using biological imagery, two participants express how deeply ingrained notions of difference are for many people living in South Africa:

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> I don't think we can get past it [segregation] easily because it is so much part of our make up…but we need to now think about it cognitively and really be aware about what we say and what we do. [Jane]

> …but [diversity] is *not* in people's blood and we live in a certain society and it's deep---separation is deep and attitudes are deep. [Kate]

The massive ideological, institutional and personal shifts that took place when apartheid ended and democracy became established was a shift experienced in very few places across the world. This meant that those living this radical change were required to find their own way through this maze of reconfiguring their identities, sense of belonging, and social as well as personal relationships. According to Jane, the realignment of society needs to be reinvigorated once more. Changes have taken place, but it is not sufficient:

> I got to thinking that we are all very superficially racially integrated, so it was my thinking that evolved out of that, that it's like this *pseudo* new South Africa, where everybody is like, 'I have got black friends, I have got white friends, we go to their houses'…but nobody really made the *connection.* And I had a very interesting conversation with a friend, saying you know, I never thought of myself as superior as a white person, but she says that as a coloured person she was raised to think that she was inferior to whites. For me, it was through discussions with other people that were just so interesting for me about education. And the diversity journey started because of *my* concern about this pseudo, as I say, this *pseudo* New South Africa, which was o.k. for a while – it's like party mode and then the reality sets in – and I think the reality is setting in now. [Jane]

> Ja, and our judgements of where other people are, umm, and are they still in a pseudo state? You know, how authentic are we? How ready are we to embrace it…*really?* [Jane]

The understanding that to engage with diversity and what it entails in a meaningful way requires a more sincere commitment from all involved is supported by another participant who uses the tension experienced in the diversity workshop to illustrate her point:

> After the workshop I actually went to the facilitator and said to her – you know, I am happy that this happened because finally things are coming out! It's not an 'ok, we're sitting there, we all like...' When we have workshops and are all sitting there and everything is okay and there's no *real* reactions, and no *real* responses, what's the point? There must be passion and there *must* be…the kind of responses I heard from the staff…they *should* come out…not that people should be screaming and shouting…so I think the *real* workshop was the second one where we *could* have done *a lot more* but we didn't. [Miranda]

The desire to engage more seriously with the complex issues that arise in diverse settings results in the fundamental rub that I introduced in Chapter five. As will be shown, these participants recognise the need for individuals to engage in an in-depth

manner with their personal and social experiences of segregation, racism and so on, yet at they same time there is a need to address the conflicts around diversity that subsequently arise. Balancing the need for practical tools to effectively and efficiently address incidents of racism, prejudice, stereotyping and so forth with the need for authentic dialogue, is no easy task. Reflecting on the heated exchange between the facilitator and John during the second diversity workshop, one participant recognises how people position themselves differently within a diversity framework and how this positioning directly affects communication:

> I think that the misunderstanding between the facilitator and John…*that* should have been used as '*this is what happens all the time*'…because they just weren't hearing each other…it was not because the one was right or wrong…they *just weren't* hearing each other, and I think that's where…it snapped…and I think once it went beyond that, that was it, there was no recovering…how *sad* is that, because…I really would have liked our staff to go through that process…where they get over not *talking* about things…or…talking about them but being *apologetic* while saying it…you know…you just *say it* if you want to say it and I think the minute you're apologetic about it and your trying to justify that 'I'm not being *this* and I'm not being *that*'…then for me it tells me that…the *exact* things you're saying that you're not being…you *are* being…because then why are you trying to be apologetic and…so it was a pity. [Miranda]

This is supported by two other participants who also feel that there is a serious lack of engagement and that 'there's a lot not being said' [Jane]. These participants suggest that there is a need to encourage and support staff to examine how and why they are positioned as they are, and what this might mean for their 'ways of seeing' [Kate] others. Jane agrees that:

> The conversation *has* to continue…I can't change other people's experiences or expectations, but I need to let them know where *I* come from, so that even if it's fifty percent of the way…it's *some* of the way. [Jane]

Two participants stated emphatically that adopting other 'ways of seeing' began with personal transformation, which would only be achieved through a process of self-reflexivity. It was acknowledged, however, that this process is rife with feelings including that of fear, guilt and vulnerability, and that for these reasons many people choose to avoid engaging in any meaningful way with this process. Thus, while many people are aware of the different narratives and points of view that people living in South Africa have, this remains at a predominantly cognitive level. Education plays a vital role in helping or hindering the process of reflection that these participants feel is

so essential in aiding transformation in society. Speaking about how her education under apartheid served to discourage reflection and transformation, Jane notes that:

> When they had the '76 riots[51] I was at college, so then the big thing was that the trains were being disrupted, not that people were killing each other because they wanted education…and so that was the kind of thinking, and it was never questioned, it was never even questioned at college…we should have been debating this at college, and we weren't…you know, it was just people causing nonsense and the trains were being disrupted and you had to get home. So that was the thinking. [Jane]

She goes on to note that this was not the educational experience of people attending 'non-white' schools during this time:

> I have spoken to some of my Coloured friends and they said they were always challenging the education system…So we [whites] were denied an education system because we didn't challenge it. But they were educated to challenge. So in a way, we were denied a richness in our own education, although we have supposedly had the 'better', in inverted commas, education system. [Jane]

Through a process of personal reflection this participant recognises that education is a powerful tool in diversity work and should be used to promote integration and transformation. Kate, who has also invested time and energy to reflect on these matters acknowledges that education has been vital to her personal understanding and engagement with these issues. Kate ran a preschool for over a decade where the underpinning philosophy was that of anti-bias and the promotion of diversity.

> Dealing with diversity at schools needs to be looked at in terms of self-reflection, self-awareness…it's also a sociological question. At many schools the discussion remains centred on 'us' and 'them'…but to me education is about learning about the 'other', breaking down these walls we build. Through my experience [at the preschool] it was clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that education is *about* diversity. Therefore, for me my school was a hugely privileged space for me to be in because it allowed me the space and the opportunity to know these people, for who they were in their communities, in their lives, in their person.

These statements suggest that adopting a critical look at certain historical ways of viewing one another (Botsis 2010) can move people beyond superficial interaction and towards more honest engagement. This, however, involves addressing the conflict between personal and public narratives of diversity and transformation. While public discourse promotes the ideal of non-racialism and a 'new inclusive South Africanism'

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[51] This is a reference to the Soweto student uprising of 1976 whereby high school students led a protest against the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in local 'black' schools. Estimates of casualties range from 176 to 600.

(Soudien 2001, 312), in more private spheres much of the discussion around diversity is predicated on old apartheid constructions of difference and hierarchies of power.

6.4   Children, 'race' and identity formation

A principle interest of this thesis is to explore how young children take up and are affected by discourses of 'race' that permeate the school environment. The data collected through the interviews suggests that there is a general feeling that children's identities are impacted upon by these discourses, yet, educators lack the necessary tools to aid them in thinking through the complexities of working outside of more taken-for-granted ways of doing and understanding things (Grieshaber 2001).

Traditional child development theories do not offer sufficient guidance to help educators and families journey through the rocky terrain of 'race' and 'racialised' differences. Ellen, however, refers directly to these development models to account for how children engage with diversity and difference:

> I think that a lot of the children's' understanding about, and experience of, these sorts of things is related to them maturing as they get older, developing. This is in line with development theories, you know. Kids wanting to fit in, have the same clothes as their friends. A lot of the stuff I deal with on a daily basis revolves around this…in other words,. someone will be upset because the other person is thinner/taller/cleverer than they are. This noticing of difference and how the kids react change as they get older. I think that the children at this age are particularly concerned with any differences which can translate into someone being cruel to another person…but again, this is the stuff of children, and has been going on for eons. Take civies day for instance – children get very hurt and upset when they feel that they don't have the right accessories, the right clothes…things like that. It can be a real trauma for them…but that's the age that they are at. [Ellen]

This framework incorporates a deterministic and somewhat romanticised notion of childhood. Ellen has clear expectations regarding the 'ages and stages' of childhood and suggests that what children are dealing with is less about complex social ideas and more about 'the stuff of children'. Even though Miranda is quick to dismiss deeply rooted and historically shaped beliefs about 'race' and the 'Other', she promotes the need to engage children in conversation about diversity:

> I've got my own kind of prejudices towards…black races…or whatever…that's not what diversity is, it's really not about that…it's the practical day to day things that we deal with in the classroom…comments that children make, and not malicious comments…but it is something that you need to deal with to avoid it recurring because if you're not dealing with it they might think it's okay…and maybe for them at this stage it's how they identify each other…but later on

in life…if they carry on with that kind of identification it may come across as…so…it can come to mean more later on in life. [Miranda]

While her notion of 'diversity' might be somewhat restrictive, she acknowledges that children are affected by such discourses and that this can come to have a direct bearing on their lives. However, her reference to 'stages' and child development processes suggests that she, too, theorises children as innocent and incapable of committing acts of racism or invoking 'race' justify practices of exclusion.

Across the literature examples abound regarding the difficulties that children face in being taken seriously as social actors whose sense of self and other are impacted upon by broader social justice issues. This is not to suggest that the participants cited above believe that children are naïve to what is going on around them, only that this has little, or only momentary, meaning in their lives. Anotherr example of this is when Ellen notes that 'children call one another gay, but they don't mean it'. Even though these children do not necessarily believe that the person they are calling 'gay' is homosexual, they are fully aware of the negative connotation that the label evokes. They are not innocent to the regulative discourses in which they are steeped and the knowledge that, as Butler has described, to recite the norm (to be heterosexual) ensures that one remains viable as a subject. Thus, discursive power is not 'lost on the children' and this understanding counters the image of the child as innocent of 'race' politics (Skattebol 2003, 153), as will be demonstrated in detail in the following chapters.

Thinking through the relationship between children, 'race' and identity formation is, however, a slippery slope, as while the discourse of childhood innocence is very appealing - given that children should not have to take responsibility for historical, institutional and systemic practices (Skatttebol 2003) - views were also expressed that suggested that children are able, and should, be engaging with complex identity and social concepts. In other words, instances arose that served to disrupt the idea that children are naïve of social power and supported the fact that they have the cognitive capacity to understand 'race' (Van Ausdale and Feagin 1996). For Miranda, her six year old son surprised her when he alerted her to the fact that he was actively thinking about questions of 'raced' identity, for example, enquiring about skin colour:

My son kept asking this question, and comparing our colours…so he'd go 'mom…you're like tan'…I'd say 'yes, okay'… 'but dad is very dark brown', because my husband is darker than I am. And then the other time he was comparing himself with [his baby brother] and he said 'mom, [my brother] is dark brown and I am light…I'm tanned'. And then in the car he asked 'mom, are

you brown, or tanned or light tanned?' And then two weeks ago… 'mom, you're actually peach'…out of the blue…I think because they started this theme about South Africa…I don't know whether…I don't know how it came about but as of two weeks ago I am no longer tan or brown, I'm peach. [Miranda]

This conversation was soon followed by a discussion that the participant overheard taking place among a group of children while she was driving them to a local zoo as part of a school excursion:

We were back to the *colour*…they were discussing what colour the other person was…light tan, or tan, or brown. [Miranda]

I pointed out to Miranda that the children in Grade R with whom I was working, which included her son, referred to 'white' people as 'peach'. She thought this was funny as she is a 'black' Xhosa woman. In the preschool the children were discouraged from using the terms 'white' and 'black' when referring to people, so they developed their own labels. These labels, however, were still directly associated with particular 'race' groups and characteristics. The fact that Miranda's son decided that she was 'peach' was highly significant, as to be 'peach' was a highly desirable physical trait among the preschool children. Her son was not oblivious to the fact that she had brown skin as can be seen from his detailed interrogation of her skin colour, yet, after much deliberation he deemed her 'peach'. As will be shown in the chapters that follow, young children were acutely aware of the power relations among people from different 'race' groups and what this meant for their own personal and social lives. Yet, for Miranda, as for many adults, children's engagement with this type of identity-work is more often than not seen as being cute and curious. It is seldom acknowledged as serious work whereby children are constructing, negotiating and/or resisting an understanding of themselves within dominant discursive frameworks.

6.4.1   Adult misconceptions

Many adults are unaware of the intricacies and complexities of children's social worlds. Literature suggests that those who do have an opportunity to immerse themselves in the life worlds of children are often surprised by the rich diversity of their thinking. Having run a preschool for over a decade, Kate had the opportunity to engage with children in such a way. Her in-depth understanding of children and how they construct and

negotiate their identities from an early age was apparent from her response to the question I posed regarding whether or not children are influenced by the broader discourses around diversity and how this impacts on their educational experience:

> My answer to that is *absolutely*…yes, without one shadow of a doubt…because I ran a school for twelve years… based on that...in terms of teaching life skills and self skills about being able to say 'I don't like it when you do that', or 'it upsets me' or, whatever…it's a 'way of being in the world', rather than, 'okay just give each other a hug and go away'. So you can't actually separate issues of diversity from discipline and reward and consequence, and being in the world. [Kate]

She went on to provide a concrete example of how issues of diversity surfaced in her school and how this was managed. More importantly, she recognises how children are discussing these topics among themselves and the importance of drawing then into a discussion where 'race' is named and deconstructed:

> One day a mother was very upset because her child had come home and said that 'all blacks have flat noses'…and she said 'what are you teaching our children?'. And one *does* become defensive because you can't control conversations that children are having and at an anti-bias, inclusive school, there are still these attitudes…it's obvious…because we are human and that is how people function together, they talk it out, and particularly children. So, we had a meeting with the group, the children, and we said 'ok, let's look at each other and let's see who looks like what…and let's look at eyes, and let's look at mouths and let's look at noses…and so it takes skill and it takes containment in terms of ones *own* defensivness and ones *own* baggage…and I'm reflecting…I didn't have it worked out like this at that point, but in reflection I can see it…and then be able to say 'he's making an observation' and then to say 'so, I've heard that some people say that all black's have flat noses…let's look and Khanyi, let's look at Siya…do they fit that?'…so now we are doing classification like we do classification for numeracy…whose got green eyes, whose got brown, whose got big eyes…instead of being fearful of naming it. [Kate]

Opening up such sensitive topics in a respectful and meaningful way might be uncomfortable, but it is far more valuable than ignoring or dismissing it as something that children will get over as they grow older. Referring to an incident at Table Mountain Primary this participant shows just how difficult it can be to see things differently, to move beyond hegemonic practices that have been in place for so long:

> They put this poster on the front gate that says 'mum's this is your moment' or something like that and I said 'do you mind if I just cross that out and say 'parents', and they kind of look at me and they say 'oh ja, we didn't think about that'. And that can be seen as petty and silly, but in terms of socialising our children as to who does what, and how things *could* function in a society…it's not petty. But the teachers would say that, 'she's so irritating, when is she going to drop it'. And I just said that this is important enough. [Kate]

Another critical point raised in this statement is the acknowledgement that to change oppressive discourses that come to shape how children see themselves and others in this

world requires a conscious engagement with these very discourses. The first step is recognising that these discourses exist, that they shape our being and thus serve to include or exclude subjects. Kate recognised that for many educators, such as those she worked with at her preschool, taking these steps was challenging and traumatic. Embarking on a process of self-reflection, especially when it comes to sensitive and often taboo topics such as 'race', is hard work that not only requires an interrogation of practices but also of identities. The deeply entrenched common-sense use of 'race' in South Africa, coupled with the histories of 'racial' privilege and oppression, give rise to feelings of anger, guilt, rejection, defensiveness, hurt, shame and so forth as the 'racial' status quo is examined and disrupted. Educators and other members of the educational community are, therefore, also looking for ways to move forward through implementing constructive action. Yet when they do not have the tools to move forward there is the risk that they will fall back into the familiar and once again defend the 'racial' status quo (Tatum 1997). The following section describes the participants need for such tools and how they attempt to implement what they consider to be constructive action.

6.5   Towards a new space: opportunities and pitfalls

All the participants were, to varying degrees, aware of the emotional and psychological aspects of dealing with diversity in society in general and at Table Mountain Primary in particular. When it came to the classroom, three of the participants supported the need for practical tools that could help them effectively and efficiently deal with incidents around racism, sexism, class discrimination and so forth. The fourth participant held a different view stating that while she recognised the need for practical skills to manage diversity in the classroom, not much would change until educators reflected, in an in-depth manner, on issues of social justice and relations of power and privilege.

Importantly, the participants all highlighted that there are no clear guidelines in government policies and documents to assist educators with managing diversity:

> Diversity and issues around this is something that all schools deal with in this country…but there are no guidelines [from the education department] so it is a tough challenge, how to deal with all that comes up in the everyday of school life. [Ellen]

> I don't think [the education department] is there yet, I think they are so busy working on curriculum that they haven't gotten there yet. We have commented on it…what is available is all very much pseudo and religion based…and things like that. It's quite scary what they're proposing we teach out kids…it's definitely going backwards. [Jane]

The kind of diversity that the education department is talking about is not practical. For them it's…superficial…it's not really… and it's to be able to tick it off on their boxes and say ok, we're dealing with diversity, we've told the schools about it and we've sent the documents…but really…their understanding of diversity, in actual fact, is flawed, because…well, from Table Mountain Primary's point of view…in that, when we talk about diversity, we are not looking at whether the child is black or white or the child is black and is therefore a 'not-have' and because the child is white, he is the 'have'. That's their very narrow-minded idea of what diversity is. So we think of it more as inclusivity where, whatever we're getting…whoever they…wherever they're from, that's for us diversity…[Miranda]

The general feeling is that those employed by the [education department] don't actually know what they are doing…they are in ivory towers making up theories and on the ground it's not serving what the people need. [Kate]

As stated in the preamble to the South African Constitution (1996), it is imperative that as a society we 'heal the divisions of the past' and work together in constructing a society based on democratic values, social justice, as well as fundamental human rights. In order to integrate this goal within the broader education system, the Department of Education (2000) has developed guiding values to influence all levels of education. The key values to be promoted include equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and honour. Within this framework of values, learning centres have been tasked with developing both the intellectual and critical capacities of all learners, as well as to challenge discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of 'race', gender and culture (Williams & Samuels, 2001). Each school is, therefore, largely left to its own devices to manage diversity in ways that they see fit. While these participants seem to agree that a structured programme might not be the best way to deal with difference and transformation, considering that each school is operating in a highly variable context, resources to guide this process would be useful.

Table Mountain Primary has opted to put diversity and integration squarely on the agenda of the school community as observed by the introduction of the diversity working group that, as outlined in the previous chapter, have been tasked with analysing and reflecting on how to promote integration and inclusion in a diverse setting. The outcome of the second diversity workshop with educators resulted in a move away from the more emotional and psychological aspects of diversity towards looking for practical solutions, which one participant labelled as a 'show-me-how kit'. For her the workshop highlighted that:

I think a lot of our staff is still at the practical and factual 'tell me' level…they need a 'show-me-how kit'. There needs to be more reflection, but it's about the incidents...that's why I say we need to take small steps. [Jane]

This line of thinking was supported by a similar statement made by Ellen:

People hadn't really undergone any process such as this before, so it was new for them, and also for me. I found that people generally had elementary and simplistic understanding of these questions and that the awareness was often not even there. [Ellen]

The majority of feedback received from staff after the second workshop supports the idea that what is being sought are strategies that can be applied to deal with incidents around diversity that arise on a daily basis. This led the diversity working group to adopt what Jane calls an 'incident-by-incident approach':

I think that we can only embrace it incident by incident, actually. That's my take on it…step-by-step, as it arises, deal with it, think about it, and reflect. [Jane]

Incidents might include 'racist' or sexist remarks, acts of bullying and disrespect, clashes between the values of the home and that of the school, language issues and so forth. Yet, for Kate, such an approach is not only difficult to sustain, but does little to change underlying attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate inequality and exclusion:

This idea of working incident-by-incident is going to be tricky, because it requires somebody who is the watchdog, or the watch person, to say 'Remember this? Have you thought about that? How does that come across? What is this teaching our children?' On the basis of 'what does diversity really mean?'. [Kate]

Kate is referring to the danger of superficially dealing with incidents' in a way that does little to interrogate and change the overarching discourses that regulate this type of behaviour in the first place. Furthermore, it is necessary to deconstruct more than just incidents' that impinge upon the well-being of another person. For example, deconstructing fairytales that depict a helpless princess saved by her prince charming could go a long way to destabilise problematic stereotypes that serve to assign meaning and value to socially constructed gender identities (this idea is expounded on in Chapter eight).

