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Dominant Narratives of Whiteness in Identity Construction of Mixed-Race Young Adults in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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Abstract: Despite the relative freedoms gained after the transition to democracy in 1994 in South Africa, dominant narratives of Whiteness stemming from settler-colonial and apartheid legacies of White supremacy remain pervasive within all structures of post-apartheid society, including the identity construction and racialisation of first-generation mixed-race people. This research explored how dominant narratives of Whiteness influence the construction of identity among mixed-race youth in post-apartheid South Africa. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants who have one White parent and one parent of colour and were considered 'born frees', as they were born during or after the transition to democracy. Guided by critical race theory, through thematic analysis, three main themes emerged: defying Rainbowism, rejecting Whiteness, and policing identity. Ultimately, this research critically investigates how mixed-race people have constructed their identities while navigating pervasive power structures of White supremacy that continue to shape the rigid racial categorisations in post-apartheid South Africa.

Keywords: mixed-race; Whiteness; identity; racism; critical race theory; post-apartheid South Africa

1. Introduction

To grow up mixed-race in post-apartheid South Africa should symbolise the transcendence of racial segregation encapsulated in the Rainbow Nation ideology, proposed as a strategy for national healing at the end of apartheid in 1994. However, rigid constructions of identity and racial categorisations continue to organise society into rigid lines of archaic apartheid categories that seek to divide and conquer. The legacies of this oppression concerning race, class, and culture remain inextricably rooted in the South African experience. These stem from the systematic entrenchment of White supremacy through settler colonialism and apartheid.

Research in South Africa on mixed-race identity is currently focused on the experiences of those in interracial relationships and the effects of stigma and attitudes towards mixed families. Research by Childs (2015), Dalmage (2018), and Steyn et al. (2018) focus primarily on the experience of the interracial couple and their attitudes towards the identity construction of their mixed-race children. There are few examples of published work on mixed-race identity construction from their perspective. The research presented in this paper seeks to add to this limited field by investigating the identity construction of first-generation mixed-race South Africans and the influence of White supremacy in this process.

First-generation here refers to people who have parents of different races. This distinction is necessary to make because of the existence of the apartheid racial category of 'Coloured', a generalised group of people with a racially mixed heritage that includes slaves from Southeast Asia, indigenous groups such as those who make up the Khoe or San people, those who do not fall into the apartheid categorisations of White, Indian, Asian, or Black, and those whose mixed heritage stems from the violent nature of colonialism and apartheid or from 'illegal' interracial relationships under apartheid. Coloured identity can be considered a cultural and creolised identity stemming from hundreds of years of

heritage. Thus, a first-generation mixed-race person in post-apartheid South Africa, with one Black parent and one White, would not be considered Coloured because they have not inherited that cultural identity and historical legacy of that culture. These complexities are central to how first-generation mixed-race people navigate personal and public spaces within the context where they exist, outside of essentialised racial categorisations that aim to stagnate and limit their identities.

2. Background

Post-apartheid South Africa today remains a deeply racialised society. This legacy stems from centuries of Dutch and British colonialism, compounded by the apartheid regime. Centuries of people of colour's oppression by dominant White minority rule and dominant narratives of Whiteness have become entrenched in its social fabric. Although South Africa is not isolated in feeling the continued effects of colonial legacies (Steyn 2005; Mhlauli et al. 2015; Reddy 2015), dominant narratives of Whiteness continue to polarise post-apartheid society. To understand this racial legacy, it is essential to know where it began.

2.1. Apartheid, Colonialism, and the Legacy of Oppression

Colonialism in South Africa 'officially' began with the Dutch in 1652, leading to years of exploitation of the indigenous population. In addition, the arrival of British settlers in 1820 spurred a war for the 'right' to control South Africa, considered an important trade port at the time, between the two colonisers at the expense of the indigenous population (Mhlauli et al. 2015, p. 204). In addition, Mhlauli et al. (2015) argue that, due to the expansion of the 'science' of race, White settlers believed they were superior to the African 'native', thus contributing to vast expansion through the exploitation of Black bodies on the continent. Through these types of White settler colonialism, the concurrent theme of racial discrimination and White superiority remains a legacy.

This colonial legacy paved the way for policies and laws to formalise and regulate racial classifications and the forced separation of racial groups, extending into the apartheid regime, which enforced many racist and segregationist laws and further entrenched White supremacist structures. Only the most pertinent to this research will be mentioned here. Laws such as the Prohibition of Mixed-Marriages Act of 1949 (PMMA), the Population Registration Act of 1950 (PRA), and the Immorality Act of 1950 (IA), created at the inception of the apartheid regime in 1948, were explicitly used to separate people along racialised lines and to ensure the continuity of White supremacy. From the 'top' of the racial hierarchy to the 'bottom', the classifications are as follows: White (European), Asian, Indian, Coloured, and Black (Bantu/African).

The PRA was explicitly designed to ensure racialised racial classifications through registration to designated races. Posel (2001) argues that the purpose of the PRA was to ensure racial purity through a more rigid and 'orderly' system of racial classification of racially ambiguous people—such as fair-skinned Coloured people. Both Posel (2001) and Reddy (2001) argue that, due to this classification's rigidity, there was no room for ambiguity, thereby giving each classification distinct racialised descriptions and markers. The apartheid regime doled out privilege and resources based on their socially constructed racial hierarchy, thus entrenching the racial and socio-economic inequality visible in post-apartheid society. Other acts aimed at the racial and social engineering of oppression were the PMMA and the IA. The IA was an amended version of a 1927 colonial act that prohibited and criminalised engagement in inter-racial sex. The IA and the PMMA intended to prevent the 'immoral' act of inter-racial relations to preserve 'racial purity', specifically in the 'protection' of White purity; the policing of which extended into constant harassment and surveillance by police (Jacobson et al. 2004). In many cases, interracial couples faced rejection from families, friends, and communities, and others were forced into exile.

The legacies of sexualised racism remain critical to understanding attitudes about interracial relationships and the children produced in these relationships in post-apartheid

South Africa today (Moodley and Adam 2000). They argue that the conservative nature of sexual politics in post-apartheid reflects a social hangover of years of indoctrination of conservative governance regarding interracial relationships as well as marriage regulation. Outdated assumptions that mixed-race children will be confused due to the perceived cultural conflict between parents are often used as modern arguments layered over racist and purist thinking (Moodley and Adam 2000).

2.2. Post-Apartheid South Africa and Other Utopian Dreams

In post-apartheid South Africa, the narrative of the 'Rainbow Nation' and the 'born frees' became nation-building tools and, to a certain extent, remains a key driving force behind strategies of reconciliation and transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. At the turn of democracy in 1994, South Africa needed to take steps to ensure the healing and transformation of a society reeling from centuries of oppression against more than 80 per cent of its population. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) began in 1996 and would act as a space for South Africans from all levels of society to provide testimony of their oppression or acts of oppression during the apartheid era. Despite its limitations, Gqola (2001) argues that the TRC sought to foster a new sense of national identity to create a shared 'South Africanness' or the Rainbow Nation.

Gqola (2001, p. 98) argues that 'Rainbowism' became an 'authorising narrative which assisted in the denial of difference'. Here, Gqola (2001) argues that the narrative of the Rainbow Nation has become synonymous with South Africa and that, in its attempt to acknowledge difference, although superficially, it stifles conversation around interrogating racialised, gendered, and class-based power dynamics, especially in a system still regulated by White supremacy. Moreover, while this doctrine seems to have fostered a keen sense of national unity, Gqola (2001) argues that it has silenced engagement and discussion of racialised atrocities, in some cases to the point of denial of past injustices.

Beneath the debate about non-racialism in post-apartheid South Africa lies the danger of colourblindness, which fails to consider the deep entrenchment of institutional and structural racism and White supremacy. Baines (1998), Moodley and Adam (2000), Gqola (2001), Reddy (2001), Ansell (2004), and Mbembe (2008) all argue that, despite attempts at non-racialism through the ideology of the Rainbow Nation, racial identities have remained resilient in their continued existence and the importance placed on them. Thus, as Moodley and Adam (2000) argue, this guise of 'Rainbowism' has created a romanticised mirage of racial transformation in a country that remains utterly unequal, and racism remains alive and well.

Research on mixed-race identity within post-apartheid society is primarily focused on interracial relationships (Childs 2015; Dalmage 2018; Steyn et al. 2018). These authors highlight the legacy of apartheid laws that prohibited interracial relationships and their effect on how people perceive interracial relationships and how people in interracial relationships navigate their relationships. Steyn et al. (2018) note how interracial couples experience the policing of their relationship by others and the racial stereotypes projected on them as individuals. This is further exacerbated in relationships with one White person, where the partner of colour will find themselves in situations where they are the only person of colour, and stereotypes are projected onto them by White people in that space. The theme of policing is further supported by Dalmage (2018), who argues that interracial couples are often subject to 'border patrollers' who attempt to control and regulate spaces through policing stereotypical racial categorisations and the gatekeeping movement across these racial borders, showing the pervasiveness of racist apartheid thinking.

