

RACIALIZED NARRATIVES

**THE CONSTRUCTION AND
EXPERIENCE OF RACIAL IDENTITY
AMONG LEARNERS AT A DESEGREGATED
SCHOOL IN CHATSWORTH**

KASAMBAL GOVENDER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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DECLARATION

I, Kasambal Govender, declare that this thesis is my own work. The thesis has been submitted in the School of Education and Development in the Faculty of Education at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, Durban, for the M Ed degree. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Kasambal Govender

Durban, _____ day of _____ 2005

This thesis is dedicated to my loving parents (yen anbudenne thaye' thandheiye),
Raman and Neela Padayachee. Thank you for the gift of education.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the construction and experience of racial identity among eight grade eleven learners at a desegregated school in Chatsworth. The possible challenges and threats faced by these learners in terms of racial identity were also examined.

Semi-structured interviews were utilized as qualitative method to interrogate the ways in which the eight grade eleven learners construct their racial identities. There were many contradictions which emerged from my study. This points to the fact that research is never clear-cut; results do not always fall neatly into place. Nonetheless, the primary findings of the interviews reflect that learners are comfortable with the idea of racial integration and expressed positive views about interacting with learners from different race groups. However, the participants made reference to pockets of racism and threads of interracial conflict evident at the school.

The data in my study also shows that the Indian learners, forming the majority in the school, enjoy a more advantaged position as the school adopts an assimilation policy.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

As South Africa is a country in transition, Steyn (2001) argues that all population groups, whether willingly or unwillingly, are engaged in the renegotiation of their identities. From being totally segregated, schools have become desegregated.

Schools constitute powerful sites where identity is constructed and shaped, successfully or unsuccessfully. This research study sets out to explore how young learners at Mountainside Secondary School construct and experience their racial identities. In the construction of their racialised identities, what are the challenges and threats they face?

The crucial role played by the school context in shaping identity is echoed by Tatum (2000:9) when she evinces that, “The concept of identity is a complex one, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts. Who am I? The answer depends in large part on who the world around me says I am”.

In similar vein, Soudien (1998:7) makes reference to the renegotiation of identity by the different population groups in a post-apartheid South Africa when he states

that, “With the abolition of formal apartheid in South Africa, there has been a movement of children classified African into schools which were previously reserved for Indians, Coloureds and Whites”. He goes on to argue that, “young people develop complex identities in the process of attending schools which seek to pull them into the dominant discourse of apartheid. They recognize the exclusionary forces which seek to sublimate their Africanness and work with these strategies in the classroom and playground. While they accede to the dominant images of school at the same time they reject the representational structures within these messages”.

The purpose of this thesis is very similar to that espoused by Soudien (1998:8). It “is to develop an understanding of how young ... men and women are dealing with the process of (racial) identity formation in the ‘open’ schools to which they are now going”.

At this point it is important for me as a researcher exploring racial identity to discuss how the concept of race will be interpreted and utilized within this study.

The concept of race, although appearing to be immutable and fixed is a social construct. Cornell and Hartmann in their book entitled, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (1998:23) enunciate this idea very

succinctly when they note that, “Despite the paucity of scientific evidence, human beings tend to assume racial categories and to take them seriously. They do so for social, not biological, reasons. They continue that, “Races, like ethnic groups, are not established by some set of natural forces but are products of human perception and classification. They are social constructs”. These authors quote James King (1981:156) who felt that, “Both what constitutes a race and how one recognizes a racial difference is culturally determined”. They state moreover, that, “We decide that certain physical characteristics – usually skin colour, but perhaps also hair type, stature, or other bodily features – will be primary markers of group boundaries. We invent categories of persons marked by these characteristics ... In other words, the categories become important only when we decide they have particular meanings and act on these meanings. The characteristics that are the basis of the categories, however, have no inherent significance. We give them meaning, and in the process we create races”.

Although I will be using racial categories already named by the past Nationalist Party Government to classify people, my intention will not be to divide learners into groups with varying degrees of importance. During apartheid four race groups were named in South Africa. The White race group was awarded a higher status and was given more advantages simply on the basis of colour. The Black race groups were regarded as being inferior and were treated little or no respect,

again on the basis of skin colour (Xaba 2001). Although I will be using these categories, as a convenient method of noting differing experiences in terms of different race groups, in no way is my classification meant to demean or denigrate any particular group of learners. Moreover, using the categories mentioned above allows me to work closely with a group of learners in order to explore their experiences of racial identity formation.

In order to gain a better grasp of the concept of identity central to this topic, it becomes necessary, at this point, to clarify the terms identity, identity formation and identity markers. Tatum (2000:18)), concedes that the concept of identity is a very complex one. Gleason (1983:914) quotes Erikson who has a similar view, as he sees identity as a difficult concept to grasp. Erikson saw identity as, “a process ‘located’ *in the core of the individual* and yet also *in the core of his communal culture*, a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of these two identities”. This seems to imply that identity is concerned with an interaction between the inner development of the individual personality and the growth of a sense of self which is the outcome of participating in society, internalizing its cultural standards, gaining different statuses and playing different roles.

Following from the above, Singh (1997:121), states that notions of identity are not merely references to natural or biological features. They are rather, social

constructions and are what people make of them. She continues that, “They (identities) are not pre-given, primordial identities”. Singh states that, “Identity is not singular and homogenous. It is complex and multifaceted, and straddles the domains of public and private life ... Identities are established in and through interactive processes that involve the perceptions, aspirations and responses of other individuals and social groupings”.

Singh (1997:121) goes on to state that, although identities might be constructed and changed according to ideologies, it is not handed down or given in a mechanical way. She continues that complex sociological and political processes cross at the individual and communal levels to explain why people become receptive to being organized around certain notions of identity at different times. According to Singh, “Certain markers of identity become the focus of strong attachment, and matter to people in ways that enable them to make sense of who they are, what commonalities and differences they believe they have with others, how they should organize themselves if necessary and how they should interact with others”.

Nadine Dolby, an American lecturing in the field of education, conducted research on how race is experienced by learners at a secondary school in Durban called Fernwood. In her study, Dolby (2001) gives an example of how young

men and women are engaging with the process of identity formation in a post-apartheid South Africa. According to Dolby (2001:7) "Life in the 1980s in South Africa was marked by increased and sustained political protests, strikes, boycotts, states of emergency, violent repression by the state, and finally, by the end of the decade, the anticipation of imminent and profound change. In the mid 1980s, in the midst of this ongoing war against the state, a new generation of children started school. In this generation's early childhood, many of the laws that defined apartheid were dismantled; by the time they were ten, Nelson Mandela was released from prison; as they entered adolescence, he became president and a democratic South Africa was established for the first time in history. The terrain on which these children grew, and continue to grow up, is substantially different from their parents and even older siblings. They are a generation whose past, present and future are neither completely defined by apartheid, nor completely free of it".

The learners at Mountainside Secondary are very similar to the learners in Dolby's study in the sense that apartheid has had a bearing on their lives. They have been forced to live in areas zoned for specific racial groups. Many of them still live in historically 'Black', 'Coloured' and 'Indian' townships. Their parents to a large extent reflect the effects of differential schooling afforded to different

race groups in that they are not very well educated and hence do not have good jobs.

At this point it becomes necessary to clarify why I have used terms like ‘choice’, ‘constructed’ and ‘shaped’. The word ‘choice’ does not imply that individuals always have deliberate choice in identity formation. The social context will decide the extent to which the individual exercises control over identity formation. The word ‘choice’ is used with the writer’s acknowledgement of the dynamic nature of the interaction between the individual and social context in the process of identity formation (Campbell 1992 cited in Francis 2005). In this research identity is seen as an occurrence taking place within a situation and depending on the different social contexts one has a ‘choice’ of identities which one can draw on. Thus identity construction requires one’s individual input.

This study holds interest for me in the sense that it gives me the chance to learn more about the racial identification of the learners at my school. In addition, as educators engage with teaching, they find little opportunity to connect with learners and understand who they are in terms of how they express their social identities; and in particular, their racial identities, thus there is a need to learn more about their racial identities.

Finally, schools in Chatsworth are under-researched sites; thus there is a lot that can be gleaned about the youth, particularly young men and women schooling in the Chatsworth area. It is therefore the aim of the researcher to gain insight into the 'racial identities' of eight grade eleven learners, and more specifically, to explore possible challenges and threats their racial identification holds for them.

A qualitative methodology utilizing semi-structured interviews was used to collect data for this study. Learners from the Indian, Coloured and African race groups were chosen from different grade eleven classes in order to make up the sample.

In the next two sections I will discuss Chatsworth in detail since it is the context in which my research is housed. In order to have a better idea of the major participants in this study, one needs to know the larger community from which they arrive. I will also discuss Mountainside Secondary in more detail so that a better understanding of the research site can be gleaned.

1.2 Historical Context of Chatsworth

Chatsworth came into existence as a result of the forced removal of thousands of Indian people. The abolishment of "The Group Areas Act" in 1991 saw Coloured

and African people moving into Chatsworth. Historically, Indians saw themselves as of a higher status than Africans and Coloureds. This kind of mindset had developed during the period of apartheid (Xaba 2001:43). In terms of education many Indians have become professionals and hence achieved social mobility to a higher socio-economic level. Moreover, Coloured and African families moving into areas not historically inhabited by their own race would definitely experience a sense of being different or of being the “other” (Carrim 1998).

This then is the context from which the majority of the learners derive.

1.3 Mountainside in Context

I chose Mountainside Secondary to do my research in since I have been teaching here for the last twenty years. The transformation of education from 1994 saw far-reaching changes occurring at this school. A need was established for technical education in order to teach vocational education to Black people. This area of education had previously, under the White regime, been reserved solely for Whites. Mountainside Secondary was chosen to be a Technical School since no technical school existed in Chatsworth in 1995. The passing of the South African Schools Act of 1996 led the way for a full racial desegregation of public

schools. The school which previously was racially exclusive in that it only admitted Indians now admits Coloureds and African learners. However, Mountainside still has a predominantly Indian population.