6.6   Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted some of the formal and informal discourses that come to bear on the way that diversity and 'race' are employed by educators and other adults who are directly involved in the diversity project at Table Mountain Primary School. Evidently, it is often difficult for the educational community to name and acknowledge difficult social issues such as 'race'. Engaging meaningfully with people from different backgrounds remains a challenge for these participants, which is not surprising given the legacy of past and present systems of inequality in the South African society. While this lack of engagement is often a result of feelings of fear about loss of privilege and power, the majority of participants expressed a keen interest in interacting across boundaries. However, the creation of safe environments to foster direct contact and experience (Tatum 1997) remains elusive. The diversity workshop for educators serves as an example of how difficult it is to create opportunities where diverse and/or opposing discourses can be confronted and bridges between such discourses built. Exposing relations of power that are continually produced and reproduced, these discourses have a significant impact on how 'raced' identities are constructed and regulated. Finally, the dominant perception of young children as innocent and unable to seriously engage with the 'raced' reality of the society of which they are an integral part means that in early schooling patterns of thinking about 'race' are not well understood.

CHAPTER 7   MAPPING 'RACE' AND OTHER DISCOURSES OF DIFFERENCE IN EARLY SCHOOLING

In the previous two chapters I detailed the broad discursive framework according to which 'racial' knowledge, power and identity are constructed and how they come to inform beliefs and practices in an education setting. In this chapter and the one that follows, I explore the salience of 'race' in the lives of children by looking closely at the myriad ways in which this concept is taken up, contested and negotiated in early schooling. The worlds of children are not free from systems of power and knowledge, which come to bear directly on subject positions and identities. In many instances 'race' is intricately woven up with other identity concepts including gender, sexuality, class, language, religion, culture and belonging.

The adultcentric world that children inhabit is filled with ambiguity and contradiction and children are not exempt from trying to make sense of it on a daily basis. Children's subjective worlds are thus shaped by regulative discourses that create what Foucault called 'regimes of truth' (MacNaughton 2005). These regimes of truth are a powerful force that children draw from as they struggle to negotiate the meanings and values of identity concepts such as 'race', gender, sexuality and so on. To explore these 'truths' requires focusing on the subject position or membership categories that children come to inhabit, the 'work' that this does, and how this is linked to specific contexts as well as to the broader culture (Rapley 2007). Analysing the 'practical, active, knowledge and action' (Rapley 2007, 4) that children engage in on a daily basis sheds light on how notions of identity are produced and negotiated. Thus, I take a close look at children's stories, social practices, and friendship patterns as sites for the construction and performance of 'raced' identities. Importantly, as Winkler (2012) advocates, this is done by considering this process from the children's point of view and through listening closely to their interpretations of their experiences, which are very often quite different from what the adults around them expect.

7.1   Challenging and channelling authority: Children making sense of their social world

Classrooms, as MacNaughton (2005, 36) points out, are 'replete with texts and their meanings'. These 'texts' are presented in a variety of forms including speech, writing,

images, actions and bodies. Through deconstructing these texts, researchers are able to gain insight into the assumptions about the social world that are embedded in systems of thought that, in turn, create powerful 'regimes of truth' (MacNaughton 2005). Thus, in this study the texts produced by, and among, the children and their educators provided insight into shifting patterns of discursive practices, strategies and storylines that come to affect the ways in which they 'do' their identities. In order to understand the complex ways that the children in this study engaged in identity works required an analysis of the adult-child relationship in this setting. This is important as it has direct implications for the way that children expressed, or did not express, what they were thinking and/or doing.

The children were acutely aware of the lack of power that they had, especially in the presence of sanctioning adults. They also knew that any feelings of resistance that they wanted to express needed to occur out of the line of sight of these adults. Having successfully negotiated access to the world of children I was fortunate to be privy to such acts. The following extracts from my field notes shows how children continually found ways to challenge adult authority:

> I sat down to watch some soccer. The game wasn't moving and Sam informed me that it had been paused due to fighting about penalties. Aiden had tripped and his team claimed that it was a foul. The other team maintained that Aiden had tripped himself and that therefore this was *not* a foul and hence no penalty should be awarded. One of the children must have gone inside to complain to Nicola who was soon outside stating: 'What is all this fighting all the time in your soccer game. You guys must stop playing with penalties because that always causes problems'. Once she left most of the players drifted off and there was no longer a game to watch. A short while later I saw Lex, Mika, Lelethu, Dirk and Shazad playing with a smaller ball around the corner from the main building in a narrow alleyway (away from adult eyes). They were playing penalties even though Nicola had expressly forbidden them from doing so.

> At one point Sipho stands up and all his beads fall off the string onto the floor with a loud noise. Linda storms over and says to Sipho 'you must pick up the last bean, you hear me! You pick up the last bean!'. During this rant Sipho stands very still looking sheepish. As Linda walks away Sipho pulls a funny face in her direction and this makes Thandi laugh. He continues to pull this funny face at Linda's back and Thandi continues to laugh.

While these actions performed by the children are only symbolic in that they do not actually shift power into the hands of the children, they are meaningful to them and are appreciated by their peers. It is interesting to see, however, when similar actions directly undermine an adult's feeling of being in control to the extent that the adult responds back violently. In the following example the main protagonist, Nadia, is a

strong willed child who, as her father informed me, was encouraged to have a strong opinion and be heard:

Linda is seated at the back of the room watching the kids. While no one is shouting or making excessive noise, the kids talk among themselves and Linda is kept busy trying to hush everybody and make them listen to the movie. Everytime Linda says anything Nadia, who is sitting at Linda's feet, laughs. Linda says to me that Nadia is really obnoxious and that sometimes she just wants to hit her [she does not say 'hit her', but uses her hand to indicate giving Nadia a smack]. Linda is clearly irritated by Nadia's attempts to undermine her authority. Linda also tells me in front of all the kids: 'You know Jaci, over at the big school nê, those Grade 3s…every time they have to watch a movie they sit, and they listen…jislaaik it…they listen and they learn. If you ask them *anything* about the movie they can tell you. They are *so* good there. Not like these Grade Rs who don't care, don't listen. I wish they could go back to their classrooms and when the teacher asks them something they know nothing, nothing.'

Responding to Nadia's laughter, Linda motions that she would like to punish her– something which further serves to entrench adult domination – and settles for belittling not only Nadia, but the entire Grade R class. Stressing how undisciplined and ignorant these children are, Linda, attempts to regain her authoritative position that has been undermined by Nadia. The momentary positioning of Nadia as subverting adult authority, however, causes a disruption in the generally accepted adult-child hierarchy.

The idea of having power *over* adults is thrilling to the children as witnessed during a conversation about movies during snack time. The kids were talking about the movie 'Spykids' and not having seen it, I ask what it is about:

Jaci: What's the movie about?

Chelsea: You never watched Spykids?? [an incredulous expression crosses her face]

Jaci: No…is it cool?

Thandi: It's *awesome*…you must watch it!!

Jaci: What's it about?

Chelsea: Kids who save the world…they even save their parents who have been caught by the baddies! But it's the *kids* who must save everyone!

The children relished the thought of kids being in a position of power to such an extent that they become ultimately responsible for rescuing not only their parents but the world. In a world of adult proportions, children are continually subject to adult power and knowledge and an opportunity to express agency within this structure is highly sought after and valued. Even though these opportunities are momentary and shift rapidly, they

create important moments of resistance and allude to instances where children are able to trouble adult power. This was again made evident when I was speaking to the children after the successful school play that they had put on.

> Ethan: The rhino's and the chimps were the nicest
>
> Sipho: Everyone laughed at the rhinos
>
> Jaci: That's because you guys were so cute
>
> Sipho: CUTE?! We aren't little babies!
>
> Jaci: Ja, you're right…you guys were cool.
>
> Sipho: Yes…cool…
>
> Ethan: Ja…cool…so why didn't you say cool first?
>
> Jaci: Ja, I should have…my mistake.
>
> Ethan: Thandi, everyone liked you with your sunglasses…
>
> Thandi: [Nods and smiles] Yes…everyone thought I was cool!

Here Sipho was clearly not pleased by my use of the term 'cute' to describe him and the other children in his group. His incisive comment forced me to refrain from using words associated with innocent and naive beings. Recognising that this discourse was disempowering, Sipho challenged me to think about what I was saying and take stock of the power that the terms I use have to position people in ways that they may find offensive. As will be shown throughout this chapter, this demonstrates that children are by no means passive and innocent in the construction of their identities, even while constrained by authoritative adults. Furthermore, children are keenly aware of the advantages afforded those who are able to exert control over, and influence, others. Among the children there were numerous examples of how they used the opportunity to express their power and/or knowledge in a way that served to subjugate others, including myself. The way this was done was most often a direct mimic of what they experienced on a daily basis as children. The scripts they followed as they invoked positions of authority suggest that these children are acutely aware of how the adult/child binary position is structured and what behaviour is expected and tolerated within each category. The following examples provide evidence of this:

Three children are sitting in the book corner, with Ellen sitting on the bean bag and Thandi and Nadir in front of her. I ask what they are playing and Ellen says 'teacher teacher'. Ellen takes the teacher role seriously, asking for show and tell objects (and putting them on the table once the explanation is complete, just as Gillian usually does). She proceeds to tell us to be quiet and that she will give us stickers and points if we behave. She physically moves Thandi and Nadir to face her and tells me to 'cross your legs and put your hands in your lap'. Morgan comes over to give Ellen food at one point and when I ask who Morgan is, Ellen replies that she is her daughter and that Nadir is her son. Nadir is hanging around Ellen and she insists that he 'go and sit on the mat!' She gets quite exasperated when we won't listen to her, insisting that she is the teacher. After show and tell time she goes to the fantasy corner and brings a basket of fruit for our snack time. She says that we must eat and that she is going to work on the computer (as Gillian does most snack times). We eat our fruit and Chelsea joins us. We are told to sit on the mat again. I whisper to Chelsea that 'the teacher is strict hey' and Ellen demands to be told what I have said. I kept quiet and Chelsea says 'she says that you are strict'. I pretend to look at Chelsea with a 'how could you tell on me' face. Ellen says 'oh, that doesn't matter, go sit outside'. This is a somewhat contradictory statement which I do not understand, but I duly go sit by the bookshelf. I look at Thandi and pull a tongue at her, and get a stern look from Ellen in response. Thandi then pulls a tongue back at me, enjoying, I think, my complete involvement in pretending to be a 'naughty' child. When I am caught making faces again Ellen insists that I go and sit on the naughty chair.

I have two naartjies at shool with me for snack time and Lelethu shows me excitedly that she too has a naartjie in her lunch box. She offers to peel my second naartjie and so I share it with her. At that moment Chelsea walks past and says to me 'holly, holly, hoxy…Jaci, you are not allowed to share your lunch, you are going to get into trouble' I look at her sheepishly and she gives me a serious look and walks off to put her lunch box away.

I ask Dirk if he speaks Afrikaans at home and he says yes. He speaks in Afrikaans and I reply. I slip up by using the word 'voetsek'. This immediately elicits giggles from Dirk and Lelethu who put their hands over their mouths in a gesture of 'naughty-naughty'. They laugh and tell me that they are going to 'tell on' me for using that word. I plead with them not to tell on me and they insist that they are, but they are still smiling. Dirk gets up and pretends to march over to tell Linda what I said. He talks to her, but he doesn't tell on me. He looks back and smiles.

In all three examples the children assume positions of authority, and by doing so expose the unbalanced nature of power relations in the lives of children. What makes these examples more significant is that they all include me –an adult - as disempowered, which, I must stress, was not a comfortable position to be in. These moments of blurring the boundaries of the adult-child relation did, however, force me to reflect on what it must feel like to spend much of one's time as a child being in this position, namely, a position where one's actions or words stand to be potentially sanctioned by an adult at all times. Of course, this blurring of boundaries was easier with me as the children did not perceive me as an authoritative figure. While children have ample opportunities to engage with one another in 'private', away from the adult gaze, they attempt to implement '"adult" ways of being' (Bhana 2002) as learned through their more 'public' engagement with adults. The sense of agency expressed through implementing such 'ways of being' bolstered the feeling of power that children enjoyed in these moments, and served to contradict discourses of childhood innocence. As highlighted in Chapter

four, I worked hard to ensure that the children did not associate me with the other adults in the school setting, reaffirming on a regular basis that I held no authority in this environment. This position allowed me much greater insight into what, and how, the children were thinking, feeling and acting within this setting and I was therefore much less restricted by more typical adult-child power relations. Discourses of age are clearly intertwined with those of power, knowledge and agency. By sitting with the children on the mat, eating my snack with them, sitting and working at the tables alongside them, playing on the jungle gym, climbing trees, playing dress up in the wendy house and so forth I was able to challenge and disrupt established adult-child relations. This was clear in the incident that I describe below that took place shortly after I entered the field to collect data:

> This is the first time that I am attending an 'after school' function. I decide to attend in order to see the exhibition and to provide parents with the opportunity to talk to me about my work should they so desire. I had assumed incorrectly that the children would not be in attendance. When I arrive Charlie is already there with his sister. Tables have been set up outside the wendy house where food and drinks have been laid out. I wander around the playground chatting to some of the kids. They tell me I look nice (I am wearing a skirt and a necklace, which the kids have never seen me in – I usually wear pants to school for running around in). More caregivers arrive, many of whom have brought their kids with them. Nadir and Charlie are playing in the tree and I go up to them and ask if I can play:
>
> Jaci: Hey guys…can I play?
>
> Nadir: No you can't! No adults are allowed!
>
> Charlie: Ja! No adults allowed.
>
> Jaci: But I am in Grade R with you guys.
>
> Charlie [to Nadir]: Maybe we should let her play…
>
> Nadir: No…
>
> Charlie: She is not like other adults…she likes to play with us
>
> Nadir: Ok, you can play Jaci. But other adults can't play!
>
> [I notice that Ethan, Thandi and Morgan have arrived and I decide to go investigate what they are doing]
>
> Jaci: Its fine, I'll go and play with the others
>
> [Nadir and Charlie are look a bit helpless]
>
> Nadir: But Jaci I said you could play!

I understood that in this context it was more difficult for them to ignore my adult status, yet I was surprisingly hurt by their initial reaction and their denial of my request to enter

their game. I had been partial to much insider information during school hours as a result of my non-sanctioning adult status, and was thus taken aback when I was 'called out' for being an adult. While I had certainly challenged the rigidity of the adult-child boundary during my time at the school, this incident shows that it can quickly be erected again when circumstances change. When I left the two boys and went to find the other children I was greeted happily and once again told that I look nice. While not so vocal about it, these children also appeared somewhat hesitant to interact with me in the same way they were doing with the other children and in a way that they would normally interact with me during school hours. Surrounded by adults, this child-dominated space was converted into an adult-dominated space for the evening. As a result, the children did not seem as trusting of me as they did when I was the only adult in *their* space, rather than one of many adults who had overrun the preschool. Given the fact that children are continually negotiating spaces that are heavily inscribed with adult power, it is not surprising that in this context my interaction with the children was restricted.

The varied and complex power relations described above are important as they come to affect the production and regulation of identity in early schooling. This was particularly acute when children worked within discourses of 'race', but was also apparent when they constructed, negotiated and contested their gender, class, cultural and linguistic identities.

7.2 'Race' matters: The politics of physical appearance and difference

Young children are neither innocent nor ignorant about 'race' (MacNaughton and Davis 2009). While it is remains an uncomfortable thought for many, the fact that children's lives are 'raced' is not new. Research undertaken in other parts of the world shed light on the complex individual and institutional, social, cultural and political processes than inform young children's understandings, desires and enactments of 'race' in their everyday lives (MacNaughton and Davis 2009; see also Cannella and Viruru 2004, Derman-Sparks and ABC Taskforce 1989, McLaren 1995). While it is essential to maintain an international perspective, specific 'racial' circumstances need to be explored to identify the challenges and possibilities for subject formation in each context (MacNaughton and Davis 2009).

7.2.1 Navigating the rocky terrain of 'racialised' difference

As referred to in Chapter five, the diversity workshop coordinator pointed out how historically the term 'flesh' was used to refer to 'white' skin, thus highlighting the normative function of 'white' skin. In Grade R, the children were strongly discouraged from using 'racial' labels such as 'white', 'black' and 'coloured' when referring to individuals. I observed more than once how the educator would point out to children who had used such a term that this was impolite. An example of this is found in the following vignette, whereby Gillian engaged the children in a discussion about apartheid. She began by asking the children if they knew what apartheid meant:

> Soraya: You don't look like me so you can't be part of my world!
>
> Ellen: It was the white and the black people all fighting
>
> Gillian: Is it fine to call someone 'black' or 'white'?
>
> Children shout out in unison: No! It's rude!
>
> Grace: [looking and pointing at Thandi] It would be rude to say 'Hey black girl, come here'.
>
> Gillian: What should one say instead?
>
> Catherine: Hey Thandi, please come here

Identifying people as 'black' or 'white' was seen by this educator as an overt form of naming 'race'. It was made explicit to these children that it was offensive to attach these labels to an individual. This taboo practice was, however, not always strictly enforced. Perhaps this was because the general perception among the educators was that five and six year old children are incapable of understanding the ideological weight that these terms carry with them. While discussing difference with these children was part of the school's commitment to diversity and transformation, Gillian states in two different instances that:

> I don't think they've gotten *that* far…[the children] see colour, but I don't think they know what it means…from what I've noticed they're very literal…they'll see *that* as a black person, *that* as a white person, and that's it. But they won't…like I think adults, they attach *other* things to that colour…you know cultural differences, thought differences…whatever, whereas they [children]…from what I see they're just very literal…you're black, you're white…o.k. cool. [Gillian]

> A lot of what kids say they actually don't understand the meaning behind it…say they use quite a derogatory word and then often if it goes to the parent and they make such a huge thing they're actually like 'why did I get into trouble for saying that word' and then the child is not actually explained, you know, the meaning…and then they can go 'ooohhh, ok!'. [Gillian]

Gillian's attempt to prohibit children from using the 'racial' labels 'white' and 'black' stands in contradiction to her beliefs that children are not able to grasp all that these labels symbolise in society, and thereby understand the implications of 'race' and racism (Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001). Not surprisingly, Gillian did not feel the need to interrogate these labels in more depth; instead, she believed that it was sufficient to attempt to move the discourse of difference away from the surface of the body. In other words, she was trying to point out that skin colour is not the substance of difference. It was evident that she was trying to deal with the semantic tangle that arises in many post-apartheid classrooms when attempting to name, or avoid naming, physical differences.

However, the colour of people is anything *but* inconsequential to the children. While at times skin colour is used in a primarily descriptive way, at other times the same children show their understanding of skin colour as attached to larger social meanings. Children, as shown in their discussion with Gillian, are astute when it comes to providing the 'right' answers to tricky questions posed by adults they seek to please. Therefore, by responding that 'it is rude' to employ 'racial' labels such as 'black' and 'white', they are providing the right answer to Gillian's question. Stated otherwise, the answer that they know the educator will appreciate. Educators would be misguided to think that children are unaware of these intentions (Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001). Unlike scholars who argue that young children do not understand the economic or political significance of 'racially' based stratification (Hughes 1997; Hirschfeld 1997), the children who participated in this study demonstrated an awareness of how 'race' was intertwined with class structures and positions of power in the broader South African context. Since these factors are salient in the everyday lives of young children they are necessarily meaningful to them. 'Race', therefore, remains a social category of significance (Winkler 2009), and children, as Hirschfeld (2008) argues, are motivated to learn as well as conform to the broader cultural and social norms that will aid their functioning in society.

7.2.2 Desiring whiteness

To determine what the normative 'racial' framework was that the children were working within required that I listen and look closely at what they said and did. As referred to earlier in this chapter, in the past the colour 'flesh' was used to denote the skin colour of 'white' individuals. While the children in this study were more specific when, for example, speaking about the colours they were using to draw somebody's 'skin', an incident with Josh and Sohpia while we were colouring in at the art tables suggested that 'white' remains normative in this setting:

> [Josh is about to colour in the face on his drawing and asks]: Where's the skin colour?
>
> Jaci: What skin colour?
>
> Sophia: This one [as she points to her picture where she has begun colouring in the person peach]
>
> Jaci: Is that everyone's skin colour?
>
> Sophia: My skin colour is brown
>
> Jaci: Why don't you make it brown?
>
> Sophia: 'Cause I don't want to.
>
> Josh then goes over to the table behind us and asks: 'Can I borrow your skin colour? [He takes the peach crayon]. I'll bring it back now'.