While Childs (2015) asked participants how they perceived interracial relationships whether they were in one or not, they noted that, across the board, participants seemed to support the idea that, in post-apartheid South Africa, interracial dating was accepted. However, despite their claims, participants spoke of pressures to date people of the same race and the potential isolation, ridicule, and alienation one could receive for being in an interracial relationship, especially with a White partner (Childs 2015). From these examples,

it is clear that there has been a focus on interracial families, but not on the perspectives and lived experiences of the children of interracial couples, nor has the role of entrenched structures of White supremacy on these children, as children or as adults, been considered.

3. Literature Review

This literature review aims to situate the impact of dominant narratives of Whiteness on the identity construction of first-generation mixed-race people within the South African context. The dominant narratives of Whiteness focused on throughout this paper stem from the legacies and entrenchment of White supremacy through colonialism, racialised science, and apartheid policies and laws. In addition, these narratives are prevalent in the construction of non-racialist ideologies such as the Rainbow Nation that continue to uphold White privilege while simultaneously invisibilising and minimising its harmful legacies. Finally, these dominant narratives of Whiteness are sustained through structural racism steeped in out-dated, racialised thinking and rigid racial classifications that remain policed and regulated in post-apartheid society.

3.1. Narratives of Whiteness

Steyn (2001, p. 21) argues that 'master narratives of Whiteness', fostered through European colonialism, 'both signified and legitimised domination, serving to oppress other articulations [that were not aligned to European narratives]'. Within the colonial ideology, the 'civilisation of the native savage' became central to justification. Steyn (2001) shows not only was erasing and rewriting the history of 'natives' essential to colonial undertakings but was also considered a 'moral duty'. Through this, the power to define the self and the other was limited to White people to attain and wield.

On colonial discourse and elements of class, Steyn (2001) argues that, while there were working class White people, they still benefitted from the advantages of Whiteness, although not in the same way. In addition, both Steyn (2001) and Conway (2017) argue that many of these benefits predicated on being a White male, which extends to the present day. Steyn (2001) argues that these ideologies have formed together to create and sustain master narratives of Whiteness through the deformation of symbolic practices to entrench domination and dependence, ensuring that processes of constructing meaning were based on dominant beliefs accepted without criticism.

The manufacturing of Whiteness and White identities during the apartheid era was done in conjunction with creating pockets of privilege, entrenched within the political economy of the time, that White people continue to benefit from today (Baines 1998; Moodley and Adam 2000; Dolby 2001; Mbembe 2008). This is especially the case in creating differential racialisation and categories of the 'other' in opposition to Whiteness. For example, using the term 'non-White' means to 'other' those who do not fit within those categories, thereby instilling a power dynamic of Whiteness as superior. Ballard (2004) argues that racial classifications were created to 'other' different races, where White, as an identity, is equated to White supremacism that ensures that Whiteness was attached to a positive image that reflected 'good' qualities. Therefore, Steyn (2005, p. 121) argues that Whiteness is 'the shared social space in which the psychological, cultural, political and economic dimensions of this privileged positionality are normalised and rendered unremarkable'.

Steyn (2001, p. 25; 2005) argues that White South Africans never entirely had comfortable assurance that they would remain superior in all aspects of life; thus, there was 'the fear of being overrun, the fear of domination, the fear of losing the purity that was supposed to guarantee their superiority, [and] the fear of cultural genocide, through intermingling'. Whiteness in South Africa was thus created within a destructive cycle of fear, anxiety, and control, resulting in harsh repression to abate these fears.

In post-apartheid South Africa, Mbembe (2008) argues that the current form of White supremacy takes on a different form. It previously focused on the entrenchment of Black 'inferiority'; now, it manifests in the denial that past racial injustice can be addressed, thereby

preserving and protecting racial differences to ensure that meaningful racial redress does not occur (Mbembe 2008, pp. 10–11). In this way, White supremacy in post-apartheid South Africa is maintained by both the supporters of apartheid and the White liberal.

3.2. White Liberalism

While it is true that some White South Africans fought against the apartheid regime and were part of anti-apartheid organisations, many authors, ranging from Steve Biko (1978) to Conway (2017), have discussed the limitations of this participation as Whiteness remains dominant in post-apartheid South Africa. In a collection of his writing during apartheid, *I Write What I Like*, Biko (1978, p. 21) defines White liberals as 'people who claim that they too feel oppression just as acutely as the Blacks and therefore should be jointly involved in the Black man's struggle for a place under the sun. In short, these are people who say that they have Black souls wrapped up in White skin'. Here, Biko discusses how White liberals who were active within various anti-apartheid organisations attempted to retain power through dictating strategy, supposedly on 'behalf' of Black people.

In another chapter, Biko (1978) argues that one cannot identify with an oppressed group in its entirety while enjoying the privileges of the continued oppression of that group, meaning that Whiteness is still privileged by the system, and this privilege is not something that a White person can escape. In the same vein, Biko (1978) warns that, for proper integration of society, the White liberal must educate other White people so that the process will run smoothly when the time comes to make changes in South Africa. Furthermore, Bradshaw (2014) supports Biko's (1978) argument that there can be no integration if it means the assimilation of one group to another, of which White people working towards anti-racism have been guilty.

By highlighting Biko's (1978) arguments, it is evident that the post-apartheid White liberal remains the same. Conway (2017) and Bradshaw (2014) argue that White liberalism in the present day denies complicity, however partial, in the apartheid regime, creates false knowledge about both past and present, and aims to discredit any critique of their racial privilege. Similarly, Steyn and Foster (2008) argue that 'White Talk' in South Africa facilitates the privilege of holding a dominant racial identity and the displacement of a diasporic person. White Talk, as argued by Steyn (2005), is used to deal with emotional dissonance and as a strategy to preserve privilege through the maintenance of the status quo; this is done by preserving inherited privilege and their centred positionality throughout history where they are placed in the dominant position to the 'other'.

Modiri (2012) notes a continuation of racial prejudice within post-apartheid South Africa, but because it manifests structurally, it often falls under the radar in areas such as poverty, crime, sports, language, and the renaming of public roads and spaces. Moreover, in Mbembe's (2008) discussion of denialism of White racism, he argues that many White people retreat into a comfortability of non-culpability for past injustices through ignoring their enormous socioeconomic privilege. Thus, through this denial, the White liberal claims that White racism is no longer responsible for the impoverishment of Black people and that, through 'uncritical acceptance', they are autonomously self-made and self-reliant (Modiri 2012, p. 238).

Modiri (2012, p. 238) argues that White liberals rely overly on the 'constitutional promise of formal legal equality'. As a result, many White people believe that no further action is required, as the law will ensure that equality will be created. Added to this, Modiri (2012, p. 254) discusses 'White backlash politics', that is, the 'legal strategies, rhetorical discourses and discursive habits, political mobilisation, conscious and unconscious practices and mindset by which Whites seek to preserve their interests and privilege status and justify disproportionate disadvantage suffered by Blacks'. Here, Modiri (2012) argues that the White backlash politics in South Africa today manifest in the belief of reverse-racism and call for colourblindness and merit. Moreover, Modiri (2012) argues that these backlash politics rely on the principle of non-racialism—espoused by the ideology of the Rainbow Nation and heavily grounded within White supremacy stemming from

settler colonialism—that seeks to, in new ways, maintain the enslavement, impoverishment, marginalisation, and invisibilisation of the majority of Black people.

Cornel Verwey and Quayle (2012), in their research on *Whiteness, racism, and Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa*, argue that there has been a downplaying of racism amongst White people, particularly Afrikaner White people, in a bid to distance themselves from the legacy of Afrikaans nationalism that was used as a means of indoctrination during apartheid. Verwey and Quayle (2012, p. 565) argue that many participants hide their racism and allude to 'racist comments' or 'jokes' and reserve these comments for in-group conversations or what they call 'braai place[1] politics'. For example, 'look, don't tell a K*[2] that he is a K* . . . he's a human being man'. Here, Verwey and Quayle (2012, p. 565) argue that this comment is deeply cryptic as the participant chose to use the K-word twice, rather than replacing it with 'Black man', suggesting that considering a Black man as a human being is reserved for public talk, and the use of the K-word as a descriptor remains within the private bubble of 'comfortable' racism.