1.4 Organization of Thesis

This chapter has provided an introduction to the study of the construction of racialised identities among grade eleven learners at a technical school in Chatsworth. The problem statement, the rationale for the study, research method and research site were discussed.

The next chapter deals with an in-depth study of relevant previous literature on the subject under study since every research problem is formulated against a background of existing knowledge.

Chapter Three, the following chapter, enunciates the Research Methodology and in Chapter Four I will present an analysis of the research findings. Chapter Five will conclude the study and make some recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is organized into five sections. In order to fully understand the kind of school Mountainside Secondary is, the history of the change in schooling in South Africa will be looked at more extensively.

The first section thus deals with the apartheid system of schooling. I am interested in finding out how the system of apartheid impinged on schools. Thereafter, I will go on to discuss the changes made in order to change the racial composition of schools as these initiatives led to Mountainside Secondary being the kind of school it is at present. The National Education Policy Act of 1996 and the new constitution will be discussed in order to give the reader a better understanding of the implications in terms of Mountainside Secondary and the kind of situation learners find themselves in.

In the next section, desegregation will be examined in detail since Mountainside Secondary is an example of a desegregated school. The following section detailing a brief history of how schools became open to all race groups will assist us in understanding how schools adopted this new

admission policy as well as the types of conditions which prevail at schools and hence affect how diverse learners construct their racial identities.

Following this, an expose of school experiences in schools mirroring the situation at Mountainside Secondary will be made in order to reveal different perspectives on the construction of identity.

In order to fully understand the kind of school Mountainside Secondary is, the history of the change in schooling in South Africa needs to be looked at more fully. An explanation of the apartheid system of schooling will thus follow.

2.3 Apartheid System of Schooling

The apartheid system greatly affected how education was provided in South Africa. Every level of schooling was influenced by racial undertones. This included budgetary constraints, curriculum, the composition of education and learners and the kind of ethos that prevailed in schools. In order to transform education, changes had to be made in all the above categories. The present scenario in schools evolved out of the above changes that had to be made (Carrim 1998: 301).

2.4 Changes made in order to change Racial Composition of Schools

Under apartheid, education in South Africa was controlled by nineteen education departments. White education was controlled by the House of Assembly (HoA), Indian education by the House of Delegates (HoD) and Coloured education by the House of Representatives (HoR). The Department of Education and Training (DET) controlled African education.

The Interim Constitution of the new South Africa allowed for a national minister of education and nine provincial ministers of education. Radical transformation was wrought with Acts like The Educators Employment Act of 1994, The National Education Policy Act of 1996, and the South African Schools Act of 1996. These were designed to address past injustices (Carrim 1998:304-305).

According to the Constitution, everyone has the right to a basic education and to further education. Everyone also has the right to education in a language of their choice. There was a need to address past discriminatory laws and practices (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:15). According to the National Education Policy Act of 1996, no school had the right to deny a person a basic education. In terms of my study this meant that Mountainside Secondary did not have the right to turn away any

learner. This resulted in the desegregation of the school, with learners from the Indian, Coloured and African groups attending the school.

The opening up of schools to all race groups after the dismantling of apartheid is responsible for the current racial mixing of learners at Mountainside Secondary School. Since the concept of desegregation will feature to a large extent in the following pages a more detailed explanation of it will follow in the next section.

2.2 Desegregation

In his book, *The Invisible Children: School Integration in American Society*, Rist (1978:15-17) quotes Mercer (1973) who defines desegregation as putting children from different ethnic backgrounds together without changing the curriculum to allow for the sharing of creative differences.

In the South African context desegregation involved the opening of schools which previously were racially exclusive, to members of all race groups. This was not a voluntary decision. The shortage of human and material resources forced the hand of the then White government. The models selected by Piet Clase provided a temporary solution until 1996 when the South African Schools Act stipulated that the various models had to convert to either public or private schools (Carrim 1998:308). The constitution

(Constitution of the Republic of South Africa) further ensured that every child would be granted access to schooling and education.

Desegregation was also accompanied by a transformation process in education which ensured that every stakeholder namely, the learner, the educator and the parent component would have a say in how the education process would be run. The South African Schools Act of 1996 thus made it mandatory for every public school to establish a governing body which would make crucial decisions concerning the running of the school. In the context of this study, desegregation at Mountainside Secondary was accompanied by a transformation process whereby a governing body was established in order to assist with the smooth running of the school.

The opening of white schools initially to learners from other race groups was echoed in former HoD schools which were exclusively Indian and former HoR schools which were exclusively Coloured. Zafar argues that principals in these schools (HoD and HoR) enrolled a few black learners because they were sympathetic to the crisis in black education in the 1980's (1998:33). Carrim (1998:317) in doing a study of desegregated schools revealed a strong degree of racism between Indian and Coloured learners, Indian and African learners and African and Coloured learners.

The following section will describe how schools in South Africa became open to all race groups.

2.5 Schools in South Africa opening to all Race Groups

In 1996 the government announced the possibility of White schools opening their doors to Black learners. The announcement was made by Piet Clase, minister of White education (Carrim 1998: 303). White schools could choose from among three models to desegregate themselves. Model A schools could close down as state schools and re-open as private schools. Model B allowed schools to remain as state schools but they had to have an open admissions policy. Model C allowed for semi-private or semi-state schools where teachers' salaries would be paid for by the state, but all other expenses would be borne by the school and its immediate community. All these models allowed schools to enroll Black learners comprising African, Indian and Coloured learners.

Although the Clase models were targeted at White schools, it eventually meant that all schools were becoming desegregated. Model C schools continued until the advent of the South African Schools Act signaled the dissolving of Model C schools. All schools were now either private or public schools. Although school governing bodies have a high degree of independence, they are still subject to the Constitution and national policies.

The Constitution and national policies prohibit racist practices and upholds the right of the individual to a basic education.

2.6 Learners' Experiences in School - Different Perspectives on the Construction of Identity

In order to fully understand and explore how learners experience and construct identity, one can look at schools similar in composition to Mountainside Secondary. These schools' experiences will to some extent give us a foretaste of what to expect in this study. Desegregated schools bring with them new experiences for learners. These new experiences in turn influence how they construct their racial identities.

Carrim conducted a study in 1992 and 1995-1996 in the Gauteng region of South Africa which included former White, Indian and Coloured schools which had now become desegregated. He found that there was a predominance of "us" and "them" language (1998:311). This signaled racially exclusive thinking where "they" are seen as the outsiders and "us" is seen as the superior race. His studies included schools where Coloured learners and Indian learners made up the dominant racial group in the school. This is similar to the school under study where Indian learners make up the dominant race group.

In desegregated schools, educators had to change their approaches in order to cater for learners from race groups other than their own race group. Soudien (1998:14) gives a rather crude, brash example of this when he quotes Monde, an African learner in a predominantly Coloured school, whose educator, a Coloured male swore at him, saying, “Go bastard”. The educator involved did not speak to Coloured learners in the same fashion. That was a few years ago. This kind of action would serve to make him see himself as inferior to the other race groups in the school since they were not spoken to as harshly as he was.

In his accounts by educators Carrim (1998: 313) shows that their interpretation of multiculturalism, (designed to inculcate in learners the ability to respect other cultures and identities and free such learners from prejudice and biases) is both “stereotypical” and “caricatured”. Zulu students, for example, were expected to behave in certain ways and Muslim learners were not expected to be familiar with western dress. Learners are narrowly defined in terms of how they should behave, what they should eat and how they should dress. I agree with Carrim’s conclusions (1998:313) “The effect of these is to project differences among people in negative ways and they do not erode racist practices”. What such ways of thinking accomplished in terms of racial identity formation was that learners felt excluded from the dominant culture of the school. They experienced a

sense of inferiority since they were not included with the majority of the school population.

Dolby's (2001) study of a school in Durban which had a majority of African learners although the educator component had remained largely White reveals similar themes as Carrim's research (2001:54). She found that educators placed all African learners as being very traditional Zulus, following ethnic practices like Zulu dancing, for example. The reality was totally opposite as one learner Zondi explained,

People automatically assume that just because I am black, I have a real tradition. My family doesn't go around slaughtering cows or sheep on special occasions as many white people believe.

In the above example we can see how African learners are being narrowly defined in terms of how their educators expected them to behave. No attempt is being made to understand that the young African person is affected by the process of modernization and the changes in the political system of the country.

Vally and Dalamba's (1999) study of open schools like Mountainside Secondary, also provides invaluable data for my study. Their study incorporated ninety schools, ten from each of the nine provinces in South

Africa. They found that learners from one race group tended to group together excluding learners from other race groups. Learners mixed with each other in the classroom but outside, “it’s a zebra crossing - only black and white”, as one learner put it. Vally and Dalamba found that learners who belonged to the minority race group, that is, the group which had fewer learners than the dominant race group (having the most number of learners in the school) felt marginalized in terms of their racial identity as compared to learners from the dominant race group. It was as if they were not good enough to join the other race group. This resulted in feelings of unhappiness and exclusion.

Vally and Dalamba (1999:3) discovered that racial harassment led to physical violence. A murder was even committed on racial grounds. They conclude that “these are manifestations of overt or direct racism”. The many instances of unnecessary and overt expressions of racial prejudice and racism in their study clearly reveal that while many schools may be desegregated, they are not deracialised (1999:62). Vally and Dalamba’s study (1999:62) highlighted the fact that many learners felt alienated and marginalized. Many accounts by African learners showed that they experienced grave physical risk by virtue of being in a White school. In the school under study there have been instances of racially motivated violence.

Racial identities negotiated by learners in a desegregated setting, is the focus of a study completed by another author, Crain Soudien (1998). He conducted a study of African learners attending a predominantly Coloured school in Cape Town. He found that for many of the African learners, going to a Coloured school was a distressing experience.