Sophia did not look at Josh's picture to get an idea of what colour he was in fact looking for. She understood the term 'skin colour' to mean 'peach'. At snack time a discussion took place about husbands and wives which led to someone suggesting that Lelethu marry Josh, which in turn led Sipho to interject: 'Lelethu must marry a black…a black boy…an ugly black'. Sipho is albino and his family members are 'black'. These incidents point towards the understanding that 'white' skin continues to have a higher status than 'black' skin in this setting. Other studies undertaken support this notion of children preferring groups that are higher in status (Bigler, Brown and Markell 2001; Brown and Bigler 2002) and in South Africa, as Shutts et al. (2011) remind us, 'whites' continue to be high in status.

While children were strongly encouraged not to use the terms 'black' and 'white' when referring to people, when they played together out of earshot of authority figures, these terms were employed on numerous occasions. In the same way that the

children were careful about using 'racial' labels that were not considered 'polite' in front of authority figures, issues of 'race', as Tatum (1997) and Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001) also point out, were only spoken about within their peer groups, and more frequently than the educators were aware of. Knowing that they were not allowed to use standard 'racial' labels, the children developed other labels to refer to 'racial' groups. These labels were most commonly used during art activities where the children sat at tables and were directly observed by the educator and her assistant. The term 'peach' was used to refer to 'white' people, while 'brown' was used to refer to 'black' people. To speak about 'coloured' or Indian people the children would use terms such as 'light brown' or 'a little bit brown'. The educator found this acceptable as she stated that it was a realistic observation on the part of the children and that these terms closely resembled actual skin colour. These terms, therefore, were viewed as being free from the connotations that came with the use of labels such as 'white', 'black' and 'coloured'. The use of these labels suited the educator's idea of children as innocent to 'race' politics. However, as MacNaughton (2005, 90), drawing from the work of Derrida notes, 'there is no objective, true meanings for a sign or specific text, only meanings that are linked, cultural, historical, contradictory and shifting'. While the term 'white' is, for example, certainly impregnated with meaning, the substitution of this term for another ('peach') does not mean that children are unaware of the power effects of the term. This is clearly evident in the following incident:

> Chelsea brought me my incomplete self-portrait from yesterday and said that I had to complete it. She and Sophia both went inside with me to finish it. We were joined by Soraya, Catherine, Grace and Natalie at the tables inside our classroom. Soraya had finished her drawing - her face coloured in entirely 'peach'. I coloured in my body brown using a pencil crayon that did not come out very dark. I suggested out loud that I colour myself in darker and Chelsea, Catherine, Sophia and some of the others all shouted out 'NO!' Chelsea stated quickly that 'cause then you'll be black!' The others used the reasoning that that was not my skin colour, pointing to my hand. Yet, Sophia too, had coloured in her self-portrait 'peach'.

Chelsea is Indian, while Soraya and Sophia would both be classified as 'coloured'. Not one of these children would be termed 'white', yet, both girls chose to colour themselves in 'peach'. The fact that they suggested I do not colour myself in darker than my actual skin colour, while they obviously chose to colour themselves in much lighter than their actual skin colour, adds further weight to the observation that being 'black' is not valued. It seemed unthinkable to these children that I would *choose* to represent myself as darker than I am. I was quickly sanctioned for this as demonstrated by the

emphatic 'NO!' that was directed at me. Why, I felt the children asking, would I want to compromise my privileged social position of being 'white'?

7.2.2.1 Children's visual representations of self and others: The power of 'white' skin

Children's artwork form an important part of the stories they have to tell. These works can convey thoughts, actions, events, emotions, as well as experiences (Thompson 2005, 2008). This is stressed by Kieff and Casbergue (2000, 172) who write that 'Their paintings, drawings, collages, songs, stories, and constructions reveal what they see and understand about the world around them'. Any effort to understand what children are representing in their artwork requires that one asks them about it, in order to avoid reading into the work that which the children did not intend (Thompson 2005, 2008).

Since the children engaged in art projects on a daily basis I was able to explore the various ways that they chose to represent themselves and others through their drawings. I was particularly interested in examining the colours they used and, where possible, to find out why they chose these particular colours. I was struck by the fact that I almost never observed children colouring in faces using brown or black. For example, noting down the colours the children were using to colour in faces in one art project I observed more than half the class (fourteen children) colour in their faces 'peach' including six children who would not be classified as 'white'. The other ten children participating in this exercise coloured in their faces using a variety of colours such as purple, blue, green, pink, yellow and orange.

Aside from the structured art activities, most of the children had a drawing book that they could use whenever they felt like drawing. They usually drew in these books in the morning before school started and when they were allowed free play time. Here they were able to draw whatever they felt like without adult instruction or supervision. I would often sit and draw with children as they drew in their books and they would show me what they had done. I was able to enquire about what they had drawn and the children responded enthusiastically to my enquiries. While was predominantly the girls who used their time for drawing, the boys in the class had also drawn a few pictures in their books. These drawings provide interesting insight into what the children were thinking about. By way of another example, Aaliyah, one of two Muslim children in the classroom, drew a picture of a person wearing a burka, while Catherine, whose closest

friend at school is Jewish, drew pictures of the Star of David. Both of these drawings were produced at the time that religion was an important point of discussion among the children. In a similar vein, when the theme was 'South Africa', some children began to draw pictures of the national flag in their books.

Figure 4. A person wearing a burka or burqa, produced by Aaliyah

Figure 5. The Star of David, produced by Catherine

Figure 6. The South African flag, produced by Ellen   Figure 7. The South African flag, produced by Ethan

Paging through these books I was struck by the numerous drawings of 'peach' individuals, or individuals with typically 'white' characteristics such as blue eyes and blonde hair. While the children did produce drawings of people outlined in a variety of colours including brown and black, as mentioned earlier, they were never coloured in using these colours. One of the girls in the class is a particularly talented artist, and some of the other girls often got her to draw the outline of an individual for them, which they would then proceed to colour in. As a result, some of the figures resemble one another closely.

Figure 8 and 9. Produced by Aaliyah ('coloured')

Figure 9 and 10. Produced by Esme ('coloured')

Figure 11. Produced by Charlie ('white')

Figure 12. Produced by Ethan ('whilte')
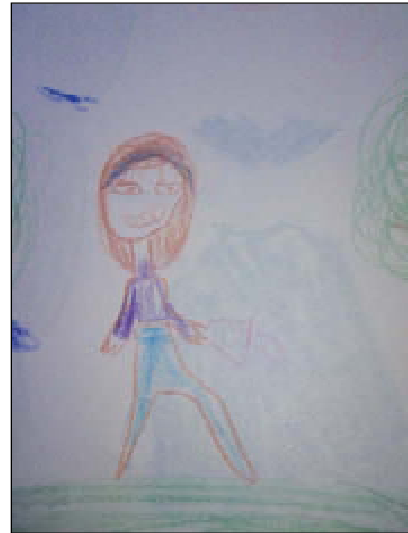
Figure 13 and 14. Produced by Lily ('white')

Figure 15. Produced by Aiden ('coloured')

Figure 16. Produced by Soraya ('coloured')

Figure 17 and 18. Produced by Natalie ('white')

Figure 19 and 20. Produced by Min-Suh ('Asian')

Figure 21 and 22. Produced by Thandi ('black' African)

Figure 23 and 24. Produced by Ellen ('white')

These drawings, as well as a host of others not reproduced here, suggest that children are playing with the 'racial' identities of self and others, with a clear preference for the characteristics associated with 'white' individuals. When, for example, I asked Aaliyah about the figures she had drawn she pointed out how beautiful the blue eyes and blonde hair of her figure were. Ellen, the archetypal blonde hair, blue eyed girl in the class, smiled happily when she told me one day that many of the children chose to draw people that looked like her. This seemed to bring her an enormous sense of satisfaction. Thandi, who never coloured in her portraits, stated that she could not use the colours that matched her physical colour as they were too dark. Sophia, whose drawing is not presented here, told me on numerous occasions that her favourite colour was 'peach' when I enquired as to why she chose to use that colour to depict her family and herself in all the drawings she made.

These characteristics might be seen as social markers in that while children could accurately name their own skin, eye and hair colour, they preferred to incorporate 'white' features into their drawings. Thus, there was a difference between the physical differences the children 'had' (in other words, what they 'were'), and their individual

colour preferences (or what they might like to have). Taken together, these drawings suggest that children recognise the social importance of physical characteristics and incorporate these understandings into daily interactions. In this way, the body is an inscriptive surface and is marked according to the operation of social relations and hierarchies. This producing, shaping and transforming of the body is accomplished through the operation of power, which, as Butler points out, affects the subject positions taken up.

Fairytales were highly significant to the lives of the girls participating in this study and often served as inspiration for their drawings (see the drawings by Aaliyah, Esme, Lily, Soraya, Natalie, Min-Suh and Ellen). The fairytales in which 'white' princesses are the leading characters were especially popular, even though the children acknowledged that they were aware of other darker skinned characters such as Pochahontas, Princess Jasmine and Moolan. The following extract from my field notes supports this line of thought:

> As I enter the school building I see Min-Suh standing by her bag hook with her mother alongside her. She greets me happily and then shows me her 'Bratz kidz' DVD that she says we will watch later. She turns the DVD to the back cover and there are the faces of four characters, with their names underneath. She points to the girl with the long plaited blonde hair and says 'that's me!'

Hegemonic notions of 'beauty' are continually reinforced through media stereotyping and children are certainly not immune to this. Since children often portray their role models in their drawings (Vandenbroeck 1999), their fascination with 'white' skinned fairy tale characters suggests that these characters serve as important points of reference for their thinking about the identity of self and others. Engaging with McIntosh's (1989) seminal article 'White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack', Ann Sibley O'Brien (2010) interrogates how this deconstructive thinking applies to the realm of children's books and notes that in contemporary society the protagonists of the stories remain predominantly 'white'. I am not suggesting that the children's preference for a 'white' princess is a sign of self-rejection, rather, as Tatum (1997) posits, it is imperative to consider the messages that children receive regarding the relative worth of light or dark skin. Taken together, the colour-coded language and images in which the children and educators are steeped play a central role in the construction of body image. Tatum (1997, 48) therefore stresses the need to 'engage children in a critical

examination of the books they read, the television they watch, the films they see, and the video games they play'.

7.2.3   Naming 'race' and engaging in identity work through play

My exploration of the children's understanding of identity concepts was greatly facilitated by the resources that formed part of daily life in Grade R. The drawings presented above are a case in point, as too are the various toys with which we played. Through making use of these resources I was able to examine the children's thinking around 'race' in diverse ways and across various contexts. One such example involves a teddy bear I named Thabo, which Chelsea and Ellen were not too happy about, as highlighted in the following vignettes:

> Catherine, Morgan and Thandi are playing 'baby baby'. I pick up a brown teddy bear and pretend that this is my baby whom I name Thabo. Chelsea and Chris are sitting facing towards me and I show them my baby and introduce him as Thabo. I see Chelsea flinch and infer that she is not happy with the name that I have chosen. I decide to ask Chelsea if she likes my baby's name (to test my hunch). She says 'no, I don't like it'. I ask her why and she says 'because it's a black name'. She insists that a better name would be Mineesha but I say that I prefer Thabo and she looks at me as if I am half mad. She then shrugs and seems to resign herself to the fact that my baby's name is Thabo.

> I find myself in the fantasy corner with Soraya and Ellen. Soraya is pretending to be the mom and Ellen her daughter. I grab my baby bear 'Thabo' and introduce him to them. Immediately Ellen pulls her face in a look of distaste. I ask her if she likes the name I have chosen and she responds with 'No, it's not a nice name!' Soraya scolds her telling her to be nice to me. I ask Ellen why she does not like the name but in keeping with the game and her 'mother's' warning to be polite she responds in a falsely sweet voice: 'It's a lovely name'.

Later in the week I arrive at school to find Morgan, Catherine and Darlene playing in the doll corner. Darlene appears to be playing by herself and invites me to play with her. I accept the invitation and sit down:

> There is a 'black' new born baby doll amongst the other 'white' dolls and teddy bears. I haven't seen anyone playing with this doll yet. I pick it up and suggest that this can be my baby. Darlene doesn't agree and hands me another, 'white', doll. I persist, saying that I am happy with this ['black'] doll and that I will call it Thabo. Darlene insists that I mustn't play with the 'black' doll. I ask her why but she just shrugs and tell me that the other doll, which is 'peach', is better. When I hesitate, she tells me that I don't need a doll, but that I can rather take care of her doll. She suggests that I prepare some food for her baby and she shows me where the cooking utensils are kept. Just then we are called for line-up and so we quickly pack up and go outside.

Having noted this strong reaction from Chelsea, Ellen and Darlene I adopted this strategy of giving the toy with which I was playing a distinctly 'black' name on other occasions. Playing in the wendy house with Morgan I decide to introduce her to my 'baby':

> Jaci: Look, its my baby Thabo
>
> Morgan: No, that's a dog.
>
> Jaci: I know, but I'm pretending that it is my baby.
>
> Morgan: No, why don't you rather use this (she hands me a 'peach' doll from the shelf).
>
> Jaci: Ok, but now it's a girl, so I'll call her Lindiwe.
>
> Morgan: [She looks at me strangely] Oh, why don't you rather call her Belle?
>
> Jaci: No, I prefer Lindiwe.
>
> Morgan: Umm…Ok.
>
> Jaci: I wish she was brown
>
> Morgan: No, she can't be! Look she is grey like you.
>
> Jaci: Grey?
>
> Morgan: Yes, see, she's your colour [pointing to the top of my hand and then back at the doll].

Morgan has an adopted sister who is 'black' and is therefore aware that mothers and their children do not necessarily share the same physical characteristics such as skin colour. Yet, while these children displayed their displeasure with my choice of baby names, taking into account that the names I chose were distinctly so-called 'black' names, the opposite effect was found when introducing my 'baby' to 'black' African children. These children expressed their delight at my name choice and it warmed me to them in a profound way. Thandi was perhaps most taken by my association to the 'Xhosa' culture even though I was 'white', as she herself was trying to find her place as a 'black' child adopted into a 'white' family, but with continual access to her biological mother and siblings.

> I go over to where Thandi is pretending to be a baby and introduce her to my baby Thabo [I catch Catherine smiling when I say this]. Thandi seems to really enjoy this and even decides to call her baby Thabo too. For the remainder of the game we both have a baby called Thabo. Thandi gets a blanket and puts the baby on her back, a common practice among 'black' woman in South Africa. This is the first time I have seen her do this. I follow suit, which gets me a few funny looks form the other children. I ask Catherine if she was carried like this by her mom and she says no. Thandi and I play together while Chelsea prepares food for our babies.

Thandi has always been a slightly reserved child with me up until this point, where she begins to share experiences that it appears she has not felt comfortable expressing up until this point. Not only does she find a close affiliation with the name Thabo, she takes this as an entry point into engaging with and performing cultural practices that she identifies with.

In another incident involving Thandi and her explorations of belonging, which took place during a conversation the children were having among themselves, and which centred on who they thought they were, I listened to the children around the table stating things like 'I am Indian', 'I am Christian', while someone else asks 'Who are you?' The children responded to one another starting their sentence with 'I am…' The conversation seemed to be predominantly between Soraya, Nadir, Thandi and Sam:

Soraya: I am half Muslim and…and…and…

Nadir: Muslim! I am Indian. Both my mom and my dad are Indian.

Soraya: No! I am half Muslim and half Indian.

Sam: I am Christian

Thandi: I am a little bit Klosa [she struggles to pronounce Xhosa] and…

[Just then Gillian calls 1,2,3 and interrupts Thandi's train of thought. I wait for her to finish and when she does I immediately ask Thandi to finish what she was saying. She seems keen to pick up where she left off but as she thinks about her reply we are once again interrupted. When next we are able to speak I ask her again, but she seems to have lost a bit of interest. So I adopt a different strategy with very unexpected results]

Jaci: You know, I am also a little bit Xhosa [this catches her attention immediately].

Thandi: [She stares at me sceptically] You can't be Klosa.

Jaci: Why not?

Thandi: Because you aren't 'brown'.

Jaci: But I am from the Eastern Cape.

Thandi: [She looks at me in disbelief and slowly starts to smile sheepishly] I am *also* from the [indescernable] Cape.

Jaci: You see.

Thandi: You are like me! We are from the same group!

Jaci: Yes. We are both a little Xhosa.

Thandi: [She smiles broadly]

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[Gillian then tells us its time to go to the aftercare room for snack time. I get my lunch and as I am walking across the passage way to the aftercare room Thandi calls me. I turn around and she runs up, grabs my hand and leads me to her school bag hook. There she proudly points to her name 'Thandi' and as she reads it to me she points at the letters. I tell her that I also have a Xhosa name, Chwayita]

Thandi: My name is [she proceeds to pronounce her full name]

Jaci: And my name is Jaci Chwayita Murray.

[She gets her lunch and we head for the aftercare room. She asks me to sit by her and finds us a spot. By this time Lelethu has joined us and I tell Thandi that Lelethu is also Xhosa. Thandi smiles at this but doesn't say anything. Lelethu does the same. Thandi tells me that Sam isn't Xhosa. I ask her who else *is* Xhosa and she says Lelethu. I ask Thandi if Lwango is Xhosa and she shakes her head while saying 'No! He is 'white'!' When I ask her what Morgan, her sister, is, she goes a bit quiet and mumbles 'South African']

Stating explicitly that we are part of the same group, Thandi is eager to retain an important symbolic connection to her biological ancestors Eastern Cape origins (Bray, Gooskens, Kahn, Moses, Seekings 2010). Thandi is aware that she is a minority in this setting. Her desire to find similarities between us allows her to suspend her association between 'black' and 'Xhosa' when it has to do with me, yet, when asked about Sipho – who is in fact Xhosa – she reiterates that he cannot be Xhosa as he is 'white'. This suspension of her beliefs occurred as a result of my affiliation with the Xhosa language. Although she herself can no longer speak the language (it is, however, the language spoken by her biological family), it remains an integral part of her identity. Had she heard Sipho speak Xhosa she would most likely have accepted that although he has 'white' skin, he is in fact Xhosa.

The notion that skin colour is directly associated with a particular cultural affiliation runs deep. Not surprisingly then, Max, who is also Xhosa, was hesitant to accept that I could be in any way affiliated to the Xhosa culture until I mentioned that I could speak some of the language:

[I tell Max that my 'baby's' name is Lindiwe and he immediately suggests that I call it 'Thuso'. I say that I like that name for my baby girl. But he says it's a boy's name. I state that my baby is a girl. He say's that I can't really use that name then so I come up with the name 'Nonkolo'. As we play I start a discussion]

Jaci: Do you like my baby's new name? It's a Xhosa name.

Max: Are you Xhosa?

Jaci: Maybe a little bit.

Thato: But you are just pretending to be Xhosa, hey?

Jaci: Why do you think I am pretending? Can't I be Xhosa?

Thato: No, because you are 'white'!

[I tell him that my other name is Chwayita which achieves quite an affect – he runs off to the toy box to get some clothes for the baby and suddenly starts talking to me in Xhosa. He does this so naturally, as if we have been speaking Xhosa all along (rather than in a way where he is testing me and my Xhosa ability). I reply to him in Xhosa and he continues. Eventually I run out of Xhosa words and he switches effortlessly to English again. For the rest of the game we speak English].

These experiences suggest that these children were acutely aware of having physical characteristics, such as 'black' skin and African languages, which are not dominant in this setting. While this did not seem to directly affect their day to day interaction with the other children since they played with them and were generally included in games, they did not feel entirely part of this setting. Their sense of belonging was most certainly not as strong as those who embodied the desired physical traits such as 'white' skin, and even those children who, although darker skinned, were lighter than Thandi, Max and Lelethu. Thandi clearly spent time after our interaction reflecting on who she is and where she fits in as, weeks later, she called me over and we have the following brief conversation:

Thandi: Jaci! Come here quickly…Jaci, are you Xhosa or are you South African?

Jaci: I am a bit Xhosa and a bit South African. Why, what are you?

Thandi: I am just Xhosa.

She does not seem surprised by my answer and seems to be content with herself on this matter as she smiles when she states that she is Xhosa. At first Lelethu, too, thought that I would be unfamiliar with Xhosa, which formed an important part of her lived experience. On various occasions I overheard her mother speaking to her in IsiXhosa, which Lelethu seemed to shy away from. In another incident Lelethu seems to think that I will naturally be ignorant of the Xhosa culture:

Jaci: So Lelethu, you looking forward to the holiday?

