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Stories of Transition in South Africa

Sophia Rottmann

Maastricht University College, sophie.rottmann@posteo.de

ABSTRACT

The apartheid system in South Africa lasted for forty-eight years before being abolished in 1994. Codified within the structure was economic and political discrimination that put the population into a hierarchy of four classified races: white, coloured, Indian and black. The outcome was a spatially and mentally divided society. Today, South Africa is faced with the task of levelling out not only economic inequalities but also psychological patterns related to race. In this research, I apply a life history approach to understand how it was to live during the transitional phase in South Africa. Inspired by critical race theory, I examine the various ways of experiencing transitional South Africa based on the narratives of seven research participants. I draw on Pierre Bourdieu's concept "doxa" to illustrate how, in their childhoods, participants took for granted racial segregation and the white supremacist ideology. Through a nuanced examination of the participants' struggle with the "hegemonic condition", I further illustrate that this acceptance played out in complex ways. I then turn to Victor Turner's theory of "liminality" to demonstrate how the post-apartheid space of uncertainty enabled individuals to challenge their commonsense assumptions so far. Throughout this paper, I show that the force of apartheid was so strong that mentalities were only able to shift following the dramatic political transformation of the abolition of apartheid.

INTRODUCTION

In 1948 the ruling National Party (NP) enforced “apartheid” in South Africa. This was a system of racial segregation along hierarchical lines. Besides the harsh economic and political inequalities that this systematic discrimination produced, it further strengthened the white supremacist thinking on which colonization was founded. Like in other colonial countries, questions arise: How was a presumption of white supremacy and the subordination of colonized people maintained in society? Moreover, how do the structures of domination diminish in within the post-colonial/independent state? Today, a generation that remains understudied when it comes to apartheid are those born during the transition phase. The adults belonging to this generation were born in the 1970’s and 1980’s and are therefore old enough to remember how apartheid racialization played out in their everyday lives. At the same time, they were young enough to accept the changes that started to take place with its abolition in 1994. In this way, they were able to reflect more critically on their upbringing in the wake of apartheid than most of their parents. These young adults – who are now aged between 28-40 are the focus of my research. I take a life history approach, with the aim of learning how it was to grow up both during and in the wake of apartheid. I specifically examine to what extent individuals perceived their society as racialized during apartheid and in turn explore how they reacted to the challenges that came after apartheid.

Inspired by critical race theory, I examine the complexity behind racialized living in transitional South Africa. The first part of the analysis focuses on the participants’ narratives of childhood during apartheid, while the second part focuses on their lived experiences in the wake of apartheid. In this section, I draw on Pierre Bourdieu’s concept “doxa” to illustrate that the participants took racial segregation and white supremacist ideology for granted during their childhoods. I also engage in a nuanced examination of the participants’ resistance towards the dominant discourse. Through this, I illustrate how the participants’ acceptance of the racialized “doxa” played out in difficult ways. In the second section, I turn to Victor Turner’s theory of “liminality” to examine the shift in commonsense thinking so far. Herein I specifically examine the different ways in which white and black participants reacted to the space of uncertainty that emerged in the wake of apartheid. I conclude by showing

that the force behind the apartheid regime was so strong that a political transformation was needed in order to disrupt the atmosphere of acceptance so far. Before I begin the analysis, I offer a contextualization of South Africa’s apartheid followed by a description of my theoretical framework and an outline of my methodology.

CONTEXTUALIZATION: THE SHAPING OF A RACIALIZED SOCIETY

A detailed exploration of apartheid in South Africa is beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, I offer a brief summary of the central features of apartheid. In 1948, the National Party won the South African elections by a slim majority under the leadership of Daniel François Malan (Ross 1999). Once in government, a project of social engineering was put in to motion that would secure white supremacist ideology on which colonization was founded (Seidman 1999). The minority white population (20%) legally secured its supremacy over the majority black (75%), Indian and coloured population (5%) (Seidman 1999). A set of laws was passed that enacted racial segregation of all South Africans. In 1949 mixed marriages were prohibited and in the following year the Immorality Act was enforced, which banned all sexual contacts between whites and all other South Africans. The Population Registration Act (1950) enforced the classification of people to one of the following racial categories: white, coloured, Indian and native (later 'Bantu', i.e. black) (Worden 2000). Soon after, under the Separate Amenities Act (1953) public facilities such as schools, parks, libraries, and restaurants were divided along racial lines (Thompson 1996; Worden 2000). With 1948 legislation, reserves that were enforced in the 1913 Land Act¹ became so-called "homelands", for black South Africans. Following this, blacks could work in (white) South Africa, but could never acquire citizenship there. The state-induced segregation led many South Africans to internalize the need for social distance (Worden 2000). The society became racially segregated in social, economic and political spheres. Significantly for my research, the physical segregation had psychological consequences. This is mainly exhibited in the internalized differences that whites and blacks perceived in themselves (Thompson 1996). Given the oppressive history of racial segregation in South Africa, I now turn to analyse the complex ways in which racialized living played out during the transitional period.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS: CRITICAL RACE STUDIES, DOXA AND THE SPACE OF LIMINALITY

Critical Race Studies

Throughout my analysis, I draw on Critical Race Studies (CRS) to examine the multifaceted nature behind racialized

living in transitional South Africa, which is communicated in the participants' narratives. Crenshaw (1995), a leading figure in critical race theory, argues that only by looking at the narratives of those who lived under legal systems of supremacy can we understand how certain ideologies could maintain power (Crenshaw et al. 1995, xiii). 'Whiteness studies' is a subfield of critical race studies in which whiteness is examined as a social space of structural advantage (Twine, 2006). Increasingly, scholars within the field have been calling for a more nuanced analysis of whiteness, as new studies challenge the assertion that whiteness is still invisible (Steyn 2001; Giroux 1997).

The South African scholar Melissa Steyn (2001) cautions us not to theorize whiteness in a way that makes it synonymous with being racist. Instead she argues for a layered account of this position through which "an understanding of the true complexities of white sway can be understood" (Steyn 2001, xxxi). In her work on the "epistemologies of ignorance", Steyn (2012) applies this nuanced approach in examining the childhood accounts of both black and white South Africans. Steyn argues that studying both whites and blacks requires a "constructive engagement with the past" (2012, 22), which acknowledges the shaping of their different racial identities. I draw on Steyn's contributions to critical race studies throughout this paper.

South African critical race scholar David Theo Goldberg (2008) stresses that racialization must be used with reference to the historical and political circumstances of a specific region in the world. He offers a nuanced approach, explaining that in South Africa racial segregation was the most dominant indication of a racialized society (Goldberg 2008). Although skin colour had legal implications under apartheid, it still continues to be the primary reference point that influences how people behave and are perceived today: "it sites and restricts, it announces and delimits, it allows and disables" (Goldberg 2008, 302). Moreover, the legalization of white supremacy through apartheid created a society in which race was naturalized and white privilege was normalized (Goldberg 2008). In a similar vein, when I speak of "racialization" or a "racialized society" I address the uneven "race-inflicted social situations" (ibid., 67) between white and non-whites in South Africa that were formed during apartheid and continue to have implications today. When I use the terms 'hegemonic/dominant discourse' I refer to the dominant nature of the racialized society. Michel

Foucault (1995) explains the dominant discourse as a way of speaking and behaving in a society that reflects the ideas of those who have most power. Hence, in the South African case, the dominant discourse was shaped by the above named ideas of white supremacy and a hierarchy between the races. When I use the term 'supremacist ideology', I am therefore making an ideological reference the dominant discourse.