Like discussions by Mbembe (2008), Modiri (2012), Steyn (2005), Bradshaw (2014), and Conway (2017), in Gqola's (2001, p. 101) exploration of Whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa, she cites Adrienne Rich's term 'White solipsism', which describes the propensity to 'think, imagine, and speak as if Whiteness described the world'. She goes on to argue that White solipsism is not the belief in racial superiority; rather, it is the limited view that experiences of people who are not White are not significant, as they do not speak to their reality, except for sporadic moments of guilt benefiting from a system that oppresses people of colour (Gqola 2001). White solipsism then exists within the discourse around White liberals and White Talk in present-day South Africa. This supports Mbembe's (2008) argument that White supremacy operates in a way that denies the atrocities committed during the past so that White people can continue to benefit from and not engage with the privileges they received as a result.

Arguments and contestation surrounding the White liberal and their role past and present are central to showing how Whiteness, in its construction of purity and protection of privilege, remains an influencing factor in the identity construction of people of colour. This is because the 'other' is constructed through the structural racism premised on upholding White supremacy. This is emulated through regulations of racial classifications, and racial identities created in this system were policed and controlled by the population themselves, not only the apartheid state. This is evident in post-apartheid South Africa and has been sustained through a societal policy of a country still intoxicated by fixed racial boxes and stereotyping.

3.3. Coloured Identity

For Coloured, Indian, and Asian people, according to apartheid law, they occupied a space 'between' Whiteness and Blackness, meaning that, by apartheid standards, they were considered 'more than' Black Africans, but 'less than' White people. Reddy (2001) argues that the broad range of categorisations of Coloured, meaning neither Black nor White, exposes the loopholes in the racial classification system. The apartheid government sought to sub-divide within the category of Coloured through the Population Registration Act of 1950. These categories were 'Cape Coloured, Cape Malay, Griqua, Indian, Chinese, "other Asiatic", and "other Coloured"' (Reddy 2001, p. 75). For a brief period, Chinese people were considered 'honorary' Whites. The category of Coloured had been used within settler colonialism and was reified through the apartheid regime (Scully 1995; Reddy 2001). Reddy (2001) argues that narratives behind racial classification were based on fixed rigid beliefs of 'pure races'—ascribed to White, Black, and some Asiatic, whereas Coloured people were recognised as 'mixed blood'.

Zimitri Erasmus (2001, p. 13) argues that 'growing up Coloured meant knowing that I was *not only* not White; *not only* not Black, but *better than Black*'. In addition, she argues that occupying the identity of being Coloured means a constant negotiation of choosing between Whiteness and Blackness and, through this negotiation, denying part of

yourself (Erasmus 2001). Erasmus (2001) argues that Coloured identity is based on cultural creativity and the creolisation of identity that has been shaped by a history of segregation and shame, rather than based on 'race mixture', which diminishes the history of Coloured people in South Africa. Similarly, Mohamed Adhikari (2009, p. 13) argues that 'Coloured identity cannot be taken as a given but as a product of human agency dependent on a complex interplay of historical, social, cultural, political, and other contingencies'. Both Adhikari (2009) and Erasmus (2001, 2017) argue that, in post-apartheid South Africa, racial debates have consisted of Black–White reductionism, thereby reducing Coloured people to faceless, agency-less bystanders to history. However, it is essential to note that Coloured people did experience a false sense of privilege within the apartheid racial hierarchy where they received better services than Black people and were often brought into corroboration with the apartheid regime, part of the apartheid government's plan to ensure the continued marginalisation of Black people while maintaining their policy of separate development (Ruiters 2009; Adhikari 2009; Erasmus 2001, 2017; Gqola 2010; Pirtle 2021).

Apartheid sought to establish legal and formal racial segregation to create races in relation to a 'uniform' identity. Coloured people have formulated a shared cultural identity from generations of this forced segregation that supersedes formal apartheid rule. This history provides Coloured people in specific locations with a shared historical legacy where their multiracial history has been forced into one racial category. For first-generation mixed-race people, they exist between two racial categories, and if the racial categorisation of one of their parents is not Coloured, they do not have access to the historical, cultural, and racialised legacy of Coloured identity. In this way, first-generation mixed-race people considered in this study straddle the line of Whiteness and the 'other' and, at the same time, challenge colonial and apartheid narratives of racial categorisations.

Ruiters (2009, p. 109) argues that 'all identities are constructed relationally, meaning that people act in response to the political and social realities when they define and redefine who they are'. In post-apartheid South Africa, constructions of racial identity remain a process of reclaiming and renaming to find new meanings. Constructions of identity are influenced by the political and socio-economic climate, compounded by decolonial thinking challenging White supremacy at an institutional and societal level.

3.4. White Supremacy in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Within post-apartheid South Africa, subliminal or overt racism continues to shape its social and political landscape through the maintenance of apartheid era White supremacy, where White elites continue to gain from the legacy of White minority rule. Modiri (2012, p. 247) argues that White supremacy within this context 'denotes a system in which Whites maintain overwhelming control and power not just in a material sense but in a symbolic sense as well'. In contemporary South Africa, discussions around Whiteness focus on its continued privilege, afforded by legacies of prolonged White minority rule (Dolby 2001; Mbembe 2008; Conway 2017; Verwey and Quayle 2012). As a result, Whiteness is often invisibilised (Dolby 2001; Steyn 2005; Mbembe 2008; Modiri 2012). Whiteness is not silenced or marginalised; rather, it is an omnipresent racial identity that privileges those who benefit from it and oppresses those who do not. What must be noted is that, while racial identity in South Africa has changed and shifted with changing social contexts, White supremacist structures remain entrenched in these changes.

Pirtle (2021) applies a critical race approach to understanding the influence of the state in re-making racial identity, with a specific focus on Coloured Identity in post-apartheid South Africa. She argues that the post-apartheid state has attempted to use non-racial and progressive language in their redress policies to redefine apartheid era racial categories. However, she found that this push for nonracialism was not effective in establishing racial equality, especially with remaking and re-defining the racial category of Coloured (Pirtle 2021, p. 155). Using the example of the inclusion of Coloured under the category of Black in policies of economic redress, Pirtle (2021) argues that this shows the apartheid state's role in the de- and re-formation process of identity, despite the role of individuals

in continuing to cultivate Coloured identity for themselves. Thus, Pirtle (2021) summates that this de- and re-forming process, the state's racial project of 'allowing a supposedly inclusive grouping to silence specific concerns about racial distinctions', changes the way that racial categories are considered in post-apartheid South Africa (Pirtle 2021, p. 156).

What Modiri's (2012) and Pirtle's (2021) arguments show is that there is a basis for interrogating racial categorisations and racialised structures in the post-apartheid context and that, despite emphasis on non-racialised legal and political policies, as Pirtle (2021) suggests, these interrogations can lead to a discussion about how racial categories can be undone and shifted through an analysis of the racial middle, referring to those who do not fit within mainstream racial categorisation, such as first-generation mixed-race people. I argue that first-generation mixed-race people not only disrupt dominant narratives of race, but that they also transcend the social context to construct their own racial identity that exists outside of existing racialised norms, despite the pervasiveness of White supremacist structures.

3.5. The Present Study

This paper interrogates how dominant narratives of Whiteness, stemming from settler-colonial and apartheid legacies of White supremacy, remain pervasive within all structures of South African society, including the identity construction and racialisation of mixed-race people, despite the relative freedoms gained in post-apartheid South Africa. It unpacks how first-generation mixed-race people engage in an identity that does not fit general categories of racial identity and how they are often forced to choose one racial identity, thus never being allowed to exist in the grey area between two rigid racial identities. I argue that first-generation mixed-race people not only disrupt dominant narratives of race, but they also transcend the social context to construct their own racial identity that exists outside of existing racialised norms, despite the pervasiveness of White supremacist structures. In this way, they inhibit both Whiteness and the 'other'.

Finally, this paper aims to show the complexities of racial categorisations and how mixed-race people in post-apartheid South Africa defy and challenge colonial legacies of Whiteness and White supremacy by considering their perceptions of the Rainbow Nation ideology, how they challenge White supremacy, and how they and others police their identity. The main question is then: How have dominant narratives of Whiteness influenced the identity construction of first-generation mixed-race people in post-apartheid South Africa?

4. Methodology and Methods

Semi-structured, in-depth, and open-ended interviews were used to conduct my research in this study. As questions were semi-structured and open-ended, the questions served as a guide, and participants were free to interpret questions as applicable to their experiences. Earl Babbie and Johann Mouton (Babbie and Mouton 2001, p. 289) argue that open interviews are 'essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent'. This method would give space for a conversation-like interview that flowed with a sharing of lived experiences, rather than a rigid, interrogation-like interview, limiting participants' responses and their comfort to share personal reflections. Participants were asked the same six open-ended questions crafted by the researcher. In addition, participants were given an interview information sheet and the interview questions before the interview, with sufficient time to consider and the option to resign from the process at any time, as stated on the consent form they signed. The study received ethical clearance from the Department of Political Science at the University of Cape Town on 17 March 2017. Original recordings and transcripts are stored safely, some of which cannot be shared due to anonymity clauses.