Lelethu: Yes! [nods her head vigorously]

Jaci: What you going to do for the holiday?

Lelethu: Play with my friend

Jaci: What's your friend's name?

Lelethu: You won't know it…it's a Xhosa name

Jaci: Come on, tell me…I know a little bit of Xhosa

Lelethu: Her name is Zihle…I told you it was a Xhosa name

Jaci: I like that name…Zihle.

Interestingly, Lelethu's understanding of the Xhosa culture was closely associated with the township life that she was living, while for both Thandi and Max, who live in wealthy neighbourhoods; this did not seem to be such a clear association. While the latter two were aware that being Xhosa (and 'black') was not the norm in this setting, they did not appear to associate this with being inferior. Lelethu, on the other hand, expressed her embarrassment with living in a poor area, and it is therefore likely that she closely associated her class status with that of being Xhosa and 'brown' skinned. Cultural identity, as Kurban and Tobin (2009) remind us, is a high stakes performance. For example, Lelethu was excitedly talking to me about her upcoming birthday party and when I asked why she did not want to have it at her house her face dropped:

> As the kids finish their snacks and move off to play I am left sitting with Lelethu. She tells me that her birthday is coming up and that she wants to have a soccer party. I ask her if she will have it at her house and she immediately says 'No! I want to have it here on the school fields or at Sam's house'. I ask her why she does not want to have the party at her house [in the township where she lives] and she tells me that it isn't nice there.

On another occasion Lelethu explicitly states that others have pointed out to her that she and I do not share similar physical characteristics, which bothers her:

Lelethu: Should I make your hair like mine?

Jaci: Yes!

Lelethu: [Smiling] And your skin brown like me?

Jaci: Cool!

Lelethu: People lie…actually your hair is like mine, hey?

Jaci: It's a similar colour, look.

Lelethu: [Smiles broadly]

Lelethu's desire to find points of similarity with me, someone who has a high social status in the preschool setting (and who is 'peach'), is not surprising considering the negative connotations that continue to be associated with 'brown' and 'black' people. In a similar vein, during an art activity Thandi finishes what she is doing, stands up from the chair, grabs my hand and pulls me up stating: 'Come, let's go play. Remember, we are the same person because we live together'. Having expressed a clear interest in, and appreciation of, these children's cultural background, they gravitate towards me in a setting in which they feel different and/or culturally alienated.

7.2.4   Articulating 'race' through other notions of difference

Discourses on 'race', gender and other notions of difference are, within a poststructural perspective, non-essential and context-specific (Connolly 2008). Thus, the way that particularly subject positions and binaries are constructed vary and are highly contested according to relations of power (Connolly 2008). In South Africa, racism, sexism and class discrimination are legally prohibited. Attempts to achieve transformation and integration in the education sector have to take account of these, as well as other notions of difference, in order to change practices of discrimination and inclusion. While the ideology of 'white' supremacy is particular to racism, it is often, as Soudien (2008a) notes, 'intertwined with other forms of discrimination, such as social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, language and xenophobia'. This set of prejudices is used to justify and reproduce racism (Soudien 2008a).

In formerly 'white' schools where classrooms are more likely to be diverse, integration remains inflected by 'race', gender and class relations (Soudien 2004). Thus, in order to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the identity work of the children in this study it is useful to look at how power, privilege and position are taken up across a variety of identity notions. Throughout this chapter many of the examples provided to show how 'race' is articulated through the words and actions of children point towards ways in which class, gender, sexuality, culture and so forth come to influence these constructions. In this section I will take a detailed look at some of the ways that these notions of difference collide, and how this comes to have a direct bearing on how children construct their 'race' identities.

7.2.4.1 'Having a brown boyfriend would be weird': 'Race', gender and sexuality

The children in this study were very vocal about how they viewed gender relations. Since notions of gender stereotyping were not silenced such as those of 'race' were, the children felt comfortable to express commonly espoused stereotypes such as 'soccer is a boys game' (Soraya), with Lex pointing out that if girls play 'they might get hurt'. Countless other biased opinions were expressed including that 'only girls like Hannah Montana[52]' (Sophia), that a wife has to take her husband's surname when they get married (which I personally did not do and this horrified the children) (Dirk), that 'the tooth fairy is for girls' (Jordan), that 'girls play with barbies' (Aiden), that 'all maids are girls' (James) and so forth. These beliefs resulted in practices of exclusion from games for both boys and girls, yet, those children who were prepared to take on the identity of the opposite sex in some form or other were in a better position to be included. For example, Lelethu was a regular player in the soccer matches that were supposedly reserved for boys. She was the only girl I observed playing soccer during my time at the school. In a conversation during snack time it is clear that Lelethu is aware of her gender 'transgression' and the privilege that it affords her, namely access to soccer games:

> Shazad: Simo wants to be a boy!
>
> Jaci: Why do you say that Shazad?
>
> Shazad: Because she likes soccer!
>
> Lelethu: Yes! Yes I do!
>
> Jaci: But girls can also like soccer and play soccer
>
> Lelethu: But I *do* want to be a boy.
>
> Jaci: Why?
>
> Lelethu: [Shrugs] Because then I can play soccer and everything.

Rather than contest the idea that only boys can play soccer, Lelethu is aware of the power and privileges that come with being a boy in this setting, especially in relation to

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[52] Hannah Montana is a children's television show.

sports. Since Lelethu is very determined to be seen as 'one of the boys', when she is told she should do ballet because she is a girl, she gets upset. This incident occurs at the end of the school year while the children are preparing for their annual concert. I am showing them some dance moves when the following conversation takes place:

Dirk: We don't want to learn ballet!

Mika: Ja, we don't want to do ballet!

Jaci: But this is not even ballet

Lex: Yes it is! Ballet is for girls!

Shazad: Lelethu, you must do ballet, you are a girl!
[Lelethu looks very unhappy with Shazad and just stares at him]

Jaci: Everyone is doing a dance for the play - boys and girls. Anyway, my brother did ballet and he is a boy. Just because Lelethu is a girl doesn't mean she has to do or even like ballet.

Lelethu: You see Shazad! I don't have to do ballet cause I'm a girl!

In this moment the boys are attempting to subjugate Lelethu by insisting that she has to do what they do not want to do. However, Lelethu turns this around and engages in a practice of resistance by insisting that girls do not have to do ballet.

Gender stereotyping is very seldom questioned and, in fact, is often reinscribed by adult authority figures who are unaware of the complexity of the social world of children. This was forcefully brought home to me by an incident with Max. Having seen Max 'trouble' gender during free play time, I was astonished when an educator scolded the children for 'teasing' Max in what she deemed was an inappropriate way:

I go and sit inside the wendy house where some kids are playing dress up. Max comes in and asks if he can play. He is given permission and goes to get something to wear. He chooses a skirt and puts it on. One girl says that he looks 'beautiful' and Max smiles. He does a twirl and continues looking for clothes to wear. Skye says he looks like a princess and Max says 'yes, I am princess Max'. He looks over to where I am writing in my notebook and says: 'Jaci, can you draw me?'

Jaci: I can, but what do you want me to draw exactly?

Max: Draw 'Princess Max'

Jaci: Ok [I draw a figure with long curly hair, a crown, a dress, eyelashes]

Max: Oooh, that's lovely! Look everyone its Princess Max! [He smiles and seems very pleased]

A little while later we are standing in our lines and Nicola comes outside to give the kids instructions. She overhears someone calling Max 'Princess Max' and starts to shout at them, telling them how rude it is and that it hurts Max's feelings. I am quite blown away by this and I

look over at Max appears shocked. He doesn't seem to know how to react, but he seems to understand that from Nicola's reaction, he should be offender. He begins to pout while Nicola continues to shout at the child who called Max a princess. I realise that this name calling has happened before. Nicola instructs the offended to apologise to Max which he duly does. Max accepts the apology and the day continues. I ask Max later if this label offends him, but he just shrugs and runs off.

The educator, unaware of what had taken place in the wendy house earlier, believed that Max was being teased. The notion that someone might *like* to be associated with something generally associated with the opposite gender did not seem to occur to Nicola. Max, realising that there was a 'right' way to perform gender identity, quickly took up this position even though it was not one that he had chosen for himself. Troubling the norm and engaging in border crossing is, as Max and the other children saw firsthand, dangerous work.

The strict gender roles that the children continually reinforced through their verbal and embodied actions were further entrenched by a heterosexual normative matrix. The majority of children were adamant that relationships were strictly between men and women:

> Min-Suh: [showing me her drawing] This one [pointing to the man] likes this one [pointing to girl number 1], but this one [pointing to girl number 2] likes the man.
>
> Alex: [Pointing to two figures on his picture] These people are in love [he proceeds to draw a heart around them]
>
> Jaci: Who are they?
>
> Alex: A boy and a girl…it can't be two girls or two boys because they are in love and it has to be a boy and a girl.

Not only was the idea of a homosexual relationship unthinkable to the children, to some of them it was repulsive:

> Sipho [to Chelsea]: You can marry Jaci!
>
> Chelsea: Jaci, Sipho is saying silly things like girls getting married
>
> Catherine: They can marry…my mom knows two women who are married
>
> Jaci: Yes, in this country it is legal, it is allowed.
>
> Sipho laughs at this while Chelsea pulls her face in an expression of disgust.

In other conversations with the children similar attitudes were expressed, and when I questioned them as to why they felt this way they would offer explanations such as 'that's just the way it works' (Dirk). Of course, not all children policed the socially constructed boundaries of gender and sexuality that intently. Natalie, for example, posited that while men might not be able to have husbands, they may have partners of the same sex.

Love, marriage and relationships were common themes in the lives of the children. I found that this was especially the case with the girls, however, this could be as a result of them being more comfortable to discuss such things with me than the boys were. In these discussions not only was the normative heterosexual matrix reinforced, but it was 'whitewashed'. The notion of 'race' was, therefore, intricately tied up with who was deemed desirable:

Jaci: You know, I think that I would like to marry Neslon Mandela if he was younger

Chelsea: Nooo man!

Ellen: [gives me a look like I am crazy, but keeps working].

Jaci: Why not Chelsea? Wouldn't you want to marry him?

Chelsea: I wouldn't marry him because he has coloured, dark skin!

Jaci: Who *would* you want to marry then?

Chelsea: I want to marry Justin Bieber!

Sophia, Thandi, Ellen and Esme: Ooooh la la…

Jaci: So you guys like the music stars hey…

Ellen: I also like Justin Bieber.

Jaci: And you Ellen, wouldn't you like to marry Neslons Mandela?

Ellen: Nooo! He is so old!

Jaci: But what if he was younger?

Ellen: No thanks! [she gives me a look like I am crazy]

Jaci: Ok, so what about Jacob Zuma?

A collective 'Nooo' is uttered.

Jaci: But don't you want to be married to the president of the country?

Chelsea: No, he is also dark skinned

Thandi: I am going to marry Michael Jackson.

Later in the day I am playing with Ellen and we are again talking about relationships. Here she points out to me that 'having a brown boyfriend would be weird'. When I ask her why, she just shrugs and smiles slyly, as if to suggest that I know what she means. I ask again, but she doesn't respond and goes back to playing with the other girls.

Chelsea, herself dark skinned, expresses her desire for a 'white' boy (Justin Bieber), which prompts Thandi to chose a so-called 'white' man (Michael Jackson – who the children believe to be 'white') as a potential husband too. These overt and subtle references to the desirability, or lack thereof, of the particular skin colour of a potential love interest are significant, as under apartheid, Sherman and Steyn (2009) point out, sexuality, love, marriage, sex and desire were no longer private, but political. Sexualities became 'racially' coded and part of the politico-legislative framework (Botsis 2010). Apartheid ideology was, as Botsis (2010, 25) states, 'pulled into the bodies and minds of apartheid subjects and naturalized, taking on the appearance of innate desire and feeling'. In these examples 'black' skin serves to establish notions of Otherness, while the preference for 'white' skinned partners serves to reaffirm the power of 'whiteness' circulating in this setting.

Notably, 'racial' notions were not only used to exclude certain people from being considered as romantic partners, rather, they were also employed to create an exotic Other, which, as Tom's mother points out in the following instance, made such individuals highly desirable:

> Tom's mom: I asked Tom the other day if he has a girlfriend and he replied that he doesn't, but if he *did* it would be Min-Suh because she's pretty and she's from China…and all people from China do karate!

Min-Suh, who is not from China, has never displayed any interest in sport, preferring to play make believe with the other girls. Her Asian features led Tom to infer that she has skills which he values and this increases her desirability (as does being 'pretty'). Min-Suh would not have been pleased to hear such a comment from Tom as in a different incident she strongly disassociated herself from the Chinese:

> Someone comments on the Asian face on the cover of my new notebook, stating that it's Min-Suh's brother. Min-Suh is irritated by this comment and insists that it's not her brother. I agree with her saying that I don't know who this boy is or where he is from.
>
> Min-Suh: Maybe it's a China. I don't like China people…
>
> Jaci: Why not?

Min-Suh: Because they talk funny and I don't like funny things.

Both Tom and Min-Suh engage in acts of stereotyping, however, Tom values the skills that he believes Chinese people possess, while Min-Suh mocks them for 'talking funny'. Interestingly, the Chinese were often on the receiving end the children's practices of stereotyping:

Chelsea: Like the Chinese people….They eat fish eyes

Jaci: What else do they eat?

Chelsea: They eat lots from the sea…like fish and even sharks!

Jaci: What do Chinese people look like?

Chelsea: Like this [and she pulls her eyes at the corners to make what someone else in the class termed 'china eyes']. I don't like my sister because she has funny eyes like that. Ohhh, those Chinoooz…

For most of the children who made references to 'Chinese' people the connotation was negative. The children were quick to point out physical differences (eye shape, hair etc.) and to link this to socially transmitted cultural practices (see Van Ausdale and Feagin 1996). Children expressing their dislike or preference for certain categories of people remains a social justice issue that undoubtedly needs to be addressed in order to prepare learners for living in a diverse world.

7.2.4.2 'But *everybody* has a garden!': 'Race' and class collide

The majority of children attending Grade R at Table Mountain Primary School were from socio-economically advantaged homes and thus shared many experiences such as having a domestic worker at home, going on holidays to exotic places, having a secure home and a garden. Various children commented that their parents were rich, owned properties, drove fancy cars or gave them plenty of money for shopping trips. These children were generally not exposed to life 'on the other side' – in other words, life for the majority of socio-economically disadvantaged people living in South Africa. While Grace, Lily and Ellen pointed out that not all 'white' people are rich, they stated that many were. When I asked them who was poor, Grace responded that 'for example, the

man at the robots[53]…the 'brown' man'. Lily and Ellen nodded in agreement with this statement. Chris, on the other hand, had a hard time believing that people lived differently to how he and his family lived. On the first day of spring the children wore spring hats to school, which were decorated with flowers. I had forgotten to bring one and this prompted Chris to ask me where my hat was. I told him that I had forgotten it, but also mentioned that I did not have a garden at home and would have struggled to find flowers to decorate my hat with. He look perplexed, but then stated confidently, 'you do have a garden'. I insisted that I did not. He looked at me in disbelief and stated 'but *everybody* has a garden Jaci!' I tried to point out that this was not the case, but he would not believe me.

As alluded to in Chapter four, Gillian was responsible for running a holiday programme for children from socio-economically disadvantaged learning centres. In this way, these children could enjoy the facilities and resources available at Table Mountain Primary school while the Grade R's were away on holiday. Speaking to one Grade R child who had been to visit these centres, I observed how the child was acutely aware of differences between these centres and Table Mountain Primary, even though she did not articulate these differences clearly. The following discussion was sparked by me writing down my name on a list for people interested in visiting these educational centres:

> Soraya: Are you going to visit [name of the educare centre]. I have been there
>
> Jaci: Yes, I am going, can you tell me what it's like?
>
> Soraya: The children are different there…
>
> Jaci: What do you mean by different?
>
> Soraya: [She laughs nervously] I don't know…they are just different…

The educare centre is indeed very different to the school environment that the children at Table Mountain Primary are accustomed to. The centre is in the backyard of someone's property, the children are cramped for space, they lack materials and resources and generally serve an all 'black' population. Interestingly, no one else at the school opted to take their children on the outing to the educare centres.

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[53] The term robots is used in South Africa to refer to traffic lights.

The disconnection between the lives of these privileged children and those of the majority of South Africans lent itself easily to practices of stereotyping. The following exchange, although clearly class related, were also directly associated to 'race':

Ethan's mom was with him in the parking lot of a Shopping Mall situated close to the school when they ran into a work colleague, a 'black' woman. Ethan's mom introduced him to her colleague. After they said goodbye, Ethan started the following conversation with his mom:

Ethan: What is she doing here?

Ethan's Mom: What do you mean?

Ethan: Why is she is the parking lot?

Ethan's Mom: Because she parked her car here.

Ethan: [Looking very surprised]: Does she have a *car*?

Ethan's Mom: Yes, why?

Ethan: Because the 'black' people go in taxis and buses…they don't have their own car!

Ethan's mom expressed her shock at hearing her son so blatantly espouse stereotypes that brought together complex 'race' and class issues that are so prevalent in the South African society. She stated that she was actively trying to teach Ethan respect for diversity, and one way she was attempting to this was by employing a 'black' Xhosa speaking woman to take care of him and speak to him in IsiXhosa. Furthermore, one of Ethan's closest friends at school was Thandi, who is 'black'. This, however, did not stop Ethan from once again catching his mother by surprise in a different conversation:

Ethan: Are there more peach or brown people living in South Africa?

Ethan's Mom: More brown people…why do you ask?

Ethan: Is there a country where there are more peach people living?

Ethan's Mom: Well, yes…I guess Northern Europe for example.

Ethan: I want to live there when I am big

Ethan's Mom: Why?

Ethan: Because I think we should live with people who are like us…peach…who are the same as us.

Ethan's Mom: But that would mean that you wouldn't see [name of caregiver] and Thandi

Ethan: Oh….mmm…that wouldn't be nice…I would miss them

Ethan's mom stated that she was really embarrassed as Ethan started this discussion in front of their 'black' caregiver, and she felt that she had to do something. She expressed her fascination with Ethan's thinking, as well as her concerns, because she emphasised that he was not learning this stuff at home – so where did he get if from? I pointed out to her that at school the children were continually discussing and negotiating topics ranging from religious beliefs, cultural practices, skin colour, and so forth. They were, as Van Ausdale and Feagin (1996, 780) note, employing notions of 'race' and ethnicity as 'integrative and symbolically creative tools in the daily construction of social life'. Many adults are unaware of the 'racial' concepts that children engage with on a regular basis, and are often more comfortable silencing the child and thereby not engaging with these concepts when they arise due to feelings of awkwardness and discomfort (Tatum 1997, Van Ausdale 1996). Ethan's mom, however, was keen to engage with Ethan about his thoughts, although she acknowledged that she was not sure what the best way to do this was. Of course, there is no best way; however it is important not to dismiss this talk as inconsequential or to label it as 'wrong'. Exploring the richness of children's 'racial' experiences requires paying attention to the 'nuanced complexity and interconnected nature of their thinking and behaviour' (Van Ausdale 1996, 790).

The most common place conversation with the children that alluded to the class difference in South Africa was that of domestic workers. In many of the games played in the fantasy corner or in the wendy house someone would be assigned the role of 'maid', 'servant', or 'nanny'. While no one explicitly stated that domestic workers were 'black', the children knew they generally lived in the townships, which are home to predominantly 'black' and 'coloured' people. For some children their relationship with the domestic worker was a close and personal one, and they expressed their pleasure at seeing them at the end of the school day. For other children they were near invisible, to the point that the children were not able to recall the name of the person even though they saw them everyday. The following example indicate the children's thinking around these points:

> Morgan [to Jaci]: I am the servant
>
> Jaci: What does a servant do?
>
> Morgan: Makes food and stuff
>
> Chelsea: I have a servant at home

Jaci: What's his/her name?

Chelsea: Um…I can't remember the name.

During a conversation that I was having with Nobanzi, Martha comes up and stands next to me. Having overheard Nobanzi tell me that she is from the township, Martha states that her 'sisi' is also from there. Confused at first I recall that 'sisi' is a term used predominantly in the past to refer to a domestic worker.

