# Contents

| Chapter One : Introduction          | 6  |
| The heuristic Journey              | 13 |
| Across the Lines                   | 22 |
| Chapter Two: Race, Identity and Agency | 27 |
| Race: Myth or Social Reality       | 28 |
| The Co-ordinates of Identity       | 43 |
| Identity and Relationship          | 54 |
| Identity and Narrative             | 63 |
| Chapter Three : Literature Review  | 72 |
| Identity in Black and White        | 75 |
| White Identity Development         | 87 |
| Identity in the Margins            | 96 |
| Beyond Dualism                     | 120|
| Chapter Four ; Methodology part 1  | 139|
| Heuristic Inquiry and Action Research | 146|
| Heuristic Inquiry and Phenomenology | 155|
| Heuristic Inquiry and Systemic Epistemology | 167|
| Chapter Five : Methodology Part 2  | 173|
| Principles of Heuristic Inquiry    | 173|
| Phases of heuristic Methodology    | 186|
| Chapter Six: Findings              | 203|
| Illumination                       | 206|
| Explication                        | 227|
| Creative Synthesis                 | 251|
| Chapter Seven : Analysis           | 269|
| Contours of Race                   | 271|
| The Outer World of Race            | 273|
| The Inner World of Race            | 275|
| Chapter Eight : Conclusion         | 297|
| Summary of Main Findings           | 299|
| Implications                       | 305|
| Endnote                            | 310|
| Bibliography                       | 314|
| Appendices                         | 332|

Word Count 82,000
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Figures</strong></th>
<th><strong>Page No.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fig 1 Negro to Black Conversion Model</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 2 Cultures of Inquiry</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 3 Race as a binary opposition</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 4 Race as a dyad</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 5 Race as a spatial relationship</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 6 Free floating identity</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 7 Collapsing Paradoxical Space</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Plates</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plate 1 Burnt Norton</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2 A Home in Dark Grass</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

This is a heuristic inquiry into the experience of race in everyday life. It investigates the choices individuals have in claiming or resisting racialised identities and how it impacts on their sense of self. The study challenges the social construction of race and focuses on the lived experience of attempting to cross race boundaries. Heuristic inquiry as elucidated by Clark Moustakas is used as a core methodology to explore the experience of crossing the race boundary and to depict the experience of resisting the use of race as a definition of self and others. The heuristic journey is captured in stories recollected in memory, dialogue, poetry, and realist tales. The study gives insight into the nature of race and the construction of identity. It identifies racial identity as a narrative identity where the self is constituted in the stories projected on to others. The race boundary is depicted as a paradoxical space which separates the day to day world of paramount reality; where race exists as a binary opposition, from the fluid world of emergent spirituality; where identities are free floating. Paradoxical space is explored as a contested space where the interests of power and difference meet the need for individuals to heal and integrate their divided selves. The dilemmas face by counsellors in supporting individuals in paradoxical space is discussed. The study concludes with the view that crossing the race boundary is a discomfiting and painful experience which also offers opportunities for healing and personal growth.
DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

(i) Copyright in text of this thesis rests with the author. Copies (by any process) either in full, or of extracts, may be made only in accordance with instructions given by the author and lodged in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester. Details may be obtained from the Librarian. This page must form part of any such copies made. Further copies (by any process) of copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without permission (in writing) of the author.

(ii) The ownership of any intellectual property rights which may be described in this thesis is vested in the University of Manchester, subject to any prior agreement to the contrary, and may not be made available for use by third parties without the written permission of the University, which will prescribe the terms and conditions of such agreement.

(iii) Further information on the conditions under which disclosures and exploitation may take place is available from the Head of School of School of Education.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by thanking the University of Birmingham for launching me on this journey. They have given me the time, support and impetus to complete the thesis. My colleagues at the university have made important contributions to sustaining me. I would in particular like to acknowledge the constant support and inspiration given to me by Gill Cressey and Andy Simpson on our shared journeys. I must not forget others like Jo King, Muhammad Khan and Joan Saunders for their encouragement and stimulating discussions. A big thanks to John Woolf who has been diligent in helping me get rid of errant commas and split infinitives.

I am indebted to my researcher supervisor William West. His quiet presence has been with me throughout. He has guided me through the process with the confidence and belief that I needed to help me find the way through to the end. I would like to thank all the members of the Manchester PhD group that William facilitated for sharing, listening and inspiring.

My own research group has been the bedrock of the study and without them this study could not have been completed. They have given of themselves and their time and fully invested in the process. During this period they have been my second family. I would particularly like to give thanks to Kemi, Anita, Debbie, Juliet, Joe, Rachel and Razia who were there with me to the end. I hope the final product honours their contributions.

My biggest thanks go to my family Lynn, Daniel, Joshua, and Ella they have had to put up with my absence and preoccupation which they have done with love and unstinting support. They have listened, given valuable feedback, shared ideas and experience and as such been very much a part of the research.

Dedication

Dedicated to my mother - Dorothy Richards
At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

(From Burnt Norton)

T. S Elliot

Plate 1
Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

Race and racism have been a prominent feature of my personal and professional life. I have been active in seeking ways to challenge racism and to support those who have been hurt or diminished by it. In this respect, I have worked in many different roles; as a parent, as youth worker, trainer, counsellor and lecturer. This study is a continuation of that struggle. I am interested in the contribution I can make as a researcher to generate new perspectives and understanding in this area. As I set out on this task, I am reminded of an experience I had with a group of students who were discussing ways of challenging racism. One of the students in the group offered the view “why would you want to challenge something that you do not understand?” This was a memorable and profound statement which struck many chords for me. The subject of racism is multifaceted, subtle and complex. It is too often approached with buzz words and simplistic solutions. Why indeed would anyone wish to challenge something he/she did not understand? I have been engaged in various strategies which span from black empowerment in the 1960s to the current policy responses to institutional racism. I will briefly reflect back on these strategies because they bring me to my present position where I feel disillusioned because the activities involved, once potent and full of hope for change, eventually end up reproducing the very structures that they set out to challenge.
The civil rights movement during the late 60’s was probably my first engagement with a collective act of resistance against racism. Although I did not understand the politics involved at the time, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X were powerful icons representing black empowerment and resistance. ‘Black is beautiful’ and ‘black power’ were statements I was able to adopt and use as a defence when the situation required. These terms always had a hollow ring to them however because my association with black at the time did not make me feel either beautiful or powerful. I was however, aware of the inherent power of the words and that in using them I no longer spoke as an isolated individual. It was later that I discovered black consciousness as a political tool which allowed me to seek solidarity and make alliances with others. Despite joining and working with black groups, there was always the anxiety that I would be discovered as not black enough. I was never quite sure whether my black credentials were anything other than skin deep. Becoming black offered the securities of joining a community of resistance, but ultimately reified race; reinforcing and perpetuating the view that blackness was a fixed and enduring characteristic.

Race awareness training during the 1970s influenced by the work of Judith Katz (1978), developed approaches geared to problematizing whiteness. Race awareness training firmly positioned racism as a white problem. The training was confrontational and sought to raise awareness in individuals of their inherent prejudices, the stereotypical views they carried, and their position as beneficiaries of an oppressive and exploitative relationship. Significantly, the training attempted to change attitudes and placed accountability on white people to be agents of change. The punchy refrain “if you are not part of the
solution, you are part of the problem” invited a white audience to be active and responsible participants in developing strategies for challenging racism. Race awareness was important in extending race identity, bringing whiteness under critical gaze. Critics of race awareness like Sivinandan (1985) argued that it was merely a diversion from the black struggle. He viewed the relationship between black and white as a relationship of power, where those in power would continue to maintain their position even if provoked by training to feel guilty for doing so. It was as a race trainer that I became struck by the depth of anxiety that surrounded the issue of race, some of which was no doubt caused by previous bruising encounters with early race trainers who were able to use race awareness training as a means of exacting revenge on a culpable white community. I too can confess to taking some pleasure in seeing others experiencing and facing the pain of accommodating to a racialised identity. Despite contributing to a blame and shame culture, race awareness training appealed to individuals to engage in their own struggle to become instruments of change. I saw race awareness training as limited to the degree that for some people it led to their retreat from race issues and ended up with their views becoming more entrenched. For others, including myself, it was liberating. Race awareness training touched on something raw and vital about the nature of our relationship with others and our position in the social order. It raised the significance of identity as something troublesome but core to our subjective existence.

The movement towards multiculturalism during the eighties was perhaps an escape from the painful focus on racial identity and a diversion from the issue of race. The multicultural perspective embraced the notion of plurality and sought to celebrate cultural
diversity. Its call for tolerance maintained a focus on prejudice but took the emphasis away from individuals and instead put the spotlight on social processes, tradition and heritage. Multiculturalism promoted the view that culture was something definable and homogenous. At a personal level I found this cultural essentialism to be painful. It exposed my ambiguous cultural status and raised questions about where I belonged. I was expected to identify with being West Indian but this was to make a claim of something I was not part of and which at the same time disenfranchised me from British culture, to which I felt more affinity. Multiculturalism had sealed my immigrant status. Essentialist notions of culture also forced the wider community to consider what it was to be British. This is something that could not be examined too closely just in case it exposed that to be British meant to be white. Certainly, the noticeable rise in nationalist and racist ideology has been recognised as a reaction to the multicultural movement (Gilroy 1992b). Multiculturalism not only masked race, it connected race with culture in a way that culture became a metaphor for racial difference. The call from Vipin Chauhan (1989) to move 'beyond Steel Bands and Samosas' was a recognition of the limitation of a superficial analysis of culture as a strategy for challenging racism.

Anti-racism as an approach was introduced in opposition to multiculturalism to refocus race as the central issue for challenge. Whilst this was a positive and necessary development, the approach was narrow and inconsistent. Firstly it led to an idealisation of black communities and black self help (Gilroy 1992b). Racism was no longer identified as a white problem; instead black communities were called upon to be the architects of change. By now however, the solidarity of black political identity had been
dissipated by claims for distinct cultural interests to be represented. This heralded a new shift to the identity politics of ethnic groups competing against each other for limited resources, forging an ambiguous relationship between race, culture and racism. Secondly, the dogmatic approach of anti-racism, sought to diminish individual discretion and responsibility by shifting emphasis to organisational process and policy, encapsulated in the notion of ‘political correctness’. The slogan “you’re either a racist or and anti-racist” was a powerful warning that individuals had to be seen to doing and saying the right thing. I feel that this led to a conspiracy of silence; ‘better to say nothing than to be found out.’. Thirdly although anti-racism was designed to oppose racism, it was based on a weak analysis of racism under the guise of ‘discrimination = prejudice + power’. This led to the association of racism with bigotry resulting in people who felt neither prejudice or powerful, exempting themselves from racism. I would not want to trivialise the importance of anti-racism and its achievements in setting a benchmark for standards in organisational practice but it is too blunt a tool to change the social relationship of power inherent in the notion of race.

Into a new millennium and the McPherson report (1999) on the outcome of the Steven Lawrence inquiry officially acknowledges the continued existence of racism in all the major institutions of state. The report redefines institutional racism as the unwitting and unconscious acts of discrimination which occur in normal custom and practice. The response to this in the 2000 race amendment act is a call for closer ethnic monitoring and identification of strategies for challenging racism. Unfortunately it falls into the same pitfalls as anti-racism. A faceless approach to institutional racism moves further away
from the relational nature of racism. The subtle and unconscious aspects of institutional racism which would seem to relate to the anxieties, fears and desires and impulses that surround race tend not to be investigated. It is this particular area that will be the focus of attention in this study.

As I reflect back on this journey, it appears that successive approaches to challenging racism have tended to de-centre the individual and de-emphasise identity. Despite this, I believe that racial identity has become more significant and, though problematic, needs a fresh approach in the way that it is examined. The racialisation of identity is shrouded in ambiguities and inconsistencies which lead us to living contradictory lives. However, it remains key to maintaining the division and differentiation which nurture racism. I am interested in how we can create strategies which allow us to heal the split rather than to institutionalise it. Such questions demand a mode of inquiry which is able to deal with the subtlety and essence of the phenomenon. The inquiry needs to be one which can expose the intersubjective and tacit nature of the material. It needs to be reflective but also sufficiently reflexive to capture the unconscious desires and motives behind our actions. Significantly the mode of inquiry should be capable of tracking how the individual and his/her identity and relationship with the outside world is being constructed as a ongoing and dynamic process. It should also enable an understanding of how individuals negotiate the issues of space and identity, power and difference.
The heuristic journey

In searching for a methodology for this study I was immediately drawn to heuristic inquiry as elaborated on by Clark Moustakas. His depiction of the nature of heuristic methodology resonated strongly with my own experience.

I begin the heuristic journey with something that has called to me from my life experience, something to which I have associations and fleeting awareness but whose nature is largely unknown. In such an odyssey, I know one thing is certain, the mystery summons me and lures me “to let go and swim in an unknown current” (Moustakas 1990:11)

‘The journey’ will be a central metaphor in this study. It captures a dynamic and changing relationship with the outside world. Moreover it emphasises being prepared to travel away from a fixed position and being open to serendipity. In achieving readiness for such a journey, I have been much inspired by the works of Hermann Hesse. In Journey to the East (1972a), Hesse portrays a journey across the boundaries of time and space by a group of fellow travellers in search of knowledge and experience. He brings attention to the excess of knowledge that cannot be contained or represented by any individual. This theme is continued in his Nobel Prize winning novel ‘The glass Bead game’ (1972b) where Joseph, Knecht, the Magister Ludi, having become a master in the synthesis and manipulation of knowledge, reaches an ‘awakening’ where he acknowledges his own inner impoverishment and the need to move on and continue his journey to fill the void:

‘Awakening’, it seemed, was not so much concerned with truth and cognition, but with experiencing and proving oneself in the real world. When you had such an
awakening, you did not penetrate any closer to the core of things, to truth; you grasped, accomplished, or endured only the attitude of your own ego to the momentary situation. You did not find laws, but came to decisions; you did not trust your way into the centre of the world, but into the centre of your own individuality. That, too, was why the experience of awakening was so difficult to convey, so curiously hard to formulate, so remote from statement. Language did not seem designed to make communications from this realm of life. (Hesse 1972b: 353)

I will liken this research journey to the process of awakening depicted by Hesse. It is a movement from the outer and institutional experience of race towards the inner subjective experience. The challenge of the research is to find a language to communicate the experience. In ‘Siddhartha’ (1973), Hesse portrays a journey which is a search for enlightenment. He shows that this is not to be found through the adoption of a particular method or doctrine but instead resides in a fluid sensibility and a grasp of the momentary and changing situation echoed in the flow of the river. Hesse’s exploration of the tension between the inner and the outer; the world of feeling and desire versus the world of structure and protocol is present throughout his work. This is exemplified however in Narzisis and Goldmund (1971) and Steppenwolf (1965) where Hesse, poignantly, explores the divided self and the struggle to reconcile opposing elements within the self. In summary, Hesse provides a template for this research journey; the need to travel in the company of others, to make the journey fluid and not fixed by a particular method and to maintain the tension of duality inherent in the construction of race. The heuristic journey demands a willingness to fully immerse oneself in the topic and therefore requires a level
of reflexivity and subjectivity unusual for academic study. It is however capable of yielding a depth of insight that cannot be expected in traditional research.

Throughout this work, I will be drawing on the range of stories which are available to me from theoretical literature, from reflections on personal experience, and from fiction and myth. I feel that these are all valuable resources which could lead to a rich synthesis of understanding. I would hope the whole thesis comes together as a story that shows knowledge unfolding as new understanding reveal itself as part of the heuristic discovery. A key feature of heuristic research is the willingness of the researcher to become fully immersed in the inquiry and to engage in a journey of discovery that will lead to a deep understanding of the meaning that inheres in the experience being investigated. In this respect heuristic inquiry merges with autoethnography.

An autoenthnographic approach is adopted which places me at the centre of the inquiry and allows me to travel backward and forward through time to invite my former selves to offer their stories to the inquiry. Margaret Vickers (2002: 609) offers the view that “researchers who share their own experiences expose themselves in no small way”. Although this raises some anxiety for me, I am reassured by her insistence on the importance of researchers as storytellers.

In order to draw attention to the unstable and fluid nature of identity, I will now reflect on three critical experiences which set the background to this study.
Little Wayne stares through the round window of the ship as the already small island of Barbados recedes until it becomes a tiny speck on the horizon. As it disappears, he wonders if he will ever see his home again. Weeks later, he finds himself parachuted into a cold and alien world.

Little Wayne stands in the doorway overlooking the playground. It is his first day at school, having arrived in England less than two weeks before. The playground is an austere, walled tarmac square. The hum of traffic can be heard in the background, almost drowned out by the squeals and laughter of children playing. There is a slight drizzle in the air and a chill wind that causes him to pull his new coat tighter around his already tense body. Everything is unfamiliar, feeling alone and disorientated he looks around for a friendly face. A bigger boy approaches him with a blank and distant look in his eye, spits out the word WOG and then walks on. Little Wayne guesses that this word is addressed to him, he does not know what it means but he can feel its venom as it sends chill through his blood. A small group of onlookers seem to find this funny and little Wayne can hear muffled laughter coming from the group along with other disembodied words which are being projected .. Blackie .. Smelly. He is shocked and frightened, wondering what he has done to attract such disgust.

You can guess, I am little Wayne. In using the third person, I am not attempting to take an objective stance. Instead, I am remembering a position I once held as whole and lovable before the projections of race created a split between myself and others. This story is essentially a fiction, pieced together with fragments of memory. It is only though the
research that I have been able to communicate with little Wayne once again in order to recover the story and to engage with my own healing. Race was given to me at an early age and in exchange my humanity was stolen. This story has become a recurrent one throughout my life. Although the characters have changed, the plot remains the same. I am not sure if I ever knew what the plot was because it was never made explicit. In a sophisticated manner, the qualities of exclusion, denial and otherness seem however to be a constant. Over time and often with more direct threat, the words have evolved .. Spade .. Coon .. Nigger .. but the meaning remains consistent. I even came to realise the subtle ways the message could be communicated; with a look, a joke, an innuendo. My parents tried to impress on me that “sticks and stones can break your bones but words can never hurt you” They were wrong in not acknowledging the wound of words. At the vulnerable age of six, I was exposed to the violent, projective split of race. I had discovered a world where being black or white dictated your position within the social hierarchy. My skin had become a marker of difference through which I was expected to relate to the outside world. In a process aptly named “the epidermilisation of inferiority.” by Fanon (1993: 13) my identity and sense of self was being shaped by being placed in a subordinate position within the social hierarchy.

On arrival in England, I already had a sense of otherness born out of a sense of unfamiliarity with the new cultural environment to which I was exposed. It should only have been a matter of time before that distance was eroded. Barbados was after all known as little England. Being positioned as the ‘racial other’ however, opened up a chasm which could not be bridged by time and adaptation. This was a profound split which told
me that there was a sacred space to which I could never belong. This space is called 
whiteness. I was introduced to a world of duality where relationships are shaped by 
power. The words with which I was so wounded were not telling me what I had done but 
instead they were telling me who I was and what position I should occupy. Ever since, I 
have been surrounded with stories which renew and perpetuate the dichotomy. Some 
stories situate me in a historical relationship as dominated, enslaved and colonized, others 
are myths that tell me of my inferior and primitive status: subhuman, instinct driven, 
uncivilised. I grew up surrounded by the images generated by these narratives. I noticed 
that whiteness on the other hand has no apparent narrative but instead appropriated 
normality. Whiteness resides as the mirror image which corresponds to the opposite 
qualities represented by blackness. When I reflect on the story of little Wayne I realise 
that in telling me who I was individuals were simultaneously co-constructing themselves 
and reassuring themselves of their own place and position in a racialised world.

The second moment relates to a painful encounter seventeen years later. Wayne is 
attending a weekend conference for detached youth workers at Keele University. The 
conference is advertised as sponsoring a black workers caucus. Nervous and excited he is 
eager to network. he is approached by a black female delegate.

Where do you work?

I run a youth club in Telford.
Not many black people there!

No, I work mainly with white kids.

What use are you to them?

Well I am able to give them a different role model and challenge their racism.

You thinks so! if you had any skills shouldn’t you be sharing them with black young people?

She takes her leave and joins a small group of black workers; Wayne can see that he is being pointed out and moments later a male delegate from the group comes over and says “I’ve been talking to Sheila she says that you need help; you think you are white!”

That remark still feels raw today. At the time it opened a wound that was buried deep inside Wayne with a blunt but very hot knife. He was hurt and very angry and was careful to avoid any member of that group for the rest of the weekend.

It was a few years before I could face the impact of this encounter. I had tried to put it aside but the wound, now reopened refused to heal. I had been travelling through life’s liberal establishments with the understanding that blackness was mine, a product of my
skin. This encounter was a totally different experience for me. My blackness seemed to be judged by my actions, it was not something I could just claim, I was expected to earn it. Little Wayne had initially attempted to fight blackness being imposed and reject the projections in order to preserve an already fragile sense of self. He soon found however, that through silence, accepting the projections and learning to laugh at himself that everyone was happier and a peaceful co-existence was possible. bell hooks (1990:155) captures this well when she writes:

"Colonisation made of us the colonized – participants in daily ritual of power where we, in strictly sado-masochistic fashion, find pleasure in ways of being and thinking, ways of looking at the world that reinforce and maintain our positions as dominated. Any coming to critical consciousness simply heightens the reality of contradictions. To focus on them is to expose our complicity, to expose the reality that even the most politically aware among us are often compelled by circumstances we do not control to submit, to collude".

My experience tells me that the cost of silence is the burden of shame that the colonized carries throughout life. The colonizer is a co-conspirator in this ritual. I presume that the cost of his or her silence is guilt. My encounter with the black caucus had left me with an odd mixture of shame and guilt. At the same time it opened the doors to the possibility of re-appropriating blackness as a tool of political resistance and rewriting the script of black being negative. I faced the difficult task over the next decade of becoming black. This process was remarkably consistent with the model of black identity development
proposed by Cross (1971) to theorise the shift to black consciousness that he was witnessing in African Americans at the time which he attributed to the civil rights movement. He referred to it as a process of psychological liberation under conditions of oppression.

The third moment in this particular journey moves me on another fifteen years from my encounter at Keele. I am engaged in a piece of research to investigate mixed race identity development in young people. In listening to the stories of mixed race young people I had become familiar with the difficulties they experience when they attempt to fit into a world polarised between black and white. It may be, however, that if our relationships are framed in this dualistic world, we are likely to elicit presentations of self which conform to it. One of the questions I asked was for the young people to describe themselves racially, a question which was often clarified as do you see yourself as black or white? This question elicited a range of responses, including:

"Most of the time I see myself as black, sometimes half caste, sometimes I don’t know". Daryl age 14

"It is hard to relate to how I am, it depends on my moods. Sometimes black, sometimes half caste. I am black when I have an argument and have to stand up for myself". Sandra age 15
“Sometimes I’m black, sometimes I’m white, sometimes I’m just me. If people want to place me, that’s up to them, I’m happy to go along with it but I don’t have to place myself” Harriet age 18

During these interviews, it became clear that a simple black – white dichotomy was inadequate to capture the complexity of racial categorisation and that it was inappropriate to ask individuals to choose between black and white in defining themselves. The young people in my study introduced me to a world of fluid identity which challenged the dualistic world that I inhabited. This piece of research raised many questions for me:

- Was I prepared to let go of being black, which I had spent so many years fighting for and had become for me a protective shield?

- How secure were the boundaries of race? could they be crossed?

- To what extent do we have agency, are we free to choose or own identity or is identity imposed?

**Across the lines**

Tracey Chapman’s song ‘Across the Lines’ provided the title for the piece of research mentioned above. The current research study takes up the challenge that she poses in the song; “Who would dare to cross the lines that separate black from white”. This
would entail claiming the freedom to break away from the set coherence of race and 
examining the sado-masochistic pleasure that bell hooks (1990) suggests that we take 
in being, thinking and looking at the world in ways that reinforce and maintain our 
position as dominated. Eric Fromm (1942) points out in his book ‘Fear of Freedom’, 
that sado-masochism is a way of maintaining relationships of power. Freedom would 
entail both sides in a relationship having to renegotiate their own positions and facing 
the discomfort and responsibilities of determining their own identities. This theme is 
echoed in Ralph Ellison’s powerful novel Invisible Man. His hero comes to the 
realisation that the duality of race is socially constructed and people are free to make 
choices about their own identities.

“I must have been crazy and blind. The world in which we live was without 
boundaries. A vast seething, hot world of fluidity” (Ellison 1965: 401)

This realisation proved to be uncomfortable.

“You could actually make yourself anew. The notion was frightening, for now the 
world seemed to flow before my eyes. All boundaries down, freedom was not 
only the recognition of necessity, it was the recognition of possibility”. (Ellison 
1965: 401)
Ellison's hero found this awareness too vast and confusing to contemplate. He consequently withdrew from social life, taking refuge in a basement, fighting his own private battles whilst he readjusted to a new vision of the world.

Stories about race are very powerful, they trigger uncomfortable emotions and affect the way we give meaning to our experiences and make sense of our lives. Listening to the stories of mixed race young people set me on the road to the rediscovery of the totality of my experience. The stories were the vehicle through which little Wayne could speak to me. The journey from little Wayne to the present day draws attention to the multiple and unstable nature and meanings of identity. This research is a continuation of my journey. It will investigate the experience of crossing racial boundaries and claiming the agency to choose the social and relational space that we are able to occupy. It is a search for freedom from the constraints imposed by the ideology of race. I realize that it is easy to reject and silence stories which offer ways of being that disturb the relative security of one's own identity.

In this study, I set out to explore new ways of challenging racism. My initial reflections have led me to the view that racism is essentially a consequence of the continued reproduction and representation of race and racialised identities. A major challenge to racism would therefore be to question the integrity of race boundaries. In doing so, I aim to explore the space between racial boundaries and to make it available to others. This involves an act of resisting dominant representations of race.
By maintaining a focus on identity I wish to explore how race, as a political and intersubjective product is given meaning in the lives of individuals. The main objective of the study is to develop critical awareness of the operation of race in daily life. However, as Moustakas suggests individuals are drawn to heuristic research without necessarily having clarity of purpose and therefore have to be prepare to ‘swim in an unknown current’. For me, this means taking the risk of going with the flow, facing emotional truths and being open to the discoveries and insights that are being pulled by the same current. I do so in the hope of finding a place of healing for myself and for others who have been ‘othered’ and feel that they do not belong. It is anticipated that this will involve the recovery of significant stories and reconciling split off parts of self. In this respect, the process has already started.

Race and identity are overused terms which need some clarification. In the next Chapter entitled ‘Race, Identity and Agency’ I will continue by discussing the ontological status of race and theoretical perspectives on identity in order to define the field of the study. The relationship between race, identity and agency is contextualized within a postmodern frame which destabilizes notions of continuity and essentialism. The following chapter will critically review literature and research exploring black identity, white identity and mixed race identity. It will end by looking at literature which advocate for identities which transcend race. This chapter will be followed by two methodology chapters the first laying down the principles of heuristic methodology. The second showing how heuristic methods have been applied in this study to gather and synthesis the data. A creative synthesis is used to present
the data using poetry and story. The methodology is covered in detail because of the intimate connection between it and the phenomenon being investigated. In many respects the research study is led by the methodology. The methodology complements the goals of the research to cross boundaries and is perhaps offers something a little special for a PhD thesis. The next chapter is a reflective discussion which draws general principles and meanings from the data. The final conclusion gives an overview of the research and draws it together; summarizing main findings.
Chapter two

Race, Identity and Agency

Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine different perspectives on identity and aim to explore the role it plays in the maintenance and transmission of race in the social imagination. The stabilising function of identity is evident in the way that identity, when linked to conditions of change, is commonly referred to as being in crisis (Erikson 1968, Dunn 1998, Frosh 1991). Despite its apparent frailty, identity has continued to occupy centre stage in race politics regardless of whether it is emphasised and bought to the foreground or evaded and left in the background. Identity is a complex concept which relates to self image, one's relationship with the outside world and one's relationship with time—past, present and future. The difficulty of researching identity is that it encompasses a tremendous range of major issues such as race, class, gender and nation. To focus on any of these, one runs the risk of fragmenting the individual and losing sight of the totality of his or her experience. I prefer to view issues such as these as a set of coordinates which individuals use to navigate themselves through the social and political world. In this study I will maintain a focus on race and identity in order to limit the scope of the research. Nonetheless, examining racial identity as an orientation towards the boundaries that separate self from other will provide a common thread that links the other markers of difference and differentiation. My focus on racial identity automatically places the discussion in the cultural and political arena. This tends to decentralise the individual but by introducing the notion of agency I intend to re-instate the personal and examine the meaning identity has in the struggle for subjectivity. By exploring more closely the nature
of identity, I intend to examine how it can fulfil contradictory roles which on one hand seeks to change the power relationship inherent in race and at the same time acts to reproduce it. Identity can thus operate both as a tool of resistance and as a source of inertia.

Race: Myth or Social reality

The notion of race is built on the belief or assertion that humanity can be divided into discrete biological entities. This assumes that there are significant differences in the human stock which warrant the sorting of human beings into distinct racial categories such as Caucasoid, Negroid and Mongoloid. Race was initially used to denote lineage and family ties as seen in the biblical reference to the race of David. This usage of race provides a means of social organisation on the basis of biology which does not necessarily support an ideology of essential difference. The articulation of ‘blackness’ and ‘whiteness’ to race however, marks a shift, in which race is extended from being purely a biological category to also being an ideological division. I will not expand on this here but instead refer to Fryer (1984) who gives a comprehensive account of how blackness came to denote the negative and the bestial whilst whiteness was exalted to signify goodness and purity. A dichotomous view of race as black or white in these terms generates a fundamental split; where in the current social environment, the white race is seen as superior and the black race as inferior. This hierarchy provides a template for racism to manifest itself. Racism will always manifest itself whilst race continues as a
viable means of social organisation. The notion of race itself is a complex phenomenon which is beautifully captured by Wideman (1994).

"The word race evokes a paradigm, a systematic network or pattern of assumptions, relationships, a model of reality, of history and causation as complete, closed and pervasive as religion. Race is not a set of qualities in some 'other' it's the license to ascribe such qualities allied with the power to make them stick". (Wideman 1994: xv)

In this study I will refer to racism as the process of erecting and maintaining racial boundaries which perpetuate the social division between black and white. A direct consequence of this division is discrimination, seen here as the differential treatment of individuals based on the belief in, or assumption of, essential racial difference. In practice, this results in a discrimination against perceptions of blackness and in favour of perceptions of whiteness. Racism in this form is already embedded in the language, the distinction is clearly evident. If we look at a common definition of black and white in the Penguin English Dictionary, we see:

**black**

negroid; dark, sombre; dirty; (fig) malignant; deadly, sinister; wicked, infamous;
gloomy, dismal; threatening, sullen, angry."
white

not belonging to the negroid or Asiatic races; (fig) benevolent; honest, honourable; pure.

(Garmonsway & Simpson 1973)

The term racism can also be used to denote various discriminatory practices. Kovel (1988) describe different forms of racism which have evolved. He identifies three different forms:

1. Dominative racism

*Which can manifest itself in forms of violence and exploitation.*

2. Aversive racism

*Which manifest itself in practices of exclusion and degradation*

3. Meta racism

*Which operates through institutional and hegemonic practices and have the effect of subordinating individuals and groups.*

Kovel suggests that although the movement from dominative to meta racism maps a trajectory towards more benign forms of racism, each variant is however capable of manifesting itself; depending on the prevailing social, political and economic conditions. This seems to be a useful model for contextualising the operations of racism but it is also
important to maintain the view of racism as an ideological position with discrimination as its consequence. Anthias and Yuval Davis (1992) suggest that restricting definitions of racism to the black-white dichotomy does not take into account the discrimination experienced by others on cultural or religious grounds. To extend the notion of racism to include ethnic groupings would perhaps be an overuse of the term and would effectively make it too diffuse as a tool of analysis. It is more precise to consider how blackness and whiteness operate as markers of distinction when connected to other social divisions such as culture, class and gender and sexuality. There is a large volume of work which explores race and racism. The majority of these works however, examine racism in its relationship to discrimination. The primary focus for this work will be racism, in relation to the perpetuation and transmission of race ideology.

I will start with a brief overview of the historical development of race ideology. I will then go on to explore how the current policy of ethnic categorisation perpetuates this ideology. Fryer (1984) suggests that the signification of black as bad and white as good existed in the language prior to the encounter of the English with the African. He goes on to argue that as an existing schema, it could conveniently be applied to render Africans subhuman and used as a justification for their enslavement. Race ideology could then be transmitted and perpetuated through folk mythologies which emanated from the plantations. The distance of the audience from the source of these stories meant that they could grow and be embellished without challenge. Fryer (1984) introduces the label plantocracy racism to refer to this process. He quotes from Edward Long (1772) as one who was prolific in disseminating such stories.
'For my own part', he wrote, 'I think there are extremely potent reasons for believing, that the white and the negro are two distinct species.' Instead of hair, black people had 'a covering of wool', like the bestial fleece'. Their bodies were infested with black lice. Their 'bestial or fetid smell' was so strong that 'it continues in places where they have been near quarter of an hour'. They had no plan or system of morality. They were barbarous to their children. Black men had no taste but for women, and eating and drinking to excess; no wish but to be idle. (Fryer 1984 :158-159)

Sentiments such as these having seeped into the popular imagination continue to be reproduced today, albeit in a less virulent form.