Sampling was based on a mix of purposive and snowball sampling. Participants were selected based on having one White parent and one parent of colour. Participants who were purposively sampled, totaling eight participants, were personally known by the researcher

through friend groups and physical location. The two participants that were snowball sampled were suggested by purposively sampled participants. In total, 10 participants were interviewed. The length of the interviews ranged between 1.5 and 2 h, so a large amount of data was recorded and interpreted.

Amongst participants there is a common thread of one parent who is White and another who is a person of colour, highlighting how dominant narratives of Whiteness might or might not influence their lives at a personal level. Five participants identified as female, while the other five identified as male. All participants were involved in some form of higher education at the time or were recent graduates. In the sample, there are two sets of siblings. Although participants did not have the same exact lived experiences, common themes emerged across all interviews. While I acknowledge the sample size and proximity of the sample to each other could be considered a limitation, I was satisfied with the information received from this limited sample, while accepting that future studies would benefit from a larger sample size.

All interviews were recorded with the participant's permission and stored securely. The age group of those born from 1990 to 1995 are considered to constitute the 'born free' era, as they were born during or after the transition to democracy in 1994. The 10 participants were between the ages of 20 and 25 when interviews took place, in 2017. Eight interviews were conducted in person, while two were conducted on Skype. All participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Table 1 provides the biographical information of the participants.

Table 1. Participant biographical information.

Participant Name	Racial Identity	Location (City Raised in)	Age
Aadilah	White Mother, Indian Father	Johannesburg	20
Ellie	White Mother, Coloured Father	Cape Town	21
Olebogeng	White Mother, Black Father	Johannesburg	22
Zwelethu	White Mother, Black Father	Johannesburg	21
Nadira	White Mother Indian Father	Johannesburg	23
Naharai	Indian Mother, White Father	Cape Town	25
Pramit	White Mother Indian Father	Johannesburg	20
Sem	Indian Mother, White Father	Johannesburg	22
Zandile	White Mother, Black Father	Johannesburg	22
Lesedi	White Mother, Black Father	Johannesburg	20

4.1. Researcher Positionality

In positioning myself, this topic stems from identifying as a mixed-race person with a Coloured mother and White father, wrestling with the struggles of understanding the effects of racialisation and the pressures of White supremacy on my own construction of identity. While I live and experience the cultural and historical legacies of Coloured identity, I am acutely aware of the privileges that my proximity to Whiteness affords me. I was born during the transition to democracy and considered to be 'born free'. I understand that having a personal stake in this research as a mixed-race person contributes to discussions within the interview process, in that participants might have been more willing to share their experiences with me because of my own identity. The mixed-race community that does work on mixed-race identity is small in the South African context, no participant was engaged in this work outside of social discussions. Mixed-race people often do not openly discuss their mixed-racedness with non-mixed-race people. As a result, many potential participants chose not to participate in the study, as they were not ready to share their experiences in such a platform. Thus, due to the limited amount of research on first-generation mixed-race people by first-generation mixed-race people in the post-apartheid context, I felt that this research topic provided an important contribution not only to the field but to others struggling with their identity.

4.2. Data Analysis

I conducted a thematic analysis of the interviews guided by critical race theory (CRT), a prominent theory used in discussions on race and racial identity. CRT focuses on understanding experiences of racism and racialisation within White supremacist structures and how these lived realities affect the intersections of the identities of people of colour (Delgado and Stefancic 2012). While based in a US context, CRT can be applied within all countries that experience dominant White rule and entrenched White supremacy.

In the South African context, Modiri (2012) argues that CRT is necessary to understand the presence of race within post-apartheid law, mainly because of the use of legislature by the apartheid government to enforce racial segregation and its lasting legacies. While his focus remains on the transformation of law, Modiri (2012, p. 233) locates CRT within the post-apartheid social sphere, arguing that CRT 'allows us to examine racial issues more critical and directly in the context of their socio-economic and political implications'. In addition, Modiri (2012) argues that, due to South Africa's violent and racist past, a CRT research lens can provide both a historical and analytical framework for engaging with issues of race in post-apartheid society.

Using CRT as a lens, after transcribing the interviews, I grouped together and identified common themes across the transcripts using qualitative coding techniques from the raw data (the transcript). Working from a large range of themes (eleven), I focused on the three themes, emerging through the thematic analysis, that addressed the role of dominant narratives of Whiteness in the way participants constructed their identities. Those three themes form the title for each section of the Results section: defying Rainbowism, rejecting Whiteness, and policing identity.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Defying Rainbowism

The Rainbow Nation ideology, or as Gqola (2001) calls it, 'Rainbowism', is often critiqued as being a narrative that has assisted in maintaining and encouraging colourblindness in addressing the various forms of apartheid-era injustice. Rainbowism has encouraged and romanticised racial transformation in post-apartheid South Africa (Moodley and Adam 2000). Under the ideal of the Rainbow Nation, which the 'born frees' would come to represent, racial categories and race labelling have not ceased into the colourblind façade of the Rainbow Nation. All participants, who have been labelled 'born free', expressed that they felt the Rainbow Nation was not a practical nationalist ideology to solve socio-economic and political issues that the majority of South Africans face, namely, poor Black South Africans. Below, Pramit situates the Rainbow Nation ideology within a critique of how it supports structures of Whiteness that seek to gloss over the historical violence of White supremacy under the guise of reconciliation.

> *What is being done by certain groups in society, most liberals, mostly Whites, we are being told that we are born free, and we live in a Rainbow Nation . . . now whose interest does that protect? If you manufacture this idea and this proposition that we are born free and we live in a Rainbow Nation, what you are doing is you're being ahistorical . . . it restricts you if you buy into resolving certain injustices of the past (Pramit).*

The Rainbow Nation narrative is considered divisive to addressing meaningful change and an overhaul of the racist legacies of apartheid (Moodley and Adam 2000; Gqola 2001). Woven through Pramit's sentiments is an assessment of Whiteness, mainly White liberals in South Africa. As Steyn (2001) noted, the use of White Talk to sustain a form of victimhood and distance from the responsibility of the past within post-apartheid South Africa, White South Africans become ahistorical in their thinking of the past, a process facilitated through the Rainbow Nation ideology. Thus, consequently undermining the experiences of historical and intergenerational trauma of the oppressed in South Africa, especially their experience of racism under a White supremacist system, a legacy of trauma of which first-generation mixed-race people find themselves in the middle. The symbolism of a rainbow, in itself,

projects unrealistic expectations for healing and forgiveness while not providing tangible means to do so. Olebogeng struggles with using the rainbow as a symbol, as he tries to relate and visualise himself in the national ideology.

> *The idea of the Rainbow Nation itself, it's a symbol of segregation because the colours are clearly defined in a rainbow, so when you say something is a Rainbow Nation, and that's what I've started to see growing up is that there are still these defined lines, whereas I don't see myself in that way, and I'd like to think that I don't see people in that way, that they are part of the Rainbow, which is why, it is kind of like my identity is aligned with that Rainbow or it's a mix of the Rainbow itself (Olebogeng).*

Olebogeng's point reflects how first-generation mixed-race people struggle to find a place within this supposed all-inclusive Rainbowism ideology, while maintaining the defined lines between colours, a metaphor for the continued rigidity of racial categorisations. The Rainbow Nation narrative is common among liberals in South Africa, particularly those who have enjoyed the benefits of the 'pot of gold' that apartheid provided to White South Africans. Perceptions of equality can be noted in Gqola's (2001) discussion about White solipsism, the belief that one's life experiences as a White person are universal to people of other races. Through this, acknowledging the past's structural conditions and atrocities are denied because it is not your lived reality. White solipsism and the Rainbow Nation ideology fail to understand that the racialisation of South African society is premised on race-, gender-, and class-based structural legacies that regulate and enforce the rigid categorisations of race that the Rainbow Nation itself was meant to challenge.

> *Someone being mixed race is sort of breaking the way that people categorise human beings. I don't know, it's fairly comforting that mixed-race people are basically the closest thing to just being people (Zwelethu).*

In this way, Zwelethu speaks to the underlying principles of the non-racialism that was prevalent in the struggle for liberation from apartheid while acknowledging how mixed-race people redefine, challenge, and define their racial identity. By advocating for existing, without enforcing racial categorisations, Zwelethu highlights the general responses of all other participants when their ethnicity, race, and culture are questioned. While their responses differed, they either felt offended or annoyed and often cultivated witty standardised responses; all participants simply wanted to exist without the pressure of constantly explaining their existence. First-generation mixed-race people in South Africa are often forced by others to choose one racial identity. Based on pigmentation and cultural experiences, many could not identify as White and are often considered Coloured. While Erasmus (2001) arguments are relevant to the participants' experiences in this study, particularly the feelings of insecurity of being 'neither Black nor White', many participants that do not have a Coloured parent discounted that they could identify as Coloured.