The levels of crime and violence in South Africa are amongst the highest in the world, and on more than one occasion children came to school reporting that they had experienced someone breaking into their homes, alarms going off, and so forth. During a conversation with Charlie he directly linked acts of crime to 'black' skin:

> There is somebody I don't like…some people I don't like…the ones who are like dark 'brown' *and* black, so I don't like those because mostly those guys are the ones that steal and everything.

Much like Ethan, some of Charlie's closest friends at school were dark skinned, yet he was comfortable associating criminal behaviour with dark skin and expressing his dislike for such individuals. This did not seem to offend Jordan, a 'coloured' boy, who was sitting with us at the time that Charlie made his comment. This would suggest that for these children 'racial' differences are more nuanced and that distinctions according to class status are important in thinking through these nuances.

7.2.4.3 Silence as significant: The power of language

In this setting English was the language of learning and teaching. The children, however, came from a range of linguistic backgrounds including IsiXhosa, Afrikaans, Swedish, Korean and Austrian. While they discussed other languages amongst themselves and with the educators, English was the language with the highest status. Children were aware of this and the only time I heard someone speak in a language other than English was when Max spoke to me briefly in IsiXhosa (see section 7.2.3). Lelethu, whose mother spoke to her in IsiXhosa at school, generally replied to her in English. In another incident, when practising a famous Xhosa song during singing class (that contains the very difficult clicks which characterises IsiXhosa) Lelethu kept her hand over her mouth and refused to sing. I asked her to show some of us how to make the clicks, but she kept her hand over her mouth and shook her head. Languages are directly associated with

'race' and ethnicity. Grace makes this explicit when she states that her domestic worker speaks IsiXhosa, but that she (Grace) does not. She then goes on to list who speaks IsiXhosa at school:

> Thandi, Chelsea…no wait, I don't think Chelsea…Thandi and definitely Lelethu and Max. Thandi a little bit, but Lelethu and Max for sure.

I asked how she knew this but she just shrugged her shoulders. While she is not wrong, she did not include Sipho in this list. Sipho's mother-tongue is IsiXhosa, however, he is albino and therefore has 'white' skin. This results in Grace overlooking him as an IsiXhosa speaker. Towards the end of the school year, after pointing out to some of the children that Sipho speaks IsiXhosa, Lelethu comes up to me and says in disbelief: 'You know, Sipho *also* speaks Xhosa!'.

The children struggled to disassociate the language that an individual spoke from her/his 'racial' and ethnic affiliation. In the following incident Grace refutes Chris's claim that any biological aunt of his can speak IsiXhosa, but Chris is adamant and does not budge:

> Chris: Do you know what? One of my aunties….she is going to teach me Xhosa!
>
> Gillian: Oh, can she speak Xhosa?
>
> Chris: Jaaa! Because she *is* Xhosa!
>
> Grace: What? How can your aunty be Xhosa?
>
> Chris: She is…
>
> Sophia: [to Grace] He said *one* of his aunties!
>
> Grace: [looks at Sophia as if she is crazy] What? But Chris, is she your *real* aunty?
>
> Chris: Yes! And she *is* Xhosa. This afternoon she is going to start teaching me a few words
>
> Grace: Whoa! That's the first time I have ever heard of that!

These notions of linking language to 'race' and ethnicity were inadvertently reinforced by the educator who, for example, asked Chelsea how to greet someone in 'Indian':

> Gillian: How do you greet someone in Indian?
>
> Chelsea: [Smiles and looks a bit embarrassed]
>
> Gillian: Do you know Chelsea?

Chelsea: [Nods her head, but still doesn't speak]

Jaci: Is it is Namaste?

Chelsea: [Quickly turns her head to look at me, and then smiles and nods that I am correct]

Gillian: Thanks Chelsea, now we know how to say hello in Indian.

Chelsea most likely found this request from Gillian to be strange, as later in the week I am playing with Thandi and Chelsea when she expresses her irritation with people who cannot speak English:

Thandi: Jaci, do you know that Chelsea went to India?

Chelsea: Ja, but it was soooo boring! [She rolls her eyes as she says this]

Jaci: Why was it boring?

Chelsea: Because…all these people are like 'oooh, whose this?' to me and touching me and arrgggg! And they didn't speak any English!

Language formed an important part of discussions about difference that Gillian undertook with the children. During one such discussion Gillian enquired after Min-Suh's home language and was taken aback by her forthright response, which seemed to suggest that this exercise appeared rather pointless to Min-Suh:

Gillian: Min-Suh, can you tell us how to say hello in Korean…

[Min-Suh does not respond]

Gillian: Do you remember how to say hello? Isn't it something like, oh, I can't remember…umm, 'Konitshiwa'?

Jaci: That is the greeting in Japanese I think

Gillian: Oh yes, you are right. Min-Suh, you do speak Korean at home with your family don't you?

Min-Suh: [nods her head] Yes, I speak it at home

Gillian: So can you tell us how to say hello, or good morning…

Min-Suh: Why? The other kids [indicating the other kids in the class] don't know how speak Korean

Gillian: I know, that's why I think it would be nice if we could teach them

Min-Suh: But why?

Nobanzi: Because Min-Suh, the kids don't know how to speak Xhosa either but we say 'Molo' so that they can learn something of the language. It is nice for people to learn to speak other people's languages don't you think?

Min-Suh: [still looking confused] When my mommy comes to fetch me later then we ask her

Gillian: OK, that's a good idea, we can ask her.

Min-Suh, Chelsea and Lelethu all remained 'silent' when asked about other languages that they were familiar with, with Min-Suh directly questioning the sudden interest in her language when it was clear to her that English was the normative language in this setting. Min-Suh had renounced the use of her home language in this setting in order to integrate into the culture of the school. Perhaps she was concerned that uttering Korean would undermine her efforts of integration. Interestingly, children who spoke Afrikaans at home were quick to point out that they could speak this language and would proceed to recite something. Afrikaans, much like English, was associated with 'white' people, which might suggest that it was afforded a higher status by the children:

Jaci: So do you think people who are different colours are different?

Lelethu: [Nods her head]

Jaci: Why?

Lelethu: You see, if you speak Xhosa then you will be 'black'.

Jaci: Ohh, so Afrikaans people are brown and…

Lelethu: [interrupts me immediately]: No man! 'Brown' people speak Xhosa and Afrikaans is spoken by 'whites'!

Jaci: So if I speak Xhosa then I can be brown?

Lelethu: Yes! You will change your colour and be brown…you will look like me…even my mother, she does speak Xhosa.

Jaci: Yebo yes! So I am going to learn to speak Xhosa! Ndifuna ukuthetha isiXhosa, kodwa kunzima!'

Lelethu: [She smiles knowingly and nods her head in approval]

Earlier in the conversation Lelethu was telling me that I am not able to change colour and that painting myself brown would just be a temporary solution until I had a bath, or swam in a pool. Thus, her comment in the above citation hints towards the idea that the relationship between language and 'race' are tightly bounded and almost impossible to cross. In other words, these examples suggest that crossing the language boundary amounts to crossing the 'racial' boundary, and if the latter is not possible, then nor is the

former. An interesting avenue that requires further exploration is how children see others who are from different language groups, and how this is affected by the social status that the language has in a given context.

7.3   Conclusion

In this chapter I have brought attention to the complex ways in which 'raced' identities are forged among these five and six year old children. Children are shown to be acutely aware of the high status that 'white' identities enjoy, with attempts being made to access this position of privilege. Foregrounding the production and reproduction of 'race' identity and relations in this preschool setting, this chapter shows that children are not passive recipients of a particular identity position, rather, they actively construct, challenge and contribute to the dominant ways in which 'race' is constituted. This is particularly important in a domain such as early childhood where common sense notions of what children are capable of understanding with regards to complex social constructs such as, for example, 'race' and gender, are severely limited. Through my intense participation in, and observation of, the worlds of the children who participated in this study, I was able to gain a more in-depth understanding of the complex networks of 'raced' performances and positionings that served as a means to produce and/or negate 'race' identities. Deconstructing notions of power and knowledge around 'race' and racism in this environment is key to investigating the complex ways in which young children's lives are constituted.

CHAPTER 8   TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT DIVERSITY IN EARLY SCHOOLING

8.1   Teaching and constructing notions of difference

Post-apartheid, discourses of 'race' that invoke a direct association with skin colour have become increasingly problematised. This has given way for the ideals of 'non-racialism' to serve as the framework within which differences and diversity are addressed. However, there is a risk that in this framework 'race' becomes simply recoded in terms of 'difference' and 'culture' (Back and Solomos 2000, Vandenbroeck 2007), thereby muting practices of 'racial' power and privilege. In this chapter, I analyse various discussions around the notion of difference and cultural diversity that the educator ran with the children. These discussions can be considered as more formal 'teachable moments' in that they were prepared beforehand and required the participation of all the children in the class. This type of engagement differs significantly from the conversations I had with children on the playground away from the eyes and ears of a sanctioning adult. I also present the findings of a discussion that I ran with the children that centred on a storybook specifically developed to engage children in talking about diversity issues.

8.1.1   The rainbow nation: Exploring the concept of culture with children

To address notions of diversity and difference in this preschool setting the educators introduced a two week theme that was entitled 'South Africa'. During this time the classroom was set up with pictures of the national symbols of South Africa such as the colourful flag, the national tree (yellowwood), fish (Galjoen), flower (protea) and animal (springbok), as well as pictures of the heads of state of democratic South Africa including Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Kgalema Motlanthe and Jacob Zuma. Books were also available for the children to page through, including one written in 1977 and which described 'white' and 'black' attitudes, 'race' relations and so forth during apartheid.

One of the discussions that Gillian ran with the class was about the 'rainbow nation' and what this meant. Putting this question to the class, Gillian received the following varied responses:

> Chris: Everything is different colours
>
> Lily: Because all the people wear different clothes…and we even get rainbow's in South Africa…maybe *that* is the reason.

Realising that the concept of 'the nation' was not clearly understood by the children, Gillian proceeded to explain that 'what makes up a nation is a whole bunch of people…that makes up a nation'. This led Sam to respond to Gillian's initial question about what is meant by the phrase 'rainbow nation':

> Sam: People are…people can be different colours…like some people are brown…or white…some people are white…we each have different skin…we each have different coloured skin. That's why we're called the rainbow nation.

Pleased with Sam's response, Gillian went on to compare a real rainbow to that of a diverse nation, asking the children if they would still be impressed by a rainbow if it was made up of only one colour. While James did not see anything wrong with this, the rest of the class responded with a chorus of 'no'. Stressing the beauty of a multicoloured rainbow, and thus of a 'racially' diverse country, Gillian then introduced other notions of difference besides skin colour:

> Gillian: So…it makes it more *interesting*, doesn't it Sam, if we got millions, lots of colours in the rainbow? And it's the same with our country…we've got lots of different…we can *say* the word colours, but also with colours comes culture…and it *all* makes our South Africa to be *sooo* interesting…ok, Ethan…what were you going to say?
>
> Ethan: Um…because in South Africa there is lots of ways of how people live and there are lots of languages in South Africa and stuff…
>
> Gillian: Ok, good! Languages also make our rainbow nation more interesting….just like a rainbow is full of different colours…our South Africa is made up of different languages
>
> Ethan: And different ways of living!
>
> Gillian: [Pointing to the poster of different 'people/cultures' of South Africa that she has put up on the board for the kids to see.] And different ways of living…ok, so if you want to say different ways of living Ethan…how would say the Ndebele people live differently…how would *they* live differently say from…

Gillian is determined not to dwell on skin colour as the dominant marker of difference and is very pleased when the children introduce a more holistic understanding of diversity including language and lifestyle. She does, however, make a direct association between 'race' and culture, which, as Back and Solomos (2000) note, can result in the understanding that they essentially mean the same thing. As highlighted in the previous chapter, Gillian is not comfortable using 'race' labels and the use of 'culture' to highlight difference is more acceptable to her. However, she does not do this uncritically as before continuing she turns to me and expresses her hesitation about how to move the discussion forward:

> Gillian: I'm wondering…you see, *they've* [the children] sort of named them into *colours*…and then also religions…I mean cultures…
>
> Jaci: Ethnic groups?
>
> Gillian: Ja! Ethnic groups…I don't really know what to do…ok…[she turns back to the children and continues]…How would the Ndebele people live differently from the Indian people? How would you think?

Here Gillian is wrestling with the approach she should take in order to address difference without reinforcing stereotypes. She seems to acknowledge that the poster typecasts the various ethnic groups who are represented, for example, wearing traditional clothing (such as the Ndebele). However, she is unsure as to how else she might facilitate what it turning into a complex discussion. This tension is apparent throughout the remainder of the discussion, which focuses on who and what is represented by the poster, as well as how this is interpreted by the children. These interpretations include, for example, notions of differences in wealth:

> Gillian: How would they *live* differently hey? That's all I want to know…how they would *live* differently…
>
> Soraya: Because um…
>
> Gillian: *Would* they live differently?
>
> Soraya: Because those people [pointing to the Ndebele group]…they wouldn't have much *food* and things…and the people in…
>
> Gillian: Why do you think they don't have much food?
>
> Soraya: Because they like…um…because it's…the world doesn't have much food…

Gillian: Ok, but we're talking about…so you think that they don't have as much food…as? Them? [pointing to the 'Indian' group] Why? Because you say the *world* doesn't have much food?

Soraya: No because they've got a castle…like because my ma went to India and stuff and there was a big castle…

Gillian: The Taj Mahal probably…

Soraya: So there was a big castle and…

Gillian: Ok, I get what you're saying! I understand…so cool, you say that because you know that mom saw a big, beautiful castle…um…the Taj Mahal in India…that seemed much richer than…it probably had much more things and food…than you would think the Ndebele people had.

Morgan: Those people don't have much money [the Ndebele]…so if there was like…they couldn't go to the shops because they didn't have any money…

Gillian takes up this discussion of differences in wealth and points out that in some cultures the kind of money that the children are familiar with is not in use. When she asks them what these 'other' cultures might use instead of money their answers include 'animals' (Sam) and 'wheat or fruit' (Esme). Nadir did not continue with this line of thought and instead points out differences in the clothing that the various groups are wearing. Reflecting what is on the poster he points out that:

Nadir: People also wear leopards [skins] and like when they kill them, because they don't have *any* clothes…then they use like leaves to make clothes…all different kinds of things.

His reference to people being naked and using plants to cover themselves conjures up images of 'the native', or the exotic 'other'. Grace quickly agrees with Nadir, commenting that 'Some people even go naked'. When Gillian, too, agrees with this comment the class let out a gasp in unison and begin to whisper and giggle amongst themselves. Picking up on this Gillian stresses:

Gillian: To us, some people…we think 'ahhh, no!!' and that's fine…but for *their culture* think about it…its *normal* for them…so when they walk around like that…it's not…they don't walk around going 'ahh, we should have clothes on!'…for them it's normal…so you see how *different* we all are?

The children respond with a resounding 'Ja!'. Esme, however, finds the idea of naked people distressing and certainly not 'normal', stating that if she lived close by to such individuals she would take them clothes. I notice some of the other children nodding in

agreement, which suggests that they, too, are not comfortable with the idea of people walking around naked. Responding to Esme's comment, Gillian tries to convince her that these people choose not to wear clothes, and that imposing clothes on them is wrong:

> Gillian: Ok, so Esme says if she goes to somewhere…if she goes to the Venda people, [pointing to the poster] this cultural group is call the *Venda* people…if she goes there, she says she would take clothes for them so they can put clothes on. Do you think that's really what they…what they might want?
>
> The class: No…
>
> Catherine: Probably
>
> Gillian: You know what…that's a lovely idea and I think you have a very good, caring heart, but that's the way they *do* their stuff
>
> Esme: I want to say, that they might get cold if they don't have clothes
>
> Catherine: [whispers to herself] Some people might want to do it, some people might not.

While Esme struggles to understand why anybody would want to walk around naked, Catherine seems to think that even within a cultural group not everyone thinks the same way. The emphasis on there being different ways to do things is the main point that Gillian tries to reinforce. Her attempts to ensure that children do not see difference in terms of 'race' has led the discussion in an interesting direction that has little to do with their present-day lives. None of them are likely to encounter individuals who walk around naked and who do not use some sort of monetary currency. Such an approach expresses traces of colonial 'othering' and the positioning of differences as exotic (MacNaughton and Davis 2001). In this way she attempts to speak about difference without having to navigate the minefield of the complex reality in which the children live. Her success in achieving this is, however, highly unlikely given that the children undoubtedly notice that the group of people identified as lacking money and clothing are 'brown' skinned.

Moving on from this, Gillian attempts to make notions of difference more relevant to the everyday lives of the children, however, how to do this without creating strict boundaries between groups is challenging:

> Gillian: Good…ok, now…is there anyone who *fits* into any of these groups [pointing to the poster]…so there's different groups over here…there's the South Sotho group, the Venda, the Swazi, the North Sotho, the Xhosa people, the Tswane people, the Zulu people, the Tsonga

people, the Ndebele people…then they've got the…um…the 'coloured'…group… now they've called them the...um…'white'…group…the…Indian and Chinese.

Aiden [and others]: Oooh Chinese!

Gillian: Do you see a lot of these groups in South Africa?

The class: No…

Catherine: Yes!

Gillian: Do you see a lot of…do you think *these* pictures and *these* cultures make up where we live? Just think about in your class and think about when you go to the shop, and think about where you live

Soraya: Chelsea is…

Fillian: Wait…do you see…do you see *all* these kinds of cultures?

The class: [In unison] No

James [turns to me]: Chelsea is Indian and Min-Suh is Chinese.

Gillian: If you see these types of cultures stand up for me…even if it's not everyday that you see them

Jaci: [to James]:I don't think Seo-Jin is Chinese…she is from Korea

James: Ja, but she *looks* Chinese.

Gillian: Stand up if you have seen these cultures in South Africa…whether it be on holiday, whether it be when you've gone to the shop, or where you live

Aiden: Um…I have seen Chinese people

Gillian: Ok, well then stand up

[Everyone stands up]

Gillian: That is why…you guys are standing up saying that you have seen this in South Africa…that is why it is called the *rainbow nation!*

The class: [In unison]: Rainbow nation!

How exactly the children are expected to 'see' different cultures is not explained and the children thus turn to physical differences to determine who fits into what culture. For both James and Aiden the easiest 'cultures' to identify is that of the 'Chinese'. The children do not seem to find much affinity between the cultural groups that the poster depicts and the world in which they live. Gillian's attempts to address cultural differences in a way that instils respect for diversity rather than simply reinforcing stereotypical images of a particular 'group' results in much confusion for the children. This is evident when she informs them that the following day they would be telling her

about *their* culture and what they *do* in their culture, while simultaneously stressing that 'even people in the same kind of culture do stuff differently'. The idea of a bounded cultural group whereby individuals *share* beliefs and practices, yet are able to assert their individuality and thus *differ* from the same group, was a complex notion which the children struggled to assimilate. This is not surprising considering that there are approximately 300 different definitions of the concept of culture (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1985). Rather than attempting to define what culture 'is' the emphasis should be on pointing out that culture is a process rather than just content. However, as Gillian pointed out to me in the interview I carried out with her, her educator training provided her 'with content and knowledge of different cultures and religious practices', which made her 'appreciate and understand other cultures better'. This content approach to teaching and learning about cultural differences is common in educator training programmes (Murray 2012). The effects of this can be seen in the next section which details the children's understanding of their 'culture'.

8.1.1.1 'My religion is Catholic. My culture is…I forgot!'

The confusion around the concept of culture was evident from when the first child stood up and introduced the class to his 'culture'. Sipho began by showing the class photographs of his family members. Gillian felt compelled to ask him directly about his cultural affiliation and practices:

> Gillian: And what *culture* are you from Sipho?
>
> Sipho: which *culture*?
>
> Gillian: Ja…what do you…[she then sees that he has brought photographs of himself as a baby and she holds them up for the class to see] So cute! Look, that's when Sipho was a baby.
>
> Linda: [Speaking to Gillian]: Watse groep behoerd hy?[54]
>
> Gillian: Um, Xhosa…[she addresses Sipho] Do you belong to the Xhosa culture?
>
> Linda: Xhosa? Zulu?
>
> Gillian: Do you speak Xhosa at home?
>
> [Sipho nods his head]
>
> Gillian: Yes…Xhosa

---

[54] In English this translates as 'What group does he belong to?'