A further concept I will use throughout the paper is that of the "racial Other". In post-colonial writing authors such as Homi Bhabha (1994) characterized the Other as a mystification, or an unknown and unpredictable identity different from that of the hegemonic subject. In this article, I use it a reference to someone who has a different race to the subject.

Bourdieu, Hall and the Doxa

In his works on everyday "practices" French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1990) provides a conceptual framework that helps make sense of the accepted racialized society under apartheid. Bourdieu coins the term "doxa" to explain a constructed vision of reality that is so naturalized that it appears to be the only version of reality. The doxa is a set of "commonsense assumptions about the world through which individuals interpret and make sense out of events" (Bourdieu 1977, 159). Notably, the concepts that shape the doxa need not be linked by logical relations, but are rather bound by customs and regular patterns that characterise the everyday life as it is (Bourdieu, 1977). As Bourdieu explains, the doxa is accepted precisely because it is assumed as the norm and is already "instilled by the childhood learning that treats the body as a living memory pad" (Bourdieu 1990, 68). In other words, the doxa is a paradigm in which socially and culturally constructed ways of perceiving, interpreting and behaving in a society are perceived as self-evident, i.e. natural from early childhood without ever being uttered (Bourdieu 1977). Bourdieu states that the doxa is only made explicit when a competing or divergent discourse is introduced, most often in the context of cultural contact or at times of political and economic crisis (Bourdieu 1977, 168).

In claiming that the idea of "taken-for-granted" is based on contradictory notions, Stuart Hall (1986) confirms the notion that the doxa deceptively appears to be natural, when it is in fact constructed. As Hall explains: "common sense' is not coherent: it is usually 'disjointed and episodic', fragmentary and contradictory" (Hall 1986, 21). Beyond illustrating the illogicality

behind the doxa, Hall explains why it is important to acknowledge the taken for granted discourse:

"Why, then is common sense so important? Because it is the terrain of conceptions and categories on which the practical consciousness of the masses of people is actually formed. It is the already formed and "taken for granted" terrain, on which more coherent ideologies and philosophies must contend for mastery; the ground which new conceptions of the world must take into account, contest and transform, if they are to shape the conceptions of the world of masses and in that way become historically effective." (Hall 1986, 20)

Following Hall, it is important to acknowledge that that which we perceive as common sense is in fact constructed. By recognizing the makers and signifiers of this construction, we create the space to challenge and deconstruct the views of masses of people. It follows that by identifying the making and acceptance of the racialized doxa in South Africa, we can better understand the possibility of challenging the status quo. Recognizing the ambivalent nature of the doxa allows for a nuanced examination of the research participants' behaviour in their everyday lives.

Turner's Conceptualization of Liminality

At this point the British Anthropologist Victor Turner's theory on 'liminality' becomes relevant. Turner's conceptualization of liminality provides a framework through which to understand the possibility of a shift away from the accepted paradigm. The space created immediately after the abolition of apartheid mirrors what Turner describes as liminality: "the moment when the past has lost grip and the future has not yet taken definite shape" (Turner 1992, 133). Liminality refers to a middle state, a stage of transition or an intermediate state of being "in between" (Turner 1992, 48). It is a space in limbo, which characterises rights of passage – anyone and anything goes. Herein, individuals are stripped from their usual identity and their constituting social differences while being on the verge of personal or social transformation. In other words liminality represents a period in the life of a subject (a state, an individual or a community) during which any assumptions about the subject's identity are extinguished through the exposure of its inherent instabilities. In this way, the space of liminality is the window of opportunity in which the doxa can be challenged.

While the latter phenomenon indicates a realm of accepted practices that regulates expected behaviour, the former signifies the moment where ‘anything goes’ (Turner 1992, 48).

Leaning on the critical race approach throughout my paper, I begin by exploring the extent to which racialization, and more specifically, racial segregation and white supremacy, were accepted or seen as the doxa in my participants’ lives during apartheid. In a second section, I examine the participants’ struggles with the hegemonic discourse in light of the ambiguous nature of a doxa. In a third section, I turn to examine the shift in common sense thinking so far in light of the newly born space of “liminality” in the wake of apartheid.

METHODOLOGY

Life history research is an approach that draws on the stories and experiences of individuals to make broader contextual meaning (Cole & Knowles 2001, 20). In trying to understand the complexities of the lives of a few individuals, the researcher also generates insights in to the wider social context (Cole & Knowles 2001; Walker 2005, 44). I use the life history approach, as it provides a practical method for examining how it was to be an individual growing up during transition in South Africa. In interpreting the participants’ accounts of their racialized experiences during and after apartheid, I produce a new level of sense-making. This interpretation is also informed by intended and unintended messages that the respondents communicated about what they perceived to be natural or good relations between different races. Because my goal is to capture different accounts of what it meant to grow up in transitional South Africa, I do not try to quantify data in terms of how widespread a specific narrative is. Having said this however, each of the patterns that I discuss throughout the analysis was supported by at least two of the respondents.

The ethnographic research includes seven in-depth interviews with black and white South Africans between the ages of 25 and 40 (three white males, one white female and three black males). The participants were raised in different parts of South Africa (Johannesburg, Plettenberg Bay, Cape Town, Free State, Durban, Limpopo, Hermanskraal and Bophuthatswana); three had lived in two different locations during their school years. All participants left their home neighbourhood for university or work at one point in time. This research explores the individuals’ family and neighbourhood biography as well as their lived experiences in school, university and/or work and day-to-day. I focus on this age group for two crucial reasons: Firstly, these individuals went to primary school before apartheid was abolished and were old enough to remember the political transition and secondly, they are young enough to not have been fully socialized under the old system, allowing for a reflection on their position in the new South Africa. I interviewed the research participants during an exchange semester in Stellenbosch, South Africa. The participants were selected through different means. The majority of the participants were acquaintances or contacts of people whom I knew. Others were selected through serendipity while I was travelling. All the participants’ names

have been changed in order to guarantee privacy. The interviews range from one to one and three quarter hours and were all captured using a tape recorder. Additionally, the research is informed by several informal conversations, which I had with black, white and coloured individuals who fall into the same age group.

THE RACIALIZED DOXA

Accepting the everyday as natural

“That’s what I remember, they were the working force. They were not among you in the community. If they lived with you, on your residence, they lived on the outside in their own cottage ... if they wanted to go to the bathroom, they would go outside and use their toilet. They don’t [sic] use the house toilets, cause that’s where we go. They’d do their own stuff. They’d make their food on their own and they’d eat on their own” - Alfred, white, 27

The above quote concisely captures the commonsense acceptance of the racialized doxa during apartheid. Black people were accepted as living entirely separate from white people, only to be seen in white communities as the working force. Nearly all research participants recognized racial segregation during their childhood years under apartheid and took it for granted. Throughout the narratives of their childhood environments, each participant could describe patterns or customs in which division, discrimination or inequality between black and white were accepted. Moreover, in many childhood accounts, the advantage that white people enjoyed was accepted in such a way that it seemed unrelated to black people’s disadvantage. In this way the white supremacy was naturalized, a façade was created in which “the groups were perceived to be naturally complementary, the exploitative nature disguised” (Steyn 2001, 18). In line with Bourdieu’s theorization of the doxa, the participants’ acceptance of the racialized apartheid paradigm appeared as a “pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world” (Bourdieu 1977, 159).