For one girl in his study, Nomsa, it was a “frightening” experience to talk in class because the Coloured children laughed at her English (1998:12).

Language, or rather their lack of it, seems to play a big part in how these African learners’ racial identities are shaped. The language used by the Coloured learners here was Afrikaans. Their inability to speak Afrikaans led to African learners developing a negative idea about themselves.

Language here, as an identity marker, served to further alienate African learners.

Many learners in Soudien’ study (1998:13) espoused the idea that their educators made little attempt to understand their backgrounds. They seemed to be afraid of the worlds their learners came from. This lack of interest on the part of educators served to increase the sense of inferiority felt by African learners. Many of them thus felt very despondent about going to school.

In addition Soudien (1998) states that, “The students were aware of the complex swirl of forces which surrounded them, and recognized themselves in the push and pull of the process of racial construction at school”. He goes on to state that in spite of this knowledge, African learners were still deeply hurt by the “racial ideological order and symbolism of the school” (1998:13).

Soudien (1998) continues that there were also moments of affirmation and love that the African learners encountered. Learners stated that they enjoyed the routine of school and the tasks that went with it. This would then lead to the development of a positive racial identity.

Soudien is of the opinion that assimilation policies are at work here. Assimilation takes for granted the idea that minority racial groups have to adapt themselves to fit in with the ethos of the majority racial group. Learners are expected to discard their racial identity and values so that they can participate to a larger extent and achieve success at the institution. Powerful incentives are provided to encourage assimilation into the dominant ethos so that rewards can be obtained. There can be no doubt that assimilation negatively impacts on the formation of racialised identities. Learners have to give up their own way of doing things and their own identity in order to fit in with the dominant ethos of the school. In Soudien’s study African learners sometimes felt that they had to abandon

their own cultural styles and practices in order to fit into the ethos of the school. At other times they felt that they had to down-play their real selves in order to fit into the pattern dictated by the school.

The African learners in Soudien's (1998) study were actively discriminated against by Coloured learners. A quiet African girl was, for example, hit by a Coloured boy. Like Carrim's (1998) study there was also a preponderance of "us" and "them" feelings. Moreover, findings from Vally and Dalamba's (1999) study find echoes in Soudien's (1998: 22) study where learners only interacted in the classroom. Outside the classroom, they went their separate ways.

Soudien (1998) found that very few relationships developed between African and Coloured learners. Learners felt that because they lived far away from Coloureds, it was a problem. They also felt that Coloured learners looked down upon African learners. The above author evinces the notion that the identities African learners develop as a result of schooling is different from the identities they bring from the township. They come with a feeling of urgency to educate themselves and achieve social mobility. He therefore states, "What it is that young people take from their school experience is thus important to identify in seeking to understand the (racial) identity of young people from the township" (1998:26). They have a sense

of not quite belonging which leads to a diminished sense of self and hence of racial identity.

Samiera Zafar (1998) is another writer who profiled a number of writings on desegregation. Her paper, *Desegregation in South African Public Schools-Emerging Patterns and Dominant Trends*, encompasses two groups of research. The first band incorporates research by Monica Bot (1987), Bot and Laurence Schlemmer's 1986 and 1989 studies as well as Pam Christie's (1990) study and Robert Morrell's (1991) analysis. The second wave included research by Nazir Carrim (1992 and 1995), Jordan Naidoo (1996a), Crain Soudien (1998), Samiera Zafar (1998) and Jonathan Jansen (1998).

Zafar (1998:33) found that Pam Christie's study of 'open' independent and church schools that were racially mixed revealed "patterns of assimilation ... feelings of alienation of learners and ...discriminatory attitudes of educators towards learners of other race groups". These findings resemble research done by other authors like Soudien (1998) and Carrim (1998).

Zafar's (1998: 33) studies also discovered the "deep psychological effects that learners suffer in having to take the blame for the challenges their presence brings to the classroom". In terms of interpersonal relationships and friendships across the racial divide Zafar's (1998:34) findings echo that

of previous writers. Learners tended to focus on differences rather than commonalities. Derogatory remarks and racist name-calling also prevented relationships from forming. Zafar's paper also showed that African learners experienced a strong sense of alienation when assimilation is practiced in traditionally White, Indian and Coloured schools. To support her, Naidoo's (1996a:79) research conducted in twenty-six secondary schools from ex-HOD and ex-HOR departments in KwaZulu-Natal concluded that, "In most cases schools did little on an organized basis to address the changes brought on by integration. There was generally an attitude of 'business as usual'" (Carrim 1992; Naidoo 1996a; Zafar 1998).

In the same vein as other authors, Nadine Dolby conducted her study of a desegregated school at a formerly white, now multiracial school in Durban, Fernwood High (2001:8). She found that daily life at Fernwood was filled with racial conflict. She further noticed the racial divide outside the classroom which one African learner laughingly referred to as the "Group Areas Act" where certain race groups converged at specific spots. Her findings included the fact that aside from the occasional fight the different race groups went their own separate ways, rarely connecting or communicating with each other (2001:80).

From the above scenario one can see quite clearly that for the students of Fernwood, racial identity is not formed away from other race groups but in

the form of continuous communication and conflict with other race groups. Thus, in a society where race is still a defining and dividing factor, the lives of students at Fernwood do not represent the types of battles that played out in the past. Instead, their identities and relationships reflect the new terrain of race and racial politics.

Dolby adds that although open signs of hostility might be occasional, race underlies everything that happens at Fernwood. She states that, “while conflict and division dominate the racial relations at Fernwood, they are not the sole dynamics” (2001:85). She found moments of connection, however brief, when bonds were formed. Soudien also found that learners in his study did experience moments of affirmation where they enjoyed going to school and the routine that surrounded it.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the history of the change in the schooling system was discussed so as to arrive at an understanding of how schools evolved to where they are now in terms of racial composition. Thereafter, school experiences in schools similar to the school under study were looked at in order to provide different perspectives of the construction of identity. Some of the authors whose works were looked at more closely, in order to find out how racial identities were constructed at schools they studied,

included Carrim (1998), Soudien(1998), Dolby(2001) and Vally and Dalamba (1999). Their findings seem to reflect a preponderance of “us” and “them” feelings, implying that the racial positions established during the days of apartheid are still real today in terms of superior and inferior race groups. After reading through the above authors’ findings I am interested in finding out the implications in terms of the construction of racialised identities of learners at Mountainside Secondary School.

Furthermore, Vally and Dalamba’s (1999) study revealed that African learners experienced grave physical risk being in a predominantly White school. Moreover, for many African learners involved in Soudien’s (1998) study, going to a predominantly Coloured school was a “distressing” experience. On the other hand Soudien (1998) also cited examples of African learners for whom school was an affirming experience. They enjoyed the routine of school and everything that went with it.

My research is involved with how eight grade eleven learners at Mountainside Secondary School construct and experience their racial identity and the challenges and threats they face in the construction of their racial identities. This review has benefited my research in that it has provided valuable insights into how learners at similarly desegregated schools have constructed and experienced their racial identities

Many of the writers I reviewed utilized the qualitative method of conducting research. This is also the method I used to gather data for my study. My research differed to a certain extent from many of the writers I reviewed since their samples comprised of a larger number of participants compared to my sample. I decided to have a smaller sample since I wanted to do a more intensive study of my participants.

In the next chapter I discuss the research strategy. This will entail describing and justifying the methods I used to collect and analyse the data of this research study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Methodology

Mountainside Secondary is an example of a desegregated school. There are learners from the African, Coloured and Indian race groups interacting with each other. I would like to find out how learners construct and experience identity. What are the challenges and threats they face in the construction of their racial identities?

This chapter describes the research approach I used to collect the data. A qualitative approach was employed since it afforded me as the researcher an opportunity to develop a close relationship with my research participants. It also afforded me the best opportunity to answer my research questions. The first part of this chapter expands on why a qualitative approach was adopted. In the second part of the chapter, the research method, involving semi-structured interviews is described, together with reasons why it was chosen over structured interviews and unstructured interviews. I argue that the unstructured interview method is a suitable instrument for exploring insider accounts of how young learners construct, negotiate and experience identity. This section will be followed by a discussion of how the sample, comprising grade eleven learners was selected. The last section deals with the analysis of the data, as well as the ethics of research, and how I incorporated this aspect into my research design.

3.2 Research Design

The qualitative research approach was adopted in order to conduct research. This approach allowed me to present a detailed account of how participants construct and experience identity since I was able to discuss the context in which they operate as well as their individual viewpoints.

Schumacher and McMillan (1993:372) maintain that, “qualitative research is based on a naturalistic-phenomenological philosophy that views reality as multi-layered, interactive and a shared social experience”. This means that many methods like structured and unstructured interviews, participant observation and questionnaires can be used to study the problem from the participants’ perspective.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:309), “Qualitative researchers attempt to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves ... The primary goal of studies using this approach is defined as describing and understanding rather than explaining human behaviour”. This method explores attitudes and behaviour in their natural setting instead of studying them in more artificial settings like experiments and surveys. The qualitative researcher explores events as they occur rather than reconstructing them at a later stage. This method will allow me to interview participants in their natural setting, which in this case will be the school rather than setting up an experiment and then assessing reactions.

I chose to use a qualitative research design rather than a quantitative research methodology. My reasons for doing so will follow in the next section.

Qualitative research is concerned with life as it is lived, and with things as they happen. This is unlike quantitative research where assumptions are made in advance of the study.

Moreover, in qualitative studies the researcher is the central instrument (Hammersly et al. 1994:59). As far as this research was concerned, I as the researcher observed closely how participants responded to questions posed to them and delved deeper in order to acquire more information.

I preferred the qualitative method since I like to be involved in the research process and I like to try and understand and interpret the participants' subjective perspectives. I am thus interested in what the participants have to say about how they experience identity, more specifically their 'insider' accounts on racial identity.