[The class begin to repeat 'Xhosa, Xhosa' as they practice their click sounds]

Sipho is clearly confused as to what Gillian means when she asks him about his culture. Gillian turns to the identity notion of language to make it clearer to the children what type of information she is hoping to solicit from them in this show and tell exercise. As other children come up they define culture according to other identity notions, namely religion and nationality:

Aaliyah: [Holding up a drawing of a star and moon] I believe in Allah.

Sophia: My religion is Christianity and that the disciples spread the word about Jesus and God

Nadir: I am half Indian and half South African and I celebrate Diwali

Tom: I support Germany and I celebrate Shabbat. We have Shabbat every Friday

James: I'm a South African…I am a Cape Townian…I'm a Woodstocker…and I'm a Christian…and the things about Woodstock are…Muslim aunties live there and Greeks live there.

Some of the children also brought food items with them that they stated belonged to their culture. Grace brought a typical South African pudding (milktart) while Nadir brought 'Indian' food that he was sure Chelsea would also identify closely with:

Nadir: Chelsea, come and sit here! I made Indian food! I know you also hey?

Chelsea: [Nods her head]

Nadir: I made samoosas…they are nice hey!

Chelsea: [Nods her head again] Ja, they are yummy, scrummy!

Nadir: Here is Indian [puri] which comes from India

Chelsea: I don't know what that is

Nadir: Yes you do! It's puri…like…umm…

Chelsea: Oh yes! It's spicy. You can dip it into tomato sauce and eat it

Gillian: That's so interesting. That's from his culture…Can you see how some cultures prepare their food differently to suite their culture?

Gillian looks at the table where the food has been laid out and picks up another dish of samoosas as she asks the children 'Right, so whose are these?' Before the children have a chance to reply Gillian states:

Gillian: I bet they are Soraya's

Soraya: No! They aren't mine!

Esme: They are mine

Gillian: Are they from India? I think they're made by the Muslims

Esme shrugs to show that she does not know.

Adopting a 'cultural understandings' approach (MacNaughton 2006), Gillian's assumption suggests that she believes children should be alerted to people's different ways of dressing, eating and living. This approach, also referred to as cultural tourism, has been criticised for being paternalistic and accentuating exotic differences rather than dealing with situations from real life (Vandenbroeck 2007). If unchallenged, it is it possible that these superficial understandings of cultural diversity will be passed on to the learners as stereotypes (Murray 2012). Later in the day sitting outside during snack time the children continue their talk about different 'cultures'. Charlie suddenly begins to sing a rhyme 'Chinese, Japanese, Stokneus, money please' as he carries out the actions of pulling his eyes to make slits, pushing his nose flat against his face, and then cupping his hands together as if begging for money. This is soon followed by James who tells me he also knows a rhyme: 'My dad is Chinese, my mom is Japanese, I am confused'. As he does this he pulls his eyelids upwards to symbolise 'Chinese', downwards for 'Japanese' and pulls one eyelid up and another down to signal 'confused'. I asked him where he learnt this rhyme and he says that a boy in Grade Two taught it to him.

MacNaughton and Davis (2001) state that in Australia little is known about how young children construct their understandings of others, and how educators construct their teaching about diverse cultural groups. The same is applicable to the South African context where high levels of diversity make it necessary, but challenging, to speak about difference. A starting point might be to explore these constructions and how they influence both teaching and learning processes (MacNaughton and Davis 2001). The knowledge gained could serve as an important foundation for curriculum and other pedagogical decisions, which need to take close account of how discourses of 'othering' directly affect the way in which children come to construct their identities.

8.2.1 Politics, nationalism and citizenship

Another element of 'South Africa' week was looking at more contemporary political understandings of what it means to live in this society. Thus, for one of the 'show and tell' activities the children were requested to bring information about a famous South African to share with the rest of the class. The first person to present was Lily who had chosen Jacob Zuma. She began her presentation by stating that he was 'our new president'. Gillian looked surprised by this and asked her 'Is he *still* our president?' I was confused by this question as was Lily by the look on her face. Some of the children shouted out 'no' in response to Gillian, who in turn replied with 'Ja, he isn't our president anymore'. Noticing the surprised expression that I had on my face, Gillian asked me 'Is he still our president?' I replied in the affirmative and she responded, embarrassed, 'Oh my word! I was thinking about all those corruption cases against him…' She laughed and one of the kids asked her why her face was going red. She responded: 'I know, I know…it's because I am embarrassed'. Jacob Zuma was inaugurated as the president of South Africa on 9 May 2009 and this discussion took place in October 2010. Her reference to his corruption charges suggests that she assumed, incorrectly, that someone of questionable moral character was unlikely to become president of a country. This line of thinking was also demonstrated among the children when, during a discussion about apartheid, Chris struggled to understand how Nelson Mandela had become president, and thereby responsible for making 'rules for the country', when he had been incarcerated for so many years. These comments suggest a desire for a clear cut line between what is 'good' and 'bad' in a world where these notions are complex social constructs and often come to mean different things to different people. To resolve the dissonance that these examples resulted in, the discussion moved on to how 'people make mistakes' to which the children responded enthusiastically 'Ja! We make mistakes as well and you can't just say that someone's always naughty if they make a mistake!' Having attained a position whereby it was 'thinkable' that someone who had 'made mistakes' could be president, the conversation moved on.

The lack of political awareness demonstrated in this incident stands in stark contrast to comments made by Nobanzi, a temporary teaching assistant. During my time at the school a nationwide civil servants strike took place that affected public transport, healthcare services, as well as the education sector. Since I took the train to get to

school in the mornings I was aware of the disruption to the timetable and used alternative forms of private transport. I wondered what these disruptions might mean for people who had no alternative forms of transport. Soon after arriving at school Nobanzi began to speak to me about the strike and the effects of this on children attending school's in disadvantaged neighbourhoods who bear the brunt of this strike. The following extract from my field notes documents our discussion:

> Nobanzi informs me that hospitals and schools have been badly affected by the strike. She laments the fate of the Grade 12 students who are not receiving lessons as a result of the strike, which is hugely problematic as they should currently be preparing for the supplementary exams. While she believes that the people have a right to strike, she says that she agrees with what Jacob Zuma says when he asked why the strike must happen now, at this crucial point in the education year, and not rather in January, February, or March. Nobanzi says that she is concerned about what will happen when these disgruntled students are angry and frustrated with failing their final year and facing an insecure future. She asks what they will resort to doing and worries about escalating violence and crime. She also talks about how the strike affects sick people and states that her ex-husband is ill in Groote Schuur hospital and might need to be operated on. If there is no one to operate then people like him could die.

Her thinking on this matter clearly illustrates the different realities being lived in this country. People in privileged social positions often do not consider the ramifications of such strike actions as they are not dependant on public healthcare and transport services. Although Table Mountain Primary is a public school, a large proportion of the educators are paid by the school governing body, which ensure that children remain in class and get through the syllabus as required. Nobanzi on the other hand has to constantly worry about the consequences of such a strike, namely that her ex-husband could die, youth she knows might not graduate from high school, and there might be more violence in her neighbourhood caused by angry and frustrated citizens who are directly affected by these political actions.

8.1.3   Not-so-proudly South African: Examining the apartheid past

A discussion that Gillian ran with the children about apartheid served as another moment whereby these different lived experiences came up against one another, troubling an approach that aimed to transmit to children that 'racial' discrimination was something that happened in the past, in a time called 'apartheid', and that it was only perpetrated by a few bad individuals. This notion - that 'the past has been overcome' - has been identified by Hirschfeld (2008) as a common practice when adults engage

children in discussions about 'race' and racism. While alluding to this past, the focus was on encouraging children to look beyond colour and to respect diversity. In my interview with Gillian we spoke about the discussion she had had with the children as I was interested in her reflections on this process:

> Some of the children…when I spoke about apartheid and I explained what it meant I said 'look around at everyone and how different they are' and 'do you know, back in the past there was…you know…just *one type* of person that you would be in a class with…whether it be that we all speak Afrikaans, you know…because I didn't want to keep on the colour…but obviously I also said that it was mainly about colour. And they couldn't believe me…even Ellen, she was like 'how's that! That means that I couldn't be friends with Chelsea!'…you know how she goes off… 'that's so sad!' And everyone was like 'ja, that would be so sad! We would never have met you then!' So for them, they related it directly to the kids that were in the class.

Highlighting her belief that children use 'race' in a purely descriptive way and not in a discriminatory way, she continues:

> They could not really comprehend why children of colour were separated from those who were 'white'… When we spoke of how we are different, they all stated how we are different physically and in our abilities. They noticed the colour differences but they didn't attach any prejudices to any of the races present….I think that if the parents did talk about apartheid, they would be very surprised by their children's non bias intuitive responses.

The notion that children have little understanding about the power and privilege associated with 'race' identities stands in contrast to my findings as set out in the previous chapter. Back in the classroom, at the end of the discussion Gillian asked Nobanzi if she has anything to share about her experiences during apartheid such as sitting on segregated buses and the like. Hesitating at first, Nobanzi soon began to cite numerous examples from her personal experiences regarding what life was like for her under apartheid. The following vignette describes what she explained to the class:

> I first really understood what apartheid meant when I was 12 years old. I had to go into certain shops via a different entrance to the 'white's', I was prohibited from entering [formerly 'white's' only suburbs]. There were different toilets for 'blacks' and 'whites', as well as benches. I needed to carry around a 'dompas'[55] and was 'lucky' in that my mother had married a 'coloured' man when I was still quite small and I had been adopted under him. This allowed me marginally more rights than other 'black' people. One experience I will never forget is when I was working in an old age home here in [the suburb where the school is located] not far from here, and during my lunch break one day I was walking down the street and I saw a police van slow down. I ignored it and kept walking. I then heard them come closer to me and they shouted 'Hey kaffir! Stop!'

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[55] 'Dompas' refers to the pass book that all 'black' South Africans had to carry with them at all times within 'white' areas.

> But I just kept on walking. They shouted again 'Hey kaffir, ons het gesê jy moet stop!'[56] They pulled up to where I was standing and demanded to see my pass. I explained to them that I didn't need one and they looked at me and said 'Voetsek!'[57] Then in 1976, with all the students fighting against Afrikaans in the schools…many children lost their lives, and many parents lost their children…they killed them like it was nothing, we were just flies to them. But we are finally free…we are now all one.

The children sat in rapt silenced while Nobanzi explained her story. Gillian looked taken aback by the brutal honesty of the account. The suffering and the humiliation that Nobanzi lived through stood in stark contrast to the experiences that me and Gillian - as 'white' South African's – had lived through growing up. Having grown up on different sides of a historically 'racialized' divide, this situation highlighted the extent to which our lives, including our personal and collective memories, have been shaped in vastly different ways. Not surprisingly, these experiences help define the way that we as social subjects make sense of the world in which we live. In a moment of reflection Gillian alludes to the difficulty of seeing 'Otherwise' when she states that:

> I *struggle* now. Like even at church and at cell groups and whatever that I'm in…like um…when I sit there and you have conversations, even about someone's week and just in general, you still struggle, there is still this *huge barrier* and it's not like…'oh, you are whatever'…it's just like, there's something, you just aren't on the same like…not level…but just…it feels like 'am I *really* connecting with this person?', Do they feel like I'm really listening and understanding where they're coming from?

Deconstructing these differences and what they have come to mean in contemporary society is vital if we are to better grasp how 'race' continues to shape everyday experiences. This was recognised by Steve Biko (1988, 27) who wrote that 'My friendship, my love, my education, my thinking and every other facet of my life have been carved and shaped within the context of separate development'. 'Separate development' was vital for creating images and ideas of the 'Other' that continue to haunt interactions and relationships among people from different so-called 'racial' groups. As Hall (1996) reminds us, identification is always a double-sided process, constructed *through* rather than outside differentiation (see also Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1996 for discussions of 'othering'). In an extract from Hall (1996, 5), Gunaratnman (2003, 12) draws our attention to how an 'identity' is always constructed in relation to its *constitutive outside* – 'the unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundational is not natural, but a constructed form of closure,

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[56] This translates into English as: 'Hey kaffir, we told you to stop!'
[57] 'Voetsek' is considered a rude term which translates as 'get lost' in English.

every identity naming as its necessary, even if silenced and unspoken other, that which it 'lacks'. This 'theorization of processes of identity formation' (Gunaratnman 2003, 12) alludes to the psycho-social entanglements of difference as well as, importantly, challenging the assumption that the category of 'race', for example, only has relevance and meaning for minoritized groups. The lived experiences of Gillian and Nobanzi that have shaped their interest in, and understanding of, difference can, post-apartheid, be used to reflect critically on the structures and discourse that have positioned them in society. But, as Davies (2003, xx) notes, 'as a speaking subject, they can also invent, invert and break old structures and patterns and discourses and thus speak/write into existence other ways of being'. This, however, requires a commitment to disrupt and challenge oppressive power relations, thus reflecting on who we are. and how we are, in this world.

8.2 Exploring the use of materials and activities to engage children in discussions about diversity and difference

The children in this study were exposed to diversity as a result of attending a multicultural preschool, however, as Vandenbroeck (1999) stresses, 'being together is not enough'. One aspect of diversity includes the decorations and play material of an institution (Vandenbroeck 1999). At Table Mountain Primary, the Grade R classroom was brightly decorated with posters and wall hangings, most of which had to do with numeracy and literacy concerns. Aside from a photograph of the school staff, there were no images of people on display (apart from the occasional show and tell display).

Figure 25. A view of the inside of the Grade R classroom.

The wall displays were all in English although, as specified earlier, the children came from a range of linguistic backgrounds. A variety of books were available for the children to page through. A few of these books addressed important issues such as bullying, frustration and learning to share, however, there were no books that dealt expressly with social justice issues such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, ageism and so forth. The children relished story time, which was a set feature of the school day, and were quick to identify themselves with the protagonists of the stories being read to them. Having discovered a series of books aimed specifically at opening up discussions with children about the differences around them, I decided to read it to the children and gauge their reaction. This book was particularly pertinent as it was produced by an early childhood development organisation based in Cape Town and therefore spoke directly to the context within which the children were living. As I have repeatedly mentioned throughout this thesis, I was very careful not to adopt a position of authority with the children. However, since the children knew I was literate and often asked me to read them books when we were sitting in the book corner during free play time, I did not think this exercise jeopardised my position as a 'big kid'.

8.2.1 Teaching to the context: Using books to introduce a discussion of difference

This book, entitled 'They were wrong!' was developed and is published by the Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU 2009). This non profit organisation has a history of anti-bias work in the early childhood development field in South Africa. The book aims to challenge a range of stereotypes that the protagonist, Mikhail, has gleaned from those around him. Before reading the book to the children they began to speak about difference, highlighting, once again, the prevalence of chromatism (MacNaughton, Cruz and Hughes 2003) in their understandings:

> Ethan: I am different to Nadir because he is a different colour from me
>
> Thandi: I am different from Chelsea because I have dark skin and she has light skin
>
> Soraya: The difference of me and Sophia…because we don't have the…she's got a little bit 'white' skin and I've got a little bit 'black' skin
>
> Alex: I'm different…I'm different to Jordan…well, because I am like very, very light and he is very, quite dark
>
> Sam: Sipho is different from me because my skin is a little bit 'white' and his skin is *really* 'white'.

The children mentioned other forms of difference, too; however, skin colour remained the most notable to the children. Importantly, as MacNaughton, Cruz and Hughes (2003) point out, the children chose to use politicised signifiers of difference – 'white' and black' – to refer to one another and themselves instead of more accurate descriptors of colour. I then proceeded to read the story, which addressed issues such as skin colour by linking them to other notions such as that of class, as the following excerpt from the book shows:

> *When I told Andre that I was going to Shane Abbott's house on Friday, Andre said 'mind your manners now…bet they'll fetch you in a fancy car and take you to their mansion up on the hill, where you will have to eat with six knives and six forks on either side of your plate! All white people live like that you know. Andre was wrong! They had a decent size house and an old car and they had lots of fun, which was the most important thing!*

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The children seemed to enjoy the book and it was useful as a tool to show the children what a prejudice or stereotype is. The children agreed that these representations were unfair and that people should 'find out for themselves' (Ethan) regarding these types of issues (for example, that old people are boring, 'white' people are all rich, people from other countries are aliens etc.). The book was illustrated using photographs of South African children and therefore represented the diversity present in the classroom. Almost everyone in the class could identify with someone in the book and the children seemed to enjoy this. From this interaction it appeared that the story and the photographs were connected to something real for the children. The notion of finding things out for oneself, rather than just being told about them, gave me the idea to pair up children, myself included, whom I knew seldom played together, in an attempt to learn something new about someone. At the beginning of the exercise the children seemed uncomfortable, but once they began chatting to their partners they relaxed and some of them took the opportunity to learn as much as they could about their partner. After a while we discussed what they had learnt about their partner and their answers ranged from pets and favourite colours to favourite activities, games and where they lived. The children found commonalities amongst themselves that they had not known about, such as Tom finding out that James and he live in the same suburb, and Soraya and Nadir discovering that they both have grandparents from India. What seemed to interest the children most, however, was learning about the home language of some of the children in the class. While it had been mentioned before, for example, that Sipho spoke IsiXhosa, the children seemed genuinely surprised and interested in this. Thandi was very pleased when her partner told the class that he had learnt that Thandi speaks some IsiXhosa:

> Grace: I learnt that…Sipho speaks Xhosa at home
>
> [Sam and a few other children look very surprised by this]
>
> Aiden: And I learnt that Thandi *also* speaks Xhosa…I didn't know she spoke Xhosa
>
> [Thandi smiles and begins to practice her click sounds].

This book paved the way for an interesting conversation amongst the children, who continued discussing this topic amongst themselves throughout the days that followed. This book is part of a larger series of books that deal with topics ranging from the

stigma of HIV/AIDS, socio-economic disadvantage, urban and rural experiences and a host of other important issues that speak to people living in contemporary South Africa. Such books are invaluable tools to discuss topical, but complex, issues with young children. This requires, as Vandenbroeck (1999) points out, educators with a strong self-confidence in order to deal with the questions and remarks of the children. As a result of this experience I was made aware of the fear of what some children might say as well as the insecurity regarding how to deal with such topics. No doubt most, if not all educators, face similar feelings and can therefore become resistant to exploring such issues with young children.

8.2.2   The Persona Doll approach

Tools such as persona dolls have been heralded as an effective way to discuss issues such as ostracism, racism, sexism and the like with young children (Moreno and van Dongen 2007, Vandenbroeck 2007). Each doll has a 'story' that provides them with their own identity or 'persona' (MacNaughton and Davis 2001) with a 'unique cultural and family background, abilities and interests' (Persona doll Training 2009). Such an approach takes into account that children are active meaning-makers and allows children's voices to be heard regarding experiences they may have had with discrimination and issues of equality. Furthermore, it encourages children's problem solving skills through discussions regarding how they might challenge prejudice and discrimination (MacNaughton 2006).

The diversity working group at Table Mountain Primary School had applied for funding from the local education department to provide Persona Doll Training for their Foundation Phase educators (Grade R to Grade three). This funding was not, however, forthcoming and thus the training did not take place. The use of Persona Dolls was also promoted by Ms. Krishna during the second workshop after staff members expressed a desire for more practical tools to deal with diversity in the classroom. However, according to one of the interview participants who has much experience with the Persona Doll approach, the training needs to happen in conjunction with mentoring: 'I would definitely recommend the Persona Doll training…it's something that takes mentoring, it's something that takes close working…a support, someone to say: 'Here's an issue, let's use Persona Dolls' (Kate). As Kate goes one to say, this approach does

not mean that prejudice and bias goes away, but it ensures that educators have done something to raise consciousness about important contextual issues:

> That is where the Persona Dolls come in, because it's not only dealing with issues as they come up, but it's teaching children about what else happens in their country, and what they are going to encounter as they go…there *will* be albino's, and there *will* be people who live in areas where there's violence etcetera.

As mentioned earlier, it is important to engage the children in discussing what is happening around them, and 'teaching to the context' can be done using a variety of materials and resources as outlined above. As Kate stresses, it is necessary to open up a variety of issues for discussion before they necessarily become a problem. The notion of speaking about such topics only when some form of discrimination arises is not what should inform practice in an institution dedicated to diversity and social justice. While incidents of racism, sexism, teasing and the like should indeed be dealt with immediately, the fact that the children are expressing similar attitudes on a regular basis out of sight of adults suggests that continually engaging children with such topics would be highly beneficial.