Ben, white, is 34 years old. He grew up in the Free State, formerly the “Orange Free State”, which remains known for its patriotic racism (Worden 2000). Like most white families in this area, Ben’s family were cattle and maize farmers who relied on black, cheap labour. He describes his neighbours, family and friends as “very much racist and Christian and capitalist ori-

entated”. Growing up during a time of workers’ unions’ protest and revenge killings in this part of the country, he experienced a lot of apartheid upheaval first hand. When Ben was 15 years old, his brother’s car was hit off the road by a taxi⁴ and he was then shot dead while driving home from town. Ben’s family interpreted the murder as an act of hate, which only strengthened the already established antagonism towards blacks. In the waning years of apartheid, his family held a big safe with “a lot of food, arms, grenades and bullets” to prepare themselves against the ‘black peril’ that threatened to erupt in light of political transition. Ben is referring here to a general fear that the so far well-controlled large black population would turn violent against the white population and take over political and military power leaving him and his family at the black people’s mercy. When I asked Ben to explain the relationship between his white family and their black workers he said:

“But always, there was clear lines [sic]. They weren’t allowed to go in to the living room for example. I mean to clean, but not after hours. None of the men from the field were allowed to come in to the actual house. So, but we had a good relationship because, I guess, no one was really aware of any difference. Even from both sides.”

“Workers were being really respectful to my dad. He was a really good farmer, if you can perhaps understand that in a racial setting. It might sound kind of atrocious to you... But yes, minimum wages, um, they received minimum wages and received maize for free from the land”

“But, our workers, mainly black people, lived about a kilometre from our house. They lived in mud houses; we lived in our big houses with swimming pool and everything.”

As Ben soberly narrated the “clear lines” that kept his black workers from entering the home, I realized that he and his family perceived themselves as honest people within the system. They lived abidingly entrenched within the lines of racial segregation and white supremacist thinking, or the doxa of apartheid. The normality of these divides that Ben claims both his family and their workers to have perceived can be interpreted in light of Marxist scholar Georg Lukács’s (1923) writing on the consciousness of the proletariat. Lukács claims that the ideology of the bourgeoisie is projected onto an objectified working class, thereby preventing the proletariat from attaining consciousness about their position (Lukács 1923). By this I mean that the

relationship between Ben's family and their workers was disguised to appear as a relation, not between people, but between things. Both the dominating group as well as the working class accepted their respective roles within the capitalist framework. This allowed Ben's family to exploit cheap black labour and enjoy the material privileges of their race in good faith. Simply by observing the racial division at home, Ben accepted the nationally constructed way of behaving in society. The norm in his environment was that blacks cannot cross into the private zone that belongs to whites, except for working here (Throop & Murphy 2002; Bourdieu 1977, 166). Ben's internalization of the apartheid structures led him to mistake the objective structures of the doxa as natural.

Ben's internalization of these divides is expressed in the sense of superiority he developed as a child. While narrating his childhood to me, Ben explains his relationship to the black labourers' children with whom he would play:

"As a kid, I copied my dad in kind of paying them when they go back home [sic] (...) because they played with me. Cause I saw them like my kind of workers."

The depth of Ben's feeling of superiority is underlined by the fact that he continued to have a casual relationship with these friends, but always perceived himself as being dominant. In Ben's story, it becomes clear that his family's workers were objectified in such a way that they did not appear human to him. Instead, their relationship mirrored that of Lukács' description as a relationship between 'things'. This is especially highlighted by the fact that Ben saw his playmates as his workers and paid them for their time.

The naturalness of racial segregation, which Ben's account portrays, takes on a different dimension in the childhood narratives of most black participants such as Kotlano. Unlike most white participants who came across their racial Other as children, Kotlano, like most black South Africans (Steyn 2001), never met a white person as a child. I meet Kotlano in front of 'Amazink', the bar that he manages in the township Kayamandi just outside of Stellenbosch's pristine city centre. When I asked him for his age, Kotlano hesitated at first, asking me for my own estimation. Once I told him my guess (28) and explained my research a little bit (at his request), he conceded his age: 34. He began by telling me that he grew up in a black township outside of Durban. His life is characterized by the death of his father,

after which he lived with his grandmother for a few years until she also died. Upon this he was left alone to live in his father's house at 13 years of age. While he occasionally saw whites at a distance, for most of his childhood they existed, ironically enough, on the "black and white" television screen. He recounts:

"My neighbourhood was full of black people. No coloured, no white. The first time I started seeing white people was on TV. But it was black and white, we called it the newspaper, you never really know [sic] what a white person looks like."

When I ask him what he recalls about the images of white people on television, it becomes clear that he too perceived white advantages over black Africans as a natural fact:

"I saw white people in their cars, it was not easy to see a black man driving in those days. They have [sic] cars, they have money ... I can say they have rich lifestyles."

Steyn (2004) takes up this notion of white prosperity as natural in her research on white South Africans. She explains that the white social position was facilitated by the construction of "race". The phenotype race, indicated through markers such as skin colour, became a way of naturalizing economic and political relationships in racial societies. Hence, an idea was supported that inequalities were the result of endogenous, genetic inequalities between the "races" (Steyn 2004, 121). Enmeshed in a daily struggle to survive, Kotlano did not feel that segregation was anything significant or had an impact on his life. His sober recollection of his childhood memories is evidence of this:

"A thing I noticed for sure was the bus thing. We couldn't use the same buses as white people, own taxis, own toilets, something like that. (...) The pubs were white pubs, black pubs. Black people used the train."

While he remembers factors through which segregation played out, he does not consider these significant. At no point, did Kotlano make a link between his own poverty or neglect and the deprivation of civil rights to black people during apartheid. Neither did it bother him that white people were what he perceived as wealthy in comparison to him.

As the accounts of black individuals reveal in Steyn's work on ignorance during apartheid, black people experienced their childhood "the way it is" (2012, 18). She continues to explain that pro-active resistance against the system was overshadowed because "formative broader social, political and economic

dynamics [are] rendered invisible at the level of ordinary, daily life” (Steyn 2012, 18). Like other black and white participants, Kotlano perceived white privileges as natural. The link between black disadvantage and white prosperity that remains invisible to him is in line with the supremacist thinking that whites are higher human beings than the indigenous black population (Steyn 2012; Steyn 2001, 24).

Kotlano does not consider that things would have been different had he been white, or been part of a society with social care or free and accessible education for all. Instead, he takes the difficult position he endured as a child for granted. In this the racialized society remains an insignificant feature that neither influences him nor leads him to develop racial resentment. For Kotlano the fact that his life as a black person was separate from that of a white person was not noteworthy, as his daily life was determined by regular customs such as the use of ‘blacks-only’ buses (Bourdieu 1977). While many black participants perceived racial segregation from afar, many white participants such as James were much closer to it.