As a second stage, Fryer (1984) explores how science was co-opted to provide empirical evidence for racial difference and in particular, to provide proof of the superiority of the 'white race'. He proposes that this was the most important ingredient to imperial expansion. Fryer examines a range of inquiries which were initiated, using the new sciences of craniology, phrenology and genetics to reinforce and legitimate the idea that the black race was intermediate between apes and the white race. He refers to this process as pseudo-scientific racism. Whilst these early studies were subsequently discredited, the fervour within the scientific community to seek evidence of white superiority continued into the nineteenth and twentieth century. Richards (1997) tracks the progress of scientific racism and gives a very good account of how the psychologists, encouraged by the publication of Darwin’s Origin of Species, took up this challenge. He shows that
although their empirical technique was more sophisticated, the racist intent of their work resulted in it being flawed and again discredited. The remnants of their work perhaps continue to reside in the assumption of the intellectual and moral superiority of whiteness. The works of Eysenck (1973) and Hernstein and Murray (1994) who use intelligence testing to establish evidence of white intellectual superiority indicate that the goal of providing a rational and scientific base for this has not yet been abandoned. Despite such attempts, it is generally acknowledged within the scientific community that race is not accepted as a valid biological or scientific category. There is no evidence which support the continued division of black and white on the assumption of racial difference. On the contrary, recent developments in DNA testing have shown that human genetic variation does not conform to any assumed racial divide. But still, minimal and insignificant genetic variation is used to generate catastrophic binary, social polarisation.

The absence of a rational or scientific basis for the continued use of race as a means of creating social divisions has led to the call for it to be jettisoned from the language and from social analysis. (Roedigger 1994, Payne 1998) Miles and Torres (1999) agree that race is inadequate as an analytical category and suggest that:

The task of social scientists is to develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of this process of structuring and representing which breaks completely with the reified language of biological essentialism (Miles and Torres 1999: 32-33)
Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) offer the compromise position that we could avoid the inadequacies inherent in the notion of race and instead refer to racialisation. By this they mean recognizing race as a socially constructed phenomenon that operate across imaginary boundaries. Whilst this may be useful in describing the phenomenon, it is not adequate to describe the ‘felt sense’ of race at a personal level. Guillaumin (1999) in referring to race suggests:

Simply showing that a category of this type has no scientific basis is insufficient to remove it from the mental universe not simply of the majority of people, but even those who are intellectually convinced that it does not exist as a “natural” reality.

(Guillaumin 1999: 44-45)

This point is reinforced by Malik (1969) when he argues that race as an existing social phenomenon, should not be equated with science. He suggests that although it may be a theoretical and scientific construct, it describes an existing social process which has economic, political and historical validity. Working with the notion of race does present me with a dilemma. I have sympathy with the view that race should be removed from the vocabulary to prevent it being perpetuated through common usage. I am aware however; that as long as race continues to exist in the social imagination and social structures, even if the word was not used, the symbolism and meaning it carry will continue to exist. I have seen this in the use of heritage, parentage and culture as encoded versions of race. Despite its real limitations I will continue to use race as a contested notion in order to keep it in focus as the object of challenge.
It would seem to me that it is precisely because we find it difficult to separate from our attachment to race that it continues to be perpetuated. The consequence of this is that even well intentioned attempts to challenge racism can end up reproducing the conditions needed for racism to flourish. I would like to illustrate this by looking at ethnic categorisation. It was first introduced by the Commission for Racial Equality in order to meet the demand for evidence of continued discrimination on the grounds of race. The ethnic group question was posed for the first time in the 1991 census to allow the extent of discrimination and disadvantage suffered by minority groups in Britain to be monitored and thus to enable targeting of resources and services. Whilst these aims are commendable, the impact of categorisation is to authenticate and legitimise the notion of race. My own relationship with racial categorisation is illustrated in the following reflections.

I am confronted with the ethnic categorizing question on the 2001 census. On first glance the question “what is your ethnic group?” seems straightforward enough I only need to tick a box. I am asked to choose a category and within it indicate my cultural background. My automatic reaction is to go to the black section; after all little Wayne was given this label a long time ago and Wayne later fought to claim it for himself. What would I be claiming now? Is black a reference to my skin and hence to my biology? I certainly would not want to claim difference on this mistaken account. Black would once have been a statement of my political stance which indicated solidarity with others in opposition to racism. Although I would still wish to be able to identify with others who
share a common experience of oppression, I would not choose an identity as a declaration of my victimhood. Stuart Hall suggests that black is an imagined community, saying;

"It has always been an unstable identity, psychically, culturally and politically. It, too is a narrative, a story, a history, something constructed, told, not simply found." (Hall 1989:45)

This statement resonates with me; the story of race has shaped my life and relationship with the outside world in many ways. My racial identity had become the stories that other people told about me and that I had told myself. Now it is time to let it go. I have a sense of liberation in the letting go of what “at one time seemed to be a necessary fiction” (Hall 1996: 444). Looking closer at the census question, it is apparent that my cultural background would have to be elsewhere. Little Wayne would probably have located this as Caribbean, but for Wayne his cultural roots were in Africa. To claim either of these now would have some sentimental value but little meaning, because these labels homogenize a great variety of cultures and place me on a Diasporas journey back to an imagined homeland. If I wished to claim a cultural background which is most relevant to me it would be British. I notice however that this is reserved only for those who identify as white. ‘Black British’ is offered to me as a category, but this only signifies an historical relationship with slavery and colonialism which places me in a subordinate position.

Can I claim White as a racial category? It would certainly be possible if this referred to
heritage in the same way as it does for blackness. Deep down however, I know that the drop of blood rule still applies to the extent that only blackness can be inherited but not whiteness. Young (1999:2) suggests that categorisation “involve mechanisms of both inclusion and exclusion of individuals on the basis of the categorisation of human subjects into those that can belong and those that cannot.” It is apparent in the census question that British as a cultural background is reserved solely for those who can claim whiteness. It is interesting to note that whiteness suggests a unity and homogeneity of the white subject that masks and minimize the significance of cultural variation. The exception being ‘Irish’ which as a distinct cultural background was first recognised in the 2001 census. This is hardly a break in the ranks since ‘Irish’ have historically been enveloped in the imaginary boundary of blackness. Bonnet (1996: 98) refers to the white position as a structural location of privilege. He suggests that ‘whiteness’ “is something that defines the ‘other’ but is not itself subject to ‘others’ definition.”

As I scan over other boxes to tick I pass quickly over the category of Asian. I do however have poignant memories however of standing side by side with Asian colleagues in black workers groups. I realize that categorisation as is not new; it is simply bringing home a practice used in the colonies as a tool of domination i.e. the well known practice of divide and rule. Although I am not able to identify any direct links with Chinese heritage, Chinese Taoist philosophy has been particularly influential in shaping my sense of self and view of the world. So can I claim Chinese? This is getting all too confusing. My identity is shifting and could be made to fit into any of the categories on the form. Perhaps I will have to settle for being ‘Mixed’. When I consider the cultural choices
available in this category, again, I see whiteness standing as an undifferentiated state and linked to other representations of culture which have an assumed homogeneity, for example; White and Caribbean, White and Asian. Unless White is a cultural representation, these categories have little meaning. In frustration I suppose I could be mixed and mixed. The nonsense of it gives me a smug satisfaction. In the end I refuse to tick anything.

On inspection, the current ethnic monitoring categories appear idiosyncratic because they are based upon a mixture of ideological, biological and geographical notions which tend only to confuse concepts of race, ethnicity and culture. The ethnic categories call upon individuals to identify themselves through parentage, physical characteristics and ancestral heritage, all of which serve to maintain and reinforce the links between race and the body; as blood, flesh and bone. Thus the embodiment of race, reconstitutes the assumption that there are significant biological differences between the races. What once was upheld as a scientific reality has been reconstructed as a social reality. The imaginary becomes the real. Both these versions of reality are capable of generating lines of division and hierarchy, which supports a position of white supremacy. Grosvenor & Green (1996:2) makes the insightful observation that ethnic categorisation “essentialise the social with the effect that fluid socio-politically generated perceptions become fixed, frozen relations and identities.” Nanton (1989) suggests that categorisation shape our way of thinking; firstly because it raises the profile of race as a central issues for concern, thus stimulating a race consciousness, secondly, attempting to establish identifiable boundaries of blackness gives substance to the illusion of race, finally, it racialises the notion of
culture by linking it to the experience of racism and discrimination..

I have used a critique of ethnic monitoring to explore the paradox of attempting to use race specific remedies to eradicate racism. Categorisation deflects attention from the individual to the group. It results in a loss of personhood and effectively reduces the black subject to an object. Categorisation encourages race to be fixed within the body as a permanent feature of personal identity which may be a difficult thing to surrender. At the same time, to surrender identity is to leave oneself open and vulnerable to the destructive features of racism. Ralph Ellison’s novel ‘Invisible Man’ gives many valuable insights into how race operates and sustains itself in the face of different forms of resistance. In his novel, Ellison (1965) provides a perspective on Harlem in the 1950’s. His work offers a different temporal and contextual perspective to examine race operating. It is this difference that makes it so useful for exploring how race, despite its shifting manifestations, can survive and perpetuate itself by maintaining its location within the body. Ellison’s hero reflects on his journey of awakening which lead him to the discovery of his invisibility. At this point he acknowledges:

“I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. .....When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination - indeed everything and anything except me” (Ellison 1965: 7)

This is an important discovery, which allows him to see the black body as a container of other peoples split off and projected parts of themselves. It shows race to exist in an
imaginary space between the observer and the observed, rather than residing within the individual. The realization of invisibility allows race to be freed from its entrapment within the body. Ellison’s novel brings attention to the paradox of ethnic categorisation, where the intention is to claim visibility and recognition as a member of a minority group.

Roedigger (1994) challenges the effectiveness of categorisation as a mechanism for change. He suggested that whiteness should not continue as a fixed and immutable quantity, instead it should be interrogated which could lead to a collapse of its hegemonic hold on racial politics. If this were to happen there would be a proliferation of ethnic categories generated which could not be split along racial lines and would make categorisation a nonsense. This strategy opens the way to questioning the stability and coherence of racialised boundaries. It would take a great courage to re-orientate ourselves to a world without racial boundaries. Such fluidity would mean a loss of the security that racial identity offers and it would threaten the divisions that support the social hierarchy. It may be necessary, however, to risk entering that transitional space so we are able to grasp the opportunities that fluidity has to offer. Hall (1996:444) warns that:

Once you enter the politics of the end of the essential black subject you are plunged headlong into the maelstrom of a continuous, contingent, unguaranteed, political argument and debate: a critical politics, a politics of criticism. You can no longer conduct politics through the strategy of a simple set of reversals, putting in place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject. Now, that formulation may seem to threaten the collapse of an entire political world. (Hall
Whilst recognizing the difficulties of conceptualising such a politic, Hall (1996:444) suggests that this “does not absolve us from the task of developing such a politics”.

It is my intention to take up this challenge in this research by attempting to cross the race boundary and resist the dominant representations of race.

The argument for the deconstruction of race is not new. There is a danger however that it remains an ideological rhetoric unless it can be translated into lived experience. Roediger (1994) is perceptive when he argues that we become trapped in the story of race even when we attempt to oppose it. He suggests that the intellectual recognition that race is socially constructed, though very important, does little to disarm the powerful effects of race on people’s lives and in the wider socio-political environment. We need to ask: is it possible to live outside the race boundary? Malik (1996) is adamant that racial division does have a social content which cannot be reduced by personal preference. He suggests that boundaries are raised as a consequence of a power relationship and individuals do not have a choice of identity. This seems to be an important note of caution and raises the question; does the agency to operate outside racial boundaries exist and if so what form does it take?

The erected boundaries of race remain a site for struggle. However tempting it may be to assume a raceless position which said that race does not exist, I realize that we operate in
a social context where this would be naïve. In my work I have come across many people only too willing to claim a view of common humanity in order to avoid a confrontation with white privilege. In seeking to cross racial boundaries I need to acknowledge that such boundaries do exist, with real consequence in peoples lives. I would not wish to take a stance which would trivialized this. At the same time I would want to challenge the immutability and legitimacy of those boundaries. I will assume the mixed race position, as a valuable one in holding the tension between race as illusion and race as social fact. The mixed race experience offers a challenge to the story of racial duality. It is effectively paradoxical because it represents a union of opposites. At this stage it is worth pointing out that my use of the term mixed race refers to an ideological position inhabited by individuals who occupy or claim an emotional space on both sides of the racialised boundary and a lived experience not contained in a world divided between the poles of black and white. This definition accepts that though race is given meaning within an individual’s experience, it is nonetheless illusory. It is useful because it avoids reference to parentage, heritage or any other embodied notion. The real challenge it offers is the ability to dislodge race thinking from its current binary position and to introduce a fluidity which reconciles the split between self and other.
The co-ordinates of identity

In the previous section I explored the question of whether race was an illusion or a social reality. Whilst at one level this may be an important line of inquiry, Lyotard asserts that:

Realism accepts and even requires the presence of the imaginary within it, and that the latter, far from being something foreign to reality is one of its states, the nascent state. (Lyotard 2001:18)

This statement suggests that the distinction between utility and truth is blurred or even non existent. In narrowing the gap between the real and imaginary by questioning whether one thing is more real than another is merely to engage in an act of abstraction. I believe that it is in these spaces of abstraction that identities reside. These spaces are necessary if we are to make differentiation between self and other; between white and black, straight and gay, man and woman. I agree that all of these are in essence false dichotomies, but nonetheless important ones. We uphold them because they give particular meaning to our identities and lived experiences. In this section I will explore identity as a means of locating the self in the social world.

Kovel (1988) looks at meaning making and experiencing as fundamentally a symbolic process. He adds:

Both the culture without and the ego within operate through the creation of an immense variety of symbolic differentiation, and the simultaneous bindings of those differentiations into a synthetic whole. (Kovel 1988:96)
This understanding lends itself to a structuralist view of the world which recognizes language as the organizing principle of the social and cultural environment. The binary oppositions embedded in language are the tools which operate to bind the differentiations suggested by Kovel into a synthetic whole. It is useful to think of race as a binary opposition and thus part of the symbolic world. The use of language tends to support and reinforce a binary view which traps identities into fixed, superior – inferior relationships. Jack Gillbeaux (1997) introduces the configuration of the superior-inferior mode which he refers to as an internalized script. He suggests although it may not be a politically correct assertion or even a conscious belief, we carry the tacit assumption that some categories of people are inherently superior to others. On the basis of this he implies that we construct social relationships where we position ourselves in either superior or subordinate positions and that our relationship with others is governed by our relative position in the binary. Our position would be either superior or inferior dependent on the particular narrative we carry about ourselves and the narrative we allocate to the other. He suggests that our attachments to superior or inferior positions are so deeply integrated into our view of ourselves that we continue to reproduce them. As I have developed my awareness of the racial script that I carry, I realize that I live in a world where I uphold white as superior to black. I have found that this understanding persists and I am uncomfortable when I catch myself operating in inferior mode. Despite efforts I have made to consciously eradicate it from my mind, this script operates at a tacit
level and creates the order in the outside world that I need to make sense of it. When I operate outside this script confusion arises unless I can claim another narrative which justifies me performing in superior mode for example when I invoke the gender script. The superior-inferior mode has the hallmark of a meta narrative which Malpas (2001) describes as the underlying structure or rules which create a context for any particular narrative. The rules governed by the meta-narrative determine whether anything we see or hear is compatible with social reality; whether it makes sense or not. The meta-narrative provides a link that connects other modalities of identity such as class, gender and sexuality. The meta-narrative of race determines that the categorical split between white and black is configured in a way that assumes a superior – inferior relationship. Binary splits appear to be configured in the following way:

Scientific v Intuitive
Rational v Emotive
Civilised v Primitive
Mind v Body
Saviour v Victim
Subject v Object

This symbolic differentiation creates a logic which gives ascendancy to associations of scientific, rational, civilized, etc. over associations of intuitive, emotional, primitive and so on. Applying these rules to race we see that whiteness makes sense if it is framed within superior mode where whiteness has a typology of scientific, rational, civilized, intellectual, saviour and subject. On the other hand blackness makes sense in inferior
mode with a typology of intuitive, emotional, primitive, embodied, victim, and object. The same meta-narrative rules can be applied to other binary accounts such as class, gender and sexuality. This leads to intersecting subordinations where the less powerful cognate of binary pairings share the same meta-narrative typology. Groups with inferior narratives would be similarly excluded from the institutions of power.

Derrida challenges the essentialising tendencies of the meta-narrative and paves the way for its deconstruction, advocating that it is possible to peel back layers of meaning to discern the underlying structure implicit in language (Silverman 1989). He argues against the elevation of reason and logic as part of the project of enlightenment since meaning could only be grasped in a relational context. Thus, the words black and white have little meaning outside the meta-narrative that governs the relationship between them. The influential postmodern philosopher Lyotard (2001) takes deconstruction further by advocating the collapse of binary differentiations to allow a more fluid understanding of relationship and identity. The use of language tends to support a binary view of the world better than the fluid view. I want to go on to explore a fluid view of identity but first, it is necessary to begin by examining how boundaries generate the binary structures and fix the coordinates of identity. It would seem that the maintenance of identity involves acts of deciding who is included and who is excluded. I will illustrate this by reflecting on my encounter with a rabbit that came to visit me.

It was a tame rabbit which, I learnt, had escaped from a nearby house a couple months
previously and had presumably been living wild. The rabbit seemed attracted to a family of rabbits that lived in a large hutch in my garden. It would spend hours sitting outside the hutch. The rabbit was caught and returned to its owner but was back in the garden the very next day. I did consider letting it join the others in the hutch but was worried that it may fight and attempt to displace one of the pair. When I found that it was eating the young shoots coming up in the garden I realised it had to go. It was eventually caught again and after discussion with its owner it was taken to another area and released.

This story highlights for me, the precarious position of living on the margins and experiencing life as an outsider. This is a position common to those who experience social exclusion, for whom, to fit in, means to know ones place and to accept the power relationship inherent within the status quo. If I had not seen the rabbit as a threat to the status quo and considered that it would have accepted a subordinate position rather than challenging for a place within the hierarchy, it may well have been offered the security and protection of the hutch. In judging that the rabbit would act on its primitive instincts – it had not after all been socialized into the social order that I was willing to protect, I had in effect created a narrative for this rabbit. I saw it as resilient and streetwise, quite unlike my own civilized and rather pampered rabbits. It was certainly tougher than the others and would be able to disturb the established hierarchies that existed. Is this narrative real or imaginary? Does it really matter? I was the gatekeeper and had the power to include or exclude. This particular narrative resonates with the racial narrative that has shaped my own relationship with the outside world, a narrative which clearly said ‘know your place or risk exclusion’. Social exclusion is the power to establish and maintain boundaries,
which separate spaces or territories from each other. Groups and individuals inhabit these spaces which can be real or imagined. In the case of the rabbit, the hutch was a real or physical boundary in as much as it separated an inner space from the outer space. The boundary that kept the rabbit as an outsider was however an imaginary one. This imaginary boundary fixed the position of the rabbit as an outsider on the basis that it did not belong.

Kurt Lewin’s (1935), dynamic field theory provides a very useful means of conceptualizing the interdependence between individuals and groups and describing how this is sustained by boundaries. He highlights the ability to traverse boundaries as a necessary precondition for definitions of self. A central theme of his work is that an individual’s feelings, perceptions and sense of self are grounded in the group to which she or he belongs. Implicit in his work is the view that a group that offers greater privileges in terms of resources, status, security and power would exert a positive valence or pull on individuals who would then seek access to that group unless the inner cohesiveness and loyalties to a rival group that they currently belong to prevents them from doing so. Seeking access to the higher status group necessitates a movement from one life space to another. The movement may be a physical journey or an imaginary one across boundaries which leads to new identifications and affiliations. This model offers the opportunity for individuals to develop their identity through multiple affiliations. However, freedom of movement between groups is required to allow individuals to satisfy their needs. In applying his ideas to the experiences of minority groups, Lewin (1948) postulated that the success of the movement ultimately depended on the ability of
the destination group to erect boundaries of exclusion and to determine who is allowed in and who is not. Lewin makes it clear:

It is well to realize that every underprivileged minority group is kept together not only by the cohesive force among its members, but also by the boundary which the majority erects against the crossing of an individual from the minority group to the majority group. It is in the interest of the majority group to keep the minority in its underprivileged status. (Lewin 1948:191)

Lewin (1935) poignantly reflects on the situation of the Jews in Nazi Germany where he warns individuals that changing their names and abandoning their religion in order to assimilate to the dominant social environment, did not necessarily mean that they would be accepted as members of the host group. Lewin further suggests that rejection by the dominant group may lead individuals to dislike or hate their own group because it represents a burden to them. For individuals in this position, it was likely that they would find themselves marginalized from both groups. Lewin recognised that the power to protect boundaries from being crossed determined their level of permeability. Consequently some boundaries were permeable and could easily be crossed whilst others like race were impermeable and strong enough to thwart the desires of individuals to cross them. The work of Henri Tagfel (1919) complements Lewin’s ideas by emphasizing the key role played by group identification to social identity. Tagfel argues that social identity is accrued from the status of the groups to which an individual claims belonging. Thus a higher status group will contribute more towards a positive social identity than a
low status group. Tagfel suggests that social comparison is used by individuals to assess their preferred choice of group membership. On this basis, members of minority groups who experience discrimination and social disadvantage would be drawn towards membership of the dominant or majority group which offers opportunity for a more positive social identity.

Like Lewin, Tagfel supports the view that an individual’s ability to join a group does, of course, depend on the permeability of the boundaries that separate one group from the other. If the boundary to the higher status group proves to be impermeable, then individuals may have to reconcile themselves to an inferior status. This option however is dependent on the perceived legitimacy and stability of the system enforcing the boundaries. If it seems conceivable, individuals may attempt to empower themselves to challenge their exclusion. Alternatively, they may act collectively to challenge the inequality and seek social change. If these two are not possible, individuals may re-evaluate their own group and in doing so seek new dimensions of comparison which enhances the positive aspects their group which could be emphasized as a source of positive identity.

The theories of Lewin and Tagfel would predict that given the imbalance of power and status between black groups and white groups, black people would automatically seek to join the white group unless excluded. This conclusion is echoed by Fanon (1986:12):

However painful it may be to accept this conclusion. I am obliged to state it: for the black man there is only one destiny and that is white.

Fanon refers here to the symbolic differentiation of race that constructs inequality, rather
than an essentialist view of race. The destiny of whiteness is an affirmation of equality. Instead of such an affirmation, we have seen legislative attempts to tackle exclusion on the grounds of race which have not been particularly successful (Parekh 2000). I suggest that this is because legislative strategies which uphold and promote the essential black-white split are co-opted in maintaining racial boundaries. It is paradoxical that exclusion has been the effective outcome of identity politics which have sought to embrace group solidarity and inclusion as a means of challenging structured inequality on the grounds of race. Black identity, however, inherits a communicative base of inequality. Lacan’s view that through the acquisition of language; the individual gains entry to the symbolic world highlights the power implicit in language (Philippe 1994). To label or to take on the label of oneself as black for example, signals a group belonging. Blackness is however located symbolically as inferior to its polar cognate – whiteness. To acquire the language of race is to take on a world of meaning which extends beyond a particular group into past and future relationships.

The perspective of Lewin and Tagfel is typical of the assimilationist perspective of their time. This view does not however, necessarily reveal the full picture. Certainly, members of one group may wish to share the power, status and privilege that may come from belonging to a higher status group, they may even make concessions such as adopting the rules and customs of that group. This says very little about how the individual’s identification with the group reflects on her or his personal identity. This leads me back to reflecting on the position of the rabbit outside my hutch. The hutch offered security against the dangers of the outside world. It offered order and predictability; food and
water would be provided on a regular basis. The cost of security, order and predictability however, was entrapment. The world of the rabbits in the hutch was boundaried, but limited and confined. From this perspective, it was only the rabbit outside the hutch that was in fact free. Freedom is not without its dangers, but here was a rabbit that had learned to survive and perhaps wanted the others also to be free. The interesting thing here is that the freedom of the rabbit, from my perspective was difficult to tolerate because in claiming my garden, it had began to affect my own world. This triggered me to act against it by moving it on. This rabbit brings to our attention the threat posed to social order by those who experience exclusion. This theme is well documented by Foucault (2001) as he explores how exclusion creates a certain freedom that then has to be controlled. He shows how this has been done historically either by confinement in institutions or by moving people on, as in the ship of fools, where those labeled as mad would be packaged off down the river from village to village.

Identity is a complex issue which cannot be fully grasped in terms of group identification. The theories of Lewin and Tagfel do however offer some important insights into the nature of identity and the process of identity development. Since individuals can belong to many groups, their identities can draw from multiple group identifications. Recognition of identity however seem to be most pronounced not through group inclusion but through group exclusion. Group membership can be taken for granted unless a challenge is posed by a rival group. Rival groups tend to be configured in an opposition which says that in order to be in one group you cannot be in its opposing group at the same time. For example under such binary logic you cannot be black and the same time be white, you
cannot be a man and at the same time a woman. Many groups of which we are members can happily co-exist alongside other groups. It is only when groups assume an oppositional stance which suggests radical, deep and basic differences between them that conflict arises. This would indicate that group identification only has a bearing on identity when it is configured in a binary relationship. When faced with binary groups, individuals have to make a choice as to which one they belong. This presumes that the individual has the power to make that choice for him or herself. Identity based on identification is essentially a power struggle which is experienced at the point of exclusion. The practice of exclusion can homogenize major differences in order to exclude minor differences (Dalal 2002). This is clearly seen in the case of race where exclusion can be the result of imagined difference attributed to blackness whilst significant differences in language, culture, religion for example can be minimized in order to maintain a homogeneity to whiteness.

It is a mistake to think of identity as singular. The dynamic of the binary system constructs two co-independent identities, one which is excluded and one which is included. Hall’s view that “the notion of displacement as a place of ‘identity’ is a concept you learn to live with, long before your are able to spell it” (Hall 1989: 45) is consistent with the work of Lewin and Tagfel which emphasizes the experience of exclusion as most formative of identity. The process of exclusion which generates blackness also simultaneously generates its cognate – whiteness. This creates a subject – object split where whiteness as subject remains hidden in the background while blackness as object is promoted to signify racial identity. Cohen (1992) shows that when whiteness is
experienced as threatened or displaced then it comes to the fore and blackness recedes into the background. The gestalt model of figure and ground could usefully be applied to racial identity to explore whiteness and blackness as perceptual processes.

Identity and relationship

Erik Erikson is credited with popularising the notion of identity as “one’s selfsameness and continuity in time” (Erikson: 1980:22). His work introduces the individual as a more active agent in the struggle for identity and moves identity on from being a process of group identification to an understanding of it being a product of a relationship between the individual and others in the social world. He describes identity formation as a process:

by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he [sic] perceives to be the way others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them (Erikson 1968: 22-23)

This is a complex statement, which need to be broken down. First of all it establishes an external point of reference as the source of identity. Instead of the view that identity arises within the individual, Erikson is suggesting that identity arises in the outside world by way of individual’s perception of how she/he is judged by others. This perspective captures the evaluative nature of an identity which is sought in affirmative relationships.

The second part of this statement is consistent with the ideas of Lewin and Tafel in the way it locates the source of identity as a comparison between self and other and also a comparison between the individual and an external point of signification. This external
point could be race, class, gender etc. The important thing is how does the individual match up to expectation of the narrative attributed to the particular label? Erikson does not develop his view on the mechanism by which individuals receive messages about themselves from others, nor does he expand on to whose judgement an individual is susceptible. He does however recognise that young people who were racialised may struggle to find affirmation and consequently could end up accepting stereotypical or negative identities as an easier route to a role which meets social expectations. Erikson’s model is useful however in that it puts identity development in a relational frame and a temporal frame. I will expand the discussion on these two key perspectives.

Erikson (1968) demarcated adolescence as an important time of transition, where individuals have the important task of reconciling the past with possible futures to achieve a sense of continuity and direction to their lives. Erikson’s psychosocial view of identity had two components. Firstly, an inner subjective element, during which individuals marks the boundary between themselves and the outside world. This process of self definition is often associated with the question “who am I?” The answer to this question clearly depends on the cultural context in which the person is operating. To what extent is the individual seen as autonomous and separate and to what extent is he/she seen as part of a collective? The inner subjective element of identity in Erikson’s formulation also relate to self image. He suggests that how individuals see and value themselves will depend on the level of affirmation they receive from the outside world which is seen as a mirror for the self. The second element focuses on the interplay between the individual and the social environment. The typical question here would be “where do I fit in?”

Erikson was probably the first to appreciate the importance of a person’s history and their
anticipation of a future role and position in shaping their identity. His assertion that an individual’s identity could only be what culture and history would allow emphasises the power of the social environment to constrain how individuals see themselves and position themselves.

Erikson offers a model for understanding the development of identity which is all encompassing and as such can be seen as imprecise. Commenting on his work, Kroger (1989:32) highlights that:

At times identity refers to a structure or a configuration; at other points, it refers to a process. On still other occasions, identity is viewed as both a subjective and an unconscious entity.

She does go on to add however, that it is the very breath of phenomena captured through Erikson’s formulation of identity that makes it so amenable to research. Erikson makes a major contribution in his introduction of a temporal frame to our understanding of identity. He was probably the first to appreciate the importance of a person’s history and the anticipation of future role and position in shaping their identity. He viewed the process of identity development as achieving “one’s selfsameness and continuity in time” (Erikson: 1980:22). His work could be located within Western modernism in which the outside world is seen as coherent and leading towards a linear progression in terms of technological advance as well as in social organisation. He locates identity development as a crisis of continuity during adolescence, which he sees as pivotal between childhood and adulthood. At the heart of the adolescent challenge, is the task of creating a synthesis of past identifications and projecting these into an anticipated or imagined future in order
to establish continuity between self image and future place and role in society. The past consists of personal history, social location in terms of race, class, gender and nation as well as the residue of unresolved trauma experienced at earlier stages of development. In the creation of a synthesis, adolescence is seen as an opportunity to rework the past in any way needed to achieve an internal consistency and coherence to the self image. In Erikson’s formulation, the future is imagined as an extrapolation of past and present in line with the modernist vision of development and progress. Within this the individual is seen as having a degree of agency in determining future roles. It is this question of choice in a changing environment which Erikson refers to as the crisis of identity. He postulates that the antithesis of identity formation is role confusion which is a result of a disruption in continuity. Without a socially affirmed role for individuals to set as their trajectory for the future they are caught suspended in time and susceptible to roles and identities being imposed by others and the outside world through stereotyping and labelling. A degree of agency is therefore a prerequisite for individuals if they are to defend themselves from the encroachment of the outside world.

Erikson’s view that identity development involves a synthesis of past and future has the potential for identity to be linked to historical and social contexts. Although he applied his work to capture transitions within the life cycle of the individual, it could be expanded to consider identity in relation to a wider social change. In order to do this I will introduce three temporal perspectives which I shall refer to as traditional, modernity and postmodernity. It is tempting to view these as sequential phases, with one succeeding the
other to give a linear view of time. I will consider these perspectives however, to be competing variants of how the past and future can be conceptualised in the present.

The traditional perspective sees the past and future as relatively stable and predictable. A range of characteristics typify traditional organization:

- It is based on ritual, and hierarchy.
- It appeals to essentialised identities and unchanging narratives.
- Ideologies of race, class, gender are fairly robust in their transmission through generations.
- Individuals are expected to know their place and to anticipate future roles which comply with their ascribed position.

Formation of identity in traditional periods would be a straightforward process; individuals are expected to know their place, fall into prescribed roles and support the established order. This perspective is in its very nature conservative and apt to reproduce and perpetuate existing socio-historical relationships and ideologies if they are projected into the future unchallenged.

New technology, communication systems and global economies offers the prospect of choice and freedoms that have become the hallmark of modernity. Modernity is typified by the celebration of change and at the same time a struggle to maintain a sense of a real self in the face of overwhelming changes in the social environment (Frosh 1991). Whilst for some, change can be anticipated as a future shock which is disturbing and destabilising (Toffler 1970), for others, it also offers the hope for progress and
emancipation. Modernity exemplifies the optimism and hope that resistance to the shaping forces of the outside world is indeed possible and that individuals have sufficient agency to exert a freedom of choice in the face of the multiplicity of opportunity available. Modernity supports a vision of equal opportunity and a meritocracy which implies that people’s positions and future roles are not fixed but instead lie in their own hands. In modernity however, identity is potentially more fluid and demands more of a search by individuals in order to find their place from within the new choices available. The new enlightenment of modernity also allows the past to be revisited and revised in the light of new developments and new understanding. This releases individuals from restrictive narratives of the past and empowers them to negotiate new positions.

The civil rights movement during the 60’s positioned blackness on the political landscape at a point of resistance. Black identities were claimed and used to empower individuals in the face of white oppression. Modernism adopted a strategy of resistance which attempted to re-appropriate blackness and claim positive associations with blackness as a register for identity. This strategy however, maintains and reinforces a binary perspective which relies heavily on group identification. The inner cohesion of the group depends on a political gesture of solidarity but also as Tagfel suggests on seeking new dimensions of comparison to raise the status of the group. One such strategy is the re-storying of ‘black history’ to challenge primitive associations by highlighting the advancement of black civilisation pre slavery and pre colonialism. ‘Black history’ is also promoted to identify the contributions made by black heroes in science and intellectual activity in arts and literature. Whilst modernity allows a challenge to the race narrative it is clear that the
underlying meta-narrative remains intact and supports Fanon’s view that the destiny of
the black [man] is white. The quest for black identity in modernity however, maintains
race in the binary with blackness positioned in an imagined community of resistance
which assumes a shared experience of racism. Modood challenges the notion that racism
is a shared experience and suggest that the notion of black identity has developed within
an Atlantocentric perspective which marginalises the Asian perspective. He suggests that
the Asian experience is distinctive and its absorption into a "black" category would only
serve to mask the additional dimensions of discrimination and prejudice that particular
emphasizes the differential treatment and varied fortunes of different ethnic minority
groups and suggests that the use of the label 'black' as a unifying concept based on
common experience is no longer appropriate. Brah and Keith (1990) however notice that
the “use of the term Asian is similarly illogical” given the diversity that exist within the
geographical location that Asian as a term denotes. This line of argument follows a
trajectory, which would result in black identity becoming increasingly differentiated. The
modernist vision of race identity has become increasingly unstable. It encompasses a
political stance with implicit essentialist notions of race as an embodied and linked to
cultural histories which have sharp distinctions. The modernist argument for identity is
persuasive in its desire for change and empowerment it clearly views group identity as
core to the struggle for racial equality. The contested element that generates hostility is
simply where to draw boundaries of identity; should they be drawn around experience or
should they be drawn around history and heritage.
Postmodernity is characterised by a vision of the social environment which challenges the horizon of emancipation championed by modernity. The postmodern landscape views past and future as contingent, and a product of image makers and storytellers. Powerful and pervasive forms of social control are seen to regulate our identities. Subjectivity itself comes under question in the face of dissolving realities and fluctuating boundaries. Baudrillard (1998) argues that the subject has collapsed in the mass market. Individuals are seduced into believing that they have freedom of choice whilst reality and internal desire is being packaged and reproduced for their consumption in the market economy. In a postmodern world, identity becomes reduced to a commodity that satisfies an unconscious desire or a nostalgic striving for a sense of purpose needed to combat the superficiality and banality of existence. Postmodern identities are fluid and contingent and constructed in imagination and memory.