As mentioned previously, I chose to use semi-structured interviews, which will be elaborated on in the next section.

3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

My research study took place at Mountainside Secondary, a technical school in Chatsworth. The name of the school, as well as the names of the participants have been changed in order to protect their confidentiality. The process of collecting and producing data was made possible through the use of semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with the objective of gaining a more comprehensive picture from the participants. The semi-structured interview, which is a combination of the structured and unstructured

interview was utilised to enable me to obtain multiple, as well as detailed, responses to questions.

According to Borg and Gall (1979:313) “The semi- structured interview provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth and often permits gathering valuable data that could not be successfully obtained by any other approach”. I found that the above type of interview method allowed for collection of valuable information pertinent to the field of study.

In using the semi-structured interview I had a clear list of issues to be discussed and questions to be answered. I chose the semi-structured interview over the structured interview since I wanted a degree of flexibility in terms of the order of topics to be discussed. I also wanted the research participants to feel free to develop ideas and to elaborate on points which I as the researcher, initiated. Babbie and Mouton (2001:289) have the following to state, “...it is an open interview which allows the object of study to speak for him/herself rather than to provide the respondent with a battery of our own predetermined hypothesis-based questions”.

Structured interviews on the other hand, according to Deniscombe (1990:112), “involve tight control over the format of the questions and answers ... The researcher has a predetermined list of questions, to which the respondent is invited to offer limited-option responses”. He adds that there is “tight control over the wording of the questions, the order in which the questions occur and the range of answers that are on offer”.

Unstructured interviews would not be suitable for my purpose, as the freedom afforded to participants to allow their thoughts to flow would be too time-consuming. I had specific questions that I needed answered and the unstructured interview, although allowing for a rich array of thoughts and feelings, might not have produced desired results in the limited time available.

I was quite willing though, to allow the participants free rein to express themselves if I thought that they felt very strongly about an issue. By allowing participants freedom of expression, within limited spheres, I gained valuable information on complex issues. Thus I could complete an in-depth investigation rather than gaining superficial information since I was exploring participants' personal accounts of their experiences and feelings. Deniscombe (1990:193) notices the overlapping of semi-structured and unstructured interviews when he states that, "Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are really on a continuum and, in practice; it is likely that any interview will slide back and forth along the scale. What they have in common, and what separates them from structured interviews, is their willingness to allow interviewees to use their words and develop their own thoughts".

The interviews took place in a classroom which was relatively secluded, to cater for the need for privacy. The room is also air-conditioned and afforded interviewer and interviewee a certain degree of comfort from soaring temperatures. I made every attempt to use my interpersonal skills in order to develop trust and rapport and encourage interviewees to relax, to be natural, and to hold nothing back in the interview. I also needed to use observational skills, to use non-verbal cues and if necessary, to use a "probe" in order to

obtain clarity about something which might seem obscure (Bailey 1978:157-172). When, for example, participants were asked about their identification with a particular race group, some of them responded that they did not see a need for this. When questioned further, some African and Coloured participants responded that they got along well with the other race groups in the school, and that remaining with one's own race group would lead to unnecessary divisions in the school. In this way, a probe in the form of an additional question clarified matters.

I also needed to be sensitive to the needs of the participant and to show understanding of and empathy with the participant. Hammersley et al. (1994:59) sum up this image of the interviewer well when they state that, "The kinds of skill that are involved are those of social management – interpersonal skills that facilitate the negotiation of access both into private places and private thoughts ... Thus the researcher is a finely tuned instrument with considerable skills". At some times during the interview process I found that participants became particularly emotional when, for example, discussing possible threats posed to them through their racial identification. At this point I had to tread very carefully in order not to disturb the delicate sensitivities of participants. I did find though that some participants went on the defensive when discussing for example, the interaction between learners from different race groups. It was as if they were expecting me as an Indian female to side with Indian learners in the school. I had to thus be very careful to appear as neutral as possible, and not to betray favour towards any particular race group. I wanted accounts that came entirely from participants, and not accounts that were coloured by my subjective feelings as researcher.

In order to start conducting my research I had to first of all choose a sample from the school population. In the next section, details of my sampling procedure follow.

3.6 The Sample

The population from which I drew my sample comprised of grade eleven learners. A small sample of eight learners was chosen to enable the researcher to understand how racial identities were constructed, what racial identities participants choose to identify with and the possible threats and challenges posed by their racial identification. At the time the research was conducted I was not teaching any grade eleven learners. I felt this would be appropriate since I did not want to use my position of power as an educator to exert pressure on learners to participate in the research.

Two major types of sampling procedures are available to researchers namely, probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is concerned with random sampling. This means that all participants will have an equal chance to be selected. In other words, every participant of the population “...has a known probability of being chosen in the sample” (Ary et al 1990:171).

This research encompassed non-probability sampling since not every member of the population had a chance of being selected. For my purpose, I used the class groups already existing at the school to choose my sample. The classes are grouped according to the courses the learners study. The courses involve different trades. These include Electronics, Welding, Fitting and Turning,

Motor Body Repairs, Motor Mechanics and Refrigeration. Each class group has a class register with the learners listed in alphabetical order. The listing thus incorporated a degree of randomness. For my sample I chose every tenth learner on each class list. Since there were eight grade eleven classes in all, I chose one learner from each class. As a result of my random sampling, my sample included four Indian learners, two Coloured learners and two African learners. My sample also included four girls and four boys. The following table supplies more details of the sample chosen.

Table One

Participants	Race*	Gender	Religion*	Residence	Class*	Age *
Giselle	Coloured	Female	Christian	Marianridge	Working	16
Brandon	Coloured	Male	Christian	Marianridge	Working	17
Sipho	African	Male	Christian	Umlazi	Working	17
Precious	African	Female	Christian	KwaNdengezi	Working	16
Priya	Indian	Female	Hindu	Chatsworth	Working	16
Razia	Indian	Female	Muslim	Chatsworth	Working	17
Shawn	Indian	Male	Christian	Chatsworth	Middle	16
Sachin	Indian	Male	Hindu	Chatsworth	Working	17

* Named by learner

Grade eleven learners were chosen as the population for my study since for them identity formation and racial identity formation is very salient. As the writer, Elliot Krause (1980:34) states, “Adolescence, the time of transition from childhood to young adult, is a key time for the formation of identity”.

In order to make sense of the data obtained during qualitative research, data analysis has to take place. The following section describes how I analysed my data.

3.7 Data Analysis

In order to successfully analyse the data I had to first make sure I retained all the information obtained during the interview process. All the interviews were thus taped using a tape recorder. I first sought permission from the participants to tape the interview since I did not want them to feel that I was intruding into their private space by tape-recording them. I also explained to them that the reason I was using the tape recorder was because I could not take down what they were saying quickly enough.

I also made written notes of non-verbal points like expression and gestures during the interview. At the end of the day I transcribed the information from the tape recorder onto pages and filed these pages, together with the tapes and notes, under separate files for each participant.

When I analysed the data I tried to change the interview transcripts into a more orderly form in order to extract meaning from it. In this phase the data was organised in a coherent manner in order to answer the research questions and convey information about how participants' identities were constructed and organised. The analysis of the data thus consisted, for example, of organizing the data according to common themes like race group or gender.

The interview data was studied in conjunction with the literature review. This enabled me to recognise similar as well as contradictory strands in the research. The themes and ideas which emerged from the data were organised into a framework which communicated the participants' experiences and negotiation of identity.

When one undertakes research one has to abide by a code of ethics so that all parties are reasonably protected during and after the research process. The following section details some considerations in terms of research ethics.

3.8 Ethical Considerations in Research

When conducting my research I tried to bear ethical principles in mind. The following points reveal the manner in which I conducted the research, while keeping ethical considerations in mind.

It is very important to obtain informed consent from your participants (Higgs 1997:11-12). In my study learners were asked whether they wanted to take part in the research and all the learners chosen agreed to participate in the study. Consent was also sought and obtained from the parents of learners, the principal and the governing body of the school.

It is incumbent on any researcher to make it very clear to participants that their involvement is voluntary. At no point in the study did I use my position of power as an educator at the school to force learners into taking part in the study.

I informed the participants right at the outset about confidentiality, which is an important ethical consideration to bear in mind when conducting research. I must add, though, that it did not seem to me as if learners were particularly concerned about this. Perhaps this is because they are still quite young and do not realise the implications of making their identities known. However, I am aware of the ethical implications and therefore ensured that pseudonyms were used in order to protect the identity of the participants.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the research design which was chosen for this study. Explanations have been supplied as to why the qualitative approach was chosen over the quantitative approach of engaging in research. Some of the reasons discussed were that it affords the researcher the opportunity to have a close relationship with her research participants; it deals with real life situations as they occur and the researcher is crucial to the research. In addition, the method of conducting research was elaborated upon. This involved semi-structured interviews as opposed to structured and unstructured interviews. The method of choosing the sample was also elucidated. Thereafter, data analysis procedures were outlined. Finally, ethical considerations when embarking upon research were described. The following chapter will detail the findings that were made once the interviews were completed.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This research is concerned with studying how the learners attending Mountainside Secondary School construct their racial identities. Mountainside Secondary School is a desegregated school in Chatsworth, an Indian township situated in the metropolitan area of Durban. The method I used to obtain data was semi-structured interviews. Learners from the different race groups were interviewed. The sample consisted of Grade eleven learners who were chosen using a random sampling technique.

What emerged from my study was that participants were more comfortable with the idea of racial integration, although they referred to pockets of racism. There was a general sense of common understanding that the school reflects society, which is racially diverse, hence participants also seemed to experience this imperative to at least make an attempt to get along with learners of other race groups. Having stated this, it also needs to be mentioned that the school was not devoid of racial tensions. There were participants in the school who did not like the idea of learners from different race groups learning and

being taught in the same school. They did not want to try to get along with learners of other race groups.