Even though James Bentham, white, 38, had more contact with his racial Other than Ben or Kotlano, he too perceived the racially segregating hierarchies as normal. Growing up, James, lived in what one may describe as usual circumstance within the apartheid paradigm: his white family owned property, in his case a lodge, which required a large non-white labour force to maintain. Bentham’s workers lived in walking distance to their lodge on the same property as them. Unlike Ben, however, James considered the coloured children who he grew up playing with as his friends. The difference in his case was that his family was what James terms “white liberals”, who were engaged in an ideological battle against the apartheid regime. As such, the Benthams approved of their son’s non-white friendships and took an attitude towards non-whites that was not obviously derogatory or racist. That being said, James grew up along racialized lines nonetheless. He went to an English, white, primary school in the white city of Plettenberg Bay, unlike his coloured friends who attended the non-white township school in their neighbourhood. He enjoyed the privileges of a good education, a comfortable home and a secure future outlook that was guaranteed to whites. His comments about how he at once perceived and failed to perceive apartheid shed an interesting light on how one comes to accept the doxa:

“I think it was so ingrained in culture that you don’t notice.”

“Because you don’t see [sic] it. You see black people, you see townships, you have a black nanny, like but because you’re in South Africa, it doesn’t seem odd in any sort of way, it’s like, ‘that’s what it’s like’ ”

Notably, in these two accounts James makes a contradictory statement about his perception of racial segregation. On the hand, he claims that he did not see or notice apartheid because it was part of everybody’s culture. On the other hand by identifying black people or the black nanny, he is able to report on racial segregation in townships, in the workplace and at home. As he continues to narrate, he realized that the cleaners at his parent’s lodge were black, while people who worked in the leading positions were white. The fact that James did not consider the racial hierarchies in his environment as odd is testimony to the naturalization of the racialized doxa to him.

The manner through which James comes to accept both the racial segregation but also white supremacy in his surroundings is in line with Hall’s understanding that ideologies work most efficiently “when our formulations seem to be simply descriptive statements about how things are (i.e. must be), or of what we can ‘take-for-granted’” (Hall 1983, 26). As Steyn (2001) acknowledges, many white South Africans became aware of their society as racialized through their association with black domestic servants, farm labourers and their children. The norm was established in structurally asymmetrical relationships and unequal ways of interacting (Steyn 2001, 87). Significantly, because racialized living dominated the discourse in school, at home and in the public sphere of their childhoods, nearly all participants perceived this reality as normal, as banal. It follows that James came to consider his racially asymmetrical surrounding as natural through visual statements about how things were without feeling the need to question them.

Ambiguity in commonsense

“I remember feeling like ‘something is really wrong here’” -
Lizzy, white

Although most participants perceived the racialized society during apartheid as natural, their narratives were speckled with moments of resistance towards the dominant discourse. In his research on the racial identification of white people in Detroit, John Hartigan (2000) advocates a critical race approach

towards understanding racial identities. Hartigan shows that by considering the contradictory and ambiguous aspects in white racial identification one is able to achieve a more nuanced understanding of whiteness. Following Hartigan, the fact that there are no other terms than racist (or antiracist) to make sense of racial perceptions of people is proof of the limitation of our analytical language (2000, p. 388). Therefore, it becomes all the more important to note the ambiguous interpretations that people voice in matters of race. In a similar vein in her work on German racial identities Müller (2011, 625-626) indicates that by “concentrating on moments of ambiguity and confusion” in research participants’ narratives one can better understand how individuals struggle with the “hegemonic condition”. Through the identification of moments of reflection or struggle with the hegemonic doxa in the participants’ accounts, it becomes apparent that the accepting attitudes towards the racialized society were not as straightforward as it appears. Consequently the ambiguous nature of the racialized doxa is disclosed.

Whites and Struggle

From a distance it is not difficult to tell that Alfred, white, 28, is a rugby player. He jokes that he began playing rugby before he could walk and is a fierce fan of the Springboks, the South African national rugby team. He grew up in a protected, white environment in the suburbs of Johannesburg, which he considers racist in the modern sense: “not the old apartheid racist, but the more modern type ... they will greet the guy, but they don’t like the guy”. While his parents were not necessarily vocal against apartheid, they donned a so-called colour-blind attitude, which they tried to pass on to their son. Notably, however, this attitude was considered too lenient in Alfred’s surrounding environment. The racially stereotypical attitudes of his suburban neighbourhood and the segregated realities of his school convinced him of the hegemonic discourse. He re-calls the comments made by his friends’ parents:

“It’s only blacks that steal, only blacks that do this (...) you’re playing rugby with a black, why is a black guy playing rugby? Isn’t he supposed to play soccer?”

Alfred continues to explain:

“After a while you realize that it’s not true... you feel sorry. I played rugby with a lot of black guys and I learnt a lot about their culture (...) But people say, ‘hey look listen here, look, this is what the paper says.’ And it’s hard to

ignore the facts (...) So it was hard to ignore the facts and you got brainwashed a bit.”

What Alfred remarks here is his struggle with the hegemonic discourse. Having played rugby with black South Africans, he got to know his racial Other through their common interest of playing rugby and was relatively open towards them. Nonetheless, while he was open towards the black rugby players in his team, he continued to hold stereotypically racist attitudes towards black South Africans outside of school. He continues to explain that he kept black people at a distance for a long time.

The resistance towards the ‘hegemonic condition’ that Alfred portrays is taken up by Steyn (2001) in her account of ambivalence within racial learning. On the one hand, white racial learning is accompanied by a commonsense, a casualness that is internalized with your race position. On the other hand, this privilege is weighed down by a discomfort or uneasiness that has to be repressed in the process of socialization into a racist society (Steyn 2001, 88). As Alfred made clear, while he sensed that the stereotypes were not true, he suppressed this intuition. As Steyn (2001) explains, many white South Africans were confronted with their race in situations that made them feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. Yet, instead of giving these feelings space and reconsidering the taken-for-granted structures, they suppressed these feelings (Steyn 2001). In a similar vein, instead of further developing his sympathy for black people, Alfred let himself be convinced by what is presented to him as facts about blacks. The struggle, which Alfred displays in this narrative, is significant, as it shows that his attitudes towards blacks were informed by the overwhelming racist discourse of the time. In line with Hartigan (2000), diagnosing Alfred’s account as simply ‘racist’ does not do justice to the ambiguous perceptions that he has of black people. Instead, accounting for his struggle reveals the challenge in abiding by a racialized doxa, which is by nature ambiguous (Hall 1986).

The force of the hegemonic discourse becomes especially salient in the narratives of white liberal participants who grew up with a counter-discourse in their home environment, meaning that their close family members denounced apartheid at least in private. When confronted with the expectations of white supremacy in public, they struggled to follow their own non-racist intuitions. This struggle sheds a crucial light on their behaviour, as it shows that they too acted in line with racial seg-

regationist expectations when they faced hegemonic pressure. It also points to the stringent force of the racialized doxa. Lizzy's story is valuable in this regard.