The loss of any set coherence and predictability to the future along with disruption to historical continuity which typifies postmodernity does not support Erikson’s formulation of identity development. Instead, individuals are confronted with discontinuity and with it a fundamental alienation from themselves. There is no longer a line that leads from past, through present to the future. In the present, the past can be re-storied and the future re-imagined. The virtual world that we live in is expressed in films like The Matrix and in the proliferation of docusoaps in the media which re-present real life as entertainment. Postmodern theory tends to refer to the cynical manipulation of identity to suit the needs of market forces and social control. This is not immediately apparent because the mass media are able to bombard us with a great variety of identity options and means of
achieving them. This gives the impression of choice and increased agency because the boundaries that constrain us are not so readily apparent. The nihilism implicit in postmodern theory can be depressing but at the same time it can offer new hope for change. Frosh (1991) indicates that postmodernism can be celebratory and playful in its capacity to dismantle received certainties. He suggests that postmodernist theory:

Is a robust refusal to have the wool pulled over our eyes, a firm statement that whatever illusions we may employ to make ourselves feel better, they remain illusory, deceptive and false. (Frosh 1991:57)

As such postmodernism offers a richer analysis of the current conditions. Its capacity to expose binary structures as a false dichotomy offers new opportunity for agency and poses a serious challenge to racism. bell hooks (2001) recognises this opportunity but questions how one is able to progress from theoretical proposition into habits of being, given that to cross the boundaries of race disrupts the organization of power and the security of position and place that boundaries offer.

A postmodern identity would also need to be a poststructural one. Black and white identities only make sense in relation to the binary structure. The deconstruction of the binary does not allow space for the essentialised black or white identities. Instead, identities are free floating but perhaps liable to being co-opted within the existing structures. Many postmodern writers avoid the difficulties caused by loss of the binaries and invoke culture and ethnicity as a source of identification. This sidestep allows postmodern identity to be analysed in terms of multiplicity. This clearly is the case if we attempt to locate cultural, ethnic or national identity. Racial identity remains however
steeped in the binary. The mixed race position has the potential to offer a fluid identity which can incorporate both black and white identities without being reduced to either. In the true spirit of postmodernity, there can be different mixed race positions.

Identity and narrative

In this study I will adopt a postmodern stance which views identity as a struggle for authenticity and agency in the face of boundaries which are sponsored by an unseen power. The postmodern identity has the power to disrupt set coherences and the potential to heal. I like Stuart Hall’s (1989: 44) suggestion that “Identity is formed at the unstable point where the ‘unspeakable’ stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history and culture”. This gives an impetus to breaking the conspiracy of silence which needed to explore identity. This would entail experiencing the discomfort of unearthing some of the ‘unspeakable stories of subjectivity’ and giving them voice.

The narratives of history and culture are themselves not easily amenable to research in a postmodern sense because they are not fixed but instead, are stories to be told and contested. My interpretation of historical narratives has changed over time with new awareness and new interpretations. To a certain extent this has allowed my identity to evolve but it has not changed my relationship with the boundary of race. There is a point where the narrative of race have been so deeply internalized that it becomes a hidden narrative (Cohen 1992) that it is not easily amenable to change. It is a mistake to think of identity as singular. When I think about it, Little Wayne, Wayne and myself are all
characters caught in different temporal phases and consequently relate very differently to, and give different meaning to racial identity in the present. Little Wayne has learnt to keep his head down and avoid bringing attention to race. He still carries a deep sense of shame and hurt from his encounters with racial boundaries. Wayne regrets the passing of racial solidarity and feels betrayed by those who have abandoned the cause. I am swimming in an unknown current, uncertain about my identity but willing to take the journey of discovery. I am at the unstable point that Hall refers to, where the subjectivity of whiteness meets the projected narrative of blackness. Racial identity is formed at this point but also collapses here.

I will develop my discussion on these issues by drawing on the work of Paul Ricoeur (1984, 1985, 1988). Ricoeur’s investigation into the subjectivity of an individual’s relationship with time extended over three volumes entitled Time and Narrative which culminate in the view that identity is a narrative identity. His view is that we make sense of our identity by telling a story that ties together lived experience and storylines resident in a particular cultural environment. Ricoeur’s analysis is elegant in its capacity to accommodate continuity and change, sameness and difference as a feature of identity. I turn to Ricoeur because he addresses the problem of agency, suggesting that an individuals identity is not fixed or given. Instead, it arises in the act of telling stories about ourselves and others. He makes identity an act; something people do rather than something they receive passively. The process of making identity is not reducible to a specific set of behaviours but relies on a ‘mimetic function’ (Ricoeur 1984) whereby individuals engage in orientating themselves within the outside world according to the
motives and goals that give them impetus. Motives and goals that drive identity construction could be to gain status or security through belonging and affirmation or to find a place and fit in. The mimetic function captures the subjectivity of an individual’s identity, which is understood as the figurative imitation and representation of their lived experience expressed through narrative. In establishing an identity, individuals position themselves with or against others. Ricoeur elaborates on three moments of mimesis which he playfully refers to as mimesis1, mimesis2 and mimesis3. I will now consider how these moments provide conceptual tools which can be used to contribute to our understanding of racial identity as a narrative identity.

Mimesis1 refers to the embodiment of structures and symbols from the external world which prefigure an individual’s experience of the social environment. Most significant in the prefiguration of experience are the narrative resources available to individuals in the construction of their identities. These provide the limits of what can be known and what can be said. Narrative resources include the existing storylines embedded within a particular culture and the dominant mode and rules of storytelling. The elaboration of different of story styles by Janine Roberts (1994) is particularly useful in reflecting on the scope of narrative resources. Her depiction of ‘Rigid’ stories seems to be particularly pertinent to race. She refers to rigid stories as those which have shared and collective meaning that appeal to notions of sameness and continuity. Race tends to be prefigured as a rigid story which essentialises blackness and whiteness representing them as fixed, enduring and embodied features of an individual. If the rigid story was the only narrative resource available individuals would be trapped in an unchanging relationship with race.
which offers little hope for change. Ricoeur (1984) however, puts forward the view that
individuals are immersed in a web of stories which extend through past, present and
future. Each person is thus, suspended at the point of intersection of many people’s lives.
Consequently, the stories individuals use to construct their identities are inseparable from
the stories of others. This view is consistent with the description of ‘Intertwined’ stories
offered by Roberts. Intertwined stories refer to the interpenetration of lives, whereby one
person’s story is intimately connected to another’s. She suggests that intertwined stories
are not time bounded and their meaning can be transmitted through time, from person to
person unchanged. Dominant stories however tend to overwhelm minority ones. I see race
as essentially an intertwined story but realise that it is most commonly prefigured as
‘Distinct/separated’ stories (Roberts 1994) where black and white identities, though
enmeshed, tend not to be linked and operate independently of each other. This results in
little access to meaning-making across the apparent divide of race. Already, we can see
that the viewing of race as rigid, intertwined or distinct/separated stories, present different
narrative possibilities that individuals can use in constructing their identity. Despite being
constrained by physical and biological traits which places certain limitations on how
individuals can plot themselves in the story, the mimetic function still allows scope for
agency depending on the access individuals have to the stories and mode of telling.
Ricoeur also comments on stories that cannot be told because they are stored below
consciousness. Roberts refer to these as ‘Silenced/secret stories’. Individuals have little
access to silent/secret stories for a variety of reasons; they may be lost or repressed
because they contain discomforting material, or censored because they contain hidden
alliances or unconscious collusions. I am going to develop my discussion on the aspect of
stories that lay below consciousness to consider the impact they have on identity and how they influence an individual’s capacity for agency in their identity. I am going to touch briefly on the perspectives offered by Carl Jung and Melanie Klein. Fanon is generous in his appreciation of Jung’s contribution in this area. He writes:

Unless we make use of that frightening postulate – which so destroys our balance – offered by Jung, the collective unconscious, we can understand absolutely nothing. (Fanon 1986:144-5)

Jung saw the collective unconscious as a communal reservoir of archetypal images and symbols. Archetypes are stories of central significance to the individual and to communal culture. They are a source of historical remnants which provide a sense of historical continuity and operate below consciousness to prefigure identity. Of particular significance here are the archetypes of the trickster and the shadow. Trickster figures appear in mythologies of cultures across the world. Nasrudin from the middle East, Eshu Elegba from Africa, Anansi from the Caribbean and Brer Rabbit in Britain are common examples. The tricksters are noted for their ability to cross the divide and blur boundaries. In doing so they build bridges between polarities and at the same time destabilise the set coherence of a dualistic world. Being both mischief makers and heroes, they show how the weak can overcome the strong, and the wisdom of the fool. The shadow is a term offered by Jung to sum up those elements each individual most fear and despises and cannot accept as part of her or himself an thus become split off and rejected. The split off aspect of the self is not normally available to us to incorporate in our conscious identity. Jung in referring to the shadow says:
By the shadow I mean the “negative” side of the personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide, together with the insufficiently developed functions and the content of the personal unconscious...

The shadow does not only consist of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses, etc (Jung 1959: CW7:103)

The shadow is an active principle, rather than being banished in a benign way to the unconscious. It seeks expression through being projected onto others. Consequently the undesirable, untenable and feared aspects of our identity are experienced as belonging to other people. Jung suggests that “everyone carries a shadow and the less it is embodied in the individual’s conscious life, the blacker and denser it is.” (Jung 1983: 88) Jung saw race as a manifestation of the collective shadow. His depiction of the shadow carries many characteristics of the race narrative. This is seen in his use of language where he uses terms such as dark, inferior, negative, primitive and childish to describe the shadow. The corresponding parts of the binary: light, superior, civilised and adult could also be seen to make up the unacknowledged narratives that contribute to racial identity. Segal (1988) provides a clear account of Klein’s theoretical perspectives. In the Kleinian view, the inner world predominates over the outer world and mediates between meaning and experience. Her view is that the individual’s goal is to achieve an internal world which is good or at least benign. In order to achieve this, elements from the inner world that are experienced as persecutory or as anxiety provoking, are split off from the self and projected into the outside world. Elements from the outside world which are experienced as good or self enhancing can be taken in and or introjected. Although Kleinian theory
does not extend to an analysis of race, it is attractive in the way splitting and projection
provides a mechanism for understanding the prefiguration of race as a Distinct/separated
story. Splitting and projection allows the individual to maintain distance between
ambivalent elements of the self and the paranoid phantasies they contain provide the
incentive for doing so. Whilst Klein considered splitting and projection to be an
individual defence mechanism typical of early childhood, it bears significant
resemblances to Jung's depiction of the shadow operating in the collective unconscious.
Though wary of applying Klein's theories out of context her conceptualisation of the
depressive position as a conflicted, anxious space where ambivalent elements need to be
reconciled and integrated provides a very apt description of the race boundary.

Ricoeur's (1984) account of mimesis portrays the individual trapped in a web of
traditional and unconscious narratives which grant only a minimal capacity for agency on
the part of the individuals in establishing their identities. He uses it to account for the
shaping presence of the past and future which affects us independently of our will. By
contrast, Ricoeur posits mimesis as the place where the individual exerts agency
necessary to refigure experience. He is not expansive in detailing the nature of mimesis
except to suggest it is a place of authentic action and suffering which arises in the
freedom from binding stories. Mimesis is a place which supports 'Evolving' stories
(Roberts 1994). Evolving stories emphasise change and the capacity to give the same
experience new meaning. This capacity frames identity in a temporal sense; recognising
the impact of history on identity but not fixing identity in time, instead allowing it to be
work in progress.
Ricoeur establishes mimesis₂ as pivotal in the emergence of subjectivity. Positioned between the inertia of mimesis₁ and the transformative praxis of mimesis₃, mimesis₂ has a mediating function. It engages innovation and imagination with lived experience in a creative process which seeks to unify discordant elements of the self into a new configuration. Mimesis₂ blurs the distinction between fact and fiction; lived experience is represented according to the narrative resources available and can be subject to constant rectifications. The past which exist in memory is effectively a story told, consequently the identity is fluid and reconstructed in memory and fiction. In mimesis₂ the self is configured in a process that Ricoeur calls emplotment. This describes events in life being linked in a way that gives coherence. This allows for discordant or opposing elements to be drawn together into an intelligible whole. Mimesis₂ signifies a movement from Distant/separated stories to Intertwined stories, it seeks to recover lost or Silenced stories and to reconcile split off parts of the self including the unconscious elements.

Ricoeur’s elaboration of narrative identity provides an excellent basis for understanding racial identity as something that incorporates continuity and change. This allows for Erikson’s view of identity as sameness and continuity to be accommodated within a postmodern perspective. Ricoeur (1988) identifies two components of identity. The first he called an Idem identity to represent the prefigured aspect of a person’s identity. The Idem identity is constituted from the narrative resources available to a person in any particular cultural environment. The resources would include stories resident in the dominant culture, which may be historical or fictitious or mythical. In addition to this the person can draw on specific familial stories and also the more universal pool of
archetypal stories held in the collective unconscious. In racial terms the idem identity is constituted from stories of dominance, conquest and survival along with archetypal stories of the shadow and the trickster. The second component of identity postulated by Ricoeur is the Ipse identity. The Ipse is the phenomenological component of identity. It is comprised of the stories derived from the unique experiences of the individual. The Ipse is a combination of memory, imagination and real experience. This aspect of identity is unstable and can change over time in the telling. Ricoeur’s account of personal identity draws together the Idem and the Ipse components and lies in the ability of an individual in keeping a particular narrative going. This ability is of course dependent on the narrative resources available as well as the degree of agency the individual has in the telling. According to Ricoeur, identity, although having fixed and changing components, is constantly evolving and capable of revision during the process of emplotment.

In this section I have explored different ways in which racial identity can be conceptualized. The perspectives examined all view identity as a relationship; with boundaries (Tagfel 1978, Lewin 1935), with others in the social world (Erikson 1968) and with narrative resources (Ricoeur 1988). In considering perspectives on racial identity in a postmodern world I find Ricoeur’s perspective on narrative identity particularly appealing in that it allows me to explore how dominant stories are embedded in the social fabric and how they construct particular versions of reality. Stories of race create a dualistic view of the world which maintain distinction between black and white as separate categories in a way that privileges whiteness and holds it in a superior position to blackness.
Chapter Three: Literature review

In and out of race: The making and unmaking of the race boundary.

Introduction

It gradually penetrates the minds of the prisoners that the people passing do not hear; that some thick sheet of invisible but horribly tangible plate glass is between them and the world. They get excited; they talk louder; they gesticulate. Some of the passing world stops in curiosity; these gesticulations seem so pointless; they laugh and pass on. They still either do not hear at all, or hear but dimly, and even what they hear, they do not understand. Then the people within become hysterical, they may scream and hurl themselves against the barriers, hardly realizing in their bewilderment that they are screaming in a vacuum unheard and that their antics may actually seem funny to those outside looking in. they may even, here and there, break through in blood and disfigurement, and find themselves faced by horrified, implacable and quite overwhelmed mob of people frightened for their own very existence. Du Bois (1984:131)

In his autobiographical essay, William Burghardt Du Bois vividly describes the struggle people face in order to get heard across the boundary of race. He saw the race boundary as a barrier to communication which prevented those imprisoned by it to claim release from their bondage. His statement captures the nature of the race boundary as an invisible but tangible barrier which serves to protect whiteness from annihilation. In his essay he describes racial identity as an entrapment that imprisons blackness and explores how his
experience of the race boundary had serious repercussions upon his inner life. It is this inner subjective experience that will provide the focus for this literature review.

In this section, I will conduct a review of literature which explores how the race boundary operates to frame and shape racialised identities. I am particularly interested in how individuals experience their relationship with the race boundary. Essentialist notions of race and the more recent social constructionist approach to race, present racial identity as a given. This implies a lack of agency in respect of an individual’s capacity to move outside fixed parameters. A consequence of this is that individuals are required to find and come to terms with their allotted place in a social world split between black and white. Although I wish to pursue a post-structural stance which aims to deconstruct the race boundary and challenge the reification of race, I will inevitable be caught in reproducing the racialised language of black and white which is prevalent in the literature.

The review will look critically at research, theoretical papers, autobiographical accounts and fictional writing. I will assess the contribution they make to the understanding of the making and unmaking of the race boundary. I will start with a review of work on black identity, then go on to explore white identity followed by mixed race identity. I will end with a review of literature which takes a more postmodern stance and aim towards the deconstruction of boundaries and racialised identities. This sequence has a certain logic which corresponds to the pattern of my encounters with racialised identities. It is important to note however, that the literature on racialised identity demonstrates that each of these themes have long histories which overlap and do not correspond to a sequential pattern.
The purpose of the review is to set my own journey and relationship with the race boundary in an historical, theoretical and conceptual context. Throughout the research, reading and reflecting on the ideas of others has been core to my own development and understanding. At different times the literature has been a source of inspiration and challenge but also of despair. It has been difficult to navigate myself through the large volume of literature on race and identity which has proliferated over recent years. I have noticed however, that far fewer texts explore how individuals configure their identities. It is in this area that my desire to pursue this review originates and which will provide the focus for the review. I will be paying particular attention to the relationship individuals have with the race boundary and in particular to their inner subjective experiences. Attention will be given to the capacity for agency individuals have in their choice of identity or in their rejection of imposed identities. The review will address the following questions:

- How does the race boundary shape identity?
- What choice do individuals have in negotiating their identity?
- What is the experience of crossing the race boundary?

In this review I will focus specifically on texts that concentrate on the race boundary that divides blackness and whiteness. A growing body of literature uses the notion of ethnicity which has the tendency to conflate race with culture and religion (Back, 1996, Bhabha 2001, Hall 1996). Whilst this allows for boundaries to be blurred and recognises a burgeoning of multiple identities, it obscures the persistence of the race boundary which
continues to operate as a binary opposition. Those aspects of ethnic identity which encompasses alliance and allegiance to geography, to state or to nation will therefore not be included in this review. Although much of the seminal work on racial identity was conducted in America, the literature review will be mainly concerned with the British context.

**Identities in black and white**

The seminal studies of Kenneth and Maime Clark which investigated the development of racial identification in African American children (Clark and Clark 1939) strikes me as being pivotal in establishing the link between racial identity and the race boundary which is still current today. Clark and Clark built on the work of Horowitz and Horowitz (1939) which identified the development racial attitudes in white children as young as three years old. They adapted the technique used by the Horowitzs and established an approach to researching racial identity that came to be known as the ‘doll studies’. In their acclaimed work, Clark and Clark tested 250 African American children aged 3-7 years old, for racial awareness, racial preference and self-identification which were assumed to be components of racial identity. The children were presented with pairs of dolls which were the same except for differences in skin and hair colour; chosen to represent a black doll and a white doll. To ascertain their relationship to the imagery the dolls presented, the children were asked a variety of questions by the researcher:–

Which is the doll:

That you would like to play with?
That is nice?
That looks bad?
That looks like a negro?
That looks like you?

The Clarks found a distinct bias in favour of whiteness, seen in the attribution of positive characteristics to the white doll (like to play with, nice) and negative characteristics to the black doll (bad). This confirmed that racial differentiation was acquired at an early age. What was more surprising was that although a high percentage of the children (94%) were able to identify the black doll as the one that looked like a Negro, a significant number (33%) chose the white doll as the one that looked most like themselves. This was seen as misidentification, taken to signify same group rejection and negative self evaluation, which by inference came to be equated with self hatred. The studies were interpreted as evidence of negative feelings the children had about their racial identity. The phenomenon of misidentification stimulated a wide body of research. A review of the literature by Brand et al (1974) confirmed that misidentification and white bias in terms of preference and positive evaluation of the white doll or stimulus material was a widespread and reliable phenomenon. Milner (1975) reproduced a variation of the doll study, testing white English, West Indian, and Indian and Pakistani children age 5 – 8 years from Brixton and Southall in London. He investigated identity (which doll looks most like you? which doll would you rather be?), preferences ( which doll would you like to play with, sit next to in class, have as a best friend) and stereotypes ( which doll is the nicest, bad, ugly). His findings confirmed the expected positive evaluation of whiteness
and indicated that misidentification was pronounced in the West Indian group (48%) and
the Indian and Pakistani group (24%) 

Aboud and Skerry (1984) conducted a further review of the literature which challenged
the reliability of the dolls studies. They were critical of dolls being used as stimulus
material, questioning whether they offer suitable and realistic images with which the
children could identify. Greenwald and Oppenheim (1947) for example, found that the
inclusion of a third doll, intermediate in shade between the stark opposition of the black
doll and the white doll, resulted in a significant reduction in misidentification. Under
these conditions the level of misidentification was effectively the same as for white
children. The review by Aboud and Skerry (1984) recognised that studies conducted after
the late 60’s show a distinct trend towards own group preferences. Milner’s (1985) follow
up to his original study after ten years also found a marked decline in misidentification.
He attributed this to the success of the black consciousness movement in encouraging
positive identification with blackness and hence a rise in black pride and self esteem.
Nonetheless, in the recent television documentary ‘Child of our time’ (BBC 2 03-02-05)
the dolls study was reproduced using photographs as stimulus material and clearly
demonstrated the persistence of positive evaluation of whiteness, negative evaluation of
blackness and a prevalence of identification with the white images. It would seem that
children remain susceptible to the prevalent social narrative which privileges whiteness
over blackness.

77
Discussions on the doll studies sparked by the initial research conducted by the Clarks, tend to pay attention to questions of methodology and validity. I am more concerned with the part played by this research in the marking of the race boundary. The dolls studies managed to achieve an unquestioning acceptance of the premise that it is wrong to cross boundaries. Under this rule misidentification becomes pathologised as it signifies self hatred and a lack of connection with the correct order of things. It suggests that one should know his or her rightful place. The black child should know and accept their blackness, whiteness is beyond their claim. If I were to revisit the findings of the Clark’s experiment, it is evident that the dominant race narrative which holds blackness as inferior to whiteness is picked up at an early age; as young as three years old. I would assume that it is acquired at the same time as language. It is an ethical concern however, that within the doll studies, young children should be called upon, first to identify the race narrative and then to apply it to themselves in a way that racialised their identity. Where perhaps, researchers were expecting a literal colour matching exercise with the question “which doll is more like you?”, the choices made could be seen to reveal the inner life of the child. It is not therefore surprising that unless there was prior conditioning of the self as a racialised being, for children to choose to identify with the identifiers good, nice, pretty and desirable as opposed to those which signify bad, naughty and ugly. With this reading, misidentification could be seen as a measure of self esteem and positive identity rather than as a maladjusted state. The theme of misidentification as maladjustment continues to dominate literature on racial identity and at the same time serves to protect the race boundary.
The theme of racial identity development being a reaffirmation of the race boundary is again seen running through models of black identity development. In the United States, Thomas (1971) and Cross (1971), working independently of each other developed black identity development models as theoretical formulation designed to capture and reflect on the rise of black consciousness that was being witnessed during the civil rights movement at the time. Cross refers to his ‘Negro to Black Conversion Model’ as a process of psychological liberation under conditions of oppression during which black Americans move towards an appreciation and acceptance of being black. The Cross model became established because it was taken up as a conceptual framework for further research. (Helms 1984, Parham and Helms 1985). Cross offers a way to comprehend racial identity as dynamic rather than fixed and enduring. Like Erikson (1980), he sees identity as a psychosocial phenomenon, arising out of the interplay between the external environment and the inner life of the individual. Cross proposes a five stage model of identity development which describes a resolution of identity issues in black Americans as they move from a white bias and identification to a black identification and positive black identity.
Figure 1 Negro to Black Conversion Model

Pre-encounter is the initial stage. It is akin to the misidentification highlighted in the doll studies. This stage typically assumes that black individuals having internalised a white frame of reference, are self rejecting and demonstrating a white bias and a desire to conform to a white social and cultural perspective. Inherent in this process, is the internalisation of the dominant race narrative which idealises whiteness and denigrates blackness. Individuals in the pre-encounter stage are seen as having a strong desire to
assimilate in the face of racial oppression. Consequently race is minimised as a salient feature of identity.

Encounter is the second stage; it is triggered by a profound confrontation with the race boundary that awakens individuals to the existence of barriers that separate them from the white world. The confrontation may be a single experience or series of experiences of hostility, or rejection from the white world. Alternatively, it may be a positive or consciousness raising experience with the black world. Either way, individuals are forced to reappraise how they locate themselves and perhaps to accept that efforts to assimilate are futile and naive. The encounter is assumed to be a shock to the inner world of the individual which precipitates a highly emotional state, laced with confusion, anger and guilt.

Immersion – Emersion is the third stage during which Cross describes individuals as taking a reactive and dramatic shift towards blackness. At this stage black is now idealised and whiteness is rejected and hated. The inner world of individuals is seen as particularly vulnerable during Immersion-Emersion because they are attempting to re-appropriate blackness. Individuals therefore have a hunger to learn and identify with black literature, cultural forms and history whilst at the same time their claim to blackness has little substance because it is not rooted in their experience. Immersion – Emersion is therefore characterised by a state of anxiety and an acute sensitivity to racism.
The forth stage of Internalisation details a movement towards a more secure sense of self as a racialised being. As individuals become more comfortable with their own blackness, self acceptance grows and they are able to become more reflective. Rather than the violent splitting and projection of negative feelings onto whiteness, internalisation leads to greater tolerance of others and anti-white feelings decline. This is matched by a more realistic appraisal of blackness which no longer needs to be idealised. Internalisation is consequently a time of adjustment and re-evaluation during which individuals develop their capacity to integrate positive as well as negative identity elements into a new sense of identity and inner wholeness. Cross is less explicit about the final stage which he depicts as a move on from internalisation to commitment, which involves individuals becoming more action orientated and prepared to tackle racism and to work with others to seek social change.

I find Cross’s depiction of the stages of black identity development very appealing because they resonate so strongly with different episodes of my own life story. In this respect, his model has a great heuristic value in revealing the subjective experience of the relationship individuals have with the race boundary at different points in their lives. There is a sense however, that as a model of black identity development, it is a caricature of a much more complex process that is occurring. This becomes evident when Parham (1989) attempts to demonstrate racial identity development in the lives of W. E. B. Du Bois and Malcolm X by matching excerpts from their autobiographies, to the different stages of the Cross model. This approach is criticised by Nobles (1989:255) who cautions that “the strategy of providing autobiographical anecdotes is an insufficient test of the
model’s integrity”. I agree with this observation because although I can identify with the positions described in the model, it would not be accurate to apply the model in a manner which implies identity development as a progression though linear stages. Parham (1989) does attempt to address this by offering an extension to Cross’s model. To begin with, he argues that the development of black identity attitudes process start in late adolescence - early adulthood and continue throughout life. This of course challenges the findings of Clark and Clark (1939) and the volume of research it generated which identified the development of racial attitudes in early infancy. Parham’s view on this is that racial identity development demanded a level of independence and personal control in making identity choices. He felt that childhood attitudes are merely an incorporation of parental and societal attitudes and that it was only later in life that individuals had the necessary agency to assume responsibility for their identity choices. Parham claimed that identity choices were adapted to the environment that individuals experienced and in which they sought affirmation of self. A white environment therefore would be more likely to precipitate pre-encounter attitudes. In addition to the stage-wise linear progression advocated by Cross (1971), Parham suggests that identity could stagnate or recycle. In stagnation, identity remains stuck predominately in one state. This suggestion meant that progression to higher levels is not inevitable but is context dependent. The Pre-encounter individual could, therefore, remain in this state unless they have a racial experience critical enough to trigger an Encounter. Recycling recognises that change from one stage to another could be in either direction, to an earlier stage or to a later stage.
Although Parham referred to identity stages, he was more inclined to focus on racial attitude states consistent with the stages rather than the stages themselves. Working with Janet Helms he developed the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) as an instrument for conducting empirical studies on racial identity (Parham and Helms 1981). The scale corresponds to the first four stages of the Cross model. Using this instrument, Parham and Helms (1985) researched the relationship between the racial attitude and affective states in black students. Their findings highlighted complexity in racial identity not immediately apparent in the Cross model. They found that feelings of inadequacy, inferiority and lack of self acceptance corresponded to Pre-encounter attitudes as predicted by Cross. Paradoxically, they also found higher self actualising tendencies linked to Pre-encounter attitudes which were not discussed. Parham and Williams (1993) found that Pre-encounter attitudes were related to higher incomes. This offers the possibility that individuals were trading avoidance of racialised issues for economic success. Parham and Helms (1985) found that individuals with encounter attitudes did not demonstrate the guilt ridden and confused feelings predicted. Instead their response appeared libratory, demonstrating high levels of self acceptance, low levels of anxiety and a positive black orientation. This was contrary to other studies reviewed by Carter (1995) who surmised that “Encounter has two distinct psychological trends” (pg 144) The first associated with initial depression and anxiety, the second a reconciliation of this and a shift to agency, as the individual decides to search for the meaning of his or her blackness. In their study, Parham and Helms (1985) found that Immersion –Emersion attitudes related to an emotional state similar to the Pre-encounter but with more anger. The Internalisation state
was found to be similar to a mute Encounter, where the relationship with race appeared to be less an emotive and more intellectual or cognitive.

The conclusions that Parham and Helms drew from their study was that identity development was complex, that individuals did not move through progressive stages as the Cross model suggests but that there was some overlap with identity work being conducted in different stages simultaneously. They also suggested that affective and cognitive processes were not changing at the same rate. Therefore shifts in attitude did not necessarily correspond to shifts in feelings and behaviour. Finally they raised the question of how central is racial identity to overall functioning since it is only one component of personal identity. This seems to be an important question that demands some attention.

In his reflections on the works of Parham and Helms, Akbar (1989) insightfully examines the relationship between racial identity and personal identity. He notes that Erikson’s formulation of identity necessitates the integration of core aspects of self into a coherent whole. An independent racial identity would therefore represent a fragmented self and a failure to achieve identity. Akbar (1989) and Nobles (1989) advocate an Afrocentric view of racial identity. They argue that the development of black identity represents the emergence and integration of an essential aspect of the self which otherwise is impeded by an oppressive social environment. They both critique the Cross model and Parham and Helms’s extension of it, as placing too much emphasis on black identity being a reaction to oppression. Akbar suggests that although Parham (1989) supports the view that the
black self is an entity independent of socially oppressive phenomena, the Cross model and his extension of it is too deeply rooted in a reactionary analysis to affirm that African/black identity is the core context of the black ‘real self’. The implication of this view is that an individuals are in a disordered state if they are not in contact with their ‘true selves’.

In their different ways, both conceptualisations of black identity; as a psychological liberation (Cross 1971, Parham 1989) or as emergence of true self (Akbar, 1989, Nobles 1989) idealise blackness and in doing so reaffirm the race boundary. The inevitable consequence of which is that blackness becomes an indicator of mental health. Individuals are seen as healthier the closer they are to their socially prescribed position. Under this regime, positive black identity is something to be desired. This seems a powerful way of policing the race boundary and ensuring compliance to it. In his book ‘Black Skin, White Masks’, Fanon (1986) shows tremendous courage in revealing black identity as an imposed inferiority and nothing to be desired.

The black is a black man; that is, as the result of a series of aberrations of effect. He is rooted at the core of a universe from which he must be extricated... ...

The problem is important. I propose nothing short of the liberation of the man of colour from himself. We shall go very slowly for there are two camps: the white and the black. (Fanon 1986:10)
His work stands out in the way it exposes the race boundary and problematizes black identity. Much of the fictional literature, (Philips 1992, Angelou 1984, Baldwin 1963) portrays a vivid awareness of the relative positions of black and white. The stories tend to emphasise blackness as survival and resistance rather than as something to be discovered in a manner conceptualised by Cross. The fictional literature often demonstrates a great clarity about the existence of the race boundary and the often tragic consequences of crossing them. For example see Richard Wright’s acclaimed book Native Son (1940).

It is perhaps the result of anti-racist policy and legislation or the innocence and naivety of childhood that has obscured the existence of the race boundary.

White identity development

In this section I plan to review literature which examines how the race boundary marks and shapes white identities. I shall start by returning to the depiction of the race boundary offered by Du Bois (1984) which I quoted earlier. In this statement, he captures how the race boundary depicted as an invisible sheet of plate glass, imprisons blackness and holds black people in a fixed and restricted space. I have shown that literature tends to support the perspective that the development of black identity entails a movement towards an acceptance of the boundary and an appreciation of one’s place within it. Black identity development thus serves to restore the boundary should anyone attempt to break through and, therefore, results in a reaffirmation of the social order. By contrast Du Bois portrays the trajectory of white identity as being very different. The passers by, presumably white, appear to be unencumbered by the boundary and naively unaware of the privileges that it
offers them until the boundary is breached. A view echoed by Frankenberg (1993:1) informed by her influential study on white women. She introduces the notion that “whiteness is a location of structural advantage and race privilege”. This seems to be a starting point for much of the literature exploring white identity, the development of which tends to be characterised by exposing and making visible the operations of racial privilege.