8.3 'I don't want to sit next to brown people': Managing practices of overt exclusion in the preschool

Speaking about culture and identity was a more comfortable exercise for Gillian than having to address 'racial' inequality and prejudice. While the topic of 'race' is perhaps less touchy now than it was soon after apartheid ended, it remains a thorny topic. As shown in Chapter five and six, for many adults, reflecting on questions of 'race', 'white' privilege and practices of racism is not a comfortable experience. These feelings, coupled with the idea of children as innocent of 'doing' 'race' and racism in any meaningful way, results in a silence about 'race' that is difficult to break. As O'Loughlin (2001, 50) points out, educators are troubled 'at the prospect of working with young children who come to school with misogynist, homophobic or racist identifications'. Whether or not educators believe that young children are able to understand the power of such actions or to benefit from such power (see Van Ausdale and Feagin 1996), the fact remains that explicit acts of racism need to be dealt with.

At the end of the school year a racist remark was made by a 'white' child towards a 'coloured' and an Indian child. Even though this took place in the classroom,

the educator, Nicola, was not aware of this incident until one of the mother's of the offended children called to report it. I heard about the incident when Nicola came into Gillian's classroom to report what the mother had said. She began by stating that: 'I can't believe it, but a mother called me *now* saying that there was a racist incident at school and that she wants me to deal with it'. Nicola expressed her exasperation at having to deal with this issue one week before school closed for the year. Gillian asked me what they should do, and I in turn enquired as to what took place. Nicola then went on to explain that:

> Nicola: Neesha's mom phoned to say that Darlene was at their place having a play date yesterday and that the girls told her that Josie had said to them 'I don't sit next to brown people'. I am going to call them in to talk to them…I think I will start with Darlene and Neesha to see what actually happened and then talk to Josie. Ah, you know how parents can make so much out of this type of thing…Neesha's mom did say that I have inspired her to stand up and face these type of things and that I have encouraged her and been an excellent guide on these things, like the other incident that I dealt with…I have to think about this because I can't recall a time when she saw me dealing with something like this.

> Gillian: I know…they can really make something out of nothing…I don't think the girls were necessarily trying to be mean.

Nicola decided to speak to all three girls at once and I am invited to sit in on the meeting. Neesha sat next to Darlene, who was seated next to Josie. Nicola then began the discussion:

> Nicola: Ok girls, Neesha's mom called me to say that you girls were upset because Josie said to you yesterday that she doesn't want to sit next to 'brown' people. Is this right? Can you tell me what happened?

> Darlene: We were sitting down and Josie said 'I don't want to sit next to 'brown' people'. She hurt our feelings.

> Nicola: Josie, is this true?

> Josie: [she shakes her head and looks sheepish]

> Nicola: Ok, Neesha, tell me what happened.

> Neesha: Josie didn't want to move up and make space for us

> Nicola: But did she say that she doesn't want to sit next to 'brown' people?

> [Neesha nod her head]

> Nicola: Josie, why did you say this to them? Do you realise that you hurt their feelings? Why did you say this Josie? You like to play together, so why are you saying mean things?

> Josie: I don't know why…

Nicola: Was it just you Josie?

Josie: Teresa was also there and said stuff

Nicola: But Teresa is 'brown', why would she say stuff like that?

Josie: [lowers her head and is silent]

Jaci: Is this the first time that such a thing has happened?

Darlene: Josie said that her mom said that she can't sit next to 'brown' people

Jaci: Is this true Josie?

Josie: No, my mom didn't say that…I can't remember why I said that to Darlene and Neesha

Nicola: Josie, how would you feel if they said that they don't want to sit next to you because you are peach, or if someone said to me that they didn't want to sit next to me because I have funny hair…how would that make you feel?

Josie: Sad

Nicola: Yes, you would be hurt and feel sad…so why did you say this? Are you going to say it again?

Josie: I don't know…no, I won't

Nicola: Remember girls, we had this conversation about the past and how 'brown' people weren't allowed to do many things and how this was very, very wrong. Here in South Africa we have so many different colour people and so much diversity and that it what makes here such a special place. We must never be mean or rude to people because they are different

Nicola: Ok, so how are we going to fix this? Are you going to be nice to Darlene and Neesha and not say such things again?

Josie: Yes

Nicola: Ok, so Josie, I am going to have to tell your mom about this incident, and Neesha, I will call your mom and tell her that I have spoken to you girls about this. Josie, now give them each a hug and be friends again, ok?

Josie proceeds to give both Darlene and Neesha a hug and then all three of them leave to go and get their snack. Nicola comments that she is perhaps going to have to get the diversity co-ordinator in to read the Desmond Tutu book (God's dream) again for the children. She asks me if I have seen this book and when I say no she shows it to me. This is the first time that I have heard about this book. The following Monday I ask Nicola if she has spoken to Josie's mom and she said that she sent her an email. She says that she is still waiting to get a response from her. On Thursday I enquire once again as to whether or not she had received a response from Josie's mom and she says that she has not.

I am interested in finding out from the girls more about what happened and when I see Darlene and Neesha playing on their own I decide to take this opportunity to ask them about what happened. Darlene informs me that her mom was 'furious' and that Neesha's mom was also very cross. She tells me that: 'Josie told us that her mom said that 'white' people are allergic to 'brown' people and that if they touch them then they

will die! But then in the meeting we had with you Josie said no, her mom hadn't told her to say anything. She was lying!' Darlene is clearly upset by all that has happened and looks indignant when she continues: 'Josie plays with Teresa and *she's* brown!' Skye comes over and asks what's happening. Darlene explains to her and Skye responds with: 'I don't think its right…we are all the same…even 'black' people.' As Skye says this Darlene looks at the palm of her hand, and then the outside of her hand, perhaps contemplating the dark and light sides.

My discussion with the children on the playground highlights, once again, that the children are acutely aware of the significance of 'race' as a social category. They attach meaning to these social categories, such as that the category 'white' is superior to that of 'brown' or 'black', and understand that this translates into relations of power and privilege. Darlene is entirely cognisant of the fact that in this situation Josie is able to exert power to exclude her and Neesha, while including Teresa. Darlene finds this unfair and highly frustrating. Furthermore, it appears that Darlene feels more comfortable discussing these issues and expressing her feelings within her own peer group than with the educator. While Nicola spoke to the children about what had happened, she focused on 'hurt feelings' and 'being mean' which, as Winkler (2009) points out, does not deal with the issues in a specific and head on manner. Nicola's reference to apartheid was important to the discussion, yet, no mention was made of current structural 'racial' inequality. Instead, Nicola chose to invoke the 'rainbow nation' discourse to describe the present day situation in South Africa and the need to celebrate difference and diversity. Meanwhile, Darlene and Neesha felt the effect of being subject to racism in the present, not the past. Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001, 208) provide educators and caregivers with the following advice regarding engaging young children in discussions that are more relevant to their lived experiences:

> Don't encourage children to believe that negative racial talk or discriminatory action is the conduct of only "sick" individuals or that it indicates a peculiar character flaw or just "bad" behaviour. Talk about the fact that the social world we live in is often unfair to people of color simply because they are people of color and that persisting racial-ethnic inequalities are unjust and morally wrong. Make it clear that racial-ethnic prejudice and discrimination are part of a larger society that needs reform and not just something that individuals do.

Racism is, after all, a societal problem and not only an individual problem (Winkler 2009). While Darlene and Neesha's mothers found this incident troubling and important to deal with, Josie's mother's actions, or rather lack thereof, suggest that she did not

agree. Over the space of a week she did not contact Nicola to discuss this issue. These actions support research findings (Tatum 1997, Winkler 2009) that caregivers of 'black' children are much more likely to speak to their children about 'race' and racism than 'white' caregivers.

When I enquired as to the approach that educators use when dealing with such acts, Gillian stated that:

> The topic of 'race' doesn't come up often. When it does it is clear that they have been exposed to something at home that has influenced their remarks at school. They have little understanding behind what they are saying. If a 'race' incident arises….We first ask each learner to state what happened from their side and how they felt about what happened or what was said. Then we ask the learner to try put themselves in the other persons shoes and then ask how they would feel if the same thing happened to them. Role playing can be helpful with this age group. Each learner is then asked how they could have reacted differently or in a better way and what the solution could be and what they have learnt from everything. By reflecting on the incident, it makes the learners aware of others and makes them part of the problem solving process.

Gillian's reference to the children's home environment as the source of 'racial' conflict suggests that she attributes acts of discrimination to the views expressed by caregivers. Interestingly, the comments made to me directly also attribute Josie's remarks to her mother. Gillian dismisses the idea that children are aware of the power behind racist statements. This thinking, coupled with Nicola's discussion with the children that drew predominantly on a discourse of 'bad behaviour' ('Do you realise that you hurt their feelings?') is commonly used by educators when dealing with such incidents in early schooling (Winkler 2009). Research has shown, however, that 'children's racial beliefs are *not* significantly or reliably related to those of their parents' (Winkler 2009), and that such incidents represent much more complicated relations of power in operation among the children than educators and caregivers are cognisant of. An example of this is Nicola's disbelief that a 'brown' child (Teresa) would discriminate against other 'brown' children (Darlene and Neesha), indicating that the intricacies and complexity of these power relations among children are not well understood. While children, like adults, work within the binary framework of 'black' and 'white', they are also able to perform their identities in a way that allows them to exert power of others, thus blurring the boundaries of these binary notions. As alluded to earlier, O'Loughlin (2001) points out that disidentifications are involved in the construction of subjectivity. Thus, the question that begs answering is who are the children identifying or disidentifying with, and why?

Gillian mentions role-playing as a valuable tool to raise children's awareness about these issues, however, this was not taken up by Nicola in her discussion with Darlene, Neesha and Josie. While Nicola did mention the book 'God's dream' (Tutu and Abrams 2008) as a useful tool to initiate a discussion about difference with the children, this book is only brought out when an incident such as the one described above takes place. Knowing that these issues are generally spoken about in this context, Darlene and Neesha do not feel comfortable to express their frustration and to tell Nicola what they told me and Skye on the playground. While the educators certainly do not shut down the conversation entirely, they should attempt to engage in more 'open, honest, frequent' conversation about 'race', 'racial' differences as well as 'racial' inequality and racism (Winkler 2009). As Katz (2003) has shown, such conversations are linked to lower levels of bias in young children. Avoiding conversations about important social topics such as 'race', gender, class, and so forth only serve to ensure that stereotypes persist and that relations of power remain unchanged. Children, as the findings of this thesis show, are already talking about these issues on a daily basis and the educators do therefore not have to be concerned about 'putting ideas into their heads' (Winkler 2009). While various strategies exist to assist educators in talking to children about these sensitive topics, Winkler (2009, 7) draws from the important work of Tatum (1997) and Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001) to suggest that one of the fundamental aspects is that of empowering children in the fight against racism, sexism and the like and provides the following practical advice for educators to assist them in their endeavour to empower children:

- Actively seek out anti-racist role models in the community and broader society and expose children to these role models
- Show children that while troubling problems exist in society there are people and organizations that aim to make a positive change
- Show children that they can help by involving them in projects that allow real participation in the process of change

Table Mountain Primary school is well situated to draw from a range of community members who work in the field of social justice issues. The panel discussion that the diversity working group organised (see Chapter five) is an example of how experts in education and diversity are drawn into the conversation about how to manage

intercultural relations in this setting. Role models and expert knowledge might also be found among the teaching staff, families as well as older learners. Furthermore, non profit organisations are also a valuable source of information and materials and resources from which to draw.

8.4   Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the challenges that educators face in their attempts to discuss diversity concerns with young children. Working within a discursive framework that is commonly used by early childhood educators around the world (see, for example, MacNaughton and Davis 2001, Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001), educator's position children as innocent to 'race' politics and ignorant of 'racial' power and privilege. Attempts to construct diversity through the dominant non-racial discourse of the 'rainbow nation' can serve to suppress uncomfortable discussions of contemporary 'racial' inequality and what this means for social relations. While 'race' remains a highly relevant social category in South Africa, the children also need to be engaged on other pertinent identity notions such as gender, sexuality, class, language, culture and religion. These notions are used in complex and multifaceted ways to perform, (re)produce or subvert a host of identity positions and can come to have a direct bearing on how children see themselves and others as being 'raced'.

Addressing diversity concerns in a multicultural classroom is a challenge for educators who might be afraid to reinforce stereotypes and prejudices. In early childhood classrooms this can be compounded by the erroneous belief that young children are ignorant about society's ongoing inequalities and that they are unable to experience or articulate their thinking around social justice and identity issues. As I have demonstrated, while much of this identity work remains invisible to adults, young children are highly attuned to these issues and use this as a basis from which to construct their subjectivities and their understanding of others.

CHAPTER 9   CONCLUSIONS

History, despite its wrenching pain. cannot be unlived,
but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.
Maya Angelou (1993)

This study initially set out to problematise identity in a context where increasing diversity and intercultural interaction has brought questions around identity construction sharply into focus. Post-apartheid, people have been encouraged to seek reconciliation amongst one another and believe in the larger project of nation-building. Reassessing identity formation forms an integral part of these processes of change and transformation in an attempt to better understand how difference is being defined and the implications this has for personal and social relations. Analysing discourses of difference circulating at the macro- as well as micro-level, highlights not only the complexity of the subject formation process, but also relations of power and knowledge that are taken up to mark difference and determine who is privileged and who is oppressed.

'Race', as Riggs and Augoustinos (2005, 462) remind us, is 'central to the ways we understand ourselves – particularly in colonial nations', and remains intricately tied up with practices of oppression and privilege. In this study, 'race' was therefore identified as a central concern to the project of transformation and thus became the main identity notion under study. Throughout this thesis examples are put forward which highlight the multiple ways in which children and educators took up 'race' as constructed across intersecting and antagonistic discourses circulating in the context of the school. While the children in this study are 'born free's' – in other words, born after apartheid was abolished – history is too pressing for anyone to assume that subject positions once so heavily enforced and policed will have disappeared. Globally, 'race' still matters and children are not ignorant of this as signalled by the linguistic and embodied practices that I observed throughout my time at the school.

In this study I have thus sought to examine discourses of 'race' and identity in a post-apartheid South African primary school in order to understand how this environment serves to either open up or limit possibilities for young children in the process of constructing their identities. Through intensive engagement with these children I not only explored the range of contemporary discursive positions available to them with regards to the category of 'race', and other notions such as gender and class,

but also looked closely at the myriad ways in which children make use of these subject positions in order to position themselves and others. These processes were contextualised within the official, formal and informal discourses circulating in the democratic South Africa and that of a public school setting. Before providing a brief summary of the research findings, it is necessary to revisit some of the methodological and epistemological concerns that shaped the research process and the subsequent findings.

9.1.   Conceptualising children in ethnographic research

This study, which brings together work undertaken across a variety of fields ranging from philosophy, psychology, the anthropology of education, and the sociology of early childhood, rests on two premises that were fundamental to the conceptualisation of the research objectives and methodology. These premises include:

> 1) The need to deconstruct and (re)construct notions of children and childhood in both the epistemological and methodological domain of research.

In agreement with other social researchers introduced throughout this text, I believe that much of the research with children has to date been founded on essentialist principles that render children as passively socialised into society. Drawing from poststructuralist theory, as well as work in the 'new sociology of childhood', in this study children are recognised as active and competent social participants who construct their worlds in intricate and complex ways. In line with this, the children's voices were expressly sought and heard. While adults were also given a voice, theirs was not used to speak for, and thus represent, the children. Instead, these voices were juxtaposed to provide a more holistic interpretation of the identity and discursive processes under study. This approach was, therefore, an attempt to shift the positioning of children in research from objects to that of subjects.

> 2) The school as an important site for identity construction processes.

While studies looking at identity formation in adolescence are not uncommon, research in the domain of early schooling is scarce. As alluded to above, young children are still

more often than not seen as incapable of processing complex social issues and are thus overlooked or excluded from such work. Work that does seek to take the thoughts and actions of young children into account often relies on the educators and caregivers as reliable sources of such information. However, as this thesis shows, young children need to be engaged directly, in a respectful manner, in research work that focuses on *their* lived experiences. While schooling is certainly not the only site where identity politics is in play, this social location plays an integral part in creating the conditions in and through which 'racial' power is (re)produced, shaped, negotiated and contested. Given the time and energy that young children spend thinking about questions of belonging and identity, early schooling is integral to the processes of making – and troubling – 'raced', gendered and class identities and discourses.

As described in Chapter four, ethnography provides the tools necessary to investigate how identities are (re)created and (re)negotiated as it is the only approach that allows the researcher to see the interactions and view subjects/actors 'doing things' in their naturalistic setting. Undertaking ethnography in an educational setting allows for insight into the diverse perspectives toward education as well as the complexity and multifaceted nature of human society (Goetz and LeCompte 1984). By observing, and participating in, the social world of education, the ethnographer investigates not only the functions of educational structures and processes, but also the conflicts generated when socializing agents are confronted by rapid social change (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). This latter point is especially pertinent to the present study that was carried out in a country and education system undergoing tremendous social upheaval.

Goetz and LeCompte (1984, 31-32) highlight that the outcomes of educational ethnography can contribute to improvement in educational and school practice. The general points they make regarding this matter are directly applicable to the work presented in this thesis, and are thus presented below as a useful guide for educational communities wishing to apply such research findings within their educational settings. The findings presented can thus:

- Strengthen the overall research upon which many innovations and policies are based
- Convey to educators, administrators, and caregivers the diversity to be expected from children, learners, and school communities

- Encourage these educators to respond more flexibly and appropriately to learners
- Highlight the complexity of educational phenomena and their entrenchment within broader socio-cultural milieus
- Allow policy makers and educational consumers to formulate more accurate and judicious expectations about what schools, families, children and other agencies can do to direct and enhance education.

9.1.1 From the position of participant researcher: Insights into research with children

Through my fieldwork it became clear that children's lives are embedded within pervasive and persisting power relations such as that of the binaries adult/child, 'black'/'white', boys/girls, rich/poor and so forth. In order to break down the discursive boundaries and borders that these binaries come to represent requires that we ask children about what this means to them and their lives. Part of understanding these relations of power was through my personal interaction with the children. Reflecting on my status as a 'white' female adult in this setting, and the significance of this in relating to the children, I was made aware of how children, too, are reflexive as they discussed their experiences and actions. This reflection – both mine and the children's – served to gauge how my presence in their everyday lives was being accepted by the children. Specifically:

- My discussions with children about my age, height, marital status, skin colour and so forth helped me understand the various ways in which children saw me and my role as researcher in their space.

My approach to entering the social world of the children at Table Mountain Primary school was developed by drawing on the 'least-adult role' put forward by Mandell (1988). Such an approach permitted me to pay close attention to the power relations inherent in the adult-child relationship, and how frequently adults invoked this power, as well as when these acts of domination were challenged by the children and to what effect. While I partook in almost all of the activities that the children engaged in and

was generally accepted as a six-year old 'wannabe', when a child questioned me about why I was at school I pointed out that I wanted to learn from them about their daily lives. While it was important to vocalise my intent, it was also integral that I *showed* them my intention to learn from them. In other words, I had to prove that I was not going to abuse their trust and confidence in me. In this context, saying was as important as doing, which supports Butler's (2006) notion that speech acts (communicating, displaying, appearing) serve as both a mode of address and a way of constituting a relationship with another. Children's lives are governed by adults not only through policies, laws and customs, but also at the level of personal relations (Mayall 2008), and the children in this study thereby sought to confirm that I was not about to do the same in what they deemed *their* space.

- An ethnographic approach allowed me to gain insight at the micro-level as to how power manifests among young children and the effects this has on their formation as subjects.

The children in this study were knowledgeable and agentic. As a result of these close interactions I was able to see how meaning is continuously constructed and how I, too, as researcher formed part of constructing those meanings. I was careful to ask as few leading questions as possible about the themes in which I was interested. I did this by letting the children control the pace and direction of our conversations. This approach is supported by Mayall (2008) who affirms that in this way researchers are able to arrive at a good understanding of what matters to children. Paying close attention to the children's discussions around values, beliefs and knowledge, I was able to tap into what was going on in their lives, most especially those things that remained hidden to many authoritative adults.