Lizzy Thomas is a 28-year-old white woman with short blond hair and a lively disposition. She is nearly as excited about the interview as I am and pauses often mid-sentence, giving me the impression that she is in constant reflection about her narrative. Her childhood account sheds a different light on the struggle with the hegemonic discourse than Alfred's does. Similar to James, Lizzy grew up in a liberal home and had many non-white friends on her family farm. In this way, she grew up within a counter-discourse, in a home that was vocal against the apartheid regime. When she was eight years old, her twelve-year-old twin cousins came to live with her family, because their parents were supporting underground ANC movements. Known for having coloured friends, she was marked as an outsider in her English school. As she explained: "I was on the periphery to that whole social scene (...) I hated, hated, that school". Not aware of any racial segregation in her home, she claimed to have come face to face with apartheid when her coloured friends and her white friends would meet. In this way, she too was confronted with her society as racialized, when these two "worlds" collided. In a pivotal event, Lizzy described how the sensation of shame made her feel self-conscious about her friendships with coloured people. In this incident, she brought her best friends from the farm to a school event, where everybody else was white:

"I felt this sensation of shame. And I wasn't sure what I was feeling this shame about (...) I just felt like I was completely ... you know when you kind of lift out of your body and feel completely uneasy? (...) I remember feeling like 'something is really wrong here'... It was that kind of sensation. I became quite self-conscious because of my relationships with these kids."

Hence Lizzy finds herself in a situation in which her own world of coloured friends collides with the mainstream segregationist ideology that governs her school environment. Under the gaze of the white community, she is made aware that she has violated the school's codes of conduct and is acting out of place (Bourdieu 1977; Probyn 2004). Lizzy's reaction to this incident exhibits the strength of the racialized doxa, as she decides to conform to the rules even when she feels uncomfortable about

them. As she continues to explain, this experience made her feel like a fraud in front of the white community and her coloured friends alike. She is self-conscious about her friendship with coloured children and senses that something is not right. All of these sentiments led her to change her relationships altogether, in a way that ironically coincided with the hegemonic expectations. As Lizzy explains:

"My behaviour towards them [coloured friends] was changed. It was separate. I just went with the sense, which was, 'just keep your lives separate, otherwise...' (...) So, I couldn't relate to them naturally because I was aware of how fucking awkward the whole thing was. If friends came here, [to her home] it was totally fine. We all played together. But like socially going out in to the world ... we just didn't."

Clearly, Lizzy's incident of shame made her feel insecure about the relationship with her coloured friends. Faced with the racialized society and its hegemonic expectations, Lizzy struggled to stand up for the non-segregationist attitudes that she learnt at home. Instead of challenging the racialized expectations that she senses from her school environment by continuing to bring her coloured friends "out into the world", she decides to withdraw her friends from this environment altogether. Lizzy's compliance with segregationist expectations shows how strong the hegemonic discourse was. As Hartigan (2000, 390) explains, far from being a reflection of a "monolithic ideological condition", displays of confusion about racial judgement can be seen as an "active effort" to make sense of racially-laden situations. In line with this notion, her decision to separate her two worlds should not be seen as a racist act on her behalf. Instead, it can be seen as proof of the ambiguous nature of the doxa altogether. As Hall (1986) highlights, the doxa is shaped by incoherent features, which albeit presented as natural, are in fact based on a project of social engineering.

The Conscious Young Black Man

The 1970s Black Consciousness' Movement (BCM) led by the charismatic medical student Steve Biko was a step in promoting black identity amidst the psychological alienation that black youth were undergoing at the time. According to Biko, blacks increasingly felt disconnected from their own land, culture and language under apartheid as their white rulers forced them in to submission. Biko's (1979) observation that the black

man under apartheid had internalized racial inferiority is in line with the white supremacist ideology of the racialized society. As Biko (1979, 31) explains, the black man has “become a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave”. Biko (1979) makes a call for the reclaiming of black dignity amidst a black psychological identity crisis. Biko (1979, 14-15) explains the essence of the BCM as: “the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetuate servitude”. Significantly, however, none of the black participants appeared to have reached the stage of internalized inferiority that Biko speaks about. The subtle resistance that I observed in the black narratives notably coincides with the zeitgeist of transitional South Africa: It is a symptom of black resistance. The black participants’ resistance towards some white supremacist expectations or sense of ease around white people in their childhood are markers of the disjointed nature of the doxa (Hall 1986, 21). Hall’s accentuation of the doxa as episodic and fragmented is especially revealed through Alex’s narrative (1986, 21).

Alex Tobhane, 38, is a tall charismatic black man with a distinctly English accent. He speaks fondly of his brothers who are both tennis players today and admirably of his parents who worked hard to provide their family with a “good home” and “good education”. Alex’s experiences are curious in that he belonged to the first generation of blacks that was allowed to go to a white school in the 1980’s. While living in a township in Hamanskraal, his parents decided to send him to a private convent school in Pretoria that was dominantly white. Hence, by the age of seven he was exposed to his white racial Other in school, and lived around other black children at home. At the age of ten, his family moved to the northern homeland Bophuthatswana, where he said: “apartheid didn’t exist”. He describes his first impressions of going to school with white children as a “culture shock”, in which his biggest challenge was learning English. Having overcome the language barrier at primary school, Alex quickly started to feel comfortable around whites. He saw himself as equal to whites from an early age and never came to sense the racial inferiority that blacks of older generations felt. In the following quote, Alex explains how the black children from his neighbourhood were timid around white people, while

he could relate to whites easily. He sees the reasons for this in his early contact with whites:

“The black kids in my neighbourhood would shy away from white people. Whereas for me, it was pretty natural to be with whites.”

Alex’s description of his ability to interact with white people as pretty natural goes against the white supremacist expectations. His attitude illustrates the mental shift that many black South Africans undertook towards the end of apartheid, signalling the first markers of rupture against the racialized doxa. The fact that Alex went to school with white children indicates that he did not grow up within the standard “systems of dispositions” that shape the racialized society (Bourdieu 1977, 161). In this way, his attitudes were opposed to the larger values and codes of conduct that formed racial segregation during apartheid (Bourdieu 1977). This in turn, shows the faultiness or “disjointed” nature of the doxa, as he does not comply with segregationist expectations (Hall 1986, 21). The experiences of Odingo, who grew up around blacks only, shed a different light on black resistance towards supremacist expectations than Alex’s story does.

Odingo is 28 years old, has a kind character and speaks in streams of consciousness, which prompt me to interrupt him repeatedly. He sees himself as belonging to a generation in his village that was never subject to apartheid. Unlike his much older siblings who are still cautious towards whites because of their experiences of racism during apartheid, he claims to see things differently. He says that he is open-minded towards people of all walks of life, and got to know his Dutch girlfriend during an exchange semester at Wageningen University. He grew up in the heart of the north-eastern region of Limpopo, where there were no white people to see for miles and miles. To him, religion, culture and tradition began to dwindle as symbols of identity when he was a child. He tells me that he was often surprised by his parents’ ways of thinking. When I ask him what he means by this, he recounts an incident of his early teenage years, when he accompanied his father to his work at a construction company. Typical of Odingo’s elusive manner of talking, he does not mention race as the issue in the following story. However, as we were talking about apartheid and the shifting mentalities between his and older generations, it becomes clear that the story has a racial undertone. Odingo recalls being really surprised by how

submissively his father acted towards his white employer at the company. He describes his initial perception of the interaction between the two grown men:

“I didn’t see it equal (...) it was skewed. I didn’t know what was happening (...) I was observing it and thought ‘hey’, I thought, ‘something is a bit off, I am not sure what it is’. I thought my dad was putting himself down. Personally, I didn’t think he needed to. Cause it was two people working together in a sense (...). The relationship was not balanced.”