The common challenge faced by researchers investigating white identity is aptly summed up by Pajaczkowska & Young 2000: 202) who suggests that “an identity based on power never has to develop consciousness of itself as responsible, it has no sense of its limits except as these are perceived in opposition to others”. Whiteness is on one hand all encompassing and on the other, invisible or unmarked. This makes it difficult to research as an aspect of personal identity. Research on white identity is therefore limited, although there has been a proliferation of texts exploring whiteness such as Richard Dyer’s (1997) insightful study on the representation whiteness. Bonnett (1996: 147) suggests that interest in white studies has “emerged in the wake of the political and intellectual challenges offered by anti racism”. The work of work Judith Katz ( 1978) which equated whiteness with racism made a significant contribution to bringing whiteness under a critical gaze. Katz pursued an anti-racist approach which suggested that white people needed to see themselves as racial beings otherwise they would be unable to acknowledge the power and privilege inherent in being white and therefore lack of racial awareness would be tantamount to being racist. By problematizing whiteness she set the goal of white identity development to be the achievement of a positive non racist whiteness. This
influence is clearly seen in the models of white identity development theorized by Sue & Sue (1990) and Helms (1984).

Sue and Sue (1990) applied the racial/Cultural Identity Development model (RCID) to conceptualize white identity development. The RCID was originally developed to describe minority identity development (Atkinson, Morten and Sue 1979). The White identity development model used the same five stages of the RCID. Sue and Sue used observations from their clinical practices with counsellors and trainees to elaborate on these stages and accommodate white identity development. The five stages: Conformity, Dissonance, Resistance and Immersion, Resistance and Integrative Awareness are outlined below.

Conformity is the initial stage, where individuals have minimal awareness of themselves as racial beings. Contact and exposure to black groups is limited and consequently, knowledge of these groups is based on stereotypes. There is an implicit acceptance of whiteness as being superior and blackness being inferior at conscious and unconscious levels. An awareness raising experience which challenges racial stereotypes and forces individuals to acknowledge the relationship between racism and whiteness propels them into the Dissonance stage. At this stage they recognise their complicity with racism and capacity for having racist attitudes and behaviour. This is the start of their identification with whiteness and is capable of generating feelings of guilt, shame, anger, depression. The awareness of the dissonance stage can be met defensively with rationalizations to justify their position and to disclaim responsibility or it can spark a retreat and distancing
from the source of discomfort. If however, this stage is held and racial awareness allowed
to develop, individuals are able to face and challenge their own racism and also racism in
their social environment. This can lead to conflict with colleagues, friends and family and
is typical of the Resistance and Immersion stage in which the new found anti racist stance
is likely to be unsophisticated and at times leads to paternalistic approaches which are
often not appreciated by either black or white groups and thus rejected. Again there is the
choice of retreat to an earlier stage which could entail increased hostility to black people
and reestablishment of stereotypes or individuals can move on to the Introspection stage.
At this stage there is a rejection of the view that whiteness automatically signifies being
racist, hence there is a reduction in the defensiveness and guilt associated with being
white. The search for identity can then extend beyond simply being a response to racism.
The final stage of Integrative Awareness is reached when a non racist white identity
emerges. This involves an affirmation of the non exploitative aspects of white culture and
a commitment to participation in a coherent strategy for challenging racism rather that
reacting on the basis of guilt.

The white identity development model proposed by Janet Helms (1984) follows a similar
trajectory through five stages: Contact, Disintegration, Re-integration, Pseudo
Independence and Autonomy. These stages articulate the challenges and adaptive
responses that correspond to the parallel discovery of race awareness and white identity.
Common to both models, is a degree of agency which individual are offered. At each
stage, individuals are active in making choices about whether to proceed or retreat
without their identities being seen as maladjusted. In essence the development of white
identity modeled by Helms and Sue and Sue does not challenge the race boundary. Instead it implies a movement towards greater social responsibility and a reduction in personal anxiety about race. There is never a question of individuals misidentifying themselves as black. White identity development arises in conditions of exposure rather than oppression. The absence of whiteness as a feature of identity is seen in many ways as normal and does not signify being maladapted. The final stages of Autonomy in the Helms model and Integrative Awareness in the Sue and Sue model, offer an idealization of a non racist white identity which is in many ways as devoid of content.

Bonnett (1996, 1999, 2000) engages with theoretical discussion on the construction of whiteness. He offers perspectives that expand the contours of whiteness. To begin with, he challenges the concept of a positive non racist white identity because it reifies whiteness as a static, ahistorical and objective category. He contends that:

reifying myths of whiteness subvert the anti-racist struggle ..... .

This process enables white people to occupy a privileged location in anti-racist debate; they are allowed the luxury of being passive observers, of being altruistically motivated, of knowing that “their” “racial” identity might be reviled and lambasted but never made slippery, torn open, or indeed abolished.

(1999:204)

In exploring historical and international perspectives on white identities, Bonnett (2000) brings attention to three important details which provide different ways of conceptualizing whiteness. Firstly he notes that prior to the labeling of whiteness as racist in a way that blamed and shamed it, whiteness was unashamedly claimed and
celebrated as a strong, dominant and civilizing force during empire. Bonnett argues that the current resistance to claiming a white identity is a reaction caused by individuals' sensitivity to being labeled racist and seen as bigoted or perhaps it is a denial of imperialism. Secondly Bonnett demonstrates that historically, white identities have existed in China and the Middle East and the Latin America. He points out that it is a more recent phenomenon that whiteness has become appropriated as European, suggesting that European whiteness is historically unique because it is racialised and fixed as a biological category, with a sense of identity invested in it. Finally, Bonnett intimates that modernity is profoundly racialised. He suggests that the symbolism of progress, science and technology which underpin modernity is intrinsically linked to whiteness. The articulation of whiteness to modernity as the dominant social force upholds the meta-narrative of white superiority and marks non whiteness as inferior. A postmodern position is therefore required to destabilize whiteness and cross boundaries of race.

The significance of Ruth Frankenberg’s work is that she attempted to ground suppositions about white racial identity in empirical analysis. In her acclaimed research study, she aims to interrogate whiteness in white women’s life histories (Frankenberg 1993). Frankenberg uses her study to name whiteness and make it visible in a relational sense. In doing so she exposes the privileged position that whiteness occupies. Frankenberg’s study was based on interviews with a group of thirty white women in which she sought a diverse representation of age, class and political affiliation. Her interest was in how the daily experience of race shapes white women’s lives. In her interviews, Frankenberg was
able to bring whiteness into conversation by focusing on the issues of territory and sex as
areas in which the race boundary is most vulnerable and likely to be contested. In the
women interviewed, childhood memories produced touching stories of anxieties, fears
and conflicts caused by black people encroaching into white neighborhoods or by
individual’s contact with black neighbourhoods. Discussions on interracial sex and
intimacy were also successful in revealing deep seated prejudice against interracial
relationships. This was a particularly pertinent issue for the women involved because it
exposed their role as custodians of racial purity. Frankenberg concludes that race shapes
identities in white women whether they are conscious of it or not. She was also able to
show the dynamic interaction between race, class and gender as intervening social
locations through which the women experienced their identities.

Whilst the exploration of ‘race as relationship’ is strong in Frankenberg’s work, there is
still an emphasis on exploring whiteness indirectly, through focusing on the relationship
with the racialised ‘other’. In this way a critical self reflexive gaze is avoided. Whilst the
experience of whiteness in women’s lives was examined, its meaning remained in the
background. In her study, Frankenberg revealed that the main obstacle to exploring
whiteness was an anxiety about being labeled as racist. She identified three overlapping
discursive repertoires which were used to talk about race. The first, ‘Color Evasion’, was
organized around an effort to minimize race difference by claiming not to see it or to
suggest race did not matter. This claim was often betrayed by revealing an underlying
narrative of white superiority. The second repertoire was ‘Power Evasion’. This was seen
as a failure to acknowledge their position as beneficiaries of structural inequalities and
reluctance recognize their own complicity with them. (Pajaczkowska & Young 1992:202) suggests that power evasion “leaves a blank in the place of knowledge of the destructive effects of wielding power”. Frankenberg surmises that power evasion is the result of a struggle between awareness of dominance and a desire to hold a view of common humanity. Dyer on the other hand, suggests it relates to white women’s place in imperialism which cast them as powerless victims of a male project of expansion; encapsulated in the statement “There’s nothing I can do! Nothing”. Dyer (1997:184).

Either way, it is an escape from having to acknowledge responsibility. Frankenberg called the third repertoire, ‘Race Cognizance’. This refers to a movement towards race awareness and often a commitment to challenge racism. The process of moving to cognizance relates to the white identity models proposed by Sue & Sue (1990) and Helms (1984). There is much value however in the notion of discursive repertoires rather than stages because they suggests a choice of operational modes individuals have at their disposal at any time.

Frankenberg struggles with the problem of reifying whiteness. She recognizes that discussions on race are necessarily trapped within the binary narrative in which race is given meaning. This is evident in her view that “because race has been made into a difference, later discursive repertoires cannot simply abolish it, but must engage it” (1993:189). Although claiming a social constructionist approach in her study, Frankenberg does not explore the underlying assumptions by which she constructs the women as white. She escapes doing so by using the tautological argument that whiteness is a set of cultural practices and “white women are, by definition, practitioners of white
Frankenberg’s depiction of discursive repertoires is useful in considering how the race boundary shapes identities and circumscribes the exercise of agency. She does not however explore the nature of the race boundary or inner subjective experience of racial identity. By contrast, in telling the story of his encounters with the race boundary, Dalton (2001) offers a very insightful account of the persistence of the race boundary. Dalton describes how he learnt to be white whilst growing up in the inner city housing projects of Manhattan. He found that through living in a predominantly African American and Hispanic community he was separated, not by economic resources but by whiteness. This whiteness was experienced as a social capital in itself which accrued status, privileged treatment and power as an unspoken norm. Dalton’s reflection on his experience is excellent and conveys a depth of perception about the nature of the race boundary. Indeed he discovers his whiteness through his encounters with the race boundary, which he experiences as not easy to cross. He recognizes that whilst culture and ethnicity offers a degree of agency and choice to individuals, race was imposed on the individual by others in a way that allotted them their place in the social hierarchy. Although Dalton is able to show how race is integrally tied up with culture, ethnicity and class, he illustrates how it
is able to act independently of them. His view is that individuals have little agency in negotiating racial identity, instead individuals have a choice of what particular path they take, within the constraints of the race boundary. This view encourages me to consider racial identity as something contested rather than negotiated.

Identities in the margins

In this section I will review literature which explores mixed race experience and identity development. This is significant because the mixed race experience has the capacity to subvert racial binaries and thus cross or challenge the integrity of the race boundary. An inevitable consequence of such a process is that the race boundary becomes blurred and fluid. I will attempt to track the varied and promising literature that offers perspectives on experience and identity in the ‘fluid space’ beyond boundaries.

The precarious position of mixed raced individuals was first articulated by Robert Park (1928, 1931) a sociologist from the Chicago school. His initial interest in the experience of people who are the product of two antagonistic cultures, later developed a focus on the ‘mixed blood’ (mixed race) experience which he described as ‘marginal’; suspended between the world of black and white and not fitting wholly into either. Park anticipated that there may be some benefit gained from the detachment of the marginal position in terms of an increased openness to diversity leading to widening of horizons, keener intelligence and greater creativity. On the other hand he recognised that marginality, in a social environment which placed emphasis on maintaining racial boundaries and
distinction, could lead to alienation and psychological maladjustment. Though ambivalent about the fate of the individual, Park acknowledged that the mixed race position provided a good vantage point to understand the social processes inherent in the black–white division. This is a prophetic insight which appears to have been lost in subsequent literature where the alienation and disharmony of the marginal position has become the dominant view.

Developing the theme of the ‘marginal man’ Stonequist(1937) pathologised the marginal condition and concluded that mixed race people would suffer an inner conflict which would result in a damaged personality unless they could gain acceptance into either black or white communities. Stonequist formulated a model of identity development which progressed through three stages: Pre-marginal, marginal and adjustment. The pre-marginal stage, consistent with the theories of Lewin (1935), predicted that mixed race children would be initially attracted to the higher status of the dominant white group as a source of identification. The marginal stage is experienced when the racial boundary is drawn and individuals experience rejection by white society and are pushed towards the black group. This is characterised by ambivalent feelings of guilt and resentment. In the final stage of adjustment, individuals have to reconcile pragmatism with desire and seek assimilation with the dominant white group or the subordinate black group. Alternatively they may remain in a marginal and confused state typified by unresolved internal conflict. The first of these choices necessitates an individual’s ability to ‘pass’ for white which for most would not be possible and certainly would involve hiding one’s background.
Stonequist’s notion of marginality, provided a conceptual framework which led to research which problematize mixed race experience and mixed race identities.

The ethnographic study by Ken Little (1948) conducted in the docklands area of Cardiff, reinforced the prevalent view that mixed race people would experience identity confusion. Based on his own observations he concluded that mixed race children were confuse about their identity and found it difficult to integrate; lacking the cultural tools needed to fit into either black or white communities. He suggested that they were seen by the local population as ‘unreliable’ and ‘shiftless’

The different visions of mixed race experience that Parks and Stonequist present, corresponds to a shift in racial thinking about the status of individuals who were seen as the product of inter-racial union. During slavery mixed race children were likely to be the product of a white father and black mother. The privilege of whiteness conveyed by the father allowed mixed race individuals to occupy an intermediate status between white and black. Mixed race individuals were thus categorised and place on a hierarchy ranging from mulatto (the lowest) through quadroon to octoroon (the highest) which represented increasing gradations of whiteness. Under this system of categorisation, the only threat that mixed race people represented was any attempt to cross boundaries and pass for white. The threat is clearly articulated by Iris MacFarlane, talking on the BBC series Ruling Passions. She reflects back on her feelings as a teenager in India some sixty years earlier at the time of the Raj:
"I really can’t understand or explain it. It was just horror and nausea, and a sort of
drawing physically away from anybody who was coloured. This was especially
ture of the Anglo-Indians because they could be a threat in that they could
infiltrate your world without your knowing it, unless you were very careful. So
you had to learn all the little signs, which you had to learn when you went out.
However fair their skins, there were always the little signs – the fingernails, and
the ears, and the white of the eyes. I’m sorry to say that I do remember starting to
watch out for these signs. I didn’t always pick them up though. I remember that I
went to a sort of shorthand typing course once and one of my fellow students was
a very blonde, blue-eyed, pink faced girl, and I though, she’s all right, so I took
her home. But the first thing my mother asked her was, ‘what does your father
do?’ and she said, ‘he’s in the railways’ Well that was it. Anybody in the railways
was absolutely bound to be Anglo-Indian. So she that was the end of her. She
wasn’t allowed in the house again”. .... (Anton Gill 1995: 48)

Such explicit declarations would probably be censored today in the name of political
correctness. The distance between the event and the telling is likely what makes it
possible. Iris talks clear of differentiated worlds between black and white with limited
social mobility and clear demarcation of boundaries and expected roles which refer to a
specific historical period she lived in. One wonders however, how much things have
changed in the intervening period. What is most revealing in Iris’s statement is the special
threat posed by Anglo-Indians that they may cross the boundary of differentiation
between worlds symbolically defined by race. In the current environment the threat of
mixed race people crossing the boundary still raises anxiety in those who feel comfortable
in a binary world of black and white. It is remarkable that Iris should be socialized into policing the boundaries with the real fear that boundary crossing may signal the collapse of her world. By her own admission she does not know what she is afraid of, but the proximity of the ‘other’ triggers deeply rooted emotions. I assume that her own sense of self and position in the world are dependent on those boundaries remaining intact.

The position and status of mixed race people changed post slavery and post colonialism, as a result of increasing number of children with black fathers and white mothers. The patriarchal nature of the meta-narrative of white superiority could not allow black fathers to convey privilege to their offspring. Rather than holding an intermediate position, mixed race children were thus seen as immoral and degenerate and their mothers regarded as prostitutes. The writings of the renowned racist Edward Long gave a public expression of such sentiments.

The Lower class of women in England, are remarkably fond of the blacks, for reasons too brutal to mention; they would connect themselves with horses and asses if the law permitted them. By these ladies they generally have a numerous brood, thus, in the course of a few generations more, the English blood will become so contaminated with this mixture, and from the chances, the ups and downs of life, this alloy may spread so extensively, as even to reach the middle, and then the higher orders of people, till the whole nation resembles the Portuguese and Moriscos in complexion of skin and baseness of mind. This is a
venomous and dangerous ulcer, that threatens to disperse its malignancy far and wide, until every family catches infection from it. (Long 1972: 48-9)

The intersection of race and gender is clearly articulated in this statement, women are expected to be the custodians of racial purity. Frankenberg (1993) recognised this as a recurrent theme in her conversations about interracial sexuality. She suggests that sexuality is key in the “setting and marking of racial boundaries” (pg 99). The threat presented to the racial hierarchy by mixed race children can be seen codified in the common statement ‘what about the children?’. On one hand this suggests a concern for their marginality but on the other it expresses a warning against and condemnation of children born of interracial union. Christian (2000) proposes that the location of mixed race people is socially engineered to match the demands of the political climate. He presents cases studies of South Africa and Jamaica where he suggests that mixed race people still occupy an intermediate position which offers a buffering between controlling white minority populations and subordinate black majority populations. This contrasts with America and Britain where the dominant white majority is not under immediate threat from the black minority but is more challenged by the ability of mixed race people to blur the race boundary. In these situations, mixed race people are an uncomfortable presence.

The different visions of mixed race, as marginal people or as creators of new spaces, have produced two divergent trends in the literature and research in this area. The first investigates how mixed race individuals perceive their place in the racial structure (Little
This trend fits a modernist appreciation of the dualistic construction of race and is concerned about how identity is located and the factors that impinge on location. The second trend takes a more postmodern stance which positions individuals as active subjects involved in the negotiation of space. (Jones 1999 Ifekwunigwe 1999 Mathani 2000) There is a greater emphasis here on the experience and life story of individuals as they deal with the change and conflict that come from the struggle to establish a coherent sense of self. I am going to look at these two trends, concentrating first on the studies conducted by Wilson (1987) and Phoenix and Tizzard (1993) these had a similar focus on the problem of location, but examined identity development from the perspective of children and adolescents respectively.

Anne Wilson (1987) adapted the dolls studies approach developed by Clark and Clark (1939) to investigate identity development of mixed race children in a British context. Identity was explored in terms of self categorisation and group identification. Wilson set out to find out where they belong in a world of black and white. Her study investigated 51 individuals in aged between 6 and 9 years, each with one black African-Caribbean parent and a white British parent. In her study, Wilson presented sets of photographs of children which offered a variety of racial imagery. Individuals were given the opportunity to categorize the photographs into distinct groupings which they could name according to their everyday speech e.g. brown, mixed race, half caste, and coloured. Wilson felt it was significant that the opportunity to create categories for the photographs resulted in only two individuals who opted for a dichotomous black-white differentiation. She found that for the children, racial identity could fall on a spectrum of possibility based on skin colour.
gradations and physical characteristics, although they could make no clear distinction of where black and white begins and ends.

Consistent with the Clark’s study, individuals were asked questions about the photographs to ascertain how they attributed positive and negative characteristics to the different images. This produced evidence of the existence of the underlying narrative that whiteness conferred a material privilege and blackness was subordinate. Most importantly, counter to the prevalent expectations of marginality or misidentification, Wilson found that when asked to identify themselves within one of the chosen categories, photographs representing mixed race children were readily chosen as ‘looking most like them’ and were overwhelmingly chosen as choice of friend. From which she was able to conclude that mixed race children were capable of establishing stable and happy mixed race identities.

Tizard and Phoenix (1993) investigated factors that affected development of identity in 58 adolescents, of mixed black African-Caribbean and white British parents. The group were drawn from the fifth forms of state and independent schools in London and were mainly 15 -16 year olds. The Tizard and Phoenix Study was part of a larger comparative study which was established to explore racial identity and the social factors which influence it. The wider study also examined identity in adolescents with two black parents and in those with two white parents. The findings of Tizard and Phoenix, were consistent with those of Wilson. They asserted that rather than suffering from identity problems, their study illustrated that the majority of individuals were able to claim a
mixed race identity that they were happy with and indeed, most of them were able to see advantages in their situation. This ran counter to the prevalent belief that their identities would be confused and marginal. Like Wilson, Tizzard and Phoenix encouraged individuals to use their own terms to describe themselves and found a similar wide range of terminology being used. The term mixed race was not often used and where it was used, individuals tended to come from a middle class background.

Tizzard and Phoenix were particularly interested in determining the impact of social factors on identity. They found that it was experience of racism that generated a strong sense of the black–white boundary. Where individuals were exposed to a politicised view of racism, they tended to gravitate towards a black identity. A lighter skin and features which approximated more towards whiteness, was seen to attract less racism but it could leave individuals more isolated and facing challenges from both black and white groups. These individuals were seen to be at risk of identity confusion if they were not able to secure a positive sense of themselves as mixed race. The study found that the geographical location that individuals grew up in had a major impact on the degree of support it offered them in developing their own strategies for dealing with racism. Multiracial neighbourhoods were preferred because individuals felt less exposed in them and because they offered proximity to others they could relate to, at least others who looked like them. Individuals who lived in the suburbs or the countryside reported less incidents of racism but felt more isolated and out of place. Tizzard and Phoenix indicated that class, shade and physical characteristics interacted in complex ways that both advantages and disadvantages individuals at the same time and influenced the way in
which they locate their racial identity. They surmised that the mixed race group did not present a homogenous set of experiences but instead a wide range of experiences which offered a range of identity options.

Both Wilson and Tizzard and Phoenix gave particular attention to the impact of family and parenting patterns. Wilson interviewed mothers from children in her study and Tizard interviewed mothers and two couples. In both studies, though clearly not wishing to problematize interracial relationships, it was apparent that racial conflicts existent in the wider society were mirrored within the family. Pressures on the relationship resulted in a high proportion of children and young people sampled, not living with both parents and in many cases with a single white mother. It is not surprising that both studies, with their focus on the experience of the mother, concluded that mothers had a strong influence on identity development. Tizzard and Phoenix suggests that the child may have a desire to identify with the parent they feel most attached to, but at the same time they may have the concern that to identify as black or white could be seen as a denial or rejection of one of the parents. The politics of identification is well described by Simbi Folarin (2004)

My story of race begins when I am about 4 years old, standing in front of a mirror with my mom and older sister.

“what colour am I” says mom, “white” comes my reply.

“what colour is your sister?” “brown is my reply.

“What colour is daddy”, “brown”

“What colour are you” “white”
We went through this about four times, with my sister laughing at me. I could see that I was the same as my sister, but to my recollection, at the same time, colour was not the issue. It was about being the same as my mom, and my sister was happy to be the same as our dad, then it was left to me to be like our mom.

From her interviews with mothers, Wilson asserted that mothers who were integrated into a subculture of women in interracial relationships and whose own identities lie outside a simple black–white binary were most successful in enabling a positive black/mixed race identity in their children. Furthermore, Tizzard and Phoenix found that young people whose mothers pushed them towards adopting a black identity were most likely to express a problematic identity. They thought that this was counterintuitive and surmised that perhaps young people who were encouraged in this way were already anxious about their identity status. It is likely however that a white parent telling a child that they are black could be experienced as the parent distancing her/himself from the child. Both Wilson and Tizzard and Phoenix report that mixed race children and young people are under pressure at school to justify or authenticate their white mother; for the mother to be experienced as distancing herself could easily intensify this particular pressure.

Despite recognising that the most supportive environment for mixed race children was one that did not push them into making polarised choices, Wilson herself was caught in a binary view of the world that saw the necessity of the race boundary. Consequently, her basic premise was that mixed race children: “like other black children they must accept and be proud of their blackness and incorporate it into the core of their identity”. Wilson (1987 vii). Her view was that a positive identity had a black primary racial identification
and a mixed race secondary one. Tizzard and Phoenix also framed their study within a binary paradigm. This is seen in their support of a positive black identity whilst seeing a desire to be white as an indicator of a problematic identity. It is implicit in their study that a white identity is beyond the claim of someone who did not look white. Both studies do however hold the possibility of a stable mixed race identity. Whilst they do consider the factors that may lead to a mixed race identity, there is not sufficient investigation into what this may mean and consequently it could amount to another vacuous identity category.

In my own research study of identity in mixed race young people (Richards 1993) I started off with the traditional black white binary and the view that a black identity represented a positive goal. The young people however introduced me to the world in between which I had to change my own position to accommodate. In reading Wilson and Tizzard and Phoenix, I get no sense that the researchers have made a similar movement. The Tizzard and Phoenix study identified two individuals who they said had a confused identity, unsure of where they fit in a world of black and white. They quote the one girl:

Sometimes I feel really confused, as if I don’t know in which direction to turn. I feel as if I don’t have a true identity pg 57

Instead of the assumption that this is problematic, it could be that this statement represents the positive mixed race identity rather than the one that has been adapted to the binary world. Perhaps the confused state represents a realistic appreciation of the individuals place in the world and opens a way to crossing boundaries of race. The
difficulty of existing in this world in between is highlighted by Cherie Knowles who says is so painful because it is no one’s world but your own.

I did not feel I could join black groups or call myself black, in case I was denied that identity. Yet I knew that I was not white. People said I should choose, but I did not feel I had any choice at all. Others were defining where I could be and who I should be. Knowles 1990:4

The limitation of research which attempts to categorise identity is that such liminal positions tend to be dismissed or problematised. Research is needed which gets beyond the labels and attempts to understand the experience.

Iona Jones (1999) investigated the experiences of an adult mixed parentage population. She interviewed 34 adults from different cultural backgrounds and a wide age range: 18 - 45 with two 76+ from the midlands area. Her sample came from different geographical locations, specified as inner city, outer city and suburbia. Her focus was on individuals with one white parent and one black parent the majority of whom were designated as having a white mother (85%). The focus for her study is the social influences on identity. It is apparent that Jones is influenced by Erikson’s (1980) view that identity is forged through affirmative relationships and is recognised in the growth of a coherent sense of self and a sense of belonging, rather than in the adoption of a particular label. She sees this however as an ongoing process throughout the life cycle of the individual and not limited to adolescence. Findings from this study were very similar to those of Tizzard and Phoenix in terms of impact of neighbourhood and parenting patterns. Jones’s study is significant in the way it is able to offer insight into the intricacies of interpersonal
relationships which are highly influential in shaping individuals sense of self. Living in a multiracial / multicultural environment was seen to offer richness in terms of access to diversity of cultures and the presence of other mixed race people which allows them to see themselves reflected in the environment. This provided a sense of place and the assumption of a commonality of shared experiences. Importantly living in such a neighbourhood meant that individuals felt less exposed than in the suburbs or the countryside, consequently it offered protection and refuge for individuals. The downside of a multiracial neighbourhood was that mixed race individuals experienced a pressure to conform to ‘blackness’ in terms of language, dress and lifestyle. It was suggested that women felt this pressure more acutely. The intersection of race and culture opened up choices regarding what is appropriate expression of blackness but also extended the range of groups vying for membership of individuals. Adults reflecting back on experience in school reconstructed it as a lesson in dealing with racism. Most commonly this meant minimising associations with race, claiming an exemption from racism that a lighter skin sometimes afforded them or seeking an avenue for excellence such as sport or music. Parenting patterns which did not give due regard to the impact of racism or advocated compliance and fitting in were not reported as supportive of a positive identity.

Jones is able to add detail to the narratives of family life, missing in the studies previously mentioned. Embedded family stories of racial conflict were common, often rooted in disapproval or rejection of their parent’s interracial relationships by grandparents or members of the wider family. The mixed race children, products of the union, often provided a point of reconciliation but at the same time could be the nexus of the conflict.
This was apparent in the familiar experience of favouritism amongst siblings, based on shade and physical characteristics. Jones’s study is useful in highlighting a ‘shadocracy’ operating in families and the wider community which privileges lighter skin and shapes mixed race identity. Where most studies acknowledge the key role played by mothers in the shaping of identity, the role of fathers tends to be overlooked. Jones addresses this in her study. In her study white mothers and black fathers was the predominant model of parenting, with a high incidence of children being brought up in by a single white mother. The contribution of the black father to identity development was seen firstly in terms of providing historical continuity by passing on knowledge and insight that pertains to race and culture and secondly in being able to empathise with experiences of racism and perhaps to offer strategies for coping. These were seen as gaps that needed to be filled if the father was absent.

Throughout her study, Jones is able to convey how mixed race individuals are able to live with the binary boundary of race which is already formed. She explores how the boundary gives or denies access to affirmative relationships, which are needed to build a positive self image. Her aims to develop the autobiographies of individuals and allow them to speak for themselves are not realised because her interview schedule leads them to focus on how they cope with the duality of race and the impact of racism; hence there is an emphasis on adaptive responses to their experience of the outside world. The inner subjective experience of dealing with the race boundary is consequently not well explored.
For example the potential to cross the race boundary by ‘passing’ to secure employment is mentioned as an undesirable strategy but no exploration of the experience of doing so is offered. Insight into this area may be overlooked because although Jones claims to use a grounded theory approach to her analysis of her interview transcripts, it appears that in her analysis of the data she uses key word searches using words such as ‘family’ and ‘area’. This resulted in her imposing a structure on the data rather than deriving the key themes from it. Jones asserts that identity is not fixed but is liable to change. A strength in her work comes from her ability to remove identity from being merely a label used to categorise the self and to focus on identity as relationship. However the nature and meaning of racial identity remains vague and ambiguous. In most cases mixed race is treated as a context rather than an identity claim.

The ethnographic study by Ifekwunigwe (1999) pays attention to the interplay between inner subjective experience of individuals and their relationship with the outer world. She explores the contradictory meanings of race, self and identity in people of mixed race who she says: “By virtue of birth, transgress boundaries, and challenge essentialised constructions of self, identity, place and belonging” (Ifekwunigwe 1999:59). Her study is based on conversations with sixteen women and nine men living in Bristol who in the main had a white British mother and a black Caribbean/African father. Ifekwunigwe adopts a textual strategy in which she places the testimonies of six of the women alongside her own story. In doing so she enlists them as co-researchers and promotes them to the role of ‘griote’, a traditional story teller.
Throughout her work, Ifekwunigwe is cognizant of the difficulty of escaping the dominant race narrative. This is evident in her view that:

Informal and formal conversations with myriad “mixed race” people have also demonstrated that to date we have not found a way to formulate discourses that do not reinscribe a dominant binary Black/White “mixed race” paradigm. (pg 17)

Consequently, she uses métis(e) as a term instead of mixed race to avoid reinscribing and reifying race. The term reflects the complexity and dual operation of the race boundary and cultural boundaries in the lives of individuals who may, but not necessarily, straddle the race boundary and at the same time are having to reconcile multiple cultural influences. Although the focus of Ifekwunigwe’s work deals with the two sets of boundaries, she shows real clarity in not conflating or confusing the two. At the same time, the blurring and interpenetration of race and culture is well explored. Like Hall 1996 and Bhaba 2001, she suggests that cultural boundaries give rise to multiplicity and hybridity of identity. The race boundary on the other hand, generates a dualism in which racial identities are contested. In this respect the life stories presented by Ifekwunigwe are consistent with the findings of Jones (1999). They illustrate the struggle of individuals who are identified as mixed race to find place and belonging in a world typified by duality and ambiguity. Although Ifekwunigwe asserts that métis(e) women are able to reinvent themselves as active subjects and create their own place in society, she acknowledges that “The degree of agency afforded a métis(e) individual is contingent in part upon local folk “readings of their phenotypes” (Ifekwunigwe 1999:19). It is revealing for instance how Yemi tells the story of having to deal with being white in Nigeria and black in Britain.
Ifekwunigwe’s study gives the women opportunity to tell stories which are very poignant and engaging, offering a sharp and perceptive awareness of the impact of the race boundary in shaping the material conditions and the sense of coherence in their lives. The stories of Ruby and Similola for example capture the experiences of being brought up in a children’s home which for many children, has been a real consequence of their parents relationships transgressing the race boundary. This theme is developed in Phil Frampton’s book The Golly in the Cupboard (2004), where he tells the powerful and moving story of how his life was shaped by his experiences growing up in Barnardo’s homes. It is apparent that rather than in crossing boundaries, the women map out and accommodate themselves to the ‘middle space’ in between. For some this meant oscillating between black and white identities and modes of expression in a way that suggests that a complex and contextual agency is operating which is embodied in everyday life. The stories stand out in the way they reveal the discontinuities between public display and private feelings. Ways of being and performing in the world do not necessarily correspond to the inner subjective sense of self. The public – private split is apparent in the way that Ruby colludes with her grandmother in hiding away from the public gaze so that her grandmother can avoid being connected by blood to blackness. This results in a profound sense of rejection for her. In revisiting my earlier research Richards (1993) the same theme can be seen in the statements of two young mixed race people I interviewed:
“I hated people to see me out with my parents, I didn’t like it. There were always questions ... I did not want to be picked up from school at the school gate”. (Deb pg 53)

“in a white group, I am treated like a white person. I pick up their habits that I can’t get rid of. I feel like a black person but I don’t know how to act like one. (Daryl pg 40)

To end this section I am going to review the distinctive work of Minelle Mahtani (2000) in which she introduces the notion of human geography which she says can provide the necessary tools to chart methods of daily living and surviving in a postmodern world. Her study is based on open interviews conducted with 24 mixed race women in Toronto, Canada. In it, she aims to talk about race beyond the mantra “race is a social construct” and to explore how mixed race women contest, challenge and negotiate their identities in relation to socially constructed social categories. Mahtani strives to construct a more inclusive “critical mixed race discourse” beyond the limitations of discussions about identity which are framed in a black/white paradigm. A view of racial identity is offered, in which racial categories are fluid and flexible instead of being embedded in static social relations. Mahtani contends that there is a crucial relationship between the categories whiteness and blackness and individual agency enacted by informants.