From the above paragraph it can be seen that there are many contradictions and complex perspectives that emerged in my study. This contradiction points to the excitement of conducting research as we do not obtain results which can neatly be compartmentalized into either this or that. In my case I found participants decrying apartheid notions of describing themselves and yet on the other hand I received overt clues to suggest that this kind of prejudicial thinking still exists among some learners. As my chapter elaborates, this contradiction can be explained by the fact that participants do not want to admit to having discriminatory ideas, as this is not in keeping with the whole spirit of a nation striving for togetherness.

There were eight dominant themes which emerged from my study of grade eleven learners. These included the following: 1) Participants do not use race as an identification marker 2) Participants are challenging old categories of defining themselves 3) Participants are racialising culture 4) How participants perceived relationships 5) Stereotypes 6) Identification with a particular race group not seen as being very important 7) The advantages, disadvantages and challenges that participants envisage as belonging to a race group 8) Participants' futures.

The above ideas will be elaborated on in the following pages.

4.2 Participants do not use race as an identification marker

When asked to describe themselves, participants responded with many different adjectives. What was noteworthy for my study was that none of the participants named themselves as belonging to a race group. This response quite fazed me since I expected most of the participants to view race as high on their list of priorities when naming themselves. Deborah Posel in her article entitled “What’s in a name? Racial categorizations under apartheid and their afterlife” very aptly explains why many of us have come to accept racial classifications as part of our everyday experiences. She states that, “After decades of apartheid’s racial reasoning, the idea that South African society comprises four distinct races has become a habit of thought and experience, a facet of popular ‘common sense’ still widely in evidence. So it remains the norm for the narratives we hear in public media or in conversation to designate unnamed social actors in terms of their race-as though this reduces their anonymity and renders their actions more intelligible” (2001:51). I was therefore surprised when the participants in my study did not see race as being significant to them.

The participants in my study responded in the following ways:

Outgoing, overachiever, enthusiastic, sometimes selfish, passionate in what I do, kind. (Coloured male)

Funny, friendly, like going out with my family and friends, like sports like cricket, soccer. I have a happy life. I don't like school. (Indian male)

Sensitive, secretive, not that friendly, talkative, funny. (African female)

The data also suggests that none of the participants used a social identity to describe themselves. Not only did they not describe themselves in terms of race, they did not use gender, religion, class or sexual orientation.

Beverly Daniel Tatum discovered different results when she interviewed psychology students from her class. In her article entitled “The Complexity of Identity: ‘Who am I?’”, she found that students of colour who constituted the minority as well as subordinate race group in the university always mentioned their race group, while white students who constituted the dominant group rarely mentioned their race group.

Tatum (2000:10-11) explains the above phenomenon when she states that members of dominant groups take for granted privileges afforded them and do not notice it while subordinate groups are very aware of the problem. As she states, “The parts of our

identity that *do* capture our attention are those that other people notice, and that reflect back to us”.

Tatum’s explanation can, to a certain extent, be used to explain learner responses at the school under study. At Mountainside Secondary School the Indian learners make up the majority group, comprising eighty two percent of the school population. The African learners comprising fourteen percent of the population and Coloured learners comprising four percent of the population make up the minority groups. One explanation as to why the Indian learners in the study did not mention race could be, as Tatum (2000) explains, that they are the majority race group in the school and take this aspect for granted. In this situation, where they comprise the majority race group, they are not subjected to incidents where they are treated as an inferior race group and hence race does not assume salience for them.

At this stage I would like to clarify the concepts of minority, majority, dominant and subordinate groups. I use minority group to refer to the group which has a smaller number of members as opposed to a majority group which would have the larger number of members in an institution or country. Bobbie Harro defines the terms “dominant group” and “subordinate group” in her article entitled, “The Cycle of Socialization”. According to her, “*Dominant* or *agent* groups are considered the ‘norm’ around which assumptions are built, and these groups receive attention and recognition. Agents have

relatively more social power, and can 'name' others". They have privileges from the time they are born and have access to opportunities without even being aware of it. Agents seldom question why they are afforded privileges to which other people do not have access. Hardiman and Jackson (1997:17) add to this explanation by contending that the agent group decides what reality comprises of and determines what is the norm or the right thing to do. The dominant group foists its culture on the target group while misrepresenting, discounting or wiping out the oppressed group's culture, language and history. Although the Indians would constitute a target group since they have also historically been oppressed; in many ways the situation described by learners seems to be similar in the sense that Indians in the school seem to have the privileges normally afforded to an agent group. The greater number of Indian learners, coupled with the fact that the school is historically an ex-HOD school with a majority of Indian educators adds to the social power wielded by Indian learners. Moreover the assimilation policy followed by the school where, in the main, Indian cultures and traditions, are followed, also adds to the power exercised by Indian learners. The festival of Deepavalli, for example, is religiously celebrated, with learners getting the day off school, whereas other race groups' cultural festivals are not as strictly adhered to.

Harro (2000:17), moreover, goes on to define a subordinate race group by stating that, "On the other hand, there are many social identity groups about which little or nothing is known because they have not been considered important enough to study. These are

referred to as subordinate *groups* or *target* groups. Some target groups are virtually invisible while others are defined by misinformation or very limited information. Targets are disenfranchised, exploited, and victimized by prejudice, discrimination and other structural obstacles. Target groups include women (within sexism) and racially oppressed groups". In my study, although Indian, African and Coloured groups constitute subordinate groups, it was found that it was mainly the learners from the African and Coloured groups which suffered the prejudice and discrimination normally experienced by subordinate race groups. Again a possible explanation could be that the Indian learners were not subjected to discrimination because of the assimilation policy of the school which favours policies familiar with Indian learners. Another explanation is that the Indian group constitutes the majority in the school and hence learners belonging to other race groups have to follow the majority learners.

One possible reason why the participants in my study did not use race as an identification marker could be because it has been many years now that learners have attended desegregated schools. They are now comfortable with the idea of mixing with other race groups. The tensions that existed when researchers like Soudien (1998), Vally and Dalamba (1999) and Carrim (1998) conducted their studies seem to have faded, although they have not disappeared completely.

Another possible reason why my sample did not use race as a social identity marker could be because in the new ethos of schools which are substantially different from that of the past, learners are subjected to new influences which are determining how they construct their racial identities. The effects of a global popular culture seem to be influencing the way identity is shaped and negotiated. The popular media, including television, for example, influences young people in terms of how they dress and what music they listen to. Stars on screen, and in the music world have an effect on the people learners identify with. The African learners identify with designer clothes and labels like Lacoste while Coloured learners identify with American styles like the Levis jeans and the Indian learners, especially the boys, dress predominantly in the style of African American rap artists like Tupac Shakur. The Fubu label, for example, is worn by the Indian learners. Although the school under study has a dress code and tries to reinforce it, the older learners habitually break this code and proudly sport huge Fubu jackets which cost about R500 and more. This is now the new way of forming an identity as all the boys, for example, who wear Fubu automatically identify with each other. Identity is now being constructed around fashions being followed, rather than on the racial group learners were previously classified into.

My study therefore resonates with the findings made by Dolby (2001:13) when she states that, "Identity, then, can be understood as a constant process of formation and change that occurs within a global/local matrix". She goes on to state that throughout her book she

“will emphasize popular culture as a location for identity formation” (2001:14).

Dolby continues that popular culture “is intricately woven into our lives; it surrounds us, influencing the way we map our realities, imagine our possible lives, and relate to others” (2001:15-16). She states of her research, “However, it is striking how popular culture (not church, family, neighbourhood, or ‘traditional’ culture) becomes the ground on which race is negotiated at Fernwood” (2001:15). Dolby goes on to note the kind of commodities which have significance for the Coloured and African learners at the school she researched in terms of defining their racial identities. This is very similar to what I found in my research as certain commodities define certain race groups. She states, “For example, a Coloured student’s preferences in jeans is Levis only – wearing more expensive jeans will not elevate social status, only the label ‘Levis’ will. For African students, however, social status is intimately connected to the price one pays for a particular commodity. African students are more likely than Coloureds to bypass American jeans and identification, instead preferring European names such as Giorgio Armani and Daniel Hechter (2001:71).

Both in mine and in Dolby’s study there was incontrovertible evidence to suggest that the arena in which racial identity is being constructed has changed vastly. Old notions of apartheid and differences in biological make-up do not seem as important. As Dolby very succinctly concludes her chapter on how learners think of themselves, “The common ground of urbanization, modernity, and increasingly, post-modernity produces a

situation within which older discursive constructions of race cannot stand. Biology, culture, and history lose their force, as youth meet in a school saturated with dynamics that are markedly different than those that existed a generation ago” (2001:17).

Both my study and Dolby’s research show that learners are no longer concerning themselves only with the racial group their parents were classified into. Neither are they overly concerned with differences in people’s physical make-up or how one looks. Now they are being influenced by global commodities like brand name clothing, music and hairstyles worn by famous people whom learners seek to emulate. As Dolby (2001:72) states, “For all students, fashion works to suture racial identities around particular taste practices. Taste becomes a substantive, generative part of the creation of racialized identities. She goes on to state that the commodities that signify African, Coloured, Indian and White are picked out from exposure to global trends and then used at the school to signify race. Many of these commodities like Levis, Seabags, Nikes and Reeboks, she adds, do not have the same significance, racially or otherwise, in places like London or New York (2001:77).

These findings differ, for example, from Soudien’s (1998) study where identity is shaped and formed in a context very similar to our apartheid past, where the racial group one was classified into wielded great influence in shaping one’s racial identity. Being African meant that one was inferior to, for example, Whites and this is the dynamic which is seen

clearly in Soudien's (1998), as well as Carrim's (1998) and Vally and Dalamba's (1999) studies.