As Odingo explains in this quote, he did not feel that the interaction between his black father and his white employer was equal. While he does not mention race here, his discomfort with the story in light of our conversations makes me certain that Odingo observed his father acting inferior towards his employer because this man is white. He continues to explain how he confronts his father who does not want to talk about the incident. Odingo’s overall reactions suggest that he did not feel inferior himself and did not see the need for his father to act this way either. Interestingly, while Odingo acknowledged racial segregation in his life (he lived in a village with blacks only, while “white people lived in towns”), he struggled to comply with supremacist ideas that consider white people superior to blacks. In line with Hartigan (2000), Odingo’s resistance towards the position of internalized inferiority shows his unwillingness to succumb to racist judgments. Against Biko’s claims, neither Alex nor Odingo claimed to feel ‘lesser’ than their white Other. This can be seen as a consequence of the era during which the participants grew up. While the blacks that Biko appeals to in the 1970’s are those who have internalized their ascribed position of subordination following centuries of domination, my participants can be seen as members of the black male avant-garde. Significantly, while many of the white participants felt superior, none of the black participants felt inferior. This is interesting, because many black adults that feature in these stories, such as Ben’s black workers, or Odingo’s black father, show signs of an internalized inferiority. It appears, therefore, that the black participants don’t view themselves (or their race) within the apartheid doxa of racial inferiority as their elders did. Their divergent thinking towards their own race corresponds to Hartigan’s evaluation of moments of resistance in white people’s narratives. Following this, people’s hesitation

to conform to a discourse “challenges the claims to validity of ideas and ideologies” (Hartigan 2000, 389).

On the one hand, the struggles that both black and white participants had expose the doxa as an ambiguous construct (Hall 1986). This is especially true in cases such as Alex’s when individuals are put in circumstances in which the normative patterns of conduct are ruptured. On the other hand however, these moments of struggle were not enough for the participants to challenge the racialized doxa altogether. Most of them continued to live within the confines of the racialized society or were left alone with their rejection of white supremacist ideas. In the next part of this paper, I return to this issue within the framework of a shifting commonsense of South African society.

THE SHIFTING OF COMMONSENSE

“This is one of those moments in a historical process where change is so far-reaching, but also so accelerated, that one may catch the process of social construction “in the act”, as South Africans shape narratives of social identity that will provide bearing in previously uncharted waters” (Steyn 2001, xxii)

Steyn’s quote is a reference to the abolition of apartheid. As she indicates, the changes that took place in this period were swift and steady at the same time, making it possible to watch the process of social construction as it happened. Whether South Africans embraced the changes that came about, or feared the uncertain future that lay ahead, apartheid structures were disrupted (Seidman 1999). The Bill of Rights radically improved the political freedoms, employment and educational opportunities that Black South African youth can expect to enjoy (Norris et al. 2008). Visible changes in South African schooling, public facilities and other aspects of the racialized societies took place (Worden 2000). In this way, the crisis, which Bourdieu considers as necessary in order to make the doxa explicit, is represented in political transition in South Africa. In line with Throop and Murphy (2002), the South African doxa was only foregrounded through the introduction of a divergent discourse – the new constitution – in 1994. The space that emerged in the wake of apartheid mirrors what Turner describes as liminality: “the moment when the past has lost grip and the future has not yet taken definite shape” (Turner 1992, 133). Caught up in this moment of uncertainty, participants’ lives lost their taken-for-grantedness. Most white participants started to see the inequalities on which their privileges were based and reacted with remorse. In turn, most black participants developed positive ways of dealing with ongoing racism and increasingly detached from essentialist notions of blackness.

Whites and remorse

“At some point, everyone realized what was really going on, how messed up it really was.”-Lizzy, white

Several authors have documented the sentiments of remorse that white South Africans have felt in the wake of apartheid (Steyn 2001; Walker 2005; Vice 2010; Kossew 2003). In her work on white people in the new South Africa, Vice (2010, p. 323) asks “how can white people be and live well in such a land with such a legacy (...) in which the self is saturated by histories

of oppression?” Before being able to take any appropriate action, Vice argues, whites must become aware of the position of privileges that they occupy. In line with these findings, the space of liminality evoked guilt and shame in the white participants, as they came to learn about the magnitude of crimes committed under apartheid. Some participants were especially disenchanted by their whiteness when they realized that they or their families had participated in the wrongs of apartheid. In this manner, the space of limbo was characterized by an exposure of the instabilities that formed their white identities (Turner 1969).

Lizzy, the young white woman who had grown up on a lodge with coloured friends, was faced with white guilt as she became increasingly aware of the direness of apartheid throughout her university education. While she was studying sociology in Grahamstown in the early-2000’s she started to read about the levels of disadvantage that black people in South Africa experienced. Even though she was aware of differences between white and black people (“white people have more money and have black people cleaning their houses and that’s a bit weird but it’s the way it is”), she had no idea about the nature of these disparities. As she began to travel and see “kids with flies in their faces starving to death on the street”, or learn about how South African police moved hundreds of blacks out of their homes, “like cattle”, she began to feel guilt. The feeling, which Lizzy describes as “being privileged by chance”, reached a peak when her childhood friend, who is coloured, died in her mid-twenties from heart failure. Lizzy is adamant that if she, a white woman, had been the one with the medical condition, she would have received an earlier diagnosis and better treatment. She explains:

“And I suddenly thought ‘fuck, if that was me with a hole in my heart I would probably still be alive.’ (...) You start feeling how unfair everything is. You just happen to be born into a family and that’s what you get given. And your friend who you grew up with happens to be born in to another family.”

The notion she refers to here is white privilege. This denotes the idea that white people gain advantages by virtue of being constructed as whites (Sullivan 2006). Moreover, the privileges are accrued even when subjects do not recognize that their life is made easier for them (Vice 2010; Sullivan 2006). The benefits of whiteness, which consist in the occupation of “a

location of social and economic structural privilege,” are significantly based on a historical legacy of inequality and exploitation (Vice 2010, 6; Alcoff 1998). The immediate response that Lizzy has to the realization of her white privilege is white guilt.

Following Vice (2010), guilt is a feeling directed outwards in response to harm that one has brought about. Lizzy feels that her well-being was secured unfairly by the colour of her skin, which is emphasized by the understanding that her coloured friend was deprived of certain benefits. In recognition of the privileges she has because of being white, Lizzy feels somehow accountable for the injustices committed by whites in South Africa.