Where most studies on mixed race identity tend to gravitate towards the relationship individuals have with blackness, Mahtani’s work is different in the way it explore the
participant's relationship with whiteness. She proposes that the women are not than passive recipients of imposed identities. Suggesting that rather than accepting boundaries which deny access to whiteness, they are able to act subversively by reflecting whiteness in their dress, self presentation and language to dislodge perceptions people may have of them. This approach to crossing the race boundary by appropriating whiteness is not the same as attempting to 'pass' and win acceptance in the white world as white (Senna 2001, Sollors 1997). Unfortunately, Mahtani does not detail the lived experience individuals of operating this strategy nor the meaning it has for them. She does suggest however that despite the privileges that whiteness offers in the wider system of power, it can be experienced as a disadvantage at a local level. She is talking here of rejection by black groups. I would imagine that a public performance of whiteness that challenges the race boundary in any environment is likely to meet disapproval and sanction in some way.

Mahtani draws on the theoretical formulations of paradoxical space by presented by Rose (1993) and the exploration of the interconnection between supposedly separate entities offered by Probyn' (1996), to develop the notion of 'Mobile Paradoxical Space'. This is a particularly exciting affirmation of the fluid space existing across the boundaries of race which I am investigating in this research study. Mahtani describes it as “a productive site of subversion, where binary oppositions are upturned, where marginality is seen as positive and the potential for forging new alliances augmented” (Mahtani 2000:193). From her analysis of interviews with mixed race women, Mathani surmises that they operate as active occupants of the mobile paradoxical space which enables them to expose the illusion of race and transcend socially constructed lines of difference. She
suggests that they are able to inhabit that space by creating indeterminacy, exploiting paradox and by employing the guile of the trickster. These strategies offer the individuals opportunity for agency in negotiating racial identity. I will summarise how Mathani identified them in action.

Firstly, by refusing to identify themselves racially or culturally when asked to do so, Mathani intimates that the women were able to use their ambiguous position, straddling race and culture boundaries, to create indeterminacy and thus confuse others who seek to locate them. This strategy is most potent for those who others find difficult to place. It allowed individuals access to multiple occupancy of different groups and the opportunity to escape the expectations and claims of any group in particular. In this way they are able to search for people and places where they feel in place rather than out of place. Mathani claims that this allows for a network of connection to be established which transcends race. She considers that the ability to move between groups provides positive roles for individuals; as mediator, interpreter, translator, or ambassador. It is possible however that these roles are experienced as a burden.

A second strategy identified is the exploitation of the paradox inherent in the mixed race label itself. As mentioned earlier, a mixed race position threatens the annihilation of the essentialised nature of both black and white binary positions. Mathani clarifies that whilst some respondents actively assert a mixed race identity as a challenge to racial duality, others were concerned that there was a danger of this strategy being countered by the mixed race position becoming another vacuous identity category. In doing so, it
would perpetuate the myth of commonality and thus mask the diversity of experience and position held by those who would be encapsulated with the label. Furthermore, a mixed race label may create a non categorical identity outside racial discourse, one which emphasises cultural diversity. In this respect it is interesting to reflect on the changing nature of the discussion on the website, "Interracial Voice". In the lead up to the 2000 US census, there was a strong claim for a mixed race category to be established. This was avoided in the census and instead individuals were invited to claim a mixed race identity outside a distinct category by ticking as many categories as they felt appropriate. The effect of this has been seen to marginalise and centre the mixed race voice, consequently many contributors to Interracial Voice now advocate refusing to comply with racial or ethnic categorising. In Britain, the 2001 census made provision for a mixed race category which suggests that subversive potential of a mixed race category is not so acutely felt. It is perhaps telling however, that people who identify as mixed race were not given the option of claiming 'British' as an ethnic group and effectively 'othered'.

Mathani articulates mobile paradoxical space as a space where racial boundaries are unstable and constantly shifting. Because of its precarious and fluctuating nature she acknowledges that living in the space is not easy. Occupying the mobile paradoxical space entails getting past the border guards who seek to maintain the status quo. She argues that the performances of the women she interviewed illustrated them playing a subversive role in crossing the race boundary. She describes them as questioning and challenging the existing social order by simultaneous occupation of black and white
identities, and by fluid movement between them. In this exhibition of agency, Mathani likens their performances to that of the trickster, employing the skills of misdirection, imagination and creativity embodied in that role. Lewis Hyde (1998:7) describes the trickster as a boundary crosser, "the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox". 'Mister Johnson', The novel by Joyce Cary (1962/39) is a brilliant and absorbing portrayal of the duality of the trickster. Mister Johnson rises to chief clerk in Fada, Nigeria. In doing so he transgresses racial and cultural boundaries showing ultimate respect for them and at the same time consummate disregard for them. The irrepressible Mister Johnson is a mischief maker, loyal - thief, adult - child, wise - fool who aspires to and claims the whiteness that is denied him by his position in the social order, he lives by his wit as he rises in status, though moving inextricable towards the gallows. In his death Mister Johnson achieves his subjecthood as a rite of passage across boundaries. Cary is able to capture a sense that crossing the race boundary engages an intense personal, social and political struggle. The struggle to inhabit paradoxical space is missing in Mathani’s work. The energy and potential of the trickster role warrants a greater depth of investigation than she offers. The trickster roles were applied to the narratives of the women but not explored as a lived experience.

Mathani’s work is refreshing, she positions mixed raced individuals as active subjects rather than as people suffering from identity problems. She constantly strives to escape reproducing the race narrative and reifying race. Her application of mobile paradoxical
space provides an excellent vehicle for doing so. It is a weakness however, that she applies the theoretical construct of mobile paradoxical space to analyse the testimonies of the women rather than deriving it from the data. A consequence of this is that whilst she does identify various means of occupying the space it tends to be more of a theoretical proposition and lacking the immediacy of lived experience. There is something reminiscent here of Danzy Senna’s excellent novel ‘From Caucasia With Love’ (Senna 2001) in which Birdie Cole is left to cope with the day to day challenge of surviving life between racial boundaries whilst her father writes and lectures on the deconstruction of race and her mother engages in challenging racism as an activist. It is poignant that both parents, though fully engaged and committed to the challenge of racism, misses the subtlety of lived experience and consequently leave their child unsupported. Mathani’s informants were chosen as academics and intellectuals capable of engaging with a feminist poststructural approach to a critical mixed race discourse. A benefit of this is clearly a richness of discussion and a depth of insight and proposition. Her analysis suggests that individuals are able to cross boundaries but there is insufficient exploration of the cost of doing so. It raises the question what is the relationship between the private journey across boundaries and the public journey. Like Birdie Cole’s father, despite the rhetoric of deconstruction that he embodies he continues to live in a static binary world of black and white. In my own experience, articulating boundary crossing and living it are very different processes.
Beyond dualism

Much of the literature I have discussed examines the way individuals live with and adapt to racial boundaries already formed. I will now explore the rather limited range of literature that aims to transcend the race boundary. Richard Payne’s book: ‘Getting Beyond Race’ is a good starting point. Payne (1998) reflects on the condition of African Americans and presents a conceptual argument rooted in a postmodern deconstructionist analysis. His argument is that race is socially constructed and therefore the race boundary is illusionary. In view of this, he suggests that it is a person’s belief in the race boundary that presents the biggest obstacle to crossing it. Payne advocates that promoting a black identity results in self imposed limitations which ultimately leads to victimhood and self destructive behaviour. He postulates that the African American identity which emanate from the shared experience of slavery and oppression serves the purpose of building allegiance and group solidarity. He contends however, that personal identity is built on a diversity of group alliances and hence, racial identity which is inevitably enmeshed in a superior/inferior racial narrative, need not dominate. Payne thus challenges fixed and essentialised racial identities on the grounds that it depersonalises the individual. Instead he advocates the strategy of crossing the race boundary by reframing race; a process which involves:

➢ Developing awareness of the operations of race and racial imagery so that one can avoid becoming trapped in stereotyped behaviour.

➢ Claiming a personal identity that embraces universal (American) values and which does not support difference and segregation.
Rejecting internalised narratives of inferiority which use race as an excuse for failure to achieve.

Payne uses Colin Powell as an example of an individual who has transcended race and is able to frame the problems of race in a non racial way by suggesting that racism need not be a problem unless individuals use it as an excuse for their own shortcomings. John Powell (1999) is severely critical of this stance which he says is typical of the new right, which have replaced the discredited liberal colour blind approach of the 60’s. He suggests that minimising the significance of race merely contributes to upholding the status quo and thus preserves the social order with its embedded racial hierarchy. Payne’s view however, is that changes in the social condition brought about by new technologies, education and increasing complexity and diversity in the social environment, weakens the dominance of race and makes racelessness a viable strategy for change. His vision is that if sufficient people crossed the race boundary then the edifice of race would collapse. This seems to be a simplistic analysis because it extrapolates from the individual action to a collective movement without considering the role of the border guards. Whilst it may be possible for one person to cross the boundary how many can cross before action is taken to preserve the interests invested in the status quo.

Payne’s work raises questions that are important to consider in relation to the challenge of crossing the race boundary:

➢ Are individuals able to cross boundaries unimpeded by external factors and interests?

➢ What impact does crossing the race boundary have on the social environment?
Is there a difference between a private crossing of the race boundary and a public one?

These questions call for a closer examination of individual’s capacity for agency and freedom of movement in relation to their racial identity. We have seen that crossing racial boundaries can be an internal cognitive or emotional movement, affecting how individuals think and locate themselves in a racialised world. Alternatively, it can be an active process affecting individuals’ behaviour and responses to the outside world. This private–public split recurs throughout the literature. It recognises the potential for a division between what we think or believe and what we do. This study will maintain a focus on the relationship between the two. I would assume however, that both processes, private and public, will affect how individuals are in the world and their state of relationship with others which will have an impact on the wider social environment.

The Anthology: Race Traitor edited and introduced by Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) sets forth the political vision of the abolition of whiteness, shared by Roedigger (1994). The anthology draws together contributions from the first five volumes of the journal ‘Race Traitor’, which was established to provide a forum for individuals to share the experience of their struggles to break the ranks of whiteness. The contributors offer stories in this anthology that are captivating, they demonstrate real courage and determinism in their efforts to take direct action in which they distance themselves from whiteness. Examples of this are the adoption of an anti-racist stance and siding with the victims of oppression (Clarke3, Ervin4, Peeples5), the renunciation of the privileges of whiteness (Eakins6), the

3 Kingsley Clarke – Running the Ball in Crown Point
adoption of cultural and musical styles seen as exclusively black (Rubio7). These stories are powerful because they convey lived experience and portray the consequences of challenging the race boundary in a way that moves the discussion beyond the rhetoric of deconstruction. The consequences highlighted include acts and threats of violence, economic loss and social exclusion. It is noticeable however, that the majority of the various contributors, narrate from the stance of being white, which unwittingly conveys the impression of their action being the performances of 'exceptional whites'. In doing so, they reproduce the narrative of the 'white hero' and thus compromise their efforts to cross the race boundary. Race Traitor is of great value because it grounds efforts to cross the race boundary in lived experience. The testimonies it contains reveal the tenacious nature of the race boundary. The race boundary is a complex space a not a line that is easily crossed simply as an act of will.

The stories of Eakins (1996) and Peeples (1996) stand out from the others in the way they explore the crossing of the race boundary as a process of progressive growth and transformation. In her concluding paragraphs, Eakins describes whiteness as a "death trip". In her attempt to break out and gain life, she takes tentative steps to redefining herself as a person of colour. Her internal dialogue explores what this would mean for her:

To be a person of color means to feel with one's heart that one is mortal amongst mortals; one takes one's place in a matrix that relationally defines and redefines

---

4 Lorenzo Ervin - Behind The Walls of Prison
5 Edward Peeples - thirty years in black & white
6 Patricia Eakin - Manifesto of a Dead Daughter
7 Phil Rubio - Cross over dreams
one’s place in one’s culture. To be a person of color is to acknowledge that we are hurt as well as blessed in our vulnerability. Pg 89

Her use of the ‘we’ in her final statement represents a significant shift that she has made in her journey in which she tentatively rehearses relinquishing her attachment to whiteness. It is a shame that her story ends here. Peeples uses the more public strategy of creating indeterminacy by disclaiming a white identity.

Seeing that I had an audience, I turned back to the cashier, who by now was informing me where to obtain the “white newspaper.” I let her finish speaking, and then said in a loud, crisp voice. “You must think I am White.”

She was startled. But within seconds she came to recognise that these simple words represented a profound act of racial sedition. I had betrayed her precious “white race” pg 82

There is a clear shift in his story which witnesses his movement from the white hero and champion of the oppressed, to that of the trickster, subverting the race boundary. His story ends at this point so we do not know whether he made the corresponding inner journey taken by Eakins. Like Ellison’s hero in his novel Invisible Man (1965), there is a tendency to withdraw from the social world at the point, hence the story of what happens next is not told.

Charles Byrd 2004 raises a promising and distinct perspective in relation to the race boundary. His newsletters (2004a, 2004b) distributed on the internet promote the message that the way to transcend race is to achieve a higher level of consciousness. His insistence that “we are more than our bodies” shifts the attention of race from the physical
and social world and encourages us to consider our relationship with ourselves and our connection with the wider world. In doing so he argues that an emergent spirituality is required to get beyond race. Byrd claims to derive the principles of non-dualism from his mixed race perspective which enables him to see connection rather than opposition and from his readings from the Advaita school of Vedanta philosophy. Although his work has an evangelical quality in the way that it signals a way forward as a leap of faith, lacking in methodology and account of the lived experience, he makes an important link between racial identity and spirituality.

The experience of the journey to higher conscious is well detailed by Carlos Casteneda in his auto-ethnographic accounts of his initiation into the shamanic world under the tutelage of the shaman Don Juan (Casteneda 1970, 1971, 1974). His work offers profound insight into the and limits of consciousness and the nature of separate realities that lie beyond the boundaries of everyday life. Casteneda’s extraordinary journey details a committed and disciplined struggle extending over many years which resulted in his personal transformation. To facilitate his journey, Don Juan presented him with many challenges designed to break his attachment to everyday reality and to prepare him for heightened awareness. Although the majority of the lessons of Don Juan are well beyond the scope of this study, I will draw on three of the lessons highlighted by Casteneda (1970) to consider the insight they offer in relation to transcending the race boundary. The lessons are: erasing personal history, losing self importance and disrupting the routines of life.
Erasing personal history.

Don Juan said that everyone that knew me had an idea about me, and that I kept feeding that idea with everything I did. ‘Don’t you see?’ he asked dramatically. ‘you must renew your personal history by telling your parents, your relatives, and your friends everything you do. On the other hand, if you have no personal history, no explanations are needed; nobody is angry with you or disillusioned with your acts. And above all no one pins you down with their thoughts’.

Suddenly the idea became clear in my mind, I had almost known it for myself, but I have never examined it. Not having personal history was indeed an appealing concept, at least on an intellectual level; it gave me however, a sense of loneliness which I found threatening and distasteful. (Casteneda 1974: 29)

In bringing attention to the role of personal history as a source of inertia Don Juan suggests that freedom and agency comes from shedding narratives of the past. This poses a particular challenge for racial identity which tends to be rooted in historical narratives that set expectations about current identities. This is clearly seen reflected in regimes of ethnic categorisation and the notion of Diaspora which seek to maintain historical connections. The concept of erasing personal history goes further than the process of reframing race advocated by Payne in that it is not just about letting go of racial reference, it embraces the postmodern notion of discontinuity. This is contrary to Erikson (1980) who stress that continuity of personal history is of prime importance in achieving a
sense of identity. The consequence of erasing personal history is therefore the loss of identity and also, as pointed out by Casteneda (1974), loneliness and loss of purpose.

Losing self importance

‘now we are concerned with losing self importance. As long as you feel that you are the most important thing in the world you cannot really appreciate the world around you. You are like a horse with blinkers, all you see is yourself apart from everything else’ (Casteneda 1974: 40)

Losing self importance refers to the need to break the tyranny of the ego in order to open the path to new consciousness. The annihilation of the ego is typical of many spiritual traditions such as Sufism, Buddhism and Taoism which emphasise a view of the self as connected to rather than apart from everything else. Losing self importance has close associations with Jung’s concept of individuation. Jung (1959) used the term to describe the process by which a person moves towards a coherent wholeness which is achieved by retrieving and integrating fragmented and split off aspects of the self. Stuart Hall’s observation that identity is a place of alienation (Hall 1989), is useful because it refers to identity emanating from a consciousness of those aspects of self rejected by the social environment. Jung’s notion of individuation however, challenges us to consider the extent that identity is the result of our alienation from ourselves. The experience of being alienated from oneself is fundamentally different to that of being alienated from external objects because the conscious ego is not necessarily aware of the split off and disowned
part of self which Jung views as residing in the unconscious. Jung proposes that the ego protects itself from those feared or non compatible aspects of the self that it cannot contain by projecting them out into the outside world where they are distanced and thus rendered safe. Jung refers to the projected aspects of self as the archetypal figure of the shadow. This is made explicit by Rachel Clements as she reflects on her developing white identity:

I live in a culture which finds a whole range of aspects of myself unacceptable. Since I cannot get rid of these parts, but also want to be socially acceptable I shall project them onto you. You will carry them for me, and for all white people. You can take the blame for them so that I can go unpunished. You will be black so that I can be white. I hate you because you represent all the things I despise, and I hate you even more because those things really belong to me, and just seeing your face is a reminder of that. I also love you and am fascinated by you because you are the carrier of parts of me which although I reject, I also long for and miss. When I need to contact those parts I will symbolically ride on your back. According to the contemporary liberal values of tolerance and racial equality, I must not be oppressive to you anymore, so I shall keep this process totally unconscious, and my lips will utter the rhetoric of equality and justice. It will affect the way I deal with you, and treat you through the institutions of this country, but no one will be able to prove it. It is of paramount importance to me to keep the divide between black and white people real, for if I ever come to see it as false, I will be forced to accept back my projection. If I can convince you of the truth of this divide, then all the better because we can unconsciously co-operate. (Clements 2001)
Individuation as a process of uniting the conscious and unconscious elements of racial identity would therefore entail that individuals are able to confront and reconcile their own shadow. This could be seen as a way of transcending race. Jung (1959) suggests that considerable moral effort is required to become conscious of the shadow. He cautions that an attempt to do so is liable to be met with resistance.

There is a range of literature which advocates that individuals should strive to reclaim their shadow. Johnson (1991:91) claims that “to own one’s shadow is to prepare for spiritual experience”. He proposes that by developing awareness of the shadow, the ego is confronted with incompatible material that it has to reconcile. Johnson therefore speaks of the shadow as a place of paradox. He suggests that living with paradox as a means of weakening the ego, which is a way to losing self importance. Richio (1999) advocates entertaining the shadow as a means of liberation of the self from its imprisonment. His book offers a good range of practices for developing awareness of the shadow and overcoming the fear of confronting it. Bly (1988) proposes that projection of the shadow is not necessarily of itself a bad thing because it is often the basis of our connection with others. He recognises however, that it is not ethical to expect other people to carry our projections for us because it maybe a burden to them. He therefore emphasises the importance of each person recognising the projections as their own and taking them back.

Bly (1988) offers a model to describe the process of reintegrating the shadow. He identifies five stages in hunting and retrieving the shadow. In the first stage individuals are not consciously aware of their shadow projections. During the second stage the
projections 'rattle'. This is the term given by Bly to the occasions when individuals become aware that the way they experience the 'other' does not fit the projections that they place on them. This can provoke anxiety because there is a danger that individuals may have to confront their own projections. In the third stage Bly describes what he calls the use of moral intelligence to repair the rattle. By this he refers to either a process of rationalisation to explain the lack of fit, or an attempt to manipulate the situation in order to entrap the 'other' into fulfilling their expected role. This is done to preserve a sense of continuity and integrity of the self. If this is unsuccessful, individuals are forced to acknowledge the projections as their own and thus face their shadow. Bly suggests that this confrontation with the shadow allows an individual to see that he or she has been diminished by their projections because that aspect of themselves has not been nurtured and by attributing qualities to others that rightfully belong to themselves they have not been able to experience their true nature. During the fifth stage of retrieval, individuals slowly develop the capacity to integrate aspects of themselves which have been lost. This is a process of healing and personal transformation.

The notion of hunting and retrieving the shadow provides a powerful metaphor for transcending the race boundary. The stages outlined by Bly could easily be seen as a model of identity development. Such a model would be significantly different from the models I have reviewed because its movement towards individuation emphasises unity and connection rather than the polarity and difference seen in other models. This model challenges us to reconcile opposing elements within the self. Jung (1960: CW8:131) refers to an individual's capacity to transcend the tension of opposites and reconcile them...
as the transcendent function. He stresses that the transcendent function is nothing mysterious or metaphysical. Instead, he suggests that it consists of involuntary and intuitive mechanisms which enable the individual to establish a union of the conscious and unconscious content of their psyche in a way that facilitates the psychological growth needed for individuation.

Disrupting routines

‘to be a hunter is not just to trap game, ‘ he went on. ‘A hunter that is worth his salt does not catch game because he sets his traps, or because he knows the routines of his prey, but because he himself has no routines. This is his advantage. He is not at all like the animals he is after, fixed by heavy routines and predictable quirks; he is free, fluid, unpredictable.’ (Casteneda 1974: 91)

Don Juan points to the limitations of fixed routines. This is a criticism of living in a way that conforms to socially constructed scripts and narratives which govern behaviour. Casteneda’s work makes it clear that whilst routines can give order and structure to life and relationships, they constrain creativity and a person’s capacity for change. The act of crossing the race boundary would thus require an ability to break out of the routines of a binary world structured on oppositions of black and white. This act requires a degree of agency which Cohen and Taylor (1992) suggest is outside the grasp of most individuals because of the massive presence of paramount reality. Cohen and Taylor indicate that routines are underpinned by scripts which give them meaning and significance. The scripts hold the narratives and meta-narratives that individuals use to frame their
existence. In their outstanding book 'Escape Attempts' Cohen and Taylor explore the
text and practice of resistance to everyday life and examine how people accommodate
themselves to restrictive and repetitive routines. The book is based on their ethnographic
work with long term prisoners in Durham prison in which they investigated the strategies
the prisoners employed in their efforts to maintain identity and personal integrity in the
face of the restrictive routines they had to live with as a result of their confinement.
Cohen and Taylor introduces the useful concept of identity work, which shifts identity
from being something given or imposed, to make it an act of agency in which individuals
strive for a sense of uniqueness in the face of pressures to institutionalise them. This
notion of identity work highlights the tension between identity being a struggle for
sameness and it being a struggle for difference. Cohen and Taylor liken the socially
constructed reality that people experience in everyday life, to an open prison which is
potentially limiting to individuals' full expression of themselves. They apply the lessons
learnt from their work with the prisoners to contemplate how individuals managed their
identities in their everyday life.

I find the notion that we are trapped in routines very challenging. I agree with Casteneda,
that change is only possible if we are able to disrupt the routines of life, but Cohen and
Taylor's analysis of people being trapped in routine involvement is compelling:

At such times words like 'freedom', 'spontaneity' and 'indeterminacy' seem
empty slogans. The only freedom lies in doing nothing, in standing still. The
habitual stretches out like a contagion into every area of life; it feels inescapable.
(Cohen and Taylor 1992:51)
Cohen and Taylor expose the many rhetorical devices people use to resist routines whilst at the same time accommodating themselves to them. In reading escape attempts I experienced a sense of being caught in the act. I am going briefly to reflect on some of the strategies for managing scripts and routines outlined by Cohen and Taylor in the light of the challenge to cross the race boundary. Race routines would include claiming an essentialised racial identity or imposing them on others, perpetuating the race narrative in language and imagery and allowing race to influence one's relationship with others.

The first strategy is unreflexive accommodation which refers to an approach to the everyday world that reduces the significance of certain routines and unquestioningly accepts things as they are. In a dualistic world it is easy to accept the legitimacy of the essentialised black/white identities unreflexively. Race has become so normalised that it is an effort to sustain attention on it as socially constructed. In effect, too great an insistence on interpreting racialised daily routines can lead to the charge of paranoia.

The second strategy is role distancing. This is possible when individuals develop a self-consciousness which enables them to look objectively at their own routines. In doing so, they are able to establish a distance from them by adopting a reflective stance. Such a stance allows individuals to make a critical commentary on the behaviour of others even though they may themselves be engaged in the same behaviour. The difference is that self-consciousness enables them to place themselves as observers rather than as participants in the routines and rituals. This can explain the failure of the deconstruction analysis to achieve change; knowing that race is socially constructed not affected
individuals operating with race in an essentialised manner. Role distancing could be an
effective rhetorical devise for researchers and trainers. The third strategy is script
switching and script evasion. Scripts presents a set of alternative ways of playing the race
routine. They give the impression of being fluid but are nonetheless particularly
Cross (1971), Jones (1999), Ifekwunigwe (1999) indicate that individuals are able to
switch identities and presentation of self from black to white. In Race Traitor, Ignatiev &
Garvey (1996), there is clear documentation of individuals switching their scripts for
example between racist, hero and explorer. In all of the different strategies outlined it is
significant that race continues operating in the background as a routine. The final strategy
that Cohen and Taylor explore is the use of free areas, escape routes and identity sites.
These tend to be temporary escapes from everyday life such as the use of fantasy, games,
private spaces, drugs and holidays.

Conclusion

I have set out to examine literature which explores the relationship between racial identity
and the race boundary. I am particularly interested in the experience of crossing the race
boundary. I have therefore focused on literature which tracks the development of racial
identity and considers individuals’ capacity for agency. In this concluding section I will
reflect on how the literature contextualises this current research study.

Underlying much of the literature is the implicit notion of a race boundary. The nature of
the boundary itself tends to be overlooked. Du Bois (1940) offers the metaphor of the race
boundary as an invisible sheet of glass that separates people into two opposing camps of
black and white, the imprisoned and the free, is very powerful. It captures the differential fortunes of people divided by race. It does not however reveal the source of the boundary. Through my reading of the literature, I have come to the conclusion that the race boundary is essentialist in nature. It can be reduced to people's belief that race is an essence which is genetically transmitted through generations. It is noticeable that though different writers claim a postmodern or poststructural approach that views race as a social construction. Their discussion ultimately reproduces race as distinct, natural and embodied categories. This challenges me to be mindful of the extent that I fall into the same trap. This would lead me to engage in an ideological journey where crossing the race boundary could only be a rhetorical device rather than a lived experience.

The literature portrays racial identity primarily as a means of affirming and reinforcing the race boundary. This is particularly so for studies featuring black identity, white identity or marginal or interstitial approaches to mixed race identity. The relationship between the race boundary and racial identity is perhaps best understood in terms of the socially constructed narratives embedded in racial identity which positions blackness as inferior and whiteness as superior. Racial identity tends to fix the position of individuals in relation to the race boundary and in doing so locate them within the racial hierarchy. It is suggested for example that to claim a black identity is, inevitably to internalise the negative narrative it contains and the limiting racial scripts that it generates (Fanon 1986, Payne 1998) Racial identity is portrayed as dynamic, with individuals able to claim identities that are fluid and capable of moving between white and black. The message that comes through the literature however, is: 'you are either black or you are white and
your identity is expected to seek alignment with your biologically designated position'.

This message is more pronounced in relation to black identity where too close an identification with whiteness by those designated black is adjudged as being in a disordered or maladjusted state. (Clark & Clark 1939, Cross 1971) A positive black identity by contrast is seen as an indicator of mental health. These texts allude to the policing of the race boundary by the mental health system. White identity development on the other hand is considered to signify a growth in awareness of the power and privilege that whiteness conveys (Frankenberg 1993) and a movement towards greater social responsibility (Sue & Sue, 1990, Helms 1984). Identification with blackness is not seen as a problem to white identity, instead it accepts that whiteness confers the right to appropriate black cultural forms (Rubio 1996). Black identity is commonly used to mark the race boundary, with white identity operating in the background as a silent but pervasive force. The literature shows that racial identity is inextricably linked to the race boundary. The implication of this for this research is that attention needs to shift from the development of racial identity to its surrender because any effort to cross the race boundary would necessitate a commensurate loss of racial identity.

As previously mentioned, crossing the race boundary is not just a matter of making a cognitive shift and thinking differently about race; instead, it requires a degree of personal transformation. The literature shows that it is not sufficient to adopt a race evasive stance (Frankenberg 1993) because racial identity does not need to be stated to affect how a person sees themselves and experiences their allocated position in the social world. Racial identity is sustained by two factors. First of all, it is informed by an internalised
narrative which is shown to be acquired at an early age (Horowitz & Horowitz 1939, Clark & Clark 1939, Milner 1975, Wilson 1987). The early acquisition of the narrative makes it deeply rooted and not amenable to cognitive changes. Secondly, as Suggested by Erikson (1963) identity is rooted in affirmative relationships. Individuals are therefore influenced by how they are reflected in the eyes of others and are susceptible to the expectations others may have of them (Ifekwunigwe 1999, Jones 1999). Both of these perspectives leave little room for individual agency or negotiation of racial identity. It is evident that rethinking race can affect group identification and affiliations but this does not necessarily translate into changes in the way individuals see and feel about themselves. Where the literature tends to emphasise an individual’s search for racial identity, little attention is given to ways in which racial identity can be relinquished or the experience of doing so. The work of Cohen and Taylor (1992) suggests that individuals are more likely to manage their identities within the parameters of the boundaries available to them. In the course of this research I will reflect further on the techniques that they identify for individuals to do their identity work of accommodating themselves to the status quo.

The literature which explores the crossing of the race boundary is understandably limited. The rich and growing literature on mixed race identity does however offer some good insight and great potential for further inquiry (Jones 1999, Ifekwunigwe 1999, Mathani 2001). Much of the work is framed within a race duality that condemns the mixed race experience to a struggle to survive in the space between black and white. It is suggested that many are able to accommodate themselves to this space in a manner which often
involves oscillating between black and white identities or mediating between the two. The work of Mathani (2001) however is very promising in her identification of mobile paradoxical space which exploits the potential for the ambiguity of the mixed race position to blur and subvert the race boundary. Within paradoxical space, Mathani recognises that the skills of the trickster can be used to create indeterminacy which empowers individuals (Hyde 1998). Paradoxical space is also a place of the shadow and an opportunity to reconcile opposing elements needed for individuals to heal the split within themselves (Bly 1998, Johnson 1991, Richio 1999). Mathani’s work was concerned with mapping this space; I would be interested in exploring the space as a lived experience. Other ways of crossing the race boundary which are explored in the literature are reframing (Payne 1998) and Transcending Race (Byrd 2004a, 2004b) Reframing attempts to achieve a racelessness by challenging the legitimacy of the race boundary and the identities it upholds. It is clear that breaking essentialist notions of race is central to crossing the race boundary. I am doubtful whether this can be achieved as an act of will. It is more likely that his strategy is one of race evasion. The potential of reframing cannot however be ignored. Bryd challenges the race boundary by calling for a spiritual strategy to transcend the notion of race as embodied. Again this is an important perspective. I have not developed the literature which explores the spiritual journey because this lies outside the scope of this research. I am however interested in the emergent spirituality which I would expect to be a feature of crossing the race boundary. I find the lessons detailed by Casteneda (1974) particularly challenging and will seek to integrate them in this study.
Chapter four

Research Methodology Part one

Introduction

In the following two chapters I am going to discuss how heuristic inquiry has been used to inform and give shape to this study. Heuristic inquiry falls under the umbrella of qualitative research. Qualitative research encompasses a wide range theoretical of methodological stances, bound by a common interest in social process and context. I perhaps need at this juncture to declare myself as a lapsed empiricist. My scientific training had encouraged me to focus attention on the natural world; governed by laws and universal truths which are discernible and verifiable and which are amenable to objective measurement. As I entered the world of social science I had to adapt to a view of the world where truths are contingent and meaning often is more important than measurement. As a scientist I saw myself as a contaminant to the research process and had to take great care to remove or minimise my influence. As a social scientist I had to recognise that my presence as a researcher was an important part of the process and had to be accounted for. I therefore have a view of the world as both transient and enduring and consequently view qualitative and quantitative research as parallel processes which address the requirements of different worlds. As a researcher, I believe it is important to choose a methodology that fits the phenomenon under investigation. Race, identity and agency are issues that come into existence only at the point of relationship. As a researcher I have to decide whether I am dealing with a fact or illusion. I needed a methodology that could work with a phenomenon that was subtle and changing and elusive and one that did not impose a rigid system. I was introduced to heuristic
methodology by a colleague who thought it might suit me. I knew immediately that I had met a match. I did not realise at the start that I had been paired with a methodology that was going to take the lead. This was a totally new experience for me as a researcher, but I was hooked and ready to embark on a new adventure.

The discussion on methodology to follow will be split into two parts. The first part will be structured around critical discussion of the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of heuristic inquiry as described by Clark Moustakas (1990). In the second part I will begin by discussing the principles of heuristic methodology elucidated by Moustakas. I will then explore the phases of heuristic inquiry and consider the organisation and synthesis of data derived from it.

Heuristic inquiry is not a methodology one chooses to address a particular question. Instead, it is a matter of synchronicity; one is drawn to the inquiry by a hidden source of meaning that demands to be revealed. The task of the researcher is to explicate that meaning. In doing so the researcher ultimately has to surrender to the inquiry and be prepared to follow its course rather than lead. Heuristic inquiry is different from conventional research in this respect. It will become evident that heuristic methodology is both a means of inquiry and a process of engagement with the subject under inquiry. In essence, the methodology is the research, and the researcher lies at the centre of it. This section will be a discursive account of my journey through the research process. Such a journey exposes the researcher to uncertainties and raises dilemmas and ethical considerations which will be discussed.
When I came across heuristic methodology, it had immediate appeal because of its emphasis on lived experience. I was led to the research whilst searching for answers to the problem of racism which I viewed as a violent, abusive and exploitative state of relationship. I was concerned with the persistence of racism which has survived the various initiatives in legislation, policy and education that have been developed to challenge and eradicate it. The themes of race, identity and agency pulled me into the research; they revolve around each other and coalesce on the race boundary. Initially I approached the research with the view that a significant challenge to racism is possible if we are able to erode the race boundary and blur the self-object divisions that race ideology support. Whilst this approach in itself is not new, it remains largely a theoretical proposition with the deconstruction of race being little more than a rhetorical device. I am interested in how the crossing of the race boundary can become translated into lived experience.