> *I go by mixed-race, and I think there's an important distinction in that because I think that race is not just a skin tone thing. I think race is also very cultural. So, even though I might present as Coloured, I don't think I could ever call myself Coloured, because I don't have that cultural background (Zandile).*

Zandile's comments speak to the intricate intersection of race and culture in South African society that is steeped within the multiple experiences of oppression faced by all people of colour in South Africa. All participants expressed the pressure of feeling that they had to 'choose' one racial identity, which is both limiting and exclusionary for first-generation mixed-race people. Many people of colour in South Africa wear their skin colour and witness the reactions that come with it every day; therefore, they do not have the privilege to 'choose'. This is also the case for mixed-race people, particularly those who are not racially ambiguous. Even if participants were to choose or move between racial boxes, they often find their 'choice' to be shaped by their current environment or is met with criticism because they do not fit into the stereotypical expectations of that particular box,

upheld by a system still heavily reliant on maintaining these boxes. However, mixed-race people's experiences of privilege and oppression cannot be homogenised.

> *Sometimes I feel like, as mixed-race children, that can sometimes be mistaken for understanding, making like we're the same, you need to understand your privilege as well. I still have that oppression of a Black person, and as much as I understand my position and I am privileged in a lot of ways, at the same time, there are things that maybe some people will never understand or never be able to understand . . . Everyone, as a mixed-race child, is an individual, and I feel that sometimes is forgotten (Lesedi).*

Here, Lesedi speaks to how lived experiences of those from particular racial backgrounds are essential when considered how people engage with their racial identities. Through her comments, Lesedi considers how colourblind approaches to understanding individual experiences of race and racism in post-apartheid South Africa can lose sight of these lived realities. The Rainbow Nation ideology has often been criticised for this lack of foresight and homogenisation of 'the South African experience'. These shortcomings are further expressed in Pramit's comments about the complexities of having a mixed-race identity.

> *You can't tell me to choose my race. It will be different, relative to where I am and who I'm with. And to expect me to choose a race as some people suggest mixed-race people should do is completely insensitive to my experiences . . . identity is fluid, and it's ridiculous to expect people to choose (Pramit).*

Pramit's comments highlight how first-generation mixed-race people straddle the grey area between racial categorisations, a reality that Rainbowism has failed to solve. The project of Rainbowism, in its colourblind approach, does not overhaul White supremacist structures rather, it provides Rainbow-tinted glasses to those who continue to benefit from this system. Rainbowism seeps into the construction of public and social spaces and can also be seen in the schooling system.

> *There was this auditorium in my high school, where there were two front entrances and one back entrance, and there was a whole apartheid education week. So, they had one door labelled for Black and one door labelled for White to show just how severe the segregation was . . . So, we'd pick what door we were meant to go in, and I just stood outside and I walked around the back of the auditorium, and I walked through the door at the back, and the teachers asked me, why did you do that, and I said because it's the only door without a sign (Zwelethu).*

In his schooling experience, Zwelethu shows how he challenged constructions of race in the post-apartheid South African landscape, which, across all spheres, remains heavily influenced and shaped by apartheid's legacy of racial segregation. It also speaks to how apartheid history is taught, which does not consider the nuanced experiences of mixed-race people, who existed despite the laws placed on controlling their existence. Racial categories were regulated through various apartheid laws based on various tests and 'scientific' or 'physical' attributes steeped in racist thinking. While some may 'pass' for a particular racial category based on their physical attributes related to specific racial categories, they understand that they never truly can claim to be a member of one specific racial category, despite the expectation of needing to 'choose' a side.

> *Once I started interacting with children from different backgrounds, that's when I started to become more aware that I wasn't the same as other people. And with people trying to label me specifically, there was always that person who tells me what I am, and I used to have some intense arguments with people because they didn't want to believe that I was what I said I was. Because I think people still have quite a narrow view of race and identity, it's very binary (Zandile).*

Here, it is evident that the regulation of these racial identities is replicated among the peers of first-generation mixed-race youth in their social spaces, meaning that the so-called born-free generation continues the regulation of racial 'classifiers' and race categories.

Participants argued that the Rainbow Nation ideology did not create tangible racial equity, nor did it address how constructions of racial categorisations leave no room for those who do not fit within its box, namely, mixed-race people. Additionally, participants critiqued the Rainbow Nation for its failure to overhaul or challenge White supremacist structures that continue to minimise its harmful legacy. This was evident in how racialised structures of Whiteness continued to be reproduced within their educational institutions and social spaces and in how they accessed public space in post-apartheid South Africa.

5.2. Rejecting Whiteness

In South Africa, dominant narratives of Whiteness continue to regulate institutional culture, whether it be within schools, universities, business, and industry. As Moodley and Adam (2000) noted, the legacies of racial classification, particularly espoused through the maintenance of apartheid, created racial categories, have created small groups of Black elites that give the appearance of a transformed society. The participant sample, all of whom are middle class and went to 'good' schools—historically White schools that have more resources due to apartheid legacies—were able to navigate multi-cultural spaces well and access these more easily. Although participants were raised in different cities that have their own specific racialised segregation and historical legacies, the White institutional culture prevalent in historically White schools was standardised and replicated in White educational intuitions across the country, thereby entrenching a specific version of South African Whiteness that maintains the dominant narratives of Whiteness. Some mixed-race people can achieve this based on class, those who have a White parent benefit from the legacies of Whiteness that might include generational wealth, a historical legacy of higher education, or ownership of land. The access to White privilege is steeped in the way they access the institutional culture of historically White spaces, albeit conditionally.

> *I think growing up as mixed-race, you very much learn how to chameleon and take on different identities in different spaces. For me now, it doesn't feel taxing, it doesn't feel like I'm being fake. I'm just a different me, so I wouldn't say that its difficult; but I definitely interact with my Johannesburg family [White family] different to how I interact with my mother, different to how I interact with other friends (Sem).*

All participants noted that, because of their experience of dealing with Whiteness and engaging within White spaces from a young age, they could easily fit within a White institutional culture at the schools they attended. While it could be argued that being able to assimilate into White spaces could be the experience of many people of colour who attend historically White schools, for first-generation mixed-race people, having a White parent exposes them to Whiteness in a highly intimate personal way. However, exposure to multiracial schooling or spaces from a young age does not mean that one is guaranteed to fit in, particularly as the institutional culture remains steeped in Whiteness.

> *Because the social system in our high school was structured in a way that Whiteness was praised and worshipped, I found myself being more proud of my White half, and I look back on it now and it cuts me so deep that I felt that. It's scary as well that's how I felt . . . [in] high school, I thought this Whiteness thing is dope . . . I can use that to my benefit here to fit in. But again, I would be reminded by the White kids that I'm not White (Pramit).*

The negotiation of racial boxes and categories remains a strategy in how participants have constructed their identities. Pramit's thoughts speak to the complexities of being able to claim Whiteness. Amongst many White people in post-apartheid South Africa, there is a belief that since apartheid has legally ended, racism no longer exists. However, to exhibit traits of Whiteness within a White institutional culture is to take on various 'traits' that are considered synonymous with White people in South Africa. This could be through language, accent, dialect, or achieving success within a field largely and historically dominated by White people. Whiteness or to be White in South Africa is something particular.

> *Someone said to me recently, she was quite impressed that I still had a tan from the holidays, I had to tell her that I am actually Brown. Which is interesting because they clearly thought I was White the whole time or something, right? That's weird. I don't know, maybe it was because it was her [a student Nadira tutored] grandmother, she's old. Maybe she was like, this person speaks well, good at Maths, can't be anything but White (Nadira).*

While under the guise of non-racialism and the movement of people of colour to a 'formerly White only space' might be considered a step further to racial equality, these spaces are not transforming to decentralise and deconstruct White spaces or the White supremacist structure that creates it. Instead, they continue to expect assimilation into these spaces. For mixed-race people with direct access to systems of Whiteness through their parent, the ability to be a racial chameleon still forces them to exist and assimilate within the status quo of White spaces. In this way, their access to these spaces is conditional.