The next section will deal with how participants are defining themselves and how these definitions are different from previous ideas of themselves.

4.3 Participants are not following old categories of defining themselves

Another theme which emerged from my study was that participants are no longer confining themselves to tight little definitions of themselves. I expected learners to accept the categorizations given to them during the period of apartheid and see themselves in terms of Indian, Coloured or African. Participants though, challenged the traditional apartheid categories and named themselves differently.

An Indian girl stated the following:

I don't consider myself as being Indian. I was born an African in South Africa so I consider myself to be a South African.

The above response reveals to us that participants are seeing themselves as part of a wider community. There seems to almost be a kinship with all of the peoples of South

Africa. This shows that *Ubuntu* (belief in the common humanity of man), is alive and well, since different race groups are abandoning narrow, constraining definitions which previously hindered communication, and are embracing each other as fellow human beings. Participants no longer see themselves as being Indian, Coloured or African, but see themselves as under a broader national umbrella.

In addition, an African girl had the following to say:

I didn't mention being African because you are also African (that is, the interviewer or educator). We are all the same so there is no need to mention it.

From the above response we can gauge that racial identities at Mountainside are shifting. Participants are no longer hanging on to old definitions of themselves and allowing this to limit them. They are embracing wider definitions of themselves.

In the same vein as the above responses, an Indian boy had the following to say:

I didn't mention being Indian because even though we might be African, Indian or White, we are still the same person- only our colour might be different.

Again the same scenario plays itself out as is the case in the responses of the previous two participants in that learners are no longer defining themselves in tight little racial denominations. They are embracing wider definitions of themselves. It almost seems as if racial identities for the participants are dissipating. The participants are not acknowledging diversity and power differentials associated with diversity. Carrim and Soudien's (1999) findings though were different from mine in the sense that they found a preponderance of "us" and "them" thinking. They state, "comments by teachers and students, across Indian, Coloured and White schools, make consistent reference to an 'us' and 'them' language which not only indicates the racially exclusive ways in which they define their own identities, but also the predominance of assimilationism in their experiences of the desegregation of their schools. The assumption being that 'they' are coming to 'us' and the more 'they' are like 'us' or the more 'they' become like 'us', the more acceptable 'they' become" (1999:160). This signifies that one race felt excluded while another race group, in this case, Indians, felt themselves to be superior. Zafar's (1998) findings also differed from mine in the sense that she found that learners tended to focus on differences rather than on commonalities.

The third theme which emerged from my study is that participants are confusing culture and race, as will be discussed in the following section.

4.4 Participants are racialising culture

Before I embark on this section I would first of all like to draw on the ideas of Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown here. These authors are of the opinion that racism is as significant an issue as it was thirty years ago. Their book entitled "*Racism*" provides a thought-provoking account of the history and debate about the concept. These authors state that racism postulates the idea of the existence of individually distinct 'races', and gives a negative connotation to one or some of these reputed 'races'. Generally, the person articulating the racist philosophy does not belong to the latter race (1989:8). In my study, most of the participants interviewed used race to mean culture and vice versa. The Indian participants felt that to be Indian meant that they dressed in a particular way or they worshipped religiously in a particular way. The African participants also associated being African with certain African traditional practices like dancing or praying in a specific way. The Coloured participants felt very strongly that since they were Coloured they "belonged to two race groups, African and White but did not know which culture to follow". They felt too far removed from their white heritage to fully identify with it and they did not want to identify with their African heritage because they felt that this was an "inferior group" as compared to them. They felt they did not belong because unlike the Indians and Africans, they had no set style or manner of dressing or manner of worship. In other words, they were racialising culture while culture is not synonymous with race.

Some of the participants' responses included the following:

Coloureds don't have a specific culture. Coloureds don't have the Zulu dance. I am just this girl that doesn't belong-not sure where I belong. (Coloured female)

I have my own culture. I am proud of it. We do certain prayers. We dress in a certain way, dance --Zulu dance. (African female)

Belief in my culture - like the way we pray. We also have eastern style of dressing. I like my culture. (Indian female)

Similar strands can be found in Carrim's (1998) research where he found that educators' interpretations of multiculturalism were very narrow and limiting. These educators felt that because a person was a Zulu-speaking individual they would automatically know how to perform a Zulu dance. The reality in many cases was not so, because learners were living in urban areas, in very westernized settings, and rarely knew how to perform this kind of dance. As he states of his research, "People are assumed to be loyal to and representative of their perceived ethnic groups. For example, an urban based, middle class, African learner in a high school would be assumed, because she/he is supposedly Zulu, to be loyal to the Zulu Kingdom, supportive of the IFP and yearning to do Zulu

dances in 'traditional' Zulu costumes, with all the cultural insignia for added effect. This despite the fact that this learner may be 'into' Kwaito music, loves jeans and fast foods and has got no exposure to or support for supposed 'traditional' Zulu ways of doing things" (1998:23).

In delving further into the accounts of participants in terms of how they construct their racial identities, another theme emerged. This theme concerned the manner in which participants perceived relationships with other learners.

4.5 How participants perceived relationships

Contrary to what researchers like Soudien (1998), Gillborn (1990) and Carrim (1998), among other researchers in the field of racial identity found, participants stated that they had good relationships with learners from other race groups. Initially the participants in my study did not communicate that there was inter-racial conflict, but as the interviews progressed they revealed that there was an element of racism among learners.

Based on my experiences at the school, I assumed that there was tension between learners because of intermittent outbreaks of conflict among learners belonging to different race groups. Recently, physical confrontations between African and Indian learners led to the disruption of lessons and school having to close early. In fact, the participants in my study did not communicate that there was inter-racial conflict. David Gillborn's study of

a predominantly White inner city school in Great Britain has relevance at this point. His findings point to the strained relationships between learners in desegregated schools. The following chilling excerpt from his book serves to highlight what inter-racial conflict can lead to, at its worst

Want it again Paki?

You stupid White bastard.

These were the words of two Manchester schoolboys. One was a Pakistani boy and the other a White boy. The Pakistani boy later died of the knife wound inflicted by the White boy. My findings seem to point to the fact that interracial relationships according to my participants at Mountainside are more cordial than the one described by Gillborn (1990:1).

Soudien also gives examples of inter-racial tensions when he describes conflict between African and Coloured learners. His study is concerned with research conducted in a working-class community in Cape Town which admitted a large number of African learners into its schools. He cites the example of an African girl, Nonthando, who had been hit by a Coloured boy (1998:18).

In terms of my study the participants responded in the following ways to the question of how they related to learners from other race groups in the school

I treat learners as pupils. I don't see anyone as more superior than the next.

Everyone is friendly with us Coloureds. They want to be like us, talk like us-our accent . There is nothing between Indians, Coloureds and Africans in the school.
(Coloured male)

I represent my race. Others can see that as a Coloured, I have a positive impact- I am a good representative. I don't have enemies. People see me in a good way.
I get along with everyone. (Coloured female)

Normal, like being with any other person. I don't notice she is African, only that she is my friend. (Indian female)

I don't have a problem. I am proud of myself and I am treated equally. We are united, no doubt about being African - we are all the same. (African girl)

The sentiments expressed are similar to what Christie (1990:46) found in her study of learners attending a racially mixed Catholic school. She states that, "When open schools

were asked about issues of race, there was clear support for racial mixing, both inside and outside school. This support was a strong theme in pupils' interview discourse".

The change in the way participants feel about other race groups could be explained by the fact that schools have been desegregated for quite a while now. The participants interviewed have spent many years in desegregated classrooms. They have therefore learnt to accept and get along with each other. Another explanation could be that even in their homes learners are experiencing atmospheres which are more accepting of other race groups. Moreover, educators at the school are always urging learners to get along with each other and not to exhibit any forms of prejudicial behaviour. Many of the books prescribed for learners also subtly work on mindsets and make learners more open to other race groups and cultures. The novel "Shades" by Marguerite Poland, for example, prescribed for matriculants, very subtly explores racial prejudice and discrimination and allows learners to see the damaging effects of narrow ways of looking at people.

However, although most of the participants interviewed stated that they themselves got along very well with children from other race groups, when questioned further they stated that there were pockets of racism and open animosity among some learners. This conflict concerned, in the main, problems between the Indian and the African learners.

This finding is in contrast to what the eight participants in my study stated earlier, that they are all part of one group and that they get along with each other. There is evidence from their responses that indicate that there is inter-racial conflict at Mountainside. This can be explained by the fact that although participants stated that they were able to integrate freely and openly with learners of other race groups, they also referred to tensions between learners of different race groups.

One Coloured learner had this to say:

Coloureds get on with everyone. Indians don't get on with Africans. People think of Africans like slaves.

Another African learner had the following to state:

Africans stick together; Coloureds stick together; Indians stick together. They don't get along. Indians see Africans as filthy. They see Africans coming from shacks with no resources-outside toilet. Also, Indians see fighting, violence, robberies committed by Africans (that is, in the media).

My study seems to echo some of the interracial conflict seen in Christie's (1990:62) study of racially mixed Catholic schools. In her study whites are the majority group. She quotes an Indian girl Tasneem as stating:

"It's very difficult (to have close friends of another race) even though we are in a mixed school and even though we do have so many friends across the colour line, our race groups still stick together. At breaks you see white groups here, black groups there."

Soudien's (1998: 22-24) study involved learners who echo the feelings described above. He states that in the playground and during other activities in the school African and Coloured children went their own ways. Many African learners felt that the Coloured learners looked down upon them. He thus quotes an African learner George, who states:

...you know, they're always insulting people. ...they think they are whites and we are blacks, and we live in, all of us are living in squatter camps and we don't have... we've got nothing..."

David Gillborn's study bears resemblance to the ideas expressed in my study. In this case a South Asian boy, constituting the minority in the school, is made fun of by a White boy. Gillborn (1990: 76) states, "Rafiq is the subject of various taunts; Barry Flemming,

for example, thinks it funny to simply repeat 'Chapatti' (a type of hand-made bread eaten by Indians) over and over again".