I have previously explored identity as the act of situating oneself in the social and relational world. I will carry forward the view proposed by Ricoeur (1988) that identity is the performance of telling and receiving stories about ourselves and using them to negotiate a position in the world. It is not just the content of the story that is formative but its source and means of telling. I am interested in the part played by identities in stabilising the social world and the power differentials inherent within it. If narratives of race become embedded in our identity and if race is the medium through which selves are defined, then it becomes possible to reproduce relationships of oppression. In this case,
identity acts as a source of inertia which traps relationships in historical narratives. Stories about race are very powerful, they trigger many uncomfortable emotions which can challenge the way we give meaning and make sense of ourselves. It is important however that such stories are not rejected or silenced; they can be used instead as an excellent tool for revealing the construction of identity. Wierenga (2001) warns of the personal and social costs of losing significant stories or losing faith in the storylines that we use to sustain us. The focus for this study is the recovery of stories silenced by the dominant narratives of race.

My aim in this research is to explore the unity that exists in a world polarised between notions of black and white. I have previously discussed how the racial dichotomy creates a context for racism to flourish. The dichotomy prefigures racial identity and transmits the myth of difference. In order to escape this dichotomy, my task as a researcher is to hold the tension that lies between separation and connection, isolation and unity. This requires an effort to achieve authenticity, and freedom from the constraints of racial ideology. I am interested in how we are situated in the world by our racial identity. I will focus on mixed race identity which is positioned in the in-between space and offers a vantage point where the nature of racial duality and meaning of racial identity can be explored.

Traditional approaches to racial identity which maintain the false dichotomy tend to marginalise the mixed race position, leading to depictions of mixed race identity as incomplete and oscillating between black and white. In contrast, this study views the mixed race position as one that captures the totality of the racial experience and one
which offers the potential for radical change. In essence we are all mixed race, although this may not be part of our conscious awareness. Fanon’s observation that:

“The white man is sealed in his whiteness.
The black man in his blackness”. Fanon 1967:11

is not optimistic about the possibilities for change. This study seeks to destabilise such a fixed position on racial identity and create the space for racial identity to be experienced as fluid. Bateson (1979: 97) offers a core precept that “the unchanging is imperceptible unless we are willing to change relative to it” This emphasises that movement is required if we are to gain understanding of a phenomenon. A critical question this study asks is whether movement is always possible. To what extent are individuals free to make choices about creating their own identities and negotiating how these are shared with others? Does such an agency exist?

The nature of this research offers me possibilities for personal change and development though the opportunity to heal divisions within myself. On the other hand, attempting to cross race boundaries is a political act which could pose risks for me and for others who follow the same path. Baldwin (1963:17) articulates the power of such an act when he cautions:

The black man has functioned in the white man’s world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations.

The advice I take from this is to tread carefully and to be mindful of the risks involved in crossing boundaries and claiming the ability to self define. The heuristic inquiry therefore
has to be a mindful process. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) introduce the notion of mindful inquiry to conceptualise a coherent, grounded approach to postmodern research which is achieved through bringing together different cultures of inquiry and putting the researcher at the centre of the inquiry. Bentz and Shapiro bring together critical social sciences, phenomenology, hermeneutics and Buddhism as sources of mindful inquiry. I will be developing my own brand of mindfulness which brings together heuristic inquiry, action research, phenomenology and systemic epistemology.

Fig 2 Cultures of Inquiry

Moustakas launched heuristic methodology with his acclaimed study of loneliness (Moustakas 1961). He coined the term to encompass the processes involved in a
disciplined and systematic exploration and interpretation of human experience.

Moustakas's account of heuristic methodology appears to encapsulate a process for doing this. He describes it as:

"a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self awareness and self-knowledge"

Moustakas 1990: 9

Heuristic methodology demands the full presence of the researcher, with the totality of his or her being. Moustakas (1990) suggest that the heuristic researcher needs to have a "willingness to enter the moment of the experience and live the moment fully" (pg 44). This involves not just an intellectual engagement but an emotional and a sensuous one as well that encompasses delight, frustration and curiosity. Moustakas's description of heuristic methodology is reminiscent of a child investigating the world; feeling, tasting, touching and observing with a playful curiosity that allows one to discover the world anew. He uses language which is poetic and presents his ideas in ways which are seductive, yet deceptive in that complex processes and concepts are introduced in simple terms.

The heuristic inquiry is a methodology which is shaped by a dynamic and reflexive inquiry in which the individual is both site and subject of a struggle over identity. I am drawn towards heuristic methodology because of the way it connects the personal with
the social in a disciplined manner that involves commitment and self searching. In this it bears close relationship with reflexive ethnography (Davies 1999) and auto-ethnography (Coffey 1999). Heuristic inquiry however is particularly pertinent in this study because of its emphasis on the hidden and tacit dimensions of experience. As a result of the developments in qualitative research, it has become widely recognised that all researchers in the social and natural sciences are connected to the subject/object of their study and that their presence directly influences the research process and the outcomes claimed to be found. In action research, rather than seeing the researcher as a contaminant and thus attempting to minimise or compensate for the presence of the researcher, the intimate connection between the researcher and the researched is used to deepen knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon. Action research emphasises the researcher as an actor, intent on change and able to reflect on the impact she or he has in the social world (McNiff & Whitehead 2002, Greenwood & Levin 1998). Phenomenology examines the nature of experience, whilst systemic epistemology examines the researcher interacting as part of a wider system as an experiencing individual. In the section to follow I will expand on these cultures of inquiry.

**Heuristic inquiry and action research**

Influenced by the work of Kurt Lewin (1946), action research developed with the view that research should be clearly involved with solving social problems; not as a secondary process but as part of the research process itself. The term action research, encompasses a wide range of perspectives and values, but in common, they have the view that
knowledge emerges as a consequence of action. Implicit in this, is the researcher’s commitment to create change and active participation in the change process. The participation of the researcher in the process tends to make it context-bound and likely to limit its sphere of influence. Although heuristic inquiry stimulates the personal change and transformation of the researcher as an inevitable consequence (Frick 1990), its wider influence needs to be considered. Moustakas (1990) describes heuristics as a recursive process which understands that the researcher will influence the subject of the inquiry, whilst at the same time the inquiry will facilitate personal growth in the researcher. Indeed, insight into the phenomenon is gained as a result of a personal transformation which comes about by letting go of the known and being open to growing self awareness. Heuristic inquiry however, is based on the understanding that personal change is likely to be made manifest in the larger social system. Thus to know ourselves is to know the world. Moustakas points to the “unshakeable connection” that exists between the individual and the outside world, suggesting:

The heuristic process is autobiographical, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social - and perhaps universal - significance

(Moustakas 1990:15)

The works of Krishnamurti (1992, 1975, 1978) are inspirational in exploring the relationship between the individual and the outside world. He advocates that individuals should assume personal responsibility for their lives and claim that it is through deliberate and conscious awareness that individuals can achieve the agency to heal their own internal conflicts and ultimately the divisions which subsequently manifest themselves in the social environment. Krishnamurti (1978) warns that attempts to create change as an
objective outsider can further establish the division between oneself and the outside world. He advocates the ‘act of looking’ as a way of understanding the part one plays in perpetuating the violence and prejudice that exist in the world. His insistence on the power of the individual to achieve change stems from his belief that there must be personal transformation and inner revolution before outer revolution is possible. He says:

If we are concerned with our lives, if we understand relationship with others, we will have created a new society; otherwise we will but perpetuate the present confusion and mess. (Krishnamurti: 1992: )

Like Moustakas, Dalal (1998) shares his understanding that the individual is permeated by the social and that the individual experience has wider social significance. It is this view which gives heuristic research a radical edge, linking it not only to depth of insight but also to social action.

In this research, I explore the experience of attempting to subvert the integrity of the race boundary. This research sets out to challenge the status quo and has the intention to facilitate change. It automatically brings in an ethical dimension. In this research, my search for authenticity and agency introduces an ethical stance which could be described as ‘the practice of freedom’. The term is borrowed from the work of Paulo Friere (1996a, 1996b) and Michel Foucault (2001, 1985), both of whom were committed to a lifetime of struggle against ideas and practices which confine, silence and dominate people. They sought to move beyond accustomed ways of thinking and being in order to find new possibilities for operating differently. The works of both writers, explore the common themes of the individuals capacity for agency, and the contingent and context bound
nature of experience embedded in a given historical moment (Arnett 2002). Their insights provide the basis for an ethical imperative in research which will inform the course of this study.

Cooper and Blair 2002 provide a review of work of Foucault which identifies three distinct but interrelated ethical standpoints that flows throughout his work. The three positions; an intellectual ethic, a political ethic and a relationship ethic could equally be applied to the work of Friere. Together, they show a concern for enhancing an individual’s capacity for change, resistance to domination, transformation of self and creating alternative relationships. I identify with these as the core themes of this study. At this stage, I will briefly elaborate on ethical standpoints mentioned above to explore how they apply to this thesis.

The intellectual ethic is committed to the search for knowledge in all its varied guises and is therefore not restricted to a reliance on rationality to produce ‘true’ knowledge. At its core, the intellectual ethic is a struggle for authenticity, it subjects the taken for granted aspects of our everyday experience to critical inquiry and demands a willingness to go beyond institutional constraints to knowledge in order to seek new possibilities in our ways of thinking and perceiving and behaving. This gives it a radical and subversive edge which emphasizes that the transformative power of knowledge should not be locked up in abstract theorising but instead, used to achieve change in self and others. Applying the intellectual ethic in heuristic research would suggest that it is not sufficient simply to reproduce experience, there is an imperative to connect with others in a way that
generates a critical consciousness and promotes dialogue. I am interested in the way stories connect and like Vickers (2002), recognise the often under-rated and marginalized role of the researcher as storyteller. Okri (1996) highlights the potential dangers of storytelling and places the act under ethical scrutiny:

To poison a nation, poison its stories. A demoralized nation tells demoralized stories to itself. Beware of the story-tellers who are not fully conscious of the importance of their gifts, and who are irresponsible in the application of their art: they could unwittingly help along the psychic destruction of their people. (Okri 1996:17)

I am aware of the potentially toxic nature of stories. This research is effectively driven by the aim to gain freedom from the dominant race narrative which upholds the claim for white superiority and subordination of the black other. I wish to generate stories which blur race boundaries and bear witness to the destructive nature of the race narrative. I will call these mixed race stories, they bear a close resemblance to the counter-story or the counter-narrative which directly challenge the dominant discourse on race. For example see Solorzano & Yosso (2002) and Bell (2003) who highlight the strategic use of story-telling to exposes the silent privilege of whiteness and to reveal the reality of people’s experience of racism which is often silenced. I am concerned however that the counter- story and counter narrative suggests an adversarial approach which could easily fall into the trap of maintaining the false dichotomy of the race meta-narrative; with blackness and whiteness set in opposition. Mixed race stories are different in the respect that they are systemic in that they emphasise connection rather than division. The mixed race story offers an alternative story to sit alongside the dominant stories as a gift to the
future. I believe that the existence of mixed race stories increases identity choices and strengthen the capacity of individuals to survive the violence of racism.

The political ethic is a determination that research contributes to challenging domination and oppression. It demands that the researcher is actively engaged in a struggle beyond the mere intention to achieve change. The researcher needs to be more than a bystander espousing the rhetoric of resistance, it necessitates her or him taking action which incorporates real risks. Krishnamurti (1975, 1992) makes an important distinction in this respect between action and activity. He says activity can be a repetitive pattern of thought or behaviour which lacks the potency to achieve change and thus involves very little risk. A deconstruction rhetoric for example which merely announces that race as a myth, could fall into this category. An action would involve taking this rhetoric and giving it consequence by making it a lived experience. In this research I am seeking to engage in an ‘act of looking’ to explore the experience of living outside the paradigm of the race dichotomy. Such a journey calls on me to let go of obsolete perceptions and ways of being and consequently to relate differently to others. This journey will certainly lead to self awareness regarding my relationship with race boundaries and my capacity to live outside them. Self awareness is seen by Krishnamurti (1978) as the as key form of action, akin to developing power awareness (Foucault 1980) or critical consciousness (Friere 1996) leading to a fundamental shift in relationship with the outside world. Self awareness as a direct form of action is consistent with a reflexive methodology and is distinct from a form of activism which seeks to manipulate or control the external world.
It is more aligned to the Taoist principle of Wu Wei (not doing) as expressed in the writings of Lao-Tzu (1996:2)

When people see some things as beautiful,
other things become ugly.
When people see some things as good,
other things become bad.

Being and non-being create each other.
Difficult and easy support each other.
High and low depend on each other.
Before and after follow each other.

Therefore the master
acts without doing anything
and teaches without saying anything.
Things arise and she lets them come;
things arise and she lets them go.
She has but doesn’t expect
When her work is done, she forgets it.
That is why it lasts forever.
Bruce Lee (2001) applies the principles of Wu Wei in his development of Kung Fu. He suggests that it allows spontaneous action free from the rigidity of rules and ritual. The notion of not doing is further explored by Casteneda (1974), who suggests that we create the world in our ‘doing’; to change our relationship to the world we have to practice ‘not doing’. In the context of this research this presents me with the challenge of being alert to how I ‘do race’ and consequently develop the skills and spontaneity to not do race.

The relational ethic positions the researcher as an ethical subject with due concern for the care of self and others. Implicit within this is the imperative to do no harm. The relational ethic focuses attention on the nature of relationships developed and gives value to the researcher capacity to forge new and alternative relationships. The dominant relationship with race, which perpetuates the binary division that supports superior and subordinate narratives, is seen to carry the potential for a great deal of harm. In this research I am attempting to pursue new relationships which emphasizes connectedness rather than division, fluidity of identity rather than fixity. Developing new relationships can be seen as an exercise in freedom and require a level of agency to escape dominant narratives and create new ones. Such an approach stresses the importance of self knowledge which comes from a reflexive inquiry. Attention must also be given to the potential for research to cause harm to the researcher. This is seen as an ethical concern that is under-explored (Vickers 2002, Gunaratnam 2004). The heuristic focus on the personal experience of the researcher can lead to the exposure of sensitive material in terms of thoughts, feelings and actions which do not have the protection of anonymity. Another possible source of harm for the researcher is that heuristic methodology can lead to the re-surfacing or re-
activation of unresolved issues or past wounds. It is recognised however that it is in the opportunity to process such material or to give it voice that the therapeutic promise of heuristic methodology lies.

Threat to the researcher is explored by Vickers 2002 under the themes of ‘process taboo and content taboo. Taboos mark the boundaries of the acceptable in any given social environment or community of practice. Researchers therefore risk sanction or exclusion when they transgress taboos. Freud (1919) saw taboos as embedded in the fabric of social life which function to maintain existing power relationships. This view is also reflected by Krause:

Taboos reflect the morally binding forces of social relationship which cannot be repudiated if one wishes to be a normal person. In this sense Taboos are ordinated aversions integral to personal and social identity. (Krause 1998:122)

Heuristic methodology would fall into the category of a process taboo because it encourages the subjectivity of the reflexive account grounded in intuition, which is likely to challenge the orthodoxy of traditional modernist research practices. On more than one occasion, it has been suggested to me that I am taking a risk using heuristic methodology for doctoral research. The risks involved are compounded when the topic being researched impinges on the vested interests of the powerful or challenges dominant narratives. In this research my attempts to cross or blur boundaries of race does present a process taboo (Vickers 2002) or topic threat (Gunaratnam 2004) which leads to defensive
responses, most commonly in the form of silence or advice that I should consider changing my topic.

When I invoke the intellectual, political and relationship ethic however, the risks involved seem justifiable, particularly if I am able to discover ways to break the conspiracy of silence surrounding race and make space for others who wish to escape the constrictions of racial boundaries.

Heuristic inquiry and Phenomenology

Heuristic methodology sets out to explore the nature and meaning of experience, it therefore has its roots in phenomenology. Phenomenology as a philosophy was developed to investigate the structures of consciousness and to obtain knowledge about how we think and feel and how we experience the outside world. Husserl (1962) promoted phenomenology as a means of producing an accurate depiction of one's experience of the phenomenon under study, as free from presupposition as possible. Central to Husserl's phenomenology is the view that we gain knowledge of the world by interacting with it. Hence the world is neither wholly, objective or subjective. Instead, our experience and knowledge of the world is construed by the interplay between consciousness and the external environment. Whilst maintaining a close allegiance with phenomenology, Moustakas (1990) places heuristic inquiry in a wider context that brings the researcher's own experience into sharper focus and shifts the emphasis of the inquiry from the external
to internal world. In doing so he positions the researcher at the centre of the inquiry as a reflexive participant.

“In heuristic research, the investigator must have had a direct personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated. There must have been actual autobiographical connections”. (Moustakas 1990:13).

My primary purpose is to recognise whatever exists in my consciousness as a fundamental awareness, to receive and accept it, and then to dwell on its possible meaning. (Moustakas 1990:11)

By emphasising the subjective experience of the researcher, Moustakas identifies heuristic methodology as an autoethnographic genre. The assumption here is that the researcher’s intimate connection to the phenomenon will give access to privileged knowledge which allows her or him to see and understand things in different ways. It is the emphasis on connectedness and relatedness that makes heuristics appropriate for a study of identity and makes research a site for identity work. The highly reflexive nature of heuristic inquiry however, opens it to the charges that it is self indulgent and narcissistic, ultimately more about the researcher than the social phenomenon. Heuristic inquiry is essentially a phenomenological shift from a study of phenomena as the immediate objects of experience into a study of experiencing individuals. Crotty (1998:48) suggests that such a move amounts to a rampant subjectivism. It is clear that Moustakas is wary of objections to heuristic methodology as too subjectivist. This is seen
in his insistence that heuristic inquiry is a disciplined and scientific process which is in no doubt designed to enable him to gain legitimacy in the eyes of a research community dominated by positivist methodology. It seems that Moustakas attempts a compromise which sustains phenomenological understandings whilst modifying them to fit a new orientation towards the inner world. Nonetheless this does not limit the expansive and creative potential that heuristics offer.

In his important work 'I and Thou', Martin Buber (1937) notes that the individual as an 'I' always stand in relation to the world. It is the way we conceptualise the nature of the world that the 'I' inhabits, that determines the nature of the relationship. In this respect, the critical distinction is an ontological one. Buber offers a vision of alternative worlds; the 'It' world and the 'You' world. In each there is an inseparable partnership; I-It and I-You. The 'It' world, which I shall refer to in this study as the binary world, is a world of objects, it is discrete, familiar and reliable it offers a sense of security and order. The 'I' experiences this world objectively, through opposition and distance. Buber goes further in suggesting that experience itself is the recognition of a fundamental alienation of the 'I' from the 'It' world. This is similar to Stuart Hall's view that identity is a point of displacement (1989). The binary world generates the 'other' for the 'I' to relate to as a separate entity. Postmodernity does not support the binary world; questioning instead, the integrity of the 'I'. It alerts one to the danger that the 'I' has been lost and replaced by an 'It' to become an alienated surface. Buber acknowledges this position when he postures the It-It relationship. By contrast, the 'You' world is typified by connectedness. In this study I will refer to the 'You' world as the fluid world because of its propensity for
movement and change. Buber depiction of this world suggests transience and intersubjectivity. In the I-You relationship boundaries between self and other are dissolved and there is a direct communication possible which is not necessarily mediated by language. Buber (1937:56–57) identifies three levels of connectivity with the You world:

- With nature where “relation vibrates in the dark and remains below language”.
- With spiritual beings where “relation is wrapped in a cloud but reveals itself, it lacks but creates language”.
- With man where “relation is manifest and enter language”

I find this useful in mapping out the complexity and subtlety of the fluid world. This depiction is multi-layered and it re-establishes connection with the spiritual and natural world as a primary source of knowing. In doing so, it brings meaning and mystery into the inquiry. There is always the danger that binary and fluid worlds are set up in opposition to each other. To avoid this it is necessary to hold the tension between the two, recognising that we are constantly shifting between the world of objects and world of perception. Buber recognises this tension, suggesting that although the binary world provides the ground for our physical and social survival it is nonetheless a world of alienated surfaces which lack connection and meaning. He says;

Without it you cannot remain alive, its reliability preserves you; but if you were to die into it, then you would be buried in nothingness. (Buber 1937:83)

On the other hand, the fluid world offers a rich source of meaning but cannot be sustained. We therefore need the ability and competence to operate in both worlds.
Much research on race and identity emphasises the binary world and concentrated on race as ‘other’, typical of the I-It relationship and, in many cases, the It-It relationship. I am interested in how exploration of the fluid world can add a new depth of understanding and insight to this topic. This does however present many methodological challenges. The binary world is described by Buber as consistent and reliable, one that can be reproduced and verified. This makes it amenable to scientific investigation. On the other hand the fluid world is far less tangible. He says:

“It lacks duration, for it comes even when not called and vanishes when you cling to it. It cannot be surveyed: if you try to make it surveyable, you lose it.” (Buber 1937:83)

Despite this, he suggests that the fluid world is one that we can come to know as it reaches out and touches us. In this the fluid world is seductive in a way evocative of Moustakas’s account of heuristic methodology. It would seem that the two are well matched and that the heuristic methods he offers would be ideal for the task of investigating the subtle and interconnected realm of the fluid world. Moustakas cites Buber’s work as one of his main influences in the development of heuristic methodology. This perhaps accounts for the radical edge and creative methods which it would seem are designed to address a fluid world which values intuitive, tacit and spiritual knowledge. Moustakas is however tentative about this and consequently his depiction of heuristic methodology as an objectifying discipline, appears to anchor it in the binary world as a scientific discipline geared to investigating conscious experience.
Reeder (2002) expands on Heidigger’s ‘existential hermeneutics$^8$ to develop a hermeneutic cycle of reflection which fits very well with heuristic inquiry and fills certain gaps left by Moustakas. His concern is not how the phenomenon speaks to one’s experience but how one’s experience is interpreted and given meaning by the individual. Reeder puts forward the case that new knowledge must come from the limits of knowing and that the individual may not necessarily have privileged access in communicating across the boundaries between that which is already known and that which about to present itself as new knowledge. Furthermore, he argues that knowledge which arises in certain realms – like the unconscious - will not necessarily have a narrative form that allows it to be assimilated by the individual and hence given meaning which could be shared with others. Although Reeder applies his theory of reflection to the psychoanalytic project of interpretation it offers a great deal in terms of insight to heuristic inquiry.

Reeder proposes a hermeneutic cycle of reflection that describes a process by which an interpretive capacity emerges in the researcher. I like this view because it is less mechanistic and more consistent with a reflexive study. Reeder is able to conceptualise experience beyond a phenomenological encounter with the material and social world. He suggests:

Experience is the most intimate subjective knowing, while at the same time belonging to an unfathomable register. It is never at hand as something ready to be discovered, but develops in tune with how our understanding expands and grows as we engage in activities that challenge its boundaries (Reeder 2002:62.)

---

$^8$ Heidegger in ‘Time and Being’ 1927 pg 191 understanding and interpreting
His exploration of experience extends beyond a view of experience as an encounter with the outside world to include experience as knowing a skill and experience as sedimentation.

- Experience as a knowing skill

As a knowing skill, he refers to experience as an ability to reach and enter into dialogue with hidden and repressed aspects of self which lie below consciousness. This acknowledges our existence as historical beings and has a marked similarity to the therapeutic process which facilitates recovery of lost or denied stories. Holmes (2001) and Fonagy (1999) examine research findings which supports the view that the capacity to recover such unstoried material, and subsequently reconstruct it in story is a ‘narrative competence’ which is arrived at as a result of personal growth and healing.

- Experiences as sedimentation

Reeder’s account of experiences as sedimentation is potent and far reaching. Reeder develops the notion of sedimentation as the residual traces which become embedded in individuals as a result of their interaction with the world. This depiction opens the way for experience to encompass symbolic and archetypal stories which may reside in the unconscious. As such, it refers to those elements residing at the core of our being which Moustakas claims heuristic research is able to reveal. Moustakas insists that the initial data being sought is already within the researcher. He suggests that the challenge of
heuristic research is to "discover and explicate its nature" (Moustakas 1990: 13). This includes:

- The taken for granted knowledge that we normalise.
- The buried knowledge that cloaks fear and discomfort that we wish to avoid.
- The unconscious knowledge at the root of our desire and anxiety.

Moustakas adheres to the phenomenological principles of bringing awareness of the phenomenon under investigation to consciousness. Heuristic methodology provides a disciplined framework for doing so, focusing the attention of the researcher on the phenomenon as a lived experience. In this study the phenomenon that I am investigating is the construction of race. I am examining my relationship with the race boundary and I wish to explore the indeterminate space that exists outside the race boundary and to describe my experience of doing so as accurately as possible. Race as a phenomenon is however difficult to pin down. Husserl (1962) would be inclined to treat the race as an objective phenomenon inhering in factors such as phenotype, genetics and geography. Consequently the construction of race would be investigated by 'bracketing off' any preconceptions I may have so that I can understand how my consciousness interacts with it. The phenomenology of Albert Shutz (1967) however, recognises a social dimension to our encounters with the outside world. He suggests that the objective world is already embedded in shared networks of collective meaning which prevent us from meeting the outside world anew. This is particularly relevant to the social world in which meaning is socially constructed. I realise that in a social environment where race remains an enduring feature of identity and social relationship, race can become too familiar. Consequently I
can become too fixed in my relationship with it to be able to see it in different ways. Although attempts are made to locate it in objective factors, these factors are merely indicators of underlying socio-historical and socio-economic relationships which give race its meaning and patterns of dominance (Gilroy 1992a, Sivinandan 1985, Hall 1992).

It seems to me, that social constructs and cultural assumptions are exactly the material that identity is made of. In researching identity, the constructs of race or class or gender interpenetrate my world and influence the ways that I think, feel and act. Rather than attempting to 'bracket' them off to gain objectivity, I believe it would be more pertinent for me to be open to them and to pursue how they give meaning. Although my intention is to liberate myself from the constraint of race boundaries, I consider the process to be one of growth and transformation rather than the suspension of cultural conditioning.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) acknowledges, that although individuals may operate in abstract and socially acquired worlds this does not negate them experiencing the world as real. This view is reminiscent of the virtual world generated in the film ‘Matrix’ and is grounded in Kovel’s notion of the symbolic matrix in his study of the psycho-history of white racism (Kovel 1988). A constructionist epistemology, connects the objective, the imaginary and the subjective and makes them inseparable. The challenge I have faced has been to let go of the known and the security which it offers in order to allow the research to take the lead. This gives a sense of being vulnerable and not in control. Heuristic inquiry is in effect an act of faith since there is no guarantee that will reach its desired end. Moustakas likens this to swimming in an unknown current, which captures the nature of the heuristic process very well. It also fits the concept of race as fluid and existing in a fluid world.
In contrasting heuristics with phenomenology, Douglas and Moustakas (1985) suggests:

Whereas phenomenology permits the researcher to conclude with definitive
descriptions of the structures of experience, heuristics leads to depictions of
essential meanings and portrayal of the intrigue and personal significance that
imbue the search to know. (pg 43)

Heuristic methods facilitate sensitivity to the subtle movements of meaning as they arise
in consciousness as a result of the researcher’s direct encounter with the physical and
social world. Moustakas develops the heuristic inquiry as a process of discovery on one
hand and meaning-making on the other. In doing so, he opens himself to criticism of
seeking objectivist goals which are incompatible with the constructionist stance of
heuristic (Martin 2002). Potential contradictions inherent in Moustakas’s description of
heuristic methodology can be seen in the following statement.

Essentially in the heuristic process, I am creating a story that portrays the
qualities, meanings and essences of universally unique experiences (pg 13)

It appears to speak to both constructionist and objectivist views of the world. The
distinction between the researcher as agent in the creation of the story and the researcher
as explorer, discovering meanings and essences is blurred. This ambiguous position of
the researcher can however be accommodated in a post-structural approach which
recognises that meanings are not fixed but subject to interpretation. In this study I
consider race to be socially constructed but whose existence in the social imagination
gives it the qualities of realism. Race has universal significance but at the same time is
experienced in unique ways. Initially I struggled with the notion of meaning and essence
in the context of this study. I could grasp the socially constructed meaning of race but to ask what is the essence of race was more difficult. The answer to this came from an unexpected source.

I was sitting in my garden when I caught a small wren in the periphery of my vision. It appeared to be visiting an established shrub in a border near the backdoor of the house. I assumed that it must have a nest there and as I paid further attention to its activities, I could see it was industriously making repetitive visits there, carrying various insects. When the wren noticed that I was watching it would make a detour and fly off in a different direction, intent in keeping its activities as secretive as possible. The following morning, a fledgling wren was discovered inside the house. The front and back door was left open so that it could find its way out. In the event it must have gone out through the front door and lost its way to the nest. I came to this conclusion because the wren, so secretive and furtive the previous day was now strident and visible. It would take up prominent positions, holding food in its beak and make strident and repeated calls. It seemed to me that the wren was searching for its lost offspring and was trying to attract it back. This behaviour continued all afternoon. The longer it went on, hour after hour, the more I connected with it. The strivings of the wren spoke to me of loss and hope. Its loud and persistent call resonated with something deep inside me. I could feel a growing hurt and tension that gripped me in my chest. I wanted it all to stop. Then suddenly I understood essence. I could understand the meaning of the wren’s activities, albeit within my own interpretive framework which may or may not be applicable to the wren. I do not assume that the wren has consciousness similar to my own. The essence however, was in
the way I connected with the wren’s story. It was a direct communication that lay in the
performance of the wren, one that did not depend on shared language.

The relationship between the wren’s world and my world makes sense to me when the
wren moved from being an It, an external object that I was able to play hide and seek
with, to a point where ‘It’ became a You. At this point the boundaries between myself and
the wren had become blurred and I felt connected at the core of my being and hurt with a
sense of loss, hope and expectancy.

I had felt resistant to the idea of race having an essential nature, this seemed to support
the essentialist concepts of race that I was trying to transcend. I could now begin to
address this in the context of relationship by asking how do I connect with race? This
seemed consistent with a post-structural approach that emphasises a phenomenon as a
process rather than as a structure. Dunn (1998) suggest that this could be significant in
understanding the construction of identity.

If constructionism is understood in processual terms, social interaction and self-
reflexivity come into play as formative effects in the production of identity in a
way that implies conscious agency and potentialities for change. If, in contrast,
constructionism is taken as a structural conception to mean the internalisation of
knowledge or learning laden with existing social beliefs and norms, or the effects
of institutional regulations and controls, its implications are inescapably
deterministic implying a fixity of identity. (Dunn 1998:40)
I take the view that constructionism is best understood in processual terms within a systemic theoretical framework where individual behaviour and patterns are seen as a response to the demands of the wider social environment. Such a view means that the individual does not exist in isolation but instead must be seen in the context of relationship. A phenomenology which encourages detachment from the phenomenon being investigated emphasises a more structural approach to constructionism, which I believe, would limit the scope of this research.

Heuristic Inquiry and Systemic Epistemology

I will now explore how an orientation towards a systemic epistemology provides a basis for heuristic methodology to investigate a multiplicity of perspectives inherent in co-existent worlds. A systemic epistemology shifts attention away from the individual as an autonomous unit to consider the functioning of the individual as part of a wider system. The focus, therefore, is on the network of relationship and interactions in which the individual is embedded. It is interesting to apply such thinking to a study of racial identity which would demand that identity is not embodied within the individual but is instead a feature of the social system. Identity is thus about position and function within a given system. I am only able to find out the function of race and racial identity when I cease to play my assigned role or act in ways that threaten its continued functioning by challenging the integrity of racial boundaries. A systemic approach supports the view that individual change can have wider ramifications within their social system. However, there are sufficient controls in stable systems to allow the system to sustain itself and in
doing so minimise the agency of individuals. I am not talking here about external controls; instead the controls that exist are implicit and relate to an individual’s ability to continue participating in the system - an un-stated contract as it were.

The system also needs the capacity to evolve and adapt to changing demands and therefore cannot afford to become too rigid. A dynamic and responsive system needs to have good reflexive capabilities. A major influence in the development of a systemic epistemology was cybernetic theory, which emerged out of the theory of how mechanical systems and robotics are able maintain independent control within set parameters. The essential requirement is a feedback mechanism which allows the system to adjust its performance in response to new information it receives through its sensory apparatus. Von Foerster (1979) and Bateson (1972) applied cybernetic theory to social systems in an attempt to conceptualise social organisations as self regulatory systems which can operate and set their own parameters. This led to profound insight to the circularity of human relations and challenged the basic principles of scientific inquiry which claimed objectivity and separation between the observer and observed. Von Foerster applied notions of circularity to investigations where the researcher is a part of the system they are observing. His outstanding contribution was to consider the cybernetics of self observing systems. This he called the cybernetics of cybernetics or 2nd order cybernetics, a view which establishes the principle of reflexivity where researchers in entering into their research, have to account for their own activity. 2nd order cybernetics enables a connection between the principles of objectivity and subjectivity.
A systemic epistemology examines the world of relationships and consequently is orientated towards pattern rather than description of external objects. Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist and researcher with the Mental Research Institute in the United States was alert to the rhythms and patterns of the outside world. He recognised a fundamental difference between the world of non living things and the world of living processes. Through his observations he found that living processes were distinguishable by “patterns that connect” (Bateson 1979) He referred to sensitivity to pattern as an aesthetic perspective which he felt was more suggestive of the world of art rather than the world of science. I participated in a research seminar in which I put forward my research proposal, framed within a heuristic methodology. The response of the facilitator was that I had crossed the boundary between science and art and that my research was more art. Clearly this was the challenge faced by Moustakas which resulted in him attempting to claim heuristics as a science. A systemic perspective which emphasises multiplicity and fluidity and connection is able to accommodate aesthetics as a modality of knowing and provides a secure base for reflexive inquiry. Heuristics as an understanding of the intimate connection between the self, other and the outside world makes it a methodology consistent with a systemic epistemology.