9.2.   Learning to live in a world of multiplicity

As described in Chapter one, in this thesis I aimed to identify discourses of 'race' circulating at both the macro- and micro levels of society and interrogate how the 'raced' identities of young children were shaped and (re)produced within this discursive terrain. Such an objective necessitates a look back at narratives of the past and how these have come to bear on present day narratives. This process is begun in Chapter two

where I address the construction and effects of both the colonial and apartheid periods and the subsequent move towards democracy. Apartheid's demise certainly served as an opportunity to overhaul practices of structural and institutional racism and produced vital ideological and discursive shifts that called for a move away from centring identities on the concept of 'race'. This is seen through the emphasis on 'non-racism' and the invocation of 'the rainbow nation'. While such attempts to open up new subject positions are integral, care must be taken that they do not serve to reinscribe 'race' and practices of racism through, for example, dismissing the continuing salience of 'race' as an identity notion in present day South Africa. This could result in the creation of new hegemonies and forms of exclusion. Thus, while legal reforms have been largely successful in moving beyond practices of structural and institutional racism, personal and social reforms, as regards 'race', have not been easy to achieve as this present study verifies.

The dominant discourses of 'race' circulating within the socio-political context of post-apartheid South Africa are taken up and (re)produced in the public school setting – that of Table Mountain Primary - in interesting and informative ways. Chapters five and six are concerned with the formal discourses circulating in Table Mountain Primary School and how these are taken up by adult individuals working within this setting. The following points highlight the key findings that point to the necessity of exploring the construction of important identity markers in contemporary educational settings:

- The panel discussion, the diversity workshop as well as the interviews shed light on how the past of 'racial' separateness, although subdued, has not been overcome and continues to shape identities and relationships in the present.

The panel discussion, for example, was rich in discourses of 'race' that were articulated using a variety of examples from the everyday lives of participants. While the desire to move forward towards reconciliation and transformation was evident, the tight grip that 'race' maintained in these individuals lives was reiterated through reference to feelings of loss of privileges experienced by 'white' people post-apartheid, notions of superiority/inferiority, silence on the issue as well as practices of defensiveness and aggressiveness.

- The critical incident that took place in the second diversity workshop served to highlight the resistance and defensiveness that accompanied an interrogation of 'white' power and privilege. The troubling of 'whiteness' by the workshop facilitator resulted in strong opposition by some to the naming and examining of 'race', and signalled that educators struggle with their own discursive understandings of 'race', power and privilege, and what this means for educational practices.

This ongoing struggle was explored in more-depth in Chapter six where members of the diversity working group wrestled with the pervasiveness of practices of 'othering' such as through the invocation of the 'us/them' binary, the fear of being 'taken over' and the normalisation of the constructing or maintaining of 'race' boundaries and borders. While a few attempts were made to position 'race' as a non-issue in this context, the discourses identified suggest otherwise. While participants are eager to move beyond identity politics, they recognise that this is not possible given the radical changes that they, and the children that they teach, are currently undergoing as they reconfigure their identities, sense of belonging and personal and social relationships.

- Notions of meaning, knowledge, identity and power are brought together to suggest dominant discourses circulating in this school setting and the implications this has for diversity and transformation at Table Mountain Primary school.

Of course, these dynamic discourses do not represent the 'truth', but rather show how discourses are socially constructed and the effects that this has on producing normative frameworks which serve to determine what might be considered as viable subject positions.

- The subject positions taken up within this setting suggest that 'race' continues to mark subjectivities in profound ways. This has important implications for an educational setting where policy and curriculum reforms have moved towards inculcating democracy and equality.

While these moves are integral to the project of transformation, this needs to be accompanied by personal reflection and an engagement with diversity concerns. This will be difficult to achieve without recognising the dynamics of power, privilege, oppression, inclusion and exclusion that are intricately bound up with identity politics.

- Educators are able to articulate the need to promote integration and respect for diversity and do so by drawing from a range of discourses such as 'moving on from the past' and 'the desire to create a better world for children to live in'.

Yet, these discursive frameworks stand in opposition to the need felt by some educators to protect positions of power and privilege, that were in turn justified by appealing to the need to 'draw the line' and not overhaul hegemonic value and belief systems to suit those who are deemed as different. The interplay between what is considered as 'freedom' (the right to assert one's identity) and that which could be considered as 'fear' (the fear of being taken over) is tricky, yet opens up possibilities for an exploration of these very concepts and what they come to represent.

- The official discourse of 'non-racialism' is taken up in educational settings such as that of Table Mountain Primary where both educators and learners are faced with having to continuously negotiate the shared space where learning and growing takes place.

School policies and plans that are in place point towards the school's commitment to social justice issues ranging from 'race', gender, class, language, religion and so forth. Specifically, the setting up of a diversity working group suggests that there is a genuine interest in addressing diversity issues and process of inclusion and exclusion at the school. Through engaging with the broader educational community, the school enabled caregivers and other interested parties to express their thoughts and feelings regarding difference and diversity. However, while the school created opportunities for engagement during my time in the field, only a very small percentage of caregivers opted to become a part of this discussion. Table Mountain Primary thus had to contend with an issue that many schools face, namely, how to get caregivers involved in the school, and thus build bridges between the home and school. Since any project aiming to move beyond 'race' requires the participation of institutions such as that of schools,

reinventing the public school in post-apartheid South Africa necessitates the active involvement of all stakeholders.

- Children were identified as central to any attempt to establish more equitable relations and a deeper understanding of the 'other' in this environment.

Born free from the direct effects of apartheid policies and practices, children are seen as being less encumbered by pernicious practices of 'race' and racism. Yet, legacies linger and, as illustrated in Chapters seven and eight, children continue to be caught up in the 'racialised' scripts which operate in the service of subjectification.

- Child development discourses were predominantly employed by educators to understand how children come to construct and perform their 'raced' identities and served to limit or prevent educators from seeing children as competent social actors.

This is particularly the case for young children who are viewed as ignorant and innocent of practices of 'race' and racism. Children's identification with 'race' in early childhood was dismissed as largely inconsequential and a 'natural' process of classifying difference. Yet, there were moments where educators admitted that children had troubled the way that they had been positioned in relation to 'race' by, for example, referring to the social status of 'racial' groups and thereby uncovering integral relations of power and privilege. These moments of troubled position were, however, generally not taken up as important pedagogical opportunities to engage children in discussions about social justice issues. Instead, such moments were labelled as curious and the children as 'cute'. Kate, a member of the diversity working group and the owner of a preschool with a clear anti-bias focus for many years, was a notable exception in that she saw children as capable of engaging with complex notions such as 'race' and believed that speaking to them about such issues was a vital part of any educational project.

9.3 'Doing' 'race' in the classroom and on the playground and the effects of this on subjectivity

Chapter seven and eight detail how 'race' is taken up in early schooling to shape and produce understandings of self and other among young children. As detailed throughout this thesis, much of the social worlds of children are hidden from adults who have authority to sanction the words and actions of children. Acutely aware of these relations of power, children dream about having control and express this through discussions with their fellow peers. This space is highly generative as identities are constantly forged and meanings constructed. Through my active participation in this sphere I was able to glean insight into how productive the context of early schooling was for the construction of 'raced' identities and discourses.

- The informal discourses circulating among the children were significant in giving meaning to their personal and social worlds. Observed through the children's linguistic and embodied performances, notions of 'race', gender and class were taken up with regularity and used to assert positions of power and/or privilege, as well as to exclude.

Foregrounding the social world of children I have shown how children actively contribute to, and contest, dominant definitions of 'race' such as through engaging in detailed discussions of physical appearance and difference. This indicates that 'race' continues to function as a dominant framework through which social relations and subjectivities are formed and understood. Furthermore, through the express desire for 'whiteness' as seen through some children's drawings and embodied acts, bodies are shown to matter (Butler 1993).

- The ascription of power to particular bodies (materialised through visual markers), while other bodies are positioned as being without – or unable to have – power, indicates what frameworks of intelligence are in operation and what regulative discourses are (re)produced to keep these frameworks in place and thus contribute to forming the subject.

The children were aware that the use of 'race' labels such as 'black' and 'white' was a taboo topic and thus reproduced 'race' categorisation through employing labels that were more closely aligned to actual skin colours, namely 'brown' and 'peach. Thus, rather than avoid using such labels in order to comply with the educator's wishes, the children continued to use skin colour as an important marker of difference. The label 'peach' was synonymous with 'white' and 'brown' was synonymous with 'black'. In this way the naming of 'race' continued while precariously located in a tonal framework.

- Play, stories and friendship patterns were tools through which to explore children's notions of 'race' and otherness in more detail and highlighted how discourses of 'race', gender, class, and language intersected in ways that affirmed or negated the identity positions that children took up. These discourses were also a prominent part of some children's exploration of belonging, which was especially the case among 'black' children who were finding their place in an environment that privileged 'white' skin and the English language.

For example, in this context language served as a clear 'race' and social marker and was used to assign group membership. 'Race' is therefore not an abstract concept for the children in this study; rather, it is invoked and used in concrete ways in social exchanges. While the children were exposed to a multicultural discourse such as that of the 'rainbow nation', they were not ignorant of the more complex nature of 'race' politics in the wider South African society.

- Engaging children in discussions about diversity and difference runs the risk that discourses of 'race' will simply be recoded into discourses centring on culture.

This is especially problematic in South Africa where many people felt uncomfortable using the term 'race' after 1994 and instead employed the term 'culture' to refer to differences. While 'culture' can have many meanings, it is necessary to interrogate whether these meanings serve to reinforce clear and fixed boundaries in a similar way to that of 'race'. This complexity makes it difficult for educators to engage with children about diversity and difference as they fear 'making mistakes' and thus entrenching ideas about 'race' in the minds of children. This is especially the case when educators ascribe to child development discourses surrounding how young children come to form their

identities. However, as this poststructurally informed study comes to show, children are already aware of many of these ideas and educators wishing to foster social justice should be engaging children in talk about the meanings and values that come to be associated with markers of difference such as 'race', gender, sexuality, class, language, religion, nationality and so forth. This is, however, difficult to achieve when the lived experiences of South African's are vastly different.

- As the juxtaposing of discussions undertaken with Gillian and Nobanzi show, in privileged locations there is often a deep unawareness of what life is like for the majority of socio-economically disadvantaged South Africans.

Such a disconnection makes it difficult to provide a nuanced and detailed picture of social justice issues and results in children being taught that issues of 'race' took place in the past and were perpetuated by 'bad' individuals. Contemporary structural and institutional inequalities are therefore seldom acknowledged and not discussed with children. Children, however, notice such inequalities and any stereotypes that they draw from their observations go unchallenged as educators remain silent on this matter.

- The use of materials and resources could greatly assist educators as entry points into discussions that might be uncomfortable, disconcerting or challenging.

While books, posters, toys and the like can stimulate discussions about sensitive topics such as 'race', it is imperative that educators thoroughly revise these materials for any latent stereotypes or prejudices they might convey. This is especially important with regards to notions that remain 'common-sense' and are likely to be overlooked such as that of gender. The positions that children took up in this setting were often reinforced, rather than challenged, by adults. Materials, such as Persona dolls, have proven to be effective not only with regards to discussing difference with children, but also in promoting their sense of belonging in the preschool setting.

- Although there were incidents when children used 'race' in an overtly hurtful manner, this was seldom the case. The infrequency of such incidents' were therefore taken up by educators as a sign that 'race' had little meaning to young

children and that acts of overt racism were merely an expression of values and beliefs held by an influential caregiver.

As I showed in Chapter eight, the version of events that the victims of this incident explained to me were much richer in detail, meaning and emotions than that which they expressed to the educator who wanted to know what had taken place. Apart from the lack of importance afforded this incident, the educator involved was not concerned with unpacking the significance of such practices in the lives of the affected children. In other words, how such practices shaped the ways in which children came to see themselves and others. For the educator, dealing with this incident was a matter of protocol and was not about making the pedagogical political and thus addressing the meaning and power behind these statements. This begs the question, if education is not political, then what is it? While overtly racist incidents serve to indicate that children are indeed capable of employing 'race' and its power through acts of racism, this thesis aimed more towards investigating how 'race' became socially and personally meaningful in the lives of these children. Thus, the findings of this thesis add weight to the findings of studies from other parts of the world including the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, which stress that children are keenly aware of 'race' and its power in society (see, for example, Van Ausdale and Feagin 1996, 2001; MacNaughton 2005; Connolly 1998, 2008).

9.4   Implications of the research findings for educational practice

The findings from this study show that 'race' remains a salient identity marker in contemporary South Africa and that children are by no means immune to this. While many adults are uncomfortable at the thought of addressing issues social justice issues with young children in an upfront manner, this only serves to perpetuate silence around issues that have important implications for subject formation processes. Sorting out the power that 'race' and racism continue to wield in complex social problems such as those present in South Africa is not easy. Drawing from the findings of this work, as well as the work of educational specialists, I set out some productive starting points to move this discussion forward:

- Educators and caregivers need to talk about 'race' and avoid silencing children who question or express their thoughts on this topic. The act of silencing or dismissing children's interest in this topic will not make these issues disappear. Instead, children will continue to talk about important identity notions amongst themselves. 'Race' and racism are societal problems and not only the domain of 'bad' individuals who express such attitudes. The first step towards moving beyond this requires that 'race' be taken seriously and that children are seen as capable of engaging with topics which are already a part of who they think they are and who they believe others to be.

- Children should be encouraged to think critically and more complexly about identity issues. This includes notions of 'race', gender, sexuality, class, language, culture and so forth. This can be achieved through the provision of accurate information about these notions, and by introducing them to role models from within the educational community who work with social justice issues. Children should also be encouraged to actively engage with people and organisations that are making a positive difference, what Winkler (2009) refers to as the need to empower children. The fruit collection initiative in Grade R was a step in this direction and, taken further, would serve as a valuable opportunity to engage children in community projects.

- Materials and resources are a useful tool to engage children in discussions about complex social issues as presented in Chapter eight. It is not sufficient to present children with materials that, for example, represent the 'rainbow nation' in a stereotypical manner. What is needed is an honest engagement with children about the challenges that face a diverse society with a totalitarian past, such as lingering inequality and practices of exclusion. It is also necessary to assist children in deconstructing socially constructed notions which are considered 'common sense'. Gender roles are, for example, challenged by books such as 'The paper bag princess' by Robert Munsch, which forces children to think about the traditional roles assigned to girls and boys in fairytales. Whether such stories serve to inspire or disturb children, they are undoubtedly thought-provoking and productive in troubling what is considered 'normal' and 'natural'.

- Educators are in a position to assess the extent to which their pedagogical practices could be considered as liberating or constraining. This includes problematising existing frameworks as regards teaching about difference that are ensconced in notions of the child as innocent and lacking access to social power. By engaging closely with learners, educators are also able to gain an in-depth understanding of how their practices affect the children in their care. Given their authoritative positioning it is difficult for educators to establish a relationship with the children similar to what I experienced. Yet, by accepting that children are competent social actors with expert knowledge about their lived worlds, educators might be surprised as to what they come to hear and observe. In this way educators move from a position of 'gatekeeper' - maintaining the boundaries between categories - to that of 'political interventionists' who seek to encourage practices of border crossing. The latter position calls for an understanding of identity as dynamic, fluid and non-unitary.

- Educators need to reflect critically on their professional practice and explore their implicit beliefs in order to better understand what shapes their perceptions and actions. The diversity workshop was an attempt at this, however, this platform was not deemed effective in supporting dialogue and the educators chose not to partake in another workshop. The incident in the workshop was productive, however, in highlighting issues of dissonance and discomfort that are part and parcel of troubling 'race' and racism. Yet, opportunities for engagement need to be created in order to allow individuals to reflect on how they and those around them might be complicit in supporting 'race' inequalities and violence.

- Through my experience in the field it became clear to me that educators committed to diversity found it frustrating that no one was able to offer them ready-made solutions to the challenges they faced on a regular basis. Since diversity work by necessity includes addressing all forms of inequalities in a given society, with each social location presenting a unique set of relations of power and knowledge, it is not possible to offer clear cut practical advice. There is no one size fits all approach. However, systematic advantage and disadvantage of groups of people needs to be challenged and a deeper

understanding of identity development processes, such as that of 'race', is a useful tool in constructing this road as it provides insight into the complexity of our social interactions and subject formation processes.

9.5 Reflecting on the research process: Limitations of this study and possibilities for future research

Taken together, the findings from this study make it clear that:

- More work is needed to understand how discourse, identity and 'race' influence how social identities are created, shaped and regulated in early schooling. Since this study focused on a former 'white' middle class urban school setting, it will be important in future work to explore what is taking place in other settings including rural schools, schools with a more homogenous student body, as well as schools located in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. Points of similarities and differences found between such diverse sites would increase knowledge with regards to the experiences that contribute to children's perceptions of 'race' and the discourses within which these are framed.

- While I chose to focus predominantly on the notion of 'race' in this study, it is clear that other identity concepts need to be considered when analysing the ways in which children become aware of differences within their society and the values they attach to such concepts. Gender, sexuality, class, language, religion and culture all surfaced as intricately wound up with how 'race' was taken up and performed in this setting. Working for social justice means working with others across all lines of difference.

- While I addressed moments of troubled positioning in the preschool, more detailed investigation into such instances would be powerful in providing information about how 'race' might be de-instituted or instituted differently in early schooling. Alternate positionings thereby serve to threaten, and potentially transform, dominant discursive positionings that regulate what is acceptable and what is not.

- Finally, framing an inquiry of this nature using a poststructurally informed theoretical lens is valuable as it ensures that common-sense notions including 'children'. 'childhood', 'race', 'identity' and 'schooling' are suspended in order to be interrogated. This framework, therefore, exposes the complex ways in which meanings, identity, 'race' and power come together to continually reinforce and/or subvert subject formation processes and positioning. 'Race' is not a frivolous concern in the lives of these children and early schooling is an integral time during which 'raced' identities are made, reproduced, negotiated, contested and challenged.

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The children that star in this thesis are special. They are part of a cohort of recent preschool graduates that have embarked on their twelve year journey through formal schooling at the start of the second decade of the twenty first century. They are special because they are the future of South Africa. What place might 'race' have in the way they see themselves and others as they proceed through the education system and life? We cannot know this, but we can work towards creating a future which is brighter than the present day.

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ANNEXURE ONE

Dear Families

My name is Jaclyn Murray and I am currently busy with my PhD research. My particular research interest is studying 'raced' identity formation in young children (aged 5-6 years) using an ethnographic approach. In particular, I am looking at how children negotiate their identities on a daily basis in a culturally diverse classroom.

In order for me to collect data on this topic I would like to spend time in your child's Grade R classroom, which would entail me doing participant observation by joining in with the children's activities. The point of this work is to disrupt the daily classroom routine as little as possible as my aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of how children relate to one another, what they talk about etc.

Table Mountain Primary's philosophy of supporting education and research, and its commitment to interacting with different sectors of the educational community makes it an excellent site to carry out research of this nature. This has been affirmed through discussions which I have had with Margaret Gregory and Gillian Summers who both support this research work.

If you give consent to this work, you are free to withdraw that consent at any time. Furthermore, you are entitled access to all my findings and the school will receive a copy of the research thesis once it has been written up. Please note that the school, as well as the children's identities, will not be revealed in this thesis (pseudonyms will always be used); however, I would like to take pictures of them doing their activities.

Thank you for your time.

Jaclyn Murray

PLEASE TEAR OFF AND RETURN TO GILLIAN SUMMERS (GRADE R)

I am happy for Jaclyn Murray to undertake her ethnographic research on identity formation in young children at Table Mountain Primary where my child is currently a learner.

Full name: _____ (Parent/Caregiver) Signature:_____

If you have any questions or concerns and would like me to contact you, please write your name and contact number in the space provided below. Alternatively, you can email me at: linamurray@gmail.com

Name:_____

Contact number: _____

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Navrae Enquiries IMibuzo	**Dr RS Cornelissen**	
Telefoon Telephone IFoni	**(021) 467-2286**	
Faks Fax IFeksi	**(021) 425-7445**	
Verwysing Reference ISalathiso	**20100813-0100**	

Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Ms Jaclyn Murray
4b Morton Road
PLUMSTEAD
7800

Dear Ms J. Murray

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPLORING HOW A NATION'S POLITICS BECOMES A CHILD'S EVERYDAY PSYCHOLOGY: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF 'RACED' IDENTITY FORMATION IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE RECEPTION YEAR (GRADE R) CLASSROOM IN SOUTH AFRICA.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. The programmes of Educators are not to be interrupted.
5. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
6. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
7. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as submitted to the Western Cape Education Department.
8. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
9. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
   The Director: Research Services
   Western Cape Education Department
   Private Bag X9114
   CAPE TOWN
   8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**

MELD ASSEBLIEF VERWYSINGSNOMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE / NCEDA UBHALE IINOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUYO YONKE IMBALELWANO

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