> *Whiteness in itself is like something that's defined against by what it's not. So everything that its mixed with becomes not White, not completely White, even if it's a tiny bit. So, it's like an elitist kind of weird thing is defined by what it's not (Olebogeng).*

Whiteness often equates White with ´good´ qualities and positive imagery, thus rendering any person who does not fit within this category an 'other' ([Ballard 2004]). However, Whiteness in South Africa is 'the shared social space in which the psychological, cultural, political and economic dimensions of this privileged positionality are normalised, and rendered unremarkable' ([Steyn 2005], p. 121). Participants engaged with Whiteness in South Africa as something specific to this context. Out of the 10 participants, three had a White parent who was not South African but had lived in South Africa for a significant amount of time. These participants noted that, while they understand the privilege that White people had and continue to have in South Africa, they still consider their parents as outsiders.

> *With White people also . . . you're still an 'other' . . . I guess growing up, sometimes you try to be White in some ways, or engage with White [people] . . . I guess you slowly realise that you'll never be part of that community. Like with my mom, she's not South African, so that helps, so that we can even criticise Whiteness [in South Africa] together and she openly criticises those ideas which is very consoling and comforting (Olebogeng).*

Here, Olebogeng distinguishes how he has personally experienced White South African people and how he engages with his Canadian mother's Whiteness in the context of South African White supremacy. Similarly, Naharai, whose father is a White American, makes an interesting distinction between Whiteness in South Africa and his father.

> *Everything I take from him are his experiences in life, that's why it has to do with me not seeing him as White. Well maybe it's different because I don't see him as a White South African, maybe because he is Italian [Italian-American]. I don't see his Whiteness being the same as the evil Whiteness in South Africa, and when it comes to White privilege when you talk about it (Naharai).*

Naharai, like the siblings Olebogeng and Lesedi, had to separate himself from the system of Whiteness and its legacies in South Africa from their parent who is not South African. This is evident in Naharai's use of the word 'evil' to describe his perception of Whiteness' current and historical legacy in South Africa. The 'dangers' of White liberalism in South Africa continue to use transformation as a front to denounce the racial and privilege denialism that it underpins. Separating a White parent out of the context of Whiteness in South Africa denies racial privilege, a feature of White liberalism in South Africa and does not excuse them from the global context of Whiteness that forms international White normative structures that influence South Africa as well. However, through their existence, mixed-race people can never fully claim or exist comfortably within those spaces, as their White parents might, because Whiteness is perceived as 'purity', and mixed-race people disrupt this premise through their existence.

> *Being White is like a paint jar . . . I cannot explain it. Society views it as perfect, and it becomes tarnished by mixing in other paint, and you can never go back once you've mixed it (Ellie).*

Ellie's comments speak to the reality of having access to Whiteness through a White parent while simultaneously never being accepted by those same structures. Participants expressed their need to feel comfortable in their belonging to family structures and a sense of acceptance and belonging within their own identities. Through participants' comments, it is evident that there is no sameness or uniform identity for first-generation mixed-race people. However, acceptance into broader society is weighed differently for many people. Those who seek to be part of a uniform identity seek to reject the part of them not desired for acceptance into a particular community.

> *My transport to work has fizzled out now, so he [his White father] offered to drop me [off] at work and to pick me up, and I was like hell no. I don't want you to come pick me up, they've just accepted me as Coloured and then this White man comes. It's so stupid. I should have just been like, 'yes, sure, I need the lift'. But no, I was like, I'd rather jump on the bus for an hour and twenty minutes, go to work and figure a way home (Naharai).*

The struggle for belonging within particular groups or communities in society affects how mixed-race people engage with their families in the home environment. Naharai had struggled for acceptance in the Coloured community in which he was raised, so acceptance amongst the predominantly Coloured group that he works with is essential for him to achieve social success. However, as is evident, the rejection of a parent for the sake of fitting in can be painful. Intersectional dynamics of race and gender are essential to understanding how participants relate to their racial identity and their parents based on these intersections. The intersectional ways that we experience spaces are often a premise for discussions that I have with my own White father; it starts with this: 'We will never enter a space the same way, you are a White man, and I am a woman of colour, we exist on different sides of the spectrum'. Similarly, Pramit relates.

> *I've never hated my mom, I've always loved her and appreciated her. I just don't see her as being part of my identity in a big way because she's White, and that's scary, and that's something I need to speak to her about and come to terms with . . . she's a huge part of shaping who I am, but at the same time, by virtue of her race, it makes it difficult for me to identify with her as strongly (Pramit).*

Pramit does not identify with a common history with his mother, despite their shared ancestry. Bernhard Makhosezwe Magubane (2007) notes that the way South African history has been written ignores the racialised acts of genocide of the majority of the population by the Dutch and British states. He argues that 'each generation seems to think that history began only yesterday and what happened the day before is "ancient history" and has no relevance on today's problems' (Magubane 2007, p. 253). From Magubane's (2007) arguments, we see how history in post-apartheid South Africa has been constructed to some extent in an ahistorical way that does not consider the lineages of structural racism and racialisation, a sentiment present in Pramit's comments about his relationship with his mother. How then does a first-generation mixed-race person begin to reconcile their shared ancestry with a parent whose common history was to wipe out their other parent's ancestry and common history?

> *I think that the fact that my mom is White . . . I don't know if it's been constructive, I think that there are some things that White people just don't get . . . having to come to that realisation by myself was just like a 'sh*t!' moment, like a 'wake up!' moment . . . I almost wish that I had been raised by my dad, I think that life . . . would have been less of a shock. And I think that there are some things that inherently people of colour come to know that White people have to be told about . . . I think that there is just this sense of collectiveness and community that comes with not being White (Zandile).*

While Zandile recognises Whiteness as a broader structure within society, she understands that, amongst people of colour, there is always some form of oppression and inferiority to Whiteness. What Zandile suggests here is that Whiteness is an attitude and an ideology, and not something that she can access, based on her skin colour. As Ballard (2004) argues, Whiteness aimed to create and entrench positive imagery, which one could only achieve if one were White. For first-generation mixed-race people, they would never be considered to uphold all positive images of Whiteness that it seeks to convey, as only being 'half White' is already a disruption of the 'purity' that is privileged within Whiteness. By their association with Whiteness, they are afforded the comforts of a 'White' lifestyle, which means access to resources, land, better education, and generational wealth in some cases, a legacy inherited from apartheid and centuries of White supremacy. However, they will always be 'othered'.

For first-generation mixed-race people, the negotiation between belonging and acceptance and the ability to exercise agency in their identity is a narrow line. In South Africa, rigid racial categorisations are still relevant to identity constructions, evident in the participants' struggles with the shame of compromising their relationships under the pressure of the performativity of Whiteness. It is evident that, while participants' experience of Whiteness has shaped their identity construction, participants were still committed to a self-reflection of their participation in and simultaneous oppression by White supremacist structures in their social, personal, and institutional spaces.

5.3. Policing Identity

The heavy regulation of institutional Whiteness through race classification and segregation laws ensures that the oppressed people of colour are forced to understand the complexities of White supremacy as a system of oppression (Posel 2001; Reddy 2001; Ratele 2009; Bradshaw 2014). Various tests were administered to determine which racial category they fit into for racially ambiguous people, regardless of their own declarations. As Ratele (2009) argues, the state would focus on both external—if the person 'looked' White— and internal criteria—if the person' behaved' as a 'White' person should. 'Trademark' signs of Whiteness premised a person's classification as White (Posel 2001; Steyn 2001). These trademarks exist today, and although they are increasingly challenged in movements to decolonise racialised structures, they remain present in the questioning of racial identity that first-generation mixed-race people or racially ambiguous Coloured people face. The questioning of race is an act done by all South Africans and stems from the legacies of colonial and apartheid racial regulation.

> *You have to reveal yourself more than other people do because now you're telling people what race, what culture your parents are, just to explain what race you are. But with you [referring to himself], now you have to explain, oh which parent is it that's White, so oh you're mixed Black and Coloured, and then no, I'm mixed with White and, you see? So, it's like you have to reveal yourself more. That's why mixed-race is useful (Olebogeng).*

The revealing of self speaks to the exhaustion around having to feel that you have to explain your racial identity constantly. In this way, Olebogeng finds the terminology of 'mixed-race' to be a useful description of his identity. What is important to note is that instances where you feel that you have to reveal yourself are not only with respect to White people; participants felt these mainly were with respect to other people of colour. Apartheid has entrenched within South African society racial markers attached to stereotypes of racial categorisations systematically organised into individual race boxes that people continue to use.

> *I also have this coping mechanism to fit in. So now I'm in a position at work where I only work with Coloured people . . . last week, we just talked, and they want to know about me, and then you get nervous, [he thinks to himself] don't ask too much now. Because I already know, it started off like, is that really your name, and I'm like 'ja'[3], but it's not my full name, and they're like, 'oh, what is that' and I'm like 'its Indian', and then they*

ask, 'are you Indian' and I say, 'my mom is Indian', and usually if I'm lucky it will stop there. But then, if it's, 'what's your dad?', and then it's over (Naharai).