Systemic principles were developed and applied to family therapy by the Milan team of Selvini-Palazzoli, et al (1980). The Milan team built on the ideas developed by Gregory Bateson. They were particularly struck by his application of cybernetic circularity to understand reciprocity in relationship. This was a radical departure from linear causality and cause and effect assessments typical of the medical model prominent at the time. The
Milan team established Hypothesizing, Circularity and Neutrality as three major therapeutic concepts. Their concern was to avoid pathologising the individual and instead understanding her or his behaviour in the context of the functioning of the family system. I will expand on these concepts and show how they can be used to underpin the principles of heuristic methodology elucidated by Moustakas (1990).

- Hypothesizing

The use of hypothesising in family therapy is interesting because it links therapeutic process with research, making personal change a subject of inquiry. Hypothesising within a systemic frame is intended to connect and hold contrasting possibilities. This is different from its use in a traditional sense where a hypothesis is an attempt to reach a truth or to confirm or verify a particular viewpoint. The value of an hypothesis lies in whether it is useful rather that whether it is true or false. Systemic hypothesising is an attempt to construct different ways of making sense of a phenomenon in a given context. The hypothesis guides the researcher’s investigative activity. It is an invitation to dialogue and a commitment to sharing the research process with others. In a practical sense, a hypothesis it is used to organise ideas and give direction to the inquiry. Reflecting on my research it became apparent that I did carry the hypothesis that racial identity acts to reproduce and transmit race ideology in the social system. Closer inspection of this hypothesis reveals the following premises which underpin this study:

- Race is a relationship.
A person’s racial identity assigns his or her position and role in social system.
Identity becomes racialised as a result of experience of threat or alienation.
Racial identity is connected to the symbolic world in ways that operate below conscious awareness.

Circularity

Circularity is an attempt to understand a system in terms of the coherence of its reciprocal relationships. It is therefore the circular connectedness between ideas, feelings, actions, persons, relationships, groups, events, traditions etc that is of interest. In the context of this research, racial identity constructs racial thinking whilst in a recursive fashion, racial thinking constructs racial identities. Circularity focuses the attention of the researcher on patterns of relationship rather than attempting to determine cause and effect in a linear sense. Importantly, the concept of circularity locates the researcher as an active participant influencing and being influenced by the inter-subjective experience. Applying the concept of circularity engages the capacity of the researcher to learn and respond to the inquiry based on feedback and information gained. The dynamic and evolving nature of research under the principle of circularity allows the researcher to engage with others as critical learning partners. In this respect it becomes more aligned to action-reflection cycles of action research (McNiff and Whitehead 2002, Reason 1998)

Neutrality
The term neutrality may give the impression of the position of passivity or non-involvement. On the contrary, in systemic terms, it recognises the inability of the researcher to act in non-political ways. In relation to circularity, neutrality recognises the intimate connection the researcher has with the subject and strives to forestall closure in an investigation which could come from holding one position as more valid than another or feeling that an answer has been found. Neutrality is a restlessness which seeks to open doors for new meanings to arise. It demands the capacity of the researcher to hold multiple perspectives each with commitment and passion but not to the exclusion of others. A neutral stance in this research has led me to accept that race is an illusion, but also experienced as real, it is a social construct and resides in the social imagination but it is also embodied. Edward De Bono (1995) refers to this ability to hold both sides of a contradiction as “parallel thinking”.

Cecchin brings the three principles together under the stance of curiosity, a state of mind that leads to the “invention of alternative views and moves” (Cecchin 1987: 406) which recursively breeds further curiosity. I like the notion of curiosity because this epitomises heuristic research.
I will now discuss the seven principles that Moustakas (1990) establishes for heuristic inquiry and elaborate on how they have been used to inform this study. This will be followed by an account of how Moustakas’s six phases of heuristic inquiry have been applied in this study.

**Principles of heuristic inquiry**

1. Identify with the focus of the inquiry
2. Self Dialogue
3. Tacit Knowing
4. Intuition
5. In-dwelling
6. Focusing
7. Internal Frame of Reference.

Moustakas suggests that the researcher should have an active engagement with the focus of the inquiry. The topic not only should be relevant to the researcher’s lived experience.
but it will raise questions of passionate concern to her or him. (West 1998). It is expected that the research process will have a transformative effect on the researcher. The emphasis on the lived experience means that heuristic research is context bound and embedded in real relationships. In the context of this study, I thought it would be relatively straightforward to identify with racial identity as the focus of the inquiry because race has been a constant companion through my life. It is like wallpaper that gives life its texture and familiar backdrop, sometimes reassuring but at other times fatigued and outdated. At times, I have sought to distance myself from race and at other times to claim identity through race. Nonetheless it has always been core to my identity. It has not been easy to maintain a focus on race. The first difficulty to present itself is to disentangle race from the other constructs that it is articulated with such as culture, class and gender. One clearly cannot assume that race operates independently but at the same time one has to avoid becoming distracted by its correlates. The second problem in holding race as a focus is that it evaporates under scrutiny. Race does not stay fixed but moves between real and imaginary realms. To account for this I have shifted my focus from race as an abstract concept to race as a narrative. I am very familiar with the dominant race narrative which upholds the binary division. My focus in this research is on new and emerging stories where race crosses boundaries suggestive of a mixed race experience. This is a shift in emphasis from existing research in this area which emphasizes how race divides. I am interested here in how race connects, how I am able to see myself in other people’s stories and how my own stories can provide a mirror for others to see themselves. The systemic concept of circularity is useful here in exploring
the recursive nature of stories. It emphasizes a journey which encompasses the movement of identity in a racialised world and the agency one has to determine its path.

Self dialogue.

Self dialogue is one of the more important and, perhaps, understated principles of heuristic methodology introduced by Moustakas. It is the adoption of an openness and reflexive disposition that allows one to become attuned to the experience of the phenomenon being investigated. Moustakas (1990) refers to self dialogue as a “critical beginning” (pg 16), in the sense that it marks the starting point of the research study. I have in effect been researching race and identity for at least the last twenty years so it is therefore important that I answer the question where am I now? This calls for me to take stock of my journey and focus attention on the present. In this respect systemic hypothesising is useful in setting a future trajectory for the study and locating me as the researcher.

I entered into self dialogue by asking myself questions - what does it mean to cross race boundaries? When am I conscious of having a racial identity? My initial response to these questions was a mixture of uncertainty, doubt and fear. Whilst Moustakas presents the self as a unified whole I came to see the self as fragmented and indeterminate. I was able to recognise and acknowledge past versions of myself still operating and struggling with different race narratives. My current post-structural strivings, to achieve change by deconstructing race does not make particular sense to little Wayne, the child who is
struggling to maintain personal integrity in the face of racial discrimination. Wayne as a young adult views deconstruction as too abstract to take seriously. He is still fully committed to challenging racism and maintains the modernist hope of progress being made by promoting solidarity and collective action. My self dialogue demonstrated that the assumption that the self would be a willing and co-operative participant in the inquiry was not necessarily correct. Instead, an ongoing dialogues in required to overcome resistance and to negotiate a mutually acceptable position.

The self dialogue was useful in introducing a temporal dimension. Past and present and future selves are interconnected each defining each other reciprocally. I found that earlier versions of self are not overwritten by later ones. On the contrary, I had to be mindful of which version was operating at any particular moment. It was therefore difficult to maintain a constant gaze as a researcher attempting to cross boundaries, because other perspectives needed to be accommodated. Far from being a beginning, self dialogue has remained a constant feature of the study. This allows a reflexive loop of time (Boscolo & Betrando 1992) which liberates the research from a static frame. Davies et al (2004) quotes Denizen (1977) to exemplify the existential dilemma and ambivalence inherent in reflexive practices, which centre on how one is able to locate the self in the research process.

The self both is and is not a fiction, is unified and transcendent and fragmented and always in the process of being constituted, can be spoken of in realist ways and it cannot and its voices can be claimed as authentic and there is no guarantee of authenticity. (Davies et al 2004:367)
Such a view of the self lends itself to an aesthetic study capable of embracing multiplicity and fluidity. I see the self as an amalgam of relationships, past and present and future which need to be realigned so that they neither dominate nor need to be denied. An orientation towards stories provides a link between the different time frames in that they speak of the future as much as they do of the past. In looking at the use of stories, Roberts (1994) highlights that evolving stories move fluidly through time. It is impossible to tell a story without rotating between past and present and future. A sense of self arises out of a capacity to shape these influences into a coherent whole. As I move backward and forward between little Wayne, Wayne and postmodern Wayne, there is corresponding movement between race being seen as a lived experience, an identity position and a lost illusion.

Moustakas develops the concept of self dialogue as an interpretive tool to extract knowledge from experience. I am uncomfortable with the way he emphasises heuristics as a scientific inquiry and adopts an objectifying hermeneutic perspective which advocates that the researcher moves backwards and forwards from their encounter with the experience in order to uncover its meanings. This gives the impression of a split between the observer and the observed and locates the experience outside of the individual.

- Tacit Knowing
Moustakas refers to tacit knowledge as the layers of knowledge embedded in experience which exist as an untapped resource, residing in actions and experience. He sees this as knowledge which normally lies outside our day to day awareness but which can be brought to consciousness through focused attention and disciplined awareness. Tacit knowing is becoming alive to ones own story. Moustakas acknowledges the work of Polanyi (1964, 1969) which elucidates two layers of tacit knowledge; subsidiary and focal. Subsidiary knowledge is closer to the surface and more amenable to reflection. This is the knowledge available when we interrupt the flow of events. It comes through the act of looking and giving attention to our experience. For example, when I set myself the task to notice when racial identity becomes salient in my day to day experience, this leads me to an awareness of the conditions and consequences of racialisation which I would normally take for granted. Focal knowledge on the other hand is more deeply embedded and needs to be excavated. It is a state of connectedness with hidden and subliminal regions of ourselves. Focal knowledge reveals itself through awareness and sensitivity to recurring patterns in behaviour. It has an emotive content and comes to awareness in those moments of silence that mask the unspeakable.

Through my work as a counsellor, trainer and lecturer I am already aware that the phenomenon of race raises many uncomfortable feelings and powerful emotions; hurt, anger, shame, guilt, envy which individuals are unable to articulate. The therapeutic quality of heuristic research comes through in its capacity to enable the researcher to develop a narrative competence and give voice to focal knowledge. This may not be so easy when the initial source of discomfort is still active. The emotional violence of race,
for example, may lead to significant stories being locked up in places from which it cannot be recovered whilst the source of that violence persists. Hagedorn (2004) elaborates on the work of Frank (1995) where he refers to stories tied to difficult or traumatic experience as chaos stories. She quotes his observation that “those who are truly living the chaos cannot tell in words. To turn the chaos into a verbal story is to have some reflective grasp of it”. (Frank 1995:99) Hagedorn elaborates her version of a post chaos story which can only be told to the extent that there is sufficient distance and recovery from the event. This resonates with the solemn commentary from Charmaz (2002:303) that:

Raw experience of suffering may fit neither narrative logic nor the comprehensive content of a story. Some participants can only articulate a story about suffering long after experiencing it.

Moustakas’s insistence that tacit knowledge is within conscious reach recognises that recovery and personal transformation may be needed to reach it. He does not go far enough to the knowledge which is held in deeper layers of self, including the unconscious, the collective unconscious and the spiritual dimensions. Despite this, the heuristic methods that he proposes place a high premium on free floating attention, meditation, and acceptance of synchronicity and dream material which are more akin to psychoanalytical and spiritual practices which are geared to giving access to unconscious realms.

- Intuition
Moustakas (1990) describes intuition as the bridge through which links the tacit realm and consciousness. He describes intuition as holistic in nature it involves taking a creative leap which enables the researcher to grasp the essence of a phenomenon. Moustakas’s account of intuition still remains limited to the knowledge amenable to conscious retrieval. The hermeneutic cycle of reflection proposed by Jurgen Reeder (2002) is geared to accessing knowledge emanating from the unconscious. Of particular note is his concept of anticipation which has close resemblances to Moustakas’s depiction of intuition. Reeder suggests that anticipation is a silent knowledge that arises in our experience; it is an awareness that lies beyond one’s grasp; it is a gut feeling, a dream that reveals mysteries that cannot be recalled; it is a smile that suddenly appears on one’s face; it lies at the root of faith, enabling us to endure uncertainly and sustain the hope that meaning will follow. Reeder suggests that anticipation leaves a trace of meaning that emanates from an unknown realm. He says that the trace is both past and future. Through anticipation we are able to get a sense of the whole of a phenomenon even though our conscious awareness may only grasp a part of it. Anticipation is a link to our authentic selves free from any interpretative frameworks that we have acquired in a given cultural context. Reeder (2002) offers the perceptive insight that:

One might imagine that the ego would unconditionally welcome the anticipation, as if it were a merry announcement of desirable knowledge to come. But the ego is most likely to feel both troubled and confused in the face of possibilities presented by the anticipation – as if it in fact did not wish to know much more than it already does. (Reeder 202:43)
This presents an ethical dilemma for the researcher – what do you do with unwelcome anticipation. In relation to this research study, my anticipation often carried a foreshadowing of “do you really want to go there”? I have also on occasion been given the well meaning advice from others that I should perhaps consider choosing a different focus for my research. Reeder suggests that the ego is able to fend off, distort or annihilate anticipations that disturb the security of self. One way of doing this could be to apply a premature interpretive framework and substitute reason or theoretical models in place of the anticipation rather than sitting with it and allowing it to come to life. The heuristic methodology as outlined by Moustakas offers technique for staying faithful to anticipation.

- Indwelling

Indwelling is described as an unwavering willingness to undertake a reflexive inquiry which involves turning inward to seek a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. A systemic epistemology is evident here in its concern for attunement to the recursive nature of the relationship between self and other. Heuristic research is a dynamic process which makes it suitable for investigating the fluid and changing nature of experience as well as the fixed and enduring elements that lead to repetitive and habitual forms of behaviour. Moustakas uses the metaphor of the ‘journey’ to capture this process and to accentuate the exploratory and open ended nature of heuristic research. Most research would typically aim to search and discover which is suggestive of a journey. The journey metaphor however, is nomadic; it emphasizes space, landscapes, relationship and pattern
rather than territories and frontiers which stress the existence of boundaries that need to be defended. Traditional and positivist research tend to use the metaphor of ‘architecture’ which emphasizes structure (Richardson 2000). Research using this metaphor lays foundations, establishes schedules and builds frameworks. Such research tends to be more fixed and solid; it maintains boundaries which are supported, and easier to defend. The journey metaphor on the other hand blurs boundaries and is fraught with uncertainty and ambiguity. For these reasons, heuristic research feels risky. If I am to research my own identity, I am not sure that I can allow it to be free floating; I want it to have roots to anchor it and offer me some stability. At the same time I want to take up Moustakas’s invitation to swim in the unknown current. It is only by entering the current that its nature is revealed. The current I have experienced is not a free flowing one but one partly choked by the debris of the past and future. Small whirlpools hold you and gently tug, threatening to pull you under if you were to lose resolve. There are obstacles that create eddies which cause the current to go back on itself. To be trapped in an eddy is to keep returning to the same position but with less energy each time. One has to trust that there is clear water ahead, encouraged by fleeting moments of respite when the current takes you forward with determination and purpose but ever aware of the dangerous undercurrents. In a conversation with Les Terry (1995:52), Stuart Hall distances himself from the “postmodern nomad view that everyone is a wandering star”. In attempting to hold an intermediate position between the essentialist fixed star and the constructionist wandering star he advocates that the role of intellectuals is to facilitate the weakening of identity to allow some room for change.
Moustakas describes focusing as a process of moving oneself into a receptive state of watchful awareness. His adoption of the principle of focusing was influenced by the work of Gendlin who convincingly argues that knowledge is embodied. He suggests that by developing receptivity to the 'felt sense' that the body holds, individuals not only grasp the meaning of their experiences in the outside world but are also able to undertake personal change and transformation. The felt sense that Gendlin refers to is akin to the anticipation Reeder identifies as a precursor of knowledge just beyond conscious awareness. The principle of focusing also has close parallels with the systemic principle of neutrality. I was, perhaps, three years into the research before I could fully appreciate the importance of this process and cultivate the skills to operate it. Focusing is the ability to develop a reflexive gaze which allows one to receive the content of one's experience without attempting to control it or manipulate it. Gendlin advocates trusting the inner teacher that resides in the body, suggesting that understanding and insight come through being able to hold the content of the experience without being flooded by it. In the initial stages of the research, I found being open to the manifestations of 'race' sensitized me to its violence and injustice, raising feelings of anger, envy, and shame that needed to be contained. The challenge of focusing is being able to put these aside so that the core issues are able to emerge. Parker J. Palmer (2004) refers to this as providing spaces for the shy souls to speak. I found that the principle of focusing was not instrumental and could not be achieved by adopting a sophisticated technique. Instead, it was a process of growth and learning to live with boundaries that are already formed whilst at the same time...
time the boundaries of self are expanded into the unknown. Moustakas (1990) refers to this as clearing an inward space (pg 24) needed to gain clarity of vision and to connect with the essence of the experience. Space-making became a crucial aspect the research; not only was it important to clear an inner space but it was also necessary to maintain an outer space where I could explore the experience in the company of others. This particular challenge presented itself in a dream I had at the start of the research when I took my first tentative steps into focusing:

*I was counselling a client who was talking about his experience of racism. In doing so I maintained a critical detachment from the material and allowed the client to tell his story. It suddenly occurred to me that the client and his experience were not separate from me and my own experience. My detachment was merely a means of separating myself from the material and protecting myself. In doing so I had left the client isolated and alone. Something within me then moved to make an authentic connection, at which point I was able to feel the impact and meaning that the experience held for him. At this point I sat and wept with the client.*

This dream raised concerns for me about my capacity and willingness to allow the research to touch me, to be authentic, to be vulnerable and not to be in control.
Moustakas draws attention to how the researcher's internal frame of reference could render her or his behaviour and experiences incomprehensible to others if they are not shared. Likewise without being able to enter the frame of reference of others their experience is not accessible to the researcher. Heuristic research involves rigorous self searching and self reflection. This has alerted me to the real difficulties of grasping one's own internal frame of reference and has made me cautious of making assumptions about that of other people. Consequently, throughout this study I have avoided trying to represent the experience of others. Instead, I explicitly attempt to represent my own experience. I have attempted to locate the research conceptually within a phenomenological and systemic epistemology. My internal frame of reference however, appears to go deeper than this; it includes my existential and ethical stance.

I live as an historical being with my concept of self comprising an amalgam of past and future representations; consequently, I do not therefore see myself as unitary. My goal however is to seek a re-integration of split off parts of myself which Jung (1959) refers as the process of individuation. Despite my focus on the race binary I am conscious of the need to reconcile the binaries of class, gender and other polarities of dominance and subordination. A movement towards individuation also includes the welding together of conscious and unconscious elements. The process demands optimism that individuals hold the power to achieve agency in their lives and introduces the hope that individuals are capable of living an authentic life where actions and awareness are not conflicted. In his work, The pedagogy of hope, Freire 1996 develops the metaphor of hope. He recognizes that, where agency exists, there is the hope of change. For Freire, agency
comes though the development of literacy which provides a voice allowing those who have been ‘othered’ to reject the culture of silence and tell their own story. Underlying the work of Freire is the search for a form of living where people are free to make choices about creating their own identities and where they are able to take action outside customary repetitive patterns of behaving and relating. The action advocated here necessitates a critical and in-depth awareness of one’s day to day activities and communication. In face of personal, social and institutional constraints however, I need to be careful not to have false confidence in my capacity for change.

Phases of Heuristic Methodology

Moustakas (1990) outlines six basic phases involved in heuristic research: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and creative synthesis. Validation is a seventh phase that he clearly identifies. I agree with West (2001) that his depiction of phases is suggestive of a linear passage from one phase to the next which is not consistent with heuristic research. The phases are useful to the extent that they identify the various processes I experienced in the heuristic approach. In the next section I will examine these phases as I engaged with them in this research study.

○ Initial Engagement.

Moustakas suggests that as a researcher I am drawn to the research topic by a passionate concern that holds important social meaning and personal attachments. The task of the
initial engagement is to discover the nature of the passionate concern that calls out and frame it as a question that engages curiosity and gives focus to the research. It is hard to say when the initial phase began; I have been engaged with the research topic for many years before I discovered myself as a researcher. I do however identify with the need to clarify for myself what it is that has drawn me to this point. I found that three themes appeared to converge. The first, my previous work and research with mixed race young people (Richards 1993) alerted me to their struggles and shifted my approach to racial identity from the black – white dichotomy and allowed me to embrace a more fluid perspective. I was left with unanswered questions about my own identity and questions as a parent and as a professional about how best to support mixed race young people. Secondly I have a long standing interest in race in the counselling relationship which was triggered by my viewing of the training video “Carl Rogers Counsels an Individual on Anger and Hurt” (Whiteley 1977). This video features Carl Rogers counselling a black client. I was struck by how race created a gap in the narrative frame which seems to prevent connection between counsellor and client. This led to an interest in how racialised boundaries affect the therapeutic relationship. I encountered the third theme as a race trainer. I found that an invitation to participants on courses I ran to explore race as a relationship rather than as a structure which impacted on the racialised ‘other’, often resulted in a profound silence. I have been intrigued by the nature and meaning of that silence. During the initial stages of the research I found myself unable to make a decision about on which of these three themes I should focus to progress the study. However, I eventually realised that the silent space, that blurs boundaries, that fills the gap in the narrative and invites relationship and connection, is also a place of dread. It is also the
space that mixed race young people are expected to occupy. It is not surprising that they struggle to do so.

A common feature of the three themes that led me to the research is the fear associated with blurring boundaries of race, the consequence of which is the act of silencing or losing stories that could help sustain people who wish to inhabit this space. Various questions started to arise such as what lies behind the fear of crossing race boundaries? This seems to be a complex issue. The construction of race maintains a power differential which would be eroded if the gap between its poles were to be narrowed. Racial identity work seems to be about performing acts to maintain the required distance between self and other. Does this lead to an unconscious collusion which traps individuals into operating recognizable racial scripts? Feldman (1979) offers an interesting insight into how fears can be generated in interpersonal relationships where boundaries between self and other are threatened. Individuals in relationship are seen to collude with each other in order to maintain the proximity needed to maintain the relationship and also to create the necessary distance to make the relationship tolerable. Balance is achieved through alternating cycles of conflict provoking behaviour and conciliatory behaviour. The five intimacy fears identified by Feldman which could be used to explain the anxiety experienced in working across racial boundaries:

- Fear of exposure: too much disclosure may uncover an individual’s complicity with maintaining the illusion of race and bring to the surface hidden prejudices and fantasies.
• Fear of attack: Fear of reprisal or reversal if the boundary that maintains the power differential held should shift.

• Fear of merger: loss of group affiliations and loss of individual identity.

• Fear of one’s own destructive impulses: The difficulty of dealing with ambivalent feelings which are projected out onto the racialised other.

• Fear of Abandonment: Loss of racial co-ordinates leading to social isolation or rejection.

These fears resonate with my experiences of working with people in a way that challenges the integrity of the racialised boundaries. It occurs to me that identity work is essentially a form of boundary maintenance. I found that I was less interested in the cause of voices being silenced and more committed to searching for the untold stories. What can those stories tell us about ourselves and our relationship with others? Do they provide hope for the future? The question that I needed to ask to release the unstoried material was what is the experience of crossing the race boundary?

○ Immersion

Having refined the research question, Moustakas advocates a full immersion in the research in a way that he describes as ‘living the question’. This has meant entering fully into the study as a lived experience in order to pay a watchful attention to how race becomes manifest in my day to day interactions and relationships. The aim to cross the race boundary seems straightforward enough. The act was however somewhat more difficult. I first had to work out what it meant to make a crossing. I designed for myself
three challenges that I assumed would give me access to the experience of crossing the boundary. First of these was to stop seeing race in biological terms. At a conceptual level this was easy enough. I found the practice near unachievable. I soon realized that I automatically racialise physical features in myself and other people. The action of embodying race occurred prior to any conscious thought and hence to do so was not simply an act of will. The second challenge was to resist categorizing myself and others in racial terms; this included not accepting labels from others. Whilst this act gave rise to some insightful boundary conflicts, it was often questionable whether it was an authentic action or an act of rhetoric. Although I found it was possible to avoid articulating race categories it did not mean that they were not internalized and responded to accordingly. The third challenge to avoid imposing fixed racial narratives onto myself and others followed from the previous two and was important in developing script awareness and learning to listen. Immersion in the topic was not and has not been an easy task. Instead it has been a process of growth which has called on me to re-evaluate my relationship with myself and others.

My immersion in the research included all aspects of my lived experience which extended into both personal and professional life. In my professional role, I have been able to create opportunities to engage others in the exploring of relationship with the race boundary.

- In my role as a trainer, I have facilitated workshops for counsellors and therapists on working with race in the therapeutic relationship.
As a lecturer I work with third year undergraduate and masters students on a black studies module which despite the misleading title investigates the construction of race and identity.

Since the start of the research I have delivered four conference papers which focus on relationship with the race boundary (appendix 2)

In my personal life, my attention to race has made it a more prominent feature of my encounters with family, friends, colleagues and strangers who subsequently become pulled into my research. Support to the research process has been given by my research group at Manchester University and a small group of work colleagues at Birmingham University who have given me valuable opportunities to reflection on my experiences and shared their experiences with me.

The primary support to the research project came from a research group that I established at the start of the study to provide support and focus for the research. The group was set up in the spirit of co-operative inquiry (Reason, 1998, Heron 1998), but most importantly to provide a space to nurture vulnerable and emerging selves. The group contracted to meet for a two hour evening session every three weeks over the first two year period of this study and has since continued as a source of validation and support.

At the onset of the inquiry, the status of the group was ambiguous. Caught between participatory action research as an co-operative inquiry group and the autoethnographic pull of heuristic inquiry it was suspended between two powerful methodologies which was causing some confusion regarding the nature of the research. As I realised that I
could fold my own life experiences and testimonies into the stories of others in the group, the heuristic journey that initially drew me into the study seemed to me to be a potent and far reaching aspect that needed emphasising. In order to draw attention from the group as the primary source of data in order to be more fully immersed in the experience of race in everyday life I decided it was more valuable to use the group for support, sharing of experiences and as a space for reflection and dialogue.

The initial group of twelve; four men, eight women, were drawn from current and ex students that I had shared journeys with before either as participants of the black studies module, or as participants in a masters personal change and development module that I run. I deliberately pulled together a group of individuals who had varied relationships and experiences with race boundaries. The actual selection of individuals was however somewhat intuitive. I chose people that I had connected with at a personal level. On reflection, common characteristics they had were:

- They were reflexive and able to put themselves at the centre of the inquiry
- They had an inherent spirituality which made them open to the challenge of crossing boundaries
- They embraced a view on race which was flexible and fluid.
- They were ready to commit to a long term inquiry

The group started with two introductory sessions which included introduction to the aims and methodology of the research, discussion on the group contract and exploration of the
research question and the implications of the research for individuals. My prior relationship to group members as a tutor raised the issue of power which was acknowledged and recognised as something that might affect future ownership of the process and authentic collaboration. To minimize associations with my tutor role it was agreed that we should seek a venue that was not associated with the University. Furthermore, it was agreed that the group would have to be responsible for facilitating its own process and that the group space would be an opportunity to share experiences and promote dialogue regarding our encounters with racial boundaries. During these two introductory sessions we discussed whether the group would operate as an open or closed group without coming to a conclusion.

I had decided that I would not tape or record the group sessions. Instead I reflected on the aspects of stories told within the group that had a significant impact on me. These reflections were shared with group members as a written dialogue. These dialogues gave me an opportunity to seek verification of my experiences within the group and the insight that I have gained. They have become the main vehicle for capturing and recording shared meanings. The research is essentially about my journey and discovery. This journey however, is enriched by the weaving together my experiences with those of others. The dialogue is therefore a mechanism for joint storying and meaning making. The group has provided space to think about and reflect on experience and social relations. Perceiving how others live their lives can make it possible to acquire new insight and perspectives on how one lives one’s own. It was noticeable that the times
when there was sharing of real life and experience were so much more powerful than when the group becomes involved in abstract or theoretical discussion.

I will be using the notion of dialogue as introduced by Paulo Freire (1996a) to provide a focus for looking at the group experience. Dialogue emphasises the need to find a voice and being open to unstoried material as a means of transformation. He says

> Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only with true words, with which men and women transform the world. (Freire 1996a: 69)

I am particularly taken with his view that dialogue is a mutual process which values and supports the voice of the other rather than attempting to appropriate or direct it.

> “no one can say a true word alone – nor can she say it for another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words”. (Freire (1996a: 69).

Freire suggests that dialogue has two essential components; action and reflection, which cannot maintain their transformative power if they are separated. This would mean that the argument for the deconstruction of race has no potency for change if it is not supported by action in one’s own life and relationships. Through the telling and retelling of our stories, we were able to recognise repetitive patterns of behaviour and touch some of the more sensitive and painful areas which had been unstoried. Storying allowed us to acknowledge the violence and brutality of racialised experience and also the seductiveness and subtlety of it. Joint storying meant we were not alone in our experience or paranoid if we looked and named the world as we saw it, and in doing so give meaning to our experiences. We found that the shared inquiry and story building gave rise to more
complex and comprehensive understandings. At the same time, we were able to see how the stories we carried about other members positioned them in a dynamic relationship to ourselves. We needed to develop the capacity to dialogue for this to happen. Data from the group consisted of my own written reflective dialogues in which I did not an attempt to interpret or to represent the content of the group session. Instead I concentrated on how stories of others, which had resonated with my own, allowed me to voice and piece together fragments of an unspoken story. In my reflective dialogues individual contributions are not necessarily acknowledged but are instead woven into my own life and experiences as a composite story. Participants however were able to recognise their own contribution to the thickening of the story. Participants gave their permission for their stories to be integrated into my research (appendix 3).

The group provided a fluid space which contained important dialogue and experiences. Fluid space can be chaotic and confusing it upholds high ideals but is full of contradiction, it be a place of despair but also of emergent spirituality and healing. Freire’s notion of dialogue offers an ideal way of engaging with the other. He realises however that in order to do so certain conditions needed to be met.Outlined below are some reflections on our struggle to meet Freire’s conditions for dialogue.

Bridging the gap -reaching out and connecting

“How can I dialogue if I regard myself as a case apart from others-mere “its” in whom I cannot recognize other “I”s”. (Freire 1996a:71)
Fluidity is difficult to maintain. In racialising each other, and ourselves we create the division which sets each other apart. In order to dialogue we needed to acknowledge that in the outside world we were located in different racial positions which are core to our identities and experiences. In fluid space we had the opportunity to let this go and to be fluid in exploring any positions of self-definitions we chose. The ability to claim fluidity was clearly easier for those who occupied a mixed race position in the outside world.

Blackness was hard to articulate in personal terms and instead was expressed as otherness often experienced through discrimination. Whiteness too remained largely unstoried and experienced as severance from the self, split-off and disowned. It was uncomfortable to acknowledge a split off part of the self that was not benign but instead destructive.

Although encounters with whiteness still remained hidden it would appear unannounced often in the guise of the saviour, perhaps seeking reparation. Dialogue involves connecting with each other across presumed boundaries and in doing so attempting to heal the split. Peter Reason makes a similar assertion:

"I have been much persuaded over recent months that by the image that the purpose of human inquiry is not so much the search for truth but to heal, and above all to heal the alienation, the split that characterizes modern experience"

(Reason 1981:10)

There is still a long way to go in this respect but the opportunity to consider the way we project on to each other and to explore how the projections that we have brought with us have been internalised was important. It was clear that the projective nature of communication and the demands that we place upon each other to carry our projections
extended beyond race to include other intersecting subordinations such as gender and class.

Guarding against the ‘elite’

“How can I dialogue if I start from the premise that naming the world is the task of the elite?" Freire (1996a:71)

A dilemma the group faced in the early stages was whether it should be open to new membership and if so what would the conditions of entry be? The value of maintaining boundaries to ensure the safety and integrity of the group was acknowledged. To boundary the group however, seemed in many ways to contradict the exploration of fluidity. Yet being too fluid was not seen as being conducive to group development. A compromise to this was to shift emphasis from the group to the space. The understanding being that people who needed the space would find it. This shift made the group a nominal group which over the two years generated a core membership of six who attended regularly and a peripheral membership of five who attended occasionally. This was an unfamiliar group process which did not detract from the quality of the experience. Within the core group there was a sense of moving on; a shared language having developed made it difficult for peripheral members to share common meaning readily. When new members came to the group it sometimes felt like we were going over old ground. Freire (1996a) reiterates the importance of dialogue and says that a key to this is humility. To operate in this way would mean to value contributions a new perspective
can bring. It is the quality of interaction that is important, rather than the building and dissemination of a body of knowledge. The space provided the means of connecting and developing new understandings and a clear focus on the ways in which the dualistic approach to race leads only to contradictions. It does not however give answers which provides a shortcut to others engaging in dialogue. We needed to be attentive to the need to promote others engaging in their own dialogue rather than presenting ourselves as experts.

- Power awareness.

"How can I dialogue if I am afraid of being displaced". (Freire 1996a:71)

The group membership consisted of current and past students that I had worked with. This introduced a power dynamic that could not be resolved, only monitored. I needed to consider how I could be an equal partner in the dialogue. Some steps were taken such as identifying and choosing venue a suitable that I was not associated with in my role as tutor. Despite this I could not overcome the sense that it was my research and my group. My reluctance to assume a leadership role meant that we operated as a leaderless group, which directly influenced the direction of the shared inquiry leading to a process, which lacked structure but operated with a high a level of spontaneity. I have had to come to realise that my role as tutor was only one dimension of power that is operating within the group. Despite working for fluidity, race, class and gender remain factors that privileges different voices and creates problems for authentic collaboration. I have become more
aware of how my undeclared needs to remain in control can lead to subtle manipulation of the group.

We have struggled to achieve the quality of dialogue advocated by Freire (1996a) but have remained committed to the struggle and in doing so learning to break the silence and discover the power to transform ourselves and the world around us. In this respect we have captured the most important aspects of dialogue which is to maintain faith and hope.