It seems inevitable, from the above discussions, that minority group learners would be traumatized by the inter-racial tensions evident in the school. The inferior status afforded to them would affect the construction of their racial identities. The Coloured and African learners would feel inferior to the majority race group learners and they would be bruised by these encounters. They might feel as if they are second rate citizens. They might eventually take the easier route and not in any way initiate communication with majority race group members. Soudien (1998:18-19), in his article concerning African children attending a predominantly Coloured school, makes mention of the damaging effects of tensions between majority group members and minority group members. He quotes the example of Nonthando, an African girl who was hit by a Coloured boy for no apparent reason. This was a traumatic experience for her as can be ascertained from her words:

....I was very upset about thatThis boy, he smacked me on my face.

The above discussion also points to the fact that although participants interviewed evinced strong notions of being able to get along with learners of other race groups, there was this undercurrent of conflict which came out through careful probing of answers. It

could also be because, as Christie (1990) states, that interview information cannot be taken at face value. One has to delve deeper in order to get truths that perhaps participants find socially unacceptable, in the new mood of being able to get along with each other in a new political dispensation.

From my interviews the participants alluded to a number of stereotypes when they referred to learners of other race groups. In the section to follow, I will make reference to the stereotypes and attempt to make meaning of them.

4.6 Stereotypes

Various stereotypes emerged from interviews with participants and this revealed how learners felt about each other. Participants freely shared stereotypes of each other.

The following responses reflect some of the views of participants:

Indians are full of themselves. They think they are superior. They hold power because they are in the majority. Africans are rude and irritating. They are thieves who steal. Coloureds are loud and noisy. (Coloured male)

Coloureds communicate in slang like “shyisa” (meaning ‘come’), “let’s waai” (let’s go). They feel that they are “all that” (very good). They are aggressive and swear -use vulgar language. Indians smoke. They don’t like Africans because of complexion, loudness. (Coloured female)

Indians start fights. They feel they are superior. Coloureds are aggressive. Africans are stupid, dirty, poor. They don’t deserve what they get. Steal. (Indian female)

Africans are given names like “kaffir”, “darkies”-but this comes more from boys. Indians are called “coolies” and “charohs”. No problem with Coloureds because they get along with Indians. (African girl)

Some of the Indians are violent towards Africans. Indians have the most power – if anything happens. Africans don’t have power outside school. Africans are given names like “kaffir”, “darkie ou”. (Indian male)

The sense of inferiority, in terms of race experienced by the participants in my study, as revealed by the negative stereotypes they have of their race groups is mirrored by Christie’s (1990:67) study, as evidenced by these words by an African learner named Ashley:

In South Africa people are made to feel, like, I'm not the same as a White guy.

You find that most blacks (Africans) are not living as whites, good lives. So we people feel that we cannot match them. We are made to feel inferior.

The above sentiments reflect clearly what Suzanne Lipsky refers to as “Internalized Racism” in her article of the same name. She defines it as “this turning upon ourselves, upon our families, and upon our own people the distress patterns that result from the racism and oppression of the majority society”. Thus the African and Coloured learners in the school under study turn on each other in response to the discrimination they experience. She goes on to state that, “Patterns of internalized oppression severely limit the effectiveness of every existing Black group” (1987:1-4).

The stereotypes mentioned above also point to the fact that African learners, and in particular, boys, are most at risk in the school. They are vulnerable to violence initiated and directed at them by Indian boys. We can therefore see that the minority race groups are being intimidated by the majority race group. The same pattern can be seen in Gillborn’s study (1990) revealing that the dominant race group (constituting Whites), at a school called City Road, constantly threatened the safety of the subordinate Asian learners. Thus learners experienced stressful experiences in terms of their racial

construction, where they either had to take on an inferior status or had an inferior status conferred on them (Soudien 1998:12).

We can also see that stereotypes handed down from the apartheid era, when African people were regarded as less than human, still prevail at the school. Although learners felt that they had outgrown apartheid and treated each other equally, the stereotypes that emerged proved otherwise. Some learners were careful to point out though, that these stereotypes were held by only a small group of learners. They themselves did not subscribe to it.

One cannot help but see that stereotypes of African learners would be extremely damaging to them. Soudien (1998:8) sums up learners' feelings when he states that young people in desegregated schools have to work their way across forces that seek to exclude them and forces that seek to include them. Thus school can be a safe place they can trust, or it can bring about feelings of not belonging. This in turn affects how their racial identities are constructed in that they have either a sense that they belong, or a feeling that they are unwanted.

It comes as no surprise to find that the minority group learners in my study would feel extremely hurt about the treatment meted out to them by the majority group learners. They would develop negative images of their own race group. Their self-esteem and

confidence would certainly plummet as a result of such abrasive encounters. These are the challenges they face in terms of the development of their racial identities.

4.7 How participants understood racial identity

The eight participants in my study felt that it was not important to identify with a particular race group. They felt that doing so would create more divisions in the school. This would also lead to them not understanding their peers and thus judging them unfairly. As one African participant stated:

No- when you do that you create more problems. You not gonna like them. They not gonna like you. You then treat each other like no-one.

By the above points he meant that you will not learn to respect each other if you do not associate with each other. My findings seem to support Christie's (1990) study but she also warns against taking interview data at face value. I agree with Christie since my data as well revealed some contradictory strands. Although about six of the participants in my study stated that it was not important for them to identify with a particular race group, when questioned further, they did indicate that 'it is important to stick together'. During breaks or any other informal social activity like an outdoors concert, there were clearly discernible pockets of learners from the same race group gathering together. One

explanation for this could be that although the learners wanted to get to know their peers, the apartheid past still impacts on their schooling. Socialization, same race neighbourhoods, and racist attitudes still persisting in families prevent learners belonging to different race groups from joining each other. Another explanation could be that they look to each other for support against racial practices since they know that other race groups would not be able to give them this support (Tatum 1997:60). They are the odd ones out and look to each other for affirmation and for support to negotiate racial identity in the rocky waters of a desegregated school. Moreover, the participants in this study still feel that they have more in common with learners of the same race group.

4.8 Advantages, disadvantages and challenges associated with belonging to a particular race group

The next two questions concerned what participants found affirming and what they felt were the negative points of being in their particular race group. As expected the Indian participants felt that they were greatly advantaged being in a predominantly Indian school, which followed a policy of assimilation (where learners from other race groups were expected to fit in with the dominant ethos of the school). Participants belonging to the minority race group at this school, felt it was a big disadvantage to them in terms of the negative attitudes exhibited by Indian learners, as well as what transpired during violent conflict situations. The Coloured and African participants felt that the sheer

number of Indian learners supporting any Indian learner involved in violent confrontation posed a distinct threat to them. These are some of the challenges faced by participants in terms of the construction of their racial identities at Mountainside Secondary School.

Some of the participants' responses include the following statements:

Indians interfere with you. They come again and again-want you to react. They feel this is their area-free to do as they please. (African male)

If I have to fight an Indian boy it will be me against the rest of the school. I do not stand a chance. (Coloured male).

Advantage to be Indian in this school. Most of our festivals are celebrated. We have the day off or talks at assembly. Other race groups do not have this privilege. (Indian female)

My findings to a limited extent echo those discovered by Soudien (1998:16) when he states of African learners in a predominantly Coloured school, "...they were asked to sublimate their 'real' selves in favour of the preferred deportment required by the school". Carrim and Soudien's study also yielded similar ideas. Jonas, a young African man at a former Coloured school had the following to say, "I don't think that I can say that I'm proud to be here". Another African learner at the same school, Monde, evinced

a similar idea that, “It’s not something I would wake up and say I want to go to school”. Lumke, a friend of Monde added, “But it is not nice because of this apartheid thing and what is happening” (1999:166). African learners would thus experience a sense of worthlessness. They would feel as if they had to sacrifice their real selves in order to be accepted in the school. They would then develop a negative idea about themselves and their worth as human beings.

4.9 Participants’ futures

The last theme in this section concerned how participants viewed their future in South Africa in terms of belonging to different race groups. Responses from participants followed expectations as the African learners were very optimistic about their future in South Africa because of the affirmative policy followed by most companies to make up for the injustices suffered by African people in the past. They were also positive about their futures since Mountainside Secondary is a technical school gearing them towards a particular technical vocation. This translates into an education that prepares one for the future. As one African participant put it:

Good. I can start my own business in hair care.

An African boy stated, in response to the above question:

Successful. Skills I have will help me – Accounting and Computers.

I am also interested in Sports and Cricket to make it my career.

These findings seem to be echoed to a certain extent by Gaganakis in Freer (1991:83) in her study of desegregated private schools. She states of African learners attending private, predominantly White schools, “As a group, they will be relatively free to change their position in society and act in their own perceived interests, having some control over their labour activity in the future and a fair amount of choice within this country”. Gaganakis thus seems to feel that because of the black empowerment programmes instituted by the new democratic government, to address and find means to redress discrimination of the past, Africans, as a race group, will definitely be in a more advantaged position as compared to the other race groups. In terms of racial identity then, this would be an affirming experience for African learners.

The Indian and Coloured participants, on the other hand, voiced reservations about their future in South Africa. Many saw themselves going overseas to build a career for themselves. Coloured participants expressed the idea that previously they had not been white enough, while now they were not black enough. Indian participants felt that concepts like affirmative action (where a certain quota of workers had to be African) favored African learners, leaving them at a disadvantage. This experience would thus be

a negative one in terms of the construction of their racial identities. The following excerpts reflect their views.

I don't see a good future for myself in South Africa. Before I was not White enough, now I am not Black enough. (Coloured male)

Not a good future in South Africa. Indians don't stand a chance.