Whiteness' 'purity' and preservation were heavily regulated through segregation. As Erasmus (2001) and Gqola (2010) attested, in the Coloured community, there are cases of people who 'chose' to be White, meaning that they were racially ambiguous enough to fit into the classification parameters for White. This complex history is reflected in the history of many South African families, including my own, where the system of classification tore families apart. Within post-apartheid South Africa, most participants played down their 'White half' of themselves, depending on the context and demographic of people around. This is evident in Naharai's experience of fear he has of being 'outed' for having a White parent. Moreover, this speaks to Olebogeng's point on how mixed-race people have to reveal much more of themselves.

As Zandile noted previously, race is inextricably linked to culture, and the regulation of all racial categories speaks to the rigid racial boxes apartheid sought to create. Even within the Coloured community, as Erasmus (2001) noted, there is a regulation of colourism within Coloured culture, which privileges lighter-skinned, English speaking, middle-class Coloured people over darker-skinned, Afrikaan-speaking, poor Coloured people. The same can be said for Black and Indian communities in South Africa as well. Here, class regulation, pigmentation, and language work as intersections of identity that either oppress or offer privilege under a racist system where the White and rich are privileged over the Black and poor. Based on the apartheid mentality, to be Black is to be at the bottom of the chain, as something not to aspire toward, and thus challenged through the Black Consciousness Movement. However, through the policing of identity by the apartheid state and its entrenchment of White supremacy, people of colour regulate themselves within these same categories and standards. For mixed-race people who identify as people of colour, their acceptance into those communities is based on condition, a conditional understanding that they are both people of colour and, in certain instances, is White.

I don't see myself as Black, I wouldn't say. But also because of the way I have been treated by the Black community as not Black. So that's also painful but it makes you feel like you are in between, which is nice at times . . . for example, one of my coaches, when I was walking in Alex[4], he was like, 'no, put on your hat, If they see your hair it won't be good, they will see you're umlungu'[5]. So Black people see me as White sometimes, and White people see me as Black and Coloured people, once they hear me open my mouth, they don't know what to think (Olebogeng).

All participants in this study noted that they police their own identity in different ways, based on the questioning about their identities that they receive or their insecurities on how they are viewed in society because of their contravention of racial classifications. The trickledown effect of racist legislation has created a space where people police their own racial identity. What is not considered within the arguments of Mbembe (2008), Ratele (2009), and Modiri (2012), amongst others, which focus on a more general view of policing by people of colour, is the consideration for people who occupy a racial identity of both White and 'Other'. As previously stated, many participants feel that they need to reject it and prove that they are of colour 'enough' to be taken seriously because of their association with Whiteness, a form of self-policing based on their experiences of questioning around their identity.

I think for a while in my life . . . I've felt like I've had to prove my Blackness . . . in first year [of university], going out a lot, having to introduce myself a lot, people being shocked. 'Lesedi? Why is your name Lesedi?' I always had to prove I'm Black. And then I thought, hang on a second, what does it mean to be Black, what does it mean to be Tswana, what does it mean to be a woman in South Africa? And that's when I found out that okay, being Black is how I want to make it for myself, and just how there are Black people who don't speak their native language, but that doesn't make them any less Black (Lesedi).

Lesedi's comments speak to the complexities of occupying two racial identities, or feeling that you do, and having to pick one. Like that of her brother, Olebogeng, her comments show how they have received conditional acceptance within the Black community and at times feel that that acceptance can be taken from them. This is a precarious position to be in, particularly in a society based on fixed racial categories. While the gendered experience of these siblings may be different, they police their identity within similar ways to 'prove' their Blackness. Beyond these experiences, language, accent, and dialogue play a role in how participants construct and perform their identity. Due to the physical segregation of racial groups in apartheid, specific accents and dialects can be linked to specific races based on their geographic location. For example, a Coloured person that grew up in Cape Town might speak differently to a White person that grew up in the same city.

The multiple intersections of language, class, race, and gender are regulated through all levels of South African society by all members, mainly through institutional Whiteness. While participants spoke to their experience within that space, they also spoke of their complicity in supporting that culture. For people of colour, transcending racial spaces, there is an element of self-policing that must be done to be accepted within these spaces. For some, it might be changing their accent; for others, it might be playing down their Blackness to fit within limits for 'safe' expression of Blackness within historically White spaces.

> *There is a part of me that's disgusted, but say there is a White person, you almost feel the need to prove that you are what they think is enough to make you a person, like I am enough of a person because I can do x, y, and z things and as much as I want to prove that I don't need to have those things for you to value me, and for you to respect me. I still feel like I need to because you are going to think worse of me (Ellie).*

For Ellie, as a mixed person who has grown up around Whiteness and participated within White institutional culture, she still feels she must regulate her identity to be considered 'Whiter' to be taken seriously. This goes back to racist constructions of intelligence as a 'White' trait. Although Ellie has more access to White spaces due to her mixed-race identity, she still polices her identity further to fit in, as she is aware of her ambiguity and conditional acceptance into those spaces. For most participants, policing their identity comes at a cost. It involves compromise, shame, and sacrifice, which are everyday realities when building their identity in the precarious grey area between rigid racial identities. Ellie further reflects on how policing of herself in those spaces shaped her attitudes towards her father.

> *I know, 100% growing up, that I was ashamed to have a Coloured dad, quite a lot of the time. And with a guilty conscious obviously, and it's horrible but that's, what is that? Why should I feel like that? Who was telling me that? It has to be because there was the White dad, White mommy, White children, and they were in the perfect house, and White teachers and the White principles and everything was just White (Ellie).*

The legacies of Whiteness have sustained and entrenched core values and beliefs within post-apartheid South African society. For first-generation mixed-race people, navigating the grey areas between having a White parent and a parent of colour is primarily influenced by these same legacies, which create variant power dynamics within their identities. As Ellie noted above, the influences of dominant narratives of Whiteness existed to how 'ideal' and 'perfect' families were created in these narratives. Through legislation against inter-racial relationships and marriages, ideologies of 'purity' around race emerged, notably the sanctity and purity of the 'White race', and the White Afrikaner home. For Ellie, the legacies of the ´perfect´ family narrative, that of the nuclear family with a White mother, White father, and two White children, affected how she viewed her own family. She viewed her family as non-normative within her environment of a White-dominated school, which was her primary social setting at the time. As a result of her need to fit in, she downplayed her 'Coloured side' to the point of being ashamed that it was part of her identity.

The struggle of feeling ashamed of a parent for the colour of their skin is a challenging experience and raises the notion of what societal conditions inform these feelings of shame. Ellie places this down to normative dominant Whiteness narratives, which emphasise the 'perfect' White nuclear family, something Ellie could never attain. These narratives of the 'ideal' family structured as White are not only prevalent within intergenerational legacies of apartheid racist ideology, but advertisements that appear on television continue to present racially monolithic and heteronormative families.

Feelings of shame are different to negotiate, particularly when it pertains to your parent. The literature review highlighted the shame and stigma the apartheid government attached to inter-racial relationships and sex. However, the shame that participants discussed is a shame of their proximity to a particular race. The structural and historical legacies within South Africa have entrenched a racial hierarchy from which White people have benefitted and continue to benefit. This has constructed a distinction between those who benefited from apartheid and those who did not. Some participants who operate within more White normative spaces might feel ashamed of having a parent of colour because of the pressures to 'perform' Whiteness in those spaces, while others might want to hide their link to Whiteness because of its legacy, based on the environment that they find themselves in.

> *Growing up in a Coloured area, you don't want to say that you're White or that my dad is White . . . in high school, there are examples where my dad would pick me up from basketball or hockey, and I would walk away from him or walk so much behind him. I'd feel so bad like I feel bad now, but at that stage, that's what I did (Naharai).*

Naharai distances himself from Whiteness based on the environment where he seeks acceptance—in this case, within the majority Coloured community around him, which he is racially not part of. The same was the case for Ellie, who also grew up in Cape Town but in a majority White community, as her environment required her to 'perform' Whiteness, she rejected her 'Coloured side'. As is evident in both participants experiences, there is a need to reject one side of your identity to 'fit in'. Therefore, while this becomes a choice that participants themselves have made, society's expectation of individuals to 'choose' one race and fit within that box remains integral to the shame participants have for a particular parent's race. While some mixed-race people do not find acceptance within these spaces and at some point 'deal with it' themselves, others seek acceptance within their families. The shame that society makes them feel often becomes internalised, to the extent that they feel shame within themselves for feeling ashamed of their parents.