In contrast to guilt, shame is directed toward the self in response to what one is. One feels shame as a response to having fallen below one’s own standards (Vice 2010). Ben, the white male who played paying his black childhood friends because he thought he “owned them” found his white identity being challenged through the sensation of shame. It was only at the age of 21, when Ben went to work in London, that he made friends with a black man for the first time. It was then that he came to question his stereotypes and condemnation of non-whites. He came to question the values that he grew up with. Ben recalls the pivotal moment when his stereotype of black people was challenged.

This happened while he was working in a biology lab with a Nigerian who was as qualified as he. What shocked Ben was that for the first time in his life, he could speak to a black person who understood him “the same way as a white person and vice versa”. Startled by the ease with which he got along with his black colleague, Ben was brushed with a sense of unease, which can be interpreted as shame: “Then I realized, wow there is something different here... something’s not right here, I’m not used to [this].” This notion of shame is confirmed in the feeling of discomfort that Ben felt when he returned to his home in the Free State and consciously took in racist remarks of members of his home community for the first time. As he explains: “If I hear someone say or tell a racist joke I feel uncomfortable and want to say ‘wake up, you’re not superior!’ ”

In her article on everyday shame, Probyn (2004) explains that shame has the ability to disrupt routinized actions and therefore makes it possible to evoke everyday ethics (ibid. 334). In the past, Ben had no reason to sense shame, because his

accepted views conformed to the racialized doxa. His stereotypes were confirmed through the selective evidence within the limits of what he describes as a racist home environment. It was only when his accepted beliefs were constructively challenged that he felt shame. In accordance with Probyn (2004), this somatic reaction has the ability to challenge how he perceives his everyday. Ben now begins to question his racist upbringing. As he explains, “in the beginning there was a lot of arguments, fights (...) I was trying to say, ‘just wake up!’” As with Vice’s (2010) definition, Ben’s shame responds to something that he is. He does not feel guilt, but rather feels ashamed for having held views, which once exposed, turn out to fall below his own standards.

Blacks and new identities

In Frantz Fanon’s controversial work *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961, the author proposes a sort of manifesto of violent uprising for colonized people. Similar to the situation under apartheid, Fanon’s explains that the colonized world is characterized by physical and psychological segregation between oppressors and oppressed. The manner in which the colonizer treats the native is characterized by such dire violence that this aggression accumulates in the colonized people over time. In this way, violence becomes both the legitimate but also necessary means through which the native can achieve freedom and gain (back) a sense of worth: “The colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence” (Fanon 1961, 68).

Contrary to this compelling argument, however, my participants who belonged to the colonized race showed neither resentment nor signs of vengeance, let alone violence. Looking at the wake of apartheid in terms of liminality helps to make sense of this lack of resentment. It becomes apparent that in occupying a space in which the past is gone and the future has yet to be shaped, black participants are detached from essentialist notions of race and increasingly shape new identities. Far from being resentful, some of them have a dual vision, which enables them to live on in a country that is still imbued with racism.

The lack of resentment becomes especially salient when I ask my participants whether they have ever been subject to racism:

“I guess one incident was four years ago in the Eastern Cape when someone decided to kick myself and my brother out of a bar he didn’t even own - he was just a bar

goer like us! I felt sad for him that his world view was so limited.”- Odingo, black

Odingo, the young man who grew up in a small black village in Limpopo, clearly felt discriminated against in this incident. However, he does not show anger or resent for the racist attitudes of this man, but rather pities him. By showing some sympathy for his offender, Odingo reveals “double consciousness” (Du Bois ([1903] 2003). The American sociologist W.E.B Du Bois (1903) developed the notion of double consciousness to explain the dual vision developed by African Americans in the wake of slavery in the United States. Du Bois ([1903] 2003, 8) explains this feeling as a “sense of always looking at one self through the eyes of others”. In a similar vein, Odingo has become adept at reading the racist behaviour directed at him in light of the discriminatory framework of apartheid, which he sees as limited.

Similarly, Kotlano, who grew up in an abandoned township house in Durban, also portrayed this dual vision. He reported to have been subject to racism regularly, without developing hatred towards whites. On one such occasion Kotlano was kneeling over an injured drunk white student in order to help him treat a wound. Seeing this, the student’s father immediately responded aggressively, accusing Kotlano of robbing his son: “The father was saying that I am robbing him. He thinks I am robbing him, because I am black.” Even when the son told his father that Kotlano was only helping, he continued to push Kotlano away. While Kotlano felt particular anger towards this man, it did not lead him to general despise towards whites. Quite to the contrary, he does not buy in to racist stereotypes but rather adopts a cautious attitude towards this:

“When one black guy robs people, there is a saying that ‘black people rob’ and when one white person shoots someone, you say ‘all white people shoot people’. But it’s just one bad apple. So I am fine with white people.”

Despite having been wrongly accused of theft out of racist motivation, Kotlano does not develop counter-racism towards his offender. Although he grew up in difficult conditions during apartheid (he was left to survive on his own from childhood onwards), he does not feel resentful towards white people in general. His composed reaction to racism can be explained by Fassin’s (2013) account of resentment as the reaction to injustice, which maintains that people become resentful, angry

or bitter, in a response to what they experienced or imagined as injustice (Fassin 2013, 249). Notably however, the level of resentment on the side of the victim depends on the extent to which the individual was subject to violence and humiliation of domination. Leaning on the reactions of black ‘victims’ in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Fassin notes that the difference felt by individuals in the hearings was based on the sort of everyday experiences of apartheid in which they were embedded (2013).

This resonates with Kotlano’s account of his everyday life during apartheid. To recall, Kotlano perceived racial segregation as normal during his childhood and saw white privilege over black Africans as natural. Kotlano did not feel that he suffered any injuries under apartheid that would suffice to hold an entire race accountable for this. The moments of injustice that are evoked through racism may be harmful; however, as Fassin (2013) explains, they merely evoke resentment at the acting person and not at a larger project. Similarly, Kotlano notes that his offender was just ‘a bad apple’. His anger was directed at this man only and not the larger white race.

A further explanation for this apparent lack of resentment can be found in the position that this generation occupies. Bhabha (1994) coins the term ‘Third Space’, adapting Turner’s liminality to the postcolonial setting. He does this based on his claim that liminality is a mutable form of meaning-making that derives from the postcolonial condition (Bhabha 1994). The Third Space is therefore “the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (Bhabha 1994, 7). Bhabha (1994) celebrates the notion of “hybridity”, or the mingling of cultural signs between colonizing and colonized cultures, for its ability to go beyond the view that identities are essential. As Vayendar (2009) points out, the concept of hybridity is useful because it rejects the idea that colonized people are monolithic or have essential, unchanging features. Far from being weighed down by an essentialist obligation to avenge the black population, both Odingo and Kotlano can be seen as in the process of constructing new identities. Having been born under apartheid, but experiencing their adulthood in the post-apartheid era, they find themselves in the Third Space. Moreover, this position evokes in them a new African identity, which, being detached from essentialist ‘blackness’,

accounts for the lack of bond with the victims of apartheid.