Africans are being given preference. (Indian female)

Maybe I have to go overseas. Jobs are very scarce. I am not the right race group. (Indian male)

The above responses show us quite clearly that African participants are very positive about their futures in South Africa since black empowerment favours them in the employment sector. Indian and Coloured participants, on the other hand, are pessimistic about what the future holds for them since they do not have as much of an advantage as African learners in black empowerment programmes.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with an analysis of the racialised narratives of a group of eight grade eleven learners at the school under study, Mountainside Secondary School. In their

descriptions of themselves we can deduce that participants are no longer exclusively using race as a marker of their identities. This dynamic is of interest to us in terms of what it reveals about learners in a post-apartheid South Africa; learners who previously could not divorce themselves from racial classifications.

In the next section concerning how participants are defining themselves, it became apparent that my sample group of eight learners is not adhering to old traditions of naming themselves. Rather, they are seeing themselves from a broader perspective, as being part of a South African or African diaspora. It can thus be gleaned that participants are beginning to weld themselves into a national consciousness, the rainbow discourse, rather than restricting themselves to narrow enclaves of race.

In addition, my study of eight learner participants reveals that participants are confusing culture with race. They equated their race group with certain cultural practices and failed to see that culture does not necessarily equate race. If a White person, for example, follows Hindu traditions of worship, this does not necessarily make the person Indian.

The fourth section dealt with participants' perceptions of their relationships with other learners. Most of the participants interviewed in my study expressed very positive views about interacting with other race groups. They did not see insurmountable barriers to communication among the various race groups. Although participants expressed the

above views, when probed further they revealed that there were underlying currents of conflict. This occurred mainly between the Indian learners and the African learners.

Moreover, the stereotypes named by participants in my sample group revealed how learners saw each other. In keeping with the idea of learners getting along better with other race groups than was seen at the beginning of desegregating schools, it was also noted that participants do not view it as imperative to identify with a particular race group. They felt that this would impede the work of striving for a more integrated society.

Finally, my research concerning a sample of eight grade eleven learners reveals that the Indian learners comprising the majority at the school under study enjoys a more advantaged position in the school, especially in view of the policy of assimilation followed by the school. On the other hand, African learners felt that in the new spirit of black empowerment in South Africa, engendering practices like affirmative action, they were in a position of advantage and felt very positively about their futures in this country.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Conclusion

The study that I embarked on looked at the construction of racial identities of a group of grade eleven learners at a technical school in Chatsworth. The challenges and threats faced by learners in the construction of their racial identities were also examined. A semi-structured interview method was used to gather data. The research site comprised Mountainside Secondary School, a technical school in Chatsworth. My sample consisted of eight grade eleven learners chosen randomly from the grade eleven population of learners. The following paragraphs describe the key findings of the study.

1. All eight participants did not use race as an identification marker. Only when I probed did they talk more about their racial identities.
2. Participants in my study did not confine themselves to narrow definitions of themselves in terms of the race group they are classified into. They are embracing wider definitions of themselves and refusing to limit themselves within constraining boundaries.
3. Participants are equating race with culture although these are two very different concepts. The Indian participants felt that praying in a specific way or dressing in Eastern garments made them Indian. The African participants felt that having a particular

style of dance like the Zulu dance identified them as being African. One can see the difficulty in defining race according to culture in the example of an African man who might sing Hindu hymns beautifully. This does not necessarily make him an Indian.

4. Participants in my study also noted the fact that certain styles of dress were followed by particular race groups. Indians, for example, sported expensive gold jewellery, Coloureds liked wearing Levis jeans and Africans favoured expensive designer labels like Lacoste. Thus it can be seen that racial identity is being defined and characterized by the fashion that young people choose to wear. Dolby's (2001) study of a desegregated school in Durban discovered similar strands. She also found that learners belonging to different race groups used fashion as markers of racial identity.

5. Contrary to what I believed, participants looked at interaction with other race groups as an opportunity to be seized in order to facilitate better relations among the various race groups attending the school. As one African participant stated, "We are all treated equally. I don't have a problem. I am proud of being African".

6. Many participants in my study felt that racial mixing at the school under study was a positive experience for them. Christie's (1990) study also found similar threads in her research as participants in her study voiced support for racial mixing in schools. One of the reasons why learners are becoming more accepting of learners belonging to other race groups could be because of the changed situation in schools today. Learners have spent much time getting to know each other in desegregated classrooms and have learnt to

understand each other. In terms of racial identity formation this would be a positive experience for African and Coloured learners since they would be accepted and not feel as if they are different or strange as compared to other learners.

Another reason for learners embracing each other could be because of interventions by educators aimed at fostering inter-racial relationships, and the whole concept of a “rainbow nation” or one integrated family of races living in unity with each other.

7. A contradictory strand in my study though, was that there were pockets of quite intense racist, unaccepting attitudes towards other learners. In terms of racial identity formation this would be quite unnerving for learners targeted by inter-racial conflict, and could lead to them developing negative ideas about themselves and low self-esteem.

8. The data also revealed that participants readily discussed racial stereotypes of each other. The stereotypes, discussed in chapter four, revealed that there was a power dynamic operating at the school under study. The Indian learners in the school enjoyed the most power and in terms of identity construction this would be an affirming experience for them. Coloured and African learners, on the other hand, were the recipients of negative stereotypes thus this would be extremely damaging to them in terms of racial identity construction. They would feel excluded and alienated in the context of school. As Vally and Dalamba (1999:62) state, “Many reports from researchers who visited schools and interviewed learners speak of learners being alienated and marginalized”.

9. My study revealed that the Indian learners in the school, comprising the majority, felt that in terms of race they were at a distinct advantage as compared to learners from other race groups. Vally and Dalamba's (1999:58) study also found that the dominant group, constituting the majority in the school in terms of race (in their research Whites constituted the dominant race) enjoyed advantages denied to the subordinate race groups comprising the minority in the school. This type of dynamic would impact negatively on the racialised identities of the subordinate group members. In this vein, Vally and Dalamba (1999:58) quote a subordinate group member (African) as stating, "If a white kid has done something wrong it comes and goes but if a black kid does it lasts forever".

10. Lastly, African participants forming the subordinate and minority race group in my study felt that there was a great future for members of their race group in South Africa. This then, was an affirming experience for them, in terms of racial identity. The majority of the Indian and Coloured participants felt that the future did not look too good for them in South Africa. They, in fact, looked to future lives and career success in overseas countries. In terms of racialised identities these participants do not feel valued in the new South Africa.

5.2 Recommendations

The focus of my study was identity, more specifically racialised identity. However, throughout my study, issues of racism, inclusion and exclusion surfaced. I feel it appropriate that the following suggested recommendations based on my modest sample

of eight grade eleven learners, be implemented at Mountainside Secondary School. I hope that these recommendations will, in some way, address the problems discovered during this study

1. Firstly, the transformation of education has seen many major changes come into being to remove the vestiges of racism bequeathed by the former apartheid regime. Structural changes have led, for example, to desegregate schools. What has been neglected though, are programmes assisting teachers to deal with the diversity in terms of race, which they experience everyday in their classrooms. Neither nationally nor provincially are there initiatives to assist learners develop anti-racist and anti-discriminatory awareness in the school. Thus there should be carefully planned programmes from the provincial departments to address the reality of racism apparent in schools (Carrim:1998:318).

2. Another recommendation is for the school management, staff and parent governing bodies to re-examine the idea of only certain primary schools being allowed to send learners to specific secondary schools. When this practice is followed schools continue to only admit learners of a specific race group. This concept is sometimes employed as a device to prevent African learners from enrolling in certain schools (Vally and Dalamba: 1999: 73).

3. School fees constitute another area, which courts controversy as far as desegregated schools are concerned. Many African learners cannot afford the high school fees set by certain schools and it deters them from enrolling in these schools. In some schools

increases in fees result in heightened racial conflicts. The school fees model should thus be re-examined (Vally and Dalamba, 1999:73). Fortunately, the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, has foreseen this problem and advocates not charging school fees at certain schools, in the future, in order to ensure that every learner has fair access to educational opportunities.

4. One of the participants in my study, in discussing solutions to racial conflict, stated that racism should be a constant topic of conversation in classrooms. There should be constant dialogue in controlled classroom environments allowing for learners from both dominant and subordinate race groups in a school to air their views. In this way, negative ideas can be discussed and knowledge gained through interaction can help to eradicate many of the racist, discriminatory practices in schools. Perhaps this kind of dialogue can be factored into part of the curriculum.

5. As mentioned previously, there are many contradictory strands running through my research. In order to arrive at more conclusive findings, the research could be done on a larger scale incorporating more participants. A quantitative study could be done concurrently and participant observation could be employed to gain a better understanding of participants in the research process. These methods, which involve triangulation, could perhaps remove some of the contradictions apparent in my study.

CONSENT FOR VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Racialised Narratives

The Construction and Experience of Racial Identity among Learners at a Desegregated School in Chatsworth

Dear Participant

My name is Kasambal Govender and I am a Masters student in the School of Education, at the University of Natal, Durban. Since the dismantling of apartheid and the opening of public schools to children of all race groups, the atmosphere at schools has changed. I am interested in finding out how racialised identities are constructed in desegregated schools. You are one of eight participants in my study and I would like to seek your assistance in gaining information concerning my study.

Please read the information below and sign the following form to indicate that you are willing to participate in this study.

- As part of this study you will participate in interviews.
- The information gained during the interviews will be used in the dissertation. The information will be presented either as direct quotations of your experiences or as reported transcripts by the researcher.
- The experiences which you discuss during the interview will be included in my Masters dissertation and may be included in manuscripts submitted for publication in academic journals.
- You may withdraw from participating in this study at any time.
- In signing this form, you are giving me permission to use the information gathered as described above.

I, _____
Have read the information given above and agree to take part in this study under the conditions stated above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

If you have any further information please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr Dennis Francis on (031) 2603490. You are also welcome to contact me telephonically on (031) 4098781.

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