> *I wonder if I'm going to disappoint him [his Black father] by not being able to speak [Tswana], that was one of my biggest, even now, it hurts me, and I think it hurts him a lot, and I think even though we don't talk about it, and he's hard to talk to about a lot of things that [are sensitive] . . . growing up, I'm not his Black son . . . I feel like if I could speak to him in Setswana, the conversation that we could have could be different (Olebogeng).*

The complexity of negotiating a racial identity that does not fit within mainstream racial categorisations is a challenge for mixed-race children and their parents. Confronting legacies of racial oppression at a structural level might be easier, as, in some ways, it might be less personal than confronting racial contradictions and legacies within one's own home. What makes the White population in South Africa different from other settler colonies is that they laid an unchallenged claim to a South African indigenous identity and culture. Through this, they adopted policies that distanced themselves from the 'natives', thereby influencing how identity politics was formed within the South African context (Reddy 2015). Traces of this are evident in how White supremacy currently manifests in South African society, which has created knowledge about what it means to be considered a particular racial category. These knowledges are primarily shaped by how White domination controlled the construction of these narratives. Moreover, these narratives control the way that first-generation mixed-race people engage within their families.

> *When I started really interrogating what it means to be Black, I also think I then had to think about what it means to be White . . . I do have to make the separation inside myself [from Whiteness], but even in that, I know that even though they are my family, I know that some of them aren't exempt from it [calling out their racism]. In fact, none of them are, I can't think of them differently, just because they are my family, it's kind of become a thing of like, you have to prove to me that you are different (Zandile).*

For first-generation mixed-race people, negotiating the grey areas of racial identity is challenging, especially within a country where racial categorisations remain inflexible. While the post-apartheid state might be outwardly moving towards an understanding of what a post-apartheid state might look like, it is crucial to understand that there is much underlying work. Challenging, decolonising, and confronting entrenched legacies of apartheid and settler colonialism that create the 'master narratives' of Whiteness remain essential tasks. However, the fact that first-generation mixed-race people exist does not mean that racism is undone. Post-apartheid South Africa remains deeply entrenched in institutional and structural racism. The transcendence of this thinking, as Lesedi predicts, will not happen soon.

> *You know how some people say that a musician is before their time? Sometimes I think I'm like that, I'm before my time (Lesedi).*

6. Conclusions

If the premise of the Rainbow Nation were true, first-generation mixed-race people would be the poster children of the South African nation. They would represent the coming together of segregated people and indicate that the human spirit prevailed despite apartheid and colonial segregation policies. However, the reality of post-apartheid South Africa is that the 'born frees' have not overcome all of the social ills entrenched by these legacies, as they remain rooted in this racialised society. Racial categorisations remain an integral part of how people are perceived at face value and in identity construction, despite the best efforts of the Rainbow Nation ideology. These racial categories are regulated throughout society and manifest in diverse ways within various contexts. However, it remains regulated within specific cultural contexts, geographic locations, classes, languages, and old and new stereotypes. Within the South African context, the settler-colonial population laid an unchallenged claim to an indigenous identity that distanced themselves from the actual 'native' population and created a legacy of White supremacy that is invested and sustained upon the political, socio-economic and cultural exclusion of people of colour in the country' (Reddy 2015).

These structural and historical legacies of Whiteness provide a different context for first-generation mixed-race people to exist in countries such as the United States, Great Britain, and Canada, where there is a considerable amount of literature on mixed-race people. Although similarly in South Africa, due to the prevailing nature of White supremacy in all of the aforementioned societies, mixed-race people navigate the inflexible confines of racial categorisations. Race and experiences of racism manifest differently in each context. Settler colonial and apartheid constructions of race regulate systems of White supremacy that in turn sustain particular and constructed racial boxes. These 'racial boxes' seem to be crafted so that they only have room for old and new stereotypes to enter. For first-generation mixed-race people who do not fit within any box precisely, attachment to a racial box is both elusive and conditional.

The conditional nature of acceptance is based on how well you can fit in within a particular racial category. Some participants in this study felt forced to choose one racial category and, through that, rejected the other. However, unanimously, participants did not identify as White. Participants acknowledged that Whiteness in South Africa has come to mean something particular. Through its links to a history of oppression, from settler colonialism to apartheid, it is noted as a race that benefited from the oppression of people of colour through slavery, cheap labour, forced migration, and the removal of people from their land. Participants argued that, although one of their parents is White, by virtue of

their skin colour or accent, or mainly because they have a parent of colour, they are never accepted as White, as they do not fit the characteristics required to enter the White box. For all participants who self-identify as people of colour, reconciling the 'White side' of their family is difficult, mainly because they acknowledge their family's role within the apartheid era, whether through a beneficiary role or more directly.

The institutional make-up of South Africa, due to its history of White domination, continues to prioritise the 'positive imagery' associated with Whiteness, as noted by Ballard (2004). Within schools, English language proficiency and the 'quality' of one's accent has become a marker of a successful trait to obtain. The regulation of 'White traits', whether through physical markers or how languages are spoken, influence how mixed-race people have constructed their identity. Thus, showing that dominant narratives of Whiteness continue to dictate 'acceptable' identity attributes.

As evident in participants' comments, the post-apartheid generation now polices the regulation of racial categories and the normative standards set through Whiteness. The intergenerational nature of reinforcing and policing identity within these parameters shows how entrenched these dominant narratives are: not only within a public setting but within the psyche of the participants' peers. First-generation mixed-race people themselves do the policing of identity differently depending on the spaces within which they interact. While some might exploit their relationship to Whiteness for performativity reasons, others shun this relationship because of the violent legacy of Whiteness.

For first-generation mixed-race people, their entry into the two communities of their family is conditional. Acceptance into each family might not necessarily be filled with contestation about an inter-racial relationship on either side. Acceptance within their family might not translate to acceptance within the broader race groups. While they were accepted within their White family, many participants noted that they never felt they could be White or be accepted as White more broadly. While some participants are more racially ambiguous than others, meaning they seem to be able to transcend racial categories as their physical appearance does not denote any specific racial category, they still feel more comfortable being perceived as a person of colour because they disrupt the parameters of acceptance within Whiteness, namely, 'purity'.

Within their family structures and in their relationships with their parents, most participants struggled to relate to their White parent, as it relates to informing their racial identity. At their core level, participants acknowledged that they receive and learn values from both of their parents, as in any family structure; however, participants highlighted the need to separate having a White parent from Whiteness as a system of domination. Thus, raising emotions related to feeling guilty that they had felt ashamed of certain parents because of their race. Feelings of shame were not only limited to broader society and the legacies of banning inter-racial relationships, but also the internalisation of these feelings of shame, which some participants feel is a shameful act in itself. Participants noted that these internalised contradictions within themselves stem from confronting the past's structural and historical legacies, which confronts their acceptance as people of colour because they benefit directly from those legacies. At the same time, they understand what it means to be a person of colour within a society dominated by entrenched White supremacy that might form a part of their identity but can never truly represent them.

Despite these struggles, first-generation mixed-race people are transforming the silencing and internalising of shame into ways to exercise their agency and define themselves. In this way, they create space for themselves within post-apartheid South Africa, even if they exist in the grey areas between racial categorisations. They exercise their agency through discussing the challenges and strengths that they can gain from their life experiences and using that as a tool to unpack and decolonise the dominant normative narratives of Whiteness that continue to influence their identity. Through self-reflection, they regain their agency to exist and defy rigid racial categorisations that continue to police their identity politics within post-apartheid South Africa.

While research that engages with race, identity, and Whiteness is not new in South Africa, this study can be built upon. I acknowledge the limitations of both the sampling technique and, as a result, the sample composition. Namely, the inclusion of two sets of siblings in this sample, leading to similar experiences of participants in the sample. The inclusion of an intersectional analysis would have been beneficial to unpack the experiences of the male–female siblings in the sample; however, this was not within the scope of this particular paper.

A larger sample size and the inclusion of those born in the 2000s would ensure a richer data set and new perspectives on the lives of mixed-race people in South Africa. Future researchers could consider a more in-depth analysis of the social locations, such as gender, sexuality, and physical location, which were not primarily focused upon in this study. In addition, in possible future research, there is space to decentre Whiteness from this study and focus on mixed-race people who do not have a White parent, thus enriching understanding of the many identities in post-apartheid South Africa.

Notes

[1] Barbeque area. Typically 'braai' is an Afrikaans word for barbequeing, it is used in all languages spoken in South Africa.

[2] This is the equivilant of the N* word in the US context in South Africa, used to demoralise and duhaminse Black people and stems from racism. Verwey and Quayle (2012, p. 565) use the full word, I have chosen not to.

[3] Translates to 'yes' in Afrikaans.

[4] Alex or Alexandra, a predominantly Black township in Johannesburg, South Africa.

[5] Used to refer to White people in Nguni Languages.

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