Bhabha's (1994) claim that racial and cultural purity do not exist is best exemplified by Alex's narrative. The manner in which Alex views himself is characteristic of the new fluidity of black identity. To recall, at the age of 10 Alex moved to the MMabatho, the capital of the homeland Bophuthatswana. Like many South Africans who grew up in pre-dominantly black surroundings, he was not witness to everyday racism towards blacks (Worden 2000). As Alex describes himself, he does not feel like he grew up in apartheid because homelands were autonomous regions in which "there was no apartheid". After apartheid was abolished he moved to Cape Town where he was faced with racially segregated South African society. When I asked him whether he has ever been discriminated against, his lengthy response illustrated the fluidity of his identity and his ability to relate to people of different backgrounds. In this narrative, he explains the subtle racist ways in which white people react to his presence and how he in turn responds:

"I felt a lot of it [racism] in Stellenbosch because people here don't have a lot of exposure to black people. When they see black people, they look at them as if, you know, they're helpless kids... like they can't offer something to this conversation. But the more I start talking to people and the more the human interaction happens, because I am able to bring it, the more it falls away. (...) I kind of stand out as an individual.

So, yeah, I felt discriminated against all the time. But I don't have the same reaction to it as other people do, who grew up in apartheid. Let's put it this way, if I was fat and I was teased all the time because I was fat, it would be different than if I grew up skinny and became fat and was teased. So if I was teased as an adult, I would laugh off. You see I didn't grow up in apartheid, so I think the discrimination I feel is different. I was able to rise above it."

Here, Alex gives voice to multiple things. For one, Alex describes what Du Bois ([1903] 2003) has conceptualized as 'double-consciousness'. Indeed, he recognizes that racism must feel "different" for him than other people who have been subject to it their whole lives. Having grown up in a homeland in which "apartheid did not exist", Alex does not remember being subject to racism as a child. In this way, when he experiences racism today, he does not take it personally. Therefore, while he states

that he often feels discriminated against, he is able to situate his upbringing and that of others within the South African context.

Additionally, Alex's ability to adjust to different social situations is evidence of what Bhabha's theorizes as 'hybridity'. Bhabha argues that within the Third Space, we come to celebrate the articulation of difference. While the moment signifies uncertainty about the unknowable future, it more significantly creates "an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment" (Bhabha 2004, 24). In a similar manner, Alex celebrates his ability to contribute to conversations when people least expect it. He celebrates the fact that he stands out as an individual, thereby not affiliating with any specific group. In line with Bhabha's notion of hybridity, he feels that his unique experiences and position of understanding empower him in his interactions with other humans. In this way, he does not feel essentially linked to any culture or any race, but rather celebrates the fact that he is human.

CONCLUSION

I began my research curious to find out how it was to grow up during the transitional period in South Africa. I somewhat naively speculated that individuals would abhor the inequalities of their lives; I hypothesized about the revelations that people born during apartheid would have as the system was abolished. By listening to the narratives of seven unique individuals about their lived experiences in this time, I was astonished by the composed ways in which they talked about their upbringing. I quickly came to realize that far from being shocked or outraged about their racialized society, people talked about their lives as anybody else might anywhere else in the world: with a tone of acceptance that indicated the natural course of their lives. Throughout my analysis, it became clear that because the participants experienced their racialized society with such naturalness, only a systematic shift would disrupt their acceptance thus far. With the abolition of the legalized system of white supremacy, a space of uncertainty was born that helped foster such a shift.

Looking through Bourdieu's framework of the doxa was helpful in locating the naturalness of the participants' commonsense thinking in the dispositions of their everyday lives. It became apparent that both black and white participants were accepting towards segregation and saw white privilege as normal without bad intent. Some participants were so deeply entrenched in white supremacist thinking that they were convinced of their racial superiority, thereby living knowingly within the racialized paradigm. For most, however, the link between black disadvantage and white prosperity remained invisible.

Through a nuanced analysis of the participants' struggles with the hegemonic discourse, the multifaceted nature of their acceptance became more tangible. Most participants displayed moments of reflection or struggle regarding what was expected from them, which indicated that they did not fully agree with the supremacist expectations. The force of the hegemonic discourse was made especially salient through the childhood account of one white participant who grew up in a counter-discourse at home, but still felt the need to keep her white and non-white lives separate. In turn, the black participants' narratives showed that they were not willing to take on the roles of inferiority that were promoted through white supremacist ideology. Nonetheless, both white and black struggles showed that

the South African society was far from being inherently divided along racial lines. Instead, the ability for people to act outside of the expected normative behaviours revealed the ambiguous nature of the societal norms. On the other hand, however, these moments of struggle were not enough for the participants to challenge the racialized doxa altogether. In this way the force of racial segregation and white supremacy were so strong, that they could not be overthrown by personal struggles.

Instead, a crisis was needed that created a space of uncertainty through which previously accepted norms could be challenged and new identities could be formed. Faced with their racial Other on an equalizing playing field, or coming to learn about the direness of apartheid, many white participants reacted with remorse in the wake of apartheid. For them, the space of uncertainty exposed the instable structures on their white identities. Contrastingly, the black participants did not show much attachment towards the past. The possibility for them to have similar education to whites and accrue better life opportunities than their parents accounted for their lack of resentment and dissociation from essentialist notions of blackness. Remarkably, most of them developed a sort of 'double-consciousness', which allowed them to understand discrimination against their race, without developing racial resentment. Despite being subject to racism in their adulthood, they moved away from essentialist association with a 'victim position' and rather formed new 'hybrid' identities.

The participants' compliance with racialization during apartheid as well as their struggle to resist the dominant discourse reveals the difficulty behind challenging taken-for-granted ideologies in any society. The fact that their actions were filled with confusion and ambiguity is evidence of a personal resistance towards the constructed doxa. Moreover, it highlights the need for a nuanced approach towards subjects such as race and racism, as discriminatory behaviour does not necessarily result from racist conviction. Despite the little resistances, which the participants gave voice to, the force of the apartheid regime seemed to overshadow the possibility of change. It was therefore all the more crucial to have a liminal space in which personal positions of advantage or disadvantage could be considered and identities reflected on. In order for this space to form, however, it appears that a structural disruption – the political transformation of South Africa – was necessary.

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ENDNOTES

1. 1913 Land Act: Aimed at limiting the ability for natives, i.e. black South Africans to acquire land. Following this Act the black population, which made up 75% of the entire population at this time, could only acquire 13% of the entire land (Seidman, 1999, p. 422)
2. Homeland was a territory set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa and West Africa (now Namibia) as part of the policy of apartheid. Ten Bantustans were established in South Africa for the purpose of concentrating ethnic groups members (Beinart, 1994)
3. Orange Free State was part of the Boer Republic, a federation composed of several Afrikaans, Dutch speaking, self-governed states. Most of these states were established after Britain took over colonial power in 1835. The republic resulted out of the Great Trek during which hundreds of Dutch descendants trekked across the country in order to escape British administrative control (Seidman, 1999; Worden, 2000).
4. Taxis in South Africa are a means of collective transportation primarily used by non-white South African's.
5. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up by the Government of National Unity to help deal with what happened under apartheid. The Register of Reconciliation gave members of the public a chance to express their regret at failing to prevent human rights violations and to demonstrate their commitment to reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Website, 2014).

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