Heuristic research is grounded in everyday life which makes everything available to me as raw data; this includes all discussions, conversations, observations, synchronous happenings, interactions with nature, images and symbols, dreams, and literature. To capture this rich diversity of data I have maintained a personal journal, a dream diary and a collection of written dialogues shared with the group and written responses and observations from group members. As the research progressed I found that I was unable to articulate that ‘felt sense’ (Gendlin 1978) or ‘anticipation’ (Reeder 2002) that remained stored within by body. This brought me to the realization that effectively I was the data. I would have to wait to find how it would reveal itself in a form that I could communicate.

My immersion in the heuristic inquiry raised a few ethical concerns that I will discuss briefly. To begin with, everyone that I encounter is potentially a participant in the research. This raises the question: to what extent is heuristic inquiry a covert, undisclosed activity? Certainly members of the research group that I established were able to give their informed consent, knowing that stories they shared could be filtered through my
own experience and reproduced. Colleagues, friends and family, likewise are aware of the nature of my research and how it may involve them. In this case consent is not formalised. It would be difficult and perhaps inappropriate to inform everyone I meet and observe that they are part of my experience and therefore contributors to the research. I am able to justify this because it is my experience that is the subject of the inquiry rather any particular person. Although individuals I have worked with may recognise parts of their own stories as they have been woven with my own, there is no requirement for confidentiality or making identities anonymous because there is no direct references to any particular person accept for myself. There is a danger however that as a researcher I risk exposing too much personal detail. In this respect I have to take responsibility for what I am prepared to reveal.

The other ethical concern that I would wish to highlight relates to the sensitivity of the topic itself and its capacity to create personal distress. It was evident in my research group that talking about issues concerning race reactivated previous hurts and brought attention to current ones. The group discussion also highlighted an underlying trend of depression and isolation. These are themes that I will return to later. When the nature of the research was explored in the induction sessions used to set up the group process, the possibility of personal distress was discussed, as was the right to withdraw from the group at any time. Throughout the course of the group five people withdrew and four new members joined. On balance the opportunity for growth and transformation that the group process offered was acknowledged by its members.
Incubation

Moustakas advocates that the researcher allows the tacit realm to weigh up the true potential of the data. This he suggests is achieved by standing back from the research question and allowing the intuitive function to continue working in the background beyond conscious attention. During incubation connections between different experiences are able to coalesce and significant themes arise in consciousness. I found that due to the ongoing nature of the research, incubation was not a distinct phase that marked the end of data collection. Instead, it seemed an ongoing process during which moments of insight and clarity would manifest themselves, often at times when I least expected them. I learnt that these moments had a dreamlike quality in that they were transitory and could equally well disappear from consciousness in the same way that they appeared. I found myself having to keep notes when these moments arose which were frustratingly partial and fragmentary but felt significant in some way. The themes that presented themselves in this way consistently revolved around key stories or experiences to which I connected. The stage of incubation was important however, to mark the end of data collection and consciously leave the immersion phase. I was able to read my journal, dialogues, letters and diary without attempting to interpret, instead allowing the core themes to grow.

The final stages of the heuristic process are illumination, explication and creative synthesis. These stages refers to the processes involved in giving meaning, structure and expression to the heuristic journey and in doing so making it available for public
consumption. These stages are developed more fully in the next chapter in which I will present my main findings and begin to explore meanings which emerge. Illumination is maintaining a state of mind which remains receptive to emerging tacit knowledge. It demands a degree of reflexivity that remains open to new awareness without striving or forcing understanding. Explication refers to the process of examining emerging knowledge that has been awakened and relating it to personal experience in a more conscious fashion. The purpose of explication is to achieve clarity about the subtle nuances and the multiple layers of meaning that reside in the experience. Moustakas insists that the final stage of creative synthesis requires that the researcher moves attention away from the data itself and generate a communication from an inner core that allows the essences to the phenomenon being investigated to arise. He suggests that this will be revealed in a creative form.
Chapter Six: Findings

Introduction

I approached this research with the aim of uncovering the meaning that lives within the experience of resisting socially constructed scripts of race. It has become apparent that the embodiment of race effectively results in our identities being written upon us with the consequence that we lose agency and responsibility for our lives. I set out with the belief, or more precisely, the hope that I have some agency in the world; although I am strongly influenced by the shaping presence of the social environment, I can assume responsibility for who I am and can choose how I tell the story of the journey towards the integration of my many and fragmented selves. Arthur Frank in ‘The Wounded Storyteller’ points to the ethical dimension of doing so:

Those who have been objects of others’ reports are now telling their own stories.
As they do so, they define the ethics of our time: an ethic of voice, affording each a right to speak her own truth, in her own words (Frank 1997: xiii)

The research process is part of the telling. In presenting the research I have already been sharing elements of the journey as recovered stories, observations, reflections and discourse. The journey has exposed me to the violence of race operating at a personal level, which is not normally talked about. The research process has required me to share this journey with others, which has been a source of joy, suffering and transformation. A critical turning point in the research journey was when I realised that I was the data. Although much of the process is documented in by journals and written dialogues, these
are in essence a means of self dialogue and connecting with myself. The real knowledge from the research remained buried deep within me. The heuristic process laid down by Moustakas is designed to help explicate and communicate that which is hidden or unspoken. This is what I intend to do in this section. However, at the moment it feels more like what Frank referred to as a ‘narrative surrender’ to describe the telling of one's story in the language and terms of the institution, for people with illness this meant - in medical terms.

During the initial stages of the study, my intent, in line with phenomenological principles was to convey the experience of crossing the race boundary as accurately as possible. The first difficulty was that to cross the boundary was to step into nothingness; the space that I initially experienced was a hypothetical space, devoid of content. It was only in the active process of resisting the binary, polarised definitions of race that I slowly began to discover what I called the ‘fluid space’. I found it extremely difficult to articulate the experience of this space. This is due in part, to the fleeting nature of the fluid world and the overbearing presence of the binary world of paramount reality from which escape is questionable (Cohen & Taylor 1976). Heron points out that: “the ordinary use of language creates a split world, with an arbitrary separation between object and subject” (Heron 1992: 9). He consequently calls for ‘post linguistic perception and thought’. Whilst Heron clearly highlights the limitation of language and provides an adequate label for what is required to overcome it, he is not explicit about how this is achieved. Gendlin (2003: 32) however, draws attention to the ‘felt sense’ as a mode of awareness that has no ready made words to describe it. I find this concept useful and I am reassured by his
affirmation that knowledge is held within the body. As a researcher I face the challenge to access and communicate this knowledge. This challenge is well expressed by Reeder:

Our experience becomes accessible to us as knowledge of ourselves, of our lives, of our history, or of our relationship to the world and others only through different forms of speaking and narrating – only through the mediation of a “separate reality”. We are persistently there, in the midst of lived experience, but as soon as we have established a split second of distance from it as we seek to establish the truth, it quickly slips between our fingers, disappearing behind the veil of words. (Reeder 2002:49)

In this section I will elaborate on the stages of illumination, explication and creative synthesis. I will use different modes of telling in order to recover and give voice to tacit knowledge that inheres in my experience of crossing the race boundary. Crossing the boundary is not simply moving between black and white because both are contained by the same boundary. To cross the boundary is to move between a binary view of the world and a fluid view of the world. It is to step outside the world of race and experience the self as a body, prefigured with fixed stories, seeking alternative stories that connect me to, rather than split me from others and the natural world. The final stages outlined by Moustakas require a narrative surrender but also signal the end to the inquiry. They come after a period of incubation designed to gain a degree of distance from the material so that I would be able to connect to the tacit knowledge that inheres in the experience. The incubation could be seen as a period of healing and development of a 'narrative
competence’ (Reeder 2002, Fonagy 1999). Arthur Frank captures the real difficulty of speaking directly from experience. His analysis of ‘chaos stories’ suggests that stories which come from the point of suffering or anxiety do not have sufficient coherence or order for one to be able to communicate them. Like Hagedorn, (2004) he suggests that a story that can be told is already a post chaos.

The teller of a chaos story is, pre-eminently, the wounded storyteller, but those who are truly living the chaos cannot tell in words. To turn the chaos into a verbal story is already taking place at a distance and is being reflected on retrospectively. (Frank 1997:98)

In telling the story of my experience in this section I will of necessity be personalising the text. The stories will revolve through past, present and future. I will use the stages of illumination, explication and creative synthesis to build the story in layers. In doing so the authentic experience of chaos is reconstructed in coherence and order. This is done mainly for the benefit of the reader.

Illumination

Moustakas 1990 describes illumination as a breakthrough into conscious awareness of knowledge that lies just below consciousness. It was evident throughout this study that the immersion in the topic itself focused attention sufficiently to see patterns and connections which are often taken for granted. Those moments of insight were available through the discipline of reflection. In this respect the research group that I established provided not only much needed companionship on the journey but also the opportunity
for reflection and sharing. Within the group we were mindful of the need to talk about the making of racial identity without becoming entrapped in black and white binaries. Initially the mixed race position was claimed because of its inherent paradoxical position. As discussions progressed during the life of the group however, the identity sites of ‘absence, alienation and confusion’ emerged as identity positions which offered mobility more suitable to a fluid view of the world. I will introduce these sites which represent reflectiveness and tacit knowledge coming together to create the insight typical of Moustakas’s illumination. Before I do that I will offer extracts from my written dialogues to the group which capture a flavour of the journey undertaken.

Dialogue 1 - 14/01/02

I found the discussions on whiteness as absence and on boundaries useful, - when is race conscious as a presence? How do we become aware of our own performances and acts of 'doing race' (even in the group). In a world defined by race, is there a place where it does not exist? To what extent do we use racial scripts in our daily lives to give them some order? What are the implications of living outside scripts? This seems like just a beginning, I need the group to explore some of these. It does make me wonder how the group is situated. Is it a remote place of safety or is it a part of our daily lives?

Dialogue 2 – 4/2/02

I visualise the 'space' as a place to do identity work and to recover stories which come from our lived experience. It will be a challenging space, which will inevitably never be particularly safe because boundaries will keep shifting. In a space as fluid as this, any
group which survives will need to be a fluid one. It seems to me the real question is how can the group support individual’s survival in this space?

Dialogue 3 25/2/02

After the last session I was left considering 'what does it mean to live outside racial boundaries? At one level I can see it can be an ideological manoeuvre with little consequence or risk for me, particularly in controlled environments. Sometimes it is an assertion of an identity position which puts me in conflict with others in ways which does involve some level of risk. Essentially, for me, boundary shifting is either a political act designed to challenge the integrity of the oppositional 'black - white' divide, or it can be an act of transformation, through which I seek to expand boundaries of reality and explore my capacity for self determination. At the last meeting I was struck by ***’s challenge that this exercise of choice is in itself a privilege. For me to assume the mixed race position is an assertion of identity. I have readily available resting points where I can experience race as absent. This option is not immediately available to her. More often than not, she experiences race as alienating or confused. Confused is used here as a complex term which is still pretty much uncharted territory for me.

Dialogue 4 18/3/02

After our first session I was asking the questions - 'what is it that makes members want to be involved with the research?' - What brings us together as a group? The insight that I got from this session is that we share common experiences of being outsiders through a range of different circumstances. Much of this seemed to be rooted in early life
experiences and in particular, the theme of maternal deprivation kept coming up. -
caused through illness, emotional distance or separation. This led us to consider that our
effectiveness as parents in helping our children through their own dislocation is probably
dependent on our own recovery. Recovery in this sense seems to mean being able to let
go of the pain, to accept that how we frame reality is how we make sense of what is going
on and to consider what wider social images we are drawing on to construct our version
of reality

Dialogue 5 8/04/02
Telling stories seem to be about accepting the truth of our existence without having to
analyse or justify it. This can however be fairly numbing. I am beginning to understand
critical consciousness as the ability to know the way reality is currently being framed and
to understand the images that we are drawing on in order to give it meaning. It is about
changing our place in the world and not necessarily about changing the world. The
world is only after all what we construct.

Dialogue 6- 20/05/02
I was struck by the relationship between alienation and a challenge to the status quo.
The individual starts off as an insider who, when attempting to challenge tradition or
normal custom and practice find her or himself in conflict with the dominant system of
power and consequently find his or herself at risk of being excluded or put in the position
of the outsider. The pressure on the individual is then whether to conform and re-invest
in the status quo or to stand alone. The intention of the challenge is to achieve change
but strategies based on reason seem almost doomed to failure because what is at stake is relative positions of power. On a number of occasions we have touched on the possibility of achieving change through being on the inside this only seem possible to the extent that the dominant stories can remain intact.

Dialogue 7 – [27/06/02]

The last session reminded me of how painful and debilitating alienation can be. It is not a place that I can spend too much time. It fills me with a real despair. But what is the action? What do we do? Is awareness sufficient? I have for a long time been taken with Krishnamurti's view that critical awareness is an action but even then one needs the courage to speak. It's a bit like the emperor's new clothes. Within the session we were able to pay some attention to absence. There is a need to be on the guard against intellectual distancing or obsolete activity masquerading as action. To what extent is the research itself a masquerade?

Dialogue 8 - 23/09/02

Lots of talk tonight which highlighted the intersections of race, gender and sexuality. I found myself strangely silent on this. Clearly this touches on many unresolved issues. I would not want to lose the opportunity to explore this topic further.

Having had a respite over the summer period from confusion, I really need to take the risk of leaving the more comfortable area of absence and get on the road again. An interesting challenge from *** was when she asked whether absence can be a conscious
and chosen state. My automatic response was to affirm that it can be and has been for me.

Dialogue 9- 7/10/02

In light of further reflections on the matter of whether absence could be maintained as a conscious state still leaves me with the view that it can. I was aware that during the summer I was actively seeking absence and using it to recover from the stress of immersion in the research during the past months.

Dialogue 10- 4/11/02

*** talked of her observations of race operating within the organisational environment. There were elements of being a critical observer of the acts of others which had an essence of absence yet, there was an emotional engagement with it which suggested that she was situated within it but at a distance. There were also elements of confusion as she recognised her complicity with it which brought traces of despair and, although no action was immediately recognizable, there was still a strategic outlook. There was a lot of anger in the narrative but it did not seem embodied. Although she was identifying closely with the issues in a way that would normally suggest alienation, she was not really located in this site. It seemed as if she was occupying all three sites simultaneously and yet was not really in any of them. Is this a new site or is it a point on the interface where the three sites overlap? For the time being it is a position that I will call melancholy.
I found that this position needed to be listened to almost in order to release it. It was
difficult to connect with the person in this position. Energetically the space felt blocked
although there was tremendous energy that seemed to be recycling. It may be that
melancholy is a place of critical commentary on the world as it is experienced. On
reflection I recognise that it is perhaps a place that I use when I am training on race
issues. If this is the case it must be very difficult for others to be able to challenge or
connect with. It probably accounts for my sense of detachment at times.

Dialogue 11 – 25/11/02

The often split-off part of self that is not benign but is instead destructive was reflected
on. This attempt to expose and acknowledge ‘whiteness’ becomes a confrontation with
‘blackness’ as the shadow part of self. It is interesting that in these encounters whiteness
still remain hidden but appearing unannounced as the saviour, or perhaps seeking
reparation as a resolution of the Kleinian depressive position. How else do we cope with
the two aspects of self existing in the same body? ...

What then motivates us to accept the ambivalence of this duality and acknowledge the
inner self as not benign? *** suggested that it depends on what resonates inside and
connects us. Again the nature and experience of mothering reappears. Perhaps in this
relationship our need for reparation is most acute.
Dialogue 12 13/12/02

Regarding the research itself, I am really pleased with the identification and exploration of the identity sites – alienation, absence, confusion and melancholy. As a model or a map, it seems to be a significant acquisition. At the last meeting, the degree to which they represent shared meaning and understanding was raised. I realise that as the constant participant in the group I have witnessed how these concepts have emerged and grown with the explorations of the group. I hope that in re-presenting them to the group in the form of dialogues I have not appropriated them from shared ownership. I do see them as a story that has been woven together from the collective stories told during the meetings. These sites have to some extent become a common vocabulary but I can see that without being in the discussions that gives them life they can become distant from individuals.

Dialogue 13 13/01/03

Outside of our private space what has meaning? This is a particularly pertinent question for me at present. I am running the black studies module and I can see that for some, the issues it raises do not enter private space in a way that seems sustainable. This is about moving the topic from an intellectual/ideological debate and making it real. This seems to be the struggle that many of us are engaged in...

The same thoughts were present when I went to the race summit conference. Why do the same people turn out to listen to the same discussions year on year? Is it only the rhetoric that gives us hope? What would it take to make the leap into the unknown? Crossing boundaries would seem to be an extremely lonely place.
Throughout the year we have specifically targeted issues of race and identity for discussion. Agency as a theme has been there implicitly but I thought that this was worth reflecting on further in the context of the last meeting... 

I see agency as a quest for self determination but more specifically it is about exercising choices in our lives. Given that our starting point is that race is essentially a socially constructed illusion which generates the oppositional poles of black and white, what choices do we have in the way race affects our identity, our experiences and sense of self? Our work over the past year has indicated that we have many choices.

1) We could accept the status quo i.e. .... race duality as a social reality

In doing so, we have a choice of alienation or absence as a response to racism. From both of these positions we can generate the rhetoric of opposition to race/racism, we can even choose to believe the rhetoric.

Accepting the status quo, is an acceptance of the S/I script and the use of them to guide our social performances.

I believe that these choices are primarily unconscious choices. I am interested in what qualitative difference there is when these choices are conscious.
2) **We could play the trickster role.**

To become the trickster is to move between the poles of the duality and in doing so exposing the potential for fluidity. This mischief making position links into the trickster energy and is capable of producing chaos and confusion. The trickster accepts the status quo but at the same time demonstrates a disregard for it. It seems that the mixed race position is capable of launching the trickster and probably requires little conscious choice. I am interested to what extent the trickster is a conscious/unconscious choice. I guess that it is probably both.

3) **The third choice is healing the split.**

The choice here is to become whole and not fragmented; it rejects the binary positions but in doing so becomes a flirtation with madness. The survival in this journey necessitates that it becomes a spiritual quest which involves exploring our connectedness with the universe and the energy within.

Dialogue 15 – 24/02/03

Curiously, as I reflect now on the session, except in general terms, I cannot really recall the content of the discussions. I have realised for a while now that in terms of content I have been very wasteful; what commentary and insight has been lost because it was not recorded?
This tends to be more pronounced at times of self doubt when I relate my research to more traditional disciplines and I realise the lack of 'data' I can produce in the light of the discussions that I have been part of. In my stronger moments, I am happy that the process is the more important. In this respect the group has been an immense source of support, joy, reassurance and personal growth. The meaning of which is still not clear to me. I will at some stage have to establish some more disciplined approach to excavating the experience that resides within me. Ever since the last meeting, my unconscious has communicated to me, the anticipation of a significant breakthrough or development in the research. I feel very close to something and I am fascinated to find out how this manifests itself.

Dialogue 16 17/3/03

When we cross the line and destabilise common practices we lose the security of the known world. It is difficult to maintain confidence in our own experiences...

I was recently asked, how do I know what is real? My answer was continuity; when patterns of experience become predictable and follow logical progression, then they become more real. This does not allow much room for change. Could it be that the only thing that is real is our stories. Potentially this could be very empowering but at the same time, it seems too risky. Perhaps the predictive world is much safer.
Dialogue 17 17/4/03

How do we live in a world that is unjust? Do we attempt to seek justice or do we accept that ‘just is’ is the nature of the world? Today we talked about complicity, recognising that even in our attempts to create change we do little more than play into the system of power that exists. ... 

So what then is a action? What level of change could we engage in without complicity? A number of roles were discussed:

Parenting: - what do we tell our children; to what extent do we embed them in the materialist world?

Critical awareness:- how do we survive the pressure of constant awareness? What subtle changes does this bring about in ourselves and others?

Narrating:- do we have a role in maintaining and communicating alternative stories so they can be reproduced in the future?

Dialogue 18 – 28/4/03

The last meeting emphasised the theme of change.

That space outside our repetitive dependency patterns seems hard to find.
Safely contained in my personal history,

Surrounded by my projections,

Anchored by my unstoried material,

I inhabit a world that offers continuity and predictability

Which is essentially my only hold onto a reality that situates me in the here and now.

I have discovered that confusion only operates in relation to the binary world. When this world collapses the fluidity presented offers too many choices as all other boundaries become vulnerable too.

At this point I am struggling to find voice. Where does the story end?

Dialogue 19 – 19/5/03
At these times when the version of reality that is about routine, commitments and production kicks in, I can see the luxury of space for reflection. I was surprised at the last meeting at how much the external pressures can diminish the self. A certain amount of energy is needed to hold together any sense of coherence that would give a meaning to identity. At these times the comfort of recognised co-ordinates feels very reassuring.
The group continued to meet on a further six occasions from this point but I ceased to write dialogues at this stage. The acknowledged reason for this at the time was that my dialogues were privileging my voice within the group and thus becoming a hindrance to authentic dialogue. As I reflect now it is evident that I was running out of a language to communicate my experience. I notice that my dialogues were already shifting towards a poetic form. My awakening to the notion of absence, alienation and confusion as identity sites represents a synthesis of fragments of discussion into a new whole. This is typical of Moustakas's views on illumination. I shall now elaborate on them.

○ Absence

Absence is a comfortable place to be. When I am in absence I do not need to think of myself in racial terms. Race therefore becomes a context through which I manage my interaction with institutions and people in the outside world rather than being a relationship with my body. On first inspection absence does not seem to be an active site for identity work but on reflection I realise that it can be a site of privilege associated with a sense of security and belonging. As a site of privilege it can be accessed by skin, heritage or alternatively class which may afford privileged access to non threatening environments or to higher status affiliations. At times in my life it is a site of surrender and resignation to the status quo. Absence allows hidden prejudices and self doubt to flourish it therefore a rather fragile site. When I am challenged for occupying this site I am expected to racialise myself according to other people's expectations and account for
my actions in socio-political terms. Since absence is a state of rest and inaction such a
challenge will automatically provoke in me feelings of guilt, shame and envy. Absence is
also susceptible to loss by any coming to critical consciousness which exposes our
complicity with the dominant social order.

My identity work in this site is often about preserving a sense of congruence and
defending my position. I have discovered a sophisticated array of strategies for doing so.

1) Role distancing

This is the ability to make the intellectual and theoretical journey towards race awareness
without developing the critical consciousness required to make a personal connection
with the emotive content it generates. It is about talking the language of race without
acknowledging one’s own complicity with it. Arguing for the deconstruction of race is a
typical way of engaging with race discourse but remaining safely distant from it.
Sometimes even personal commitment to anti-racism may involve employing strategies
which unwittingly act to reinforce racial divisions. In relationships it is about dealing
with race with critical detachment, but as Cohen and Taylor (1992) indicate, this does not
necessarily allow us to escape the entrapment of racialised thinking or projecting our
hidden prejudices.

"a mere ability to lift ourselves above the arrangements of everyday life
(paramount reality) by regarding them with detachment, scepticism or irony, was
no guarantee that we had evaded their restrictions. Indeed we could argue that such self consciousness might imprison us more firmly within ‘reality’ in the sense that it provides us with an alibi for continuing to live our routine, habitual lives.” (Cohen and Taylor 1992:2)

2) Substitution.

This is not a strategy that I have recognised myself using during the period of my immersion in the study. I have seen it however to be a common response when I have worked with others to develop race consciousness. Substitution takes the form of moving from absence to an alienated site in which the individual feels more comfortable to do their identity work, for example talking about experiences of being Irish, fat or disabled. I was recently leading a self awareness group as part of a counselling training programme. In one particular session, I challenged the group to focus on how they were experiencing the presence of race in the group and how it was affecting the activities of participants. This led to a period of silence which was followed by one of the group members disclosing his homosexual fantasies. When the group commented that it was very courageous of him to do so, he responded that it seemed safer than facing the issues of race that were confronting the group. I have noticed that many writers that have began to explore working with race in the counselling relationship make the substitution of race with culture almost using the notions interchangeably (Banks 1999, Ridley 1995)

3) Denial
Denial is essentially about awareness tolerance. Critical awareness exposes the persistence of race as a violent and exploitative state of relationship which can be uncomfortable or distressing. Denial is an investment in the need not to know, to believe in the progress being made in addressing racism. At a personal level through denial we are able to ignore or reframe the presence of race in our daily lives or to assume a raceless position.

- Alienation

By contrast to the identity work done at the site of absence, identity work at the site of alienation is aware of the negative impact of race at a personal level. Alienation is the recognition of identity as a place of displacement (Hall 1989). Erikson (1966) also considered that pre-occupation with identity to be a symptom of alienation because a secure identity does not need to be conscious of itself. Consequently, efforts to claim a racial identity are tantamount to having a problem. As a child if I dwelt on my racial experience I was accused of having a ‘chip on my shoulder’. I hate these word, they have been so effective in silencing the expression of the pain of rejection and unbelonging, that I have felt throughout life on account of race. I learnt to bury these feeling deep inside, although the desire to be recognised and accepted has influenced so many of my patterns of interaction. I find alienation a difficult site to be in. It touches so many powerful and unresolved emotions; anger, hate, frustration, powerlessness and despair, which lie just below the surface. I have found that when confronted by other alienated selves, their
identity work makes me feel uncomfortable; their pain is often too close to my own. When one group member attempted his identity work in this site early in the life of the group we found that his hurt and pain was too much for the group to contain at this stage with the result that he took an early exit from the group. This raised issues of the sustainability of the group if we are not able to listen to, and bear the pain of alienation. It highlighted the importance of the space that the group provided and the need to enable stories to be heard.

I have been able to recover some of my own stories of alienation and use them to understand some of my own identity work I have done at this site. Alienation has been most keenly felt when I have been proximity seeking. It is in attempts to claim membership, acceptance or recognition in the spaces of the ‘other’ that I have experienced rejection. Alienation also comes through the rejection one faces through attempting to cross boundaries. It is in the face of such rejection that one develops boundary awareness. It becomes clear that skin is used as the marker of difference used to allocate the social space that a person should occupy. Although the boundary of race is an ideological one, the theoretical deconstruction of race does nothing to erode it. Boundaries are designed to exclude, they give demarcation to territories. Even when in dominant positions we can feel alienated by those who threaten to change the power balance which may trigger action to restore social order. Hall (1989) comments on the shifting power relations which brings those who live on the margins into conflict with those who occupy positions at the centre when they attempt to claim space at the centre. Working within the group we realised that sometimes it may me difficult to let go the
pain of alienation. Sometimes it may be tempting to hang on to an alienating experience of the world if it connects us to earlier unresolved pains. Such a re-investment in pain makes it difficult to let go, particularly if we have used it to forge our identities.

How does one do work at this site? I offer a selection of performances

1) Struggle to be heard.

This is a particularly exhausting strategy and one largely without success. bell hooks (1990) talks of the 'speech of suffering' that no one wants to hear. I have found that people are willing to listen until they are implicated in the actions which contribute to and perpetuate the suffering.

2) Play the victim

This can attract those who wish to occupy saviour positions. This does little more than reproduce dominant and subordinate roles which are effective in restoring the status quo.

3) Seek solidarity with others.

Recruiting others on the basis of assumed shared experience of adversity can satisfy the need for belonging. The cost of this is often to essentialise difference and to
attempt to impose identities onto others. Where people resist imposed identities it is easy to feel that we have been betrayed by them.

I notice that alienation can be minimised or avoided if one accepts and works within the racial scripts which are part of the social fabric. This means knowing and accepting one's place. Absence can be a site for recovery and resting from the pressure of alienation it allows one to go off and pay attention to other aspects of identity that need work.

- Confusion

Confusion is about being able to live with multiplicity and ambiguity. It is about standing outside the race boundary and at the same time standing within it. Identity work at this site is an attempt to resist racial scripts being imposed on us and to claim agency to determine our own lives but at the same time recognizing that such agency does not exist. Confusion is an act of faith in the face of the potentially destructive nature of race in people's lived experience. The world of race as an embodied social reality is held in tension with the world of race as illusion. De Bono (1995) suggests that the ability to embrace both sides of a contradiction is needed to cope with this tension; this he refers to as parallel thinking. This would enable us to see race is illusory yet to acknowledge that it has so great an impact on people's lives. The deconstruction of race is an exhilarating conceptual position to hold but one has to careful however that it is not merely a retreat to the site of absence. Experiencing race as fluid, changeable and contextual can make one feel very isolated and dislocated.
In Ralph Ellison’s novel Invisible Man (1965) the hero discovers the constructed world of race and the possibilities of a fluid world of boundless possibilities. Having discovered this, he is no longer able to operate in the world but instead retreats to a cellar still fighting his own private battles whilst he tries to orientate himself to his new world and the possibilities it offers. Herman Hesse’s Sidhartha (1973) also opts for a life of exclusion from the social world at the end of his journey of discovery. Here he learns from the river, the value of fluidity and the loss of boundaries which allowed him to make authentic connections with the rest of existence. Fromm’s (1942) comment that the price of freedom is isolation and loneliness is haunting. He surmises that the attraction of entering into relations configured as dominant and subordinate is that they offer a mutual dependency which provides another sense of connectedness.

I notice that because race can be shown to be illusory it does not stand up to any depth of scrutiny. I find that when race evaporates people are pulled into confusion which is experienced as a very uncomfortable and disorienting place. The most common response to this is silence.

My experience of working with people on this site is their need for reassurance that they are not going mad. Working on this site seems to be about tolerating reality however painful it may be. It recognises that we should not be silenced or frustrated by the wish to change others. A strategy that is becoming increasingly significant is ‘storying’. It is about creating and claiming a space to recover and tell our stories and using them to make
meaning. It recognises that silencing of peoples stories in the past disrupt their ability to face the future with confidence.

Explication

Explication is an effort to provide a thematic structure to the research. It involves drawing out and exploring themes that characterise the experience of the phenomenon. Whilst illumination is not forced, instead relying on knowledge that manifests itself as moments of insight, explication is an attempt to reach knowledge which resides at a deeper level. It is, consequently, a product of self searching and self disclosure. When I asked myself the question “what have I found in the course of the research?”, the answer was not immediately accessible. I was caught simultaneously with an absence of data and an excess of data. What I did know was that I felt different and that my relationship with race had changed. The challenge of the explication is to bring the threads together and to excavate what lies beneath the change in feelings and relationship. The incubation period was not a set amount of time, instead it was the ritual of acknowledging to myself that the immersion in the topic as a researcher was over and it was time to explore what has awoken in consciousness and to try to understand its various layers. Part of the ritual, was a social event with the research group to mark its ending. Whilst I continue to live the experience, the research part of me is left to coax out the meaning of that experience. During the incubation period I was able to revisit my journal, my dialogues and the literature on race and identity. I found during this time that certain themes were presenting themselves in the form of stories, events and dreams that stayed with me.
knew intuitively that they were significant. In this section I will explore the following seven core themes explicated using a variety of techniques such as focussing (Gendlin 2005), playback theatre, and visualisation.

- Private space
- Silence and shame
- Script restoration
- Inscription of identity
- Inhabited boundaries
- Silent projection
- Beyond race

Private space

As I was driving home on a country lane, I saw a pigeon on the road ahead of me. I slowed down expecting it to fly off but noticed that it was injured and as the car stopped it slowly staggered to across the lane. Coming out of the bushes on the other side of the lane, I spotted a black cat who I presumed had inflicted the initial damage and was waiting for me to move on so it could finish the job. I sat there between the cat and the pigeon in a frozen drama that seemed to go on for ever. All three of us in that timeless moment locked in a battle of life and death. I had to decide what I was going to do while questions flew around inside of my head: Should I try to catch the pigeon and take it home to see if I can treat it? Would I be able to catch it? Does it need to go to a vet? If
treatment is needed who would cover the costs? If it needed putting down, need I intervene because its end would come quickly? To act was to get involved. After sitting for a while in indecision, I sounded my car horn. The cat was startled for a while but soon settled down in its position waiting for the next play. In the end I came to the conclusion I did not wish to assume any responsibility. I rationalize that it was better not to interrupt the natural encounter between the cat and pigeon and reluctantly decided to drive on. For the rest of the day, I felt guilty and ashamed of my ability to rationalize my inaction; a feeling which has never left me.

This story sharply contrasts with a discussion I had the previous day with the research group. We had been discussing the deaths of Charlene Ellis and Letitia Shakespeare who had been reported in the news as innocent victims of gun crime. In the group we acknowledged that deaths through gun crime were nothing new and often not reported. I was suggesting that the media attention to the case and the presumption of innocence was because they were women, which betrayed a subtext that male victims of gun crime were culpable or guilty. The concern was different for those members of the group who had connections with Charlene and Letitia, either directly or indirectly through the neighborhood or through their own children. Their discussion about the events was embedded in fear, anxiety and anger whilst mine was analytical and dispassionate. I could relate to these feelings but did not feel them myself.

As I reflected on my experiences with the cat and the pigeon I was struck by the realization that we are unable to connect with the events of the world unless they enter
our private space. The death of the pigeon had a lasting impact on me. It made me aware of how I act in my own self interest and rationalize inactivity. The death of the women on the other hand had remained a distant event that left no mark. Further reflection on my reaction to these two experiences led me to the realization that despite my declared interest and commitment to the subject of race, it was still possible to engage with it with an intellectual distance. My encounter with the cat and the pigeon highlighted something of the quality of a relationship in which one is fully engaged. And it didn’t end happily ever after! That’s the story that we do not want to hear. In order to be able to look directly at the world of relationship this ending is the one we have to be able to tolerate. When I look race squarely in the face I see the brutality, suffering and violence inherent in the binary division of race. I also have to acknowledge the privileges and benefits that I derived directly or indirectly from racism. I find that I am able to romanticise poverty, engage in ineffective action that has no long term consequence or even to rationalise inaction. If I allow the reality of racism to enter into my personal space, powerful feelings of shame, guilt, anger, rage threaten to surface. These are feelings that I have to inoculate myself against to in order to maintain a focus on race. Otherwise, I would be looking down the barrel of depression. This is the burden of awareness, the legacy of seeing too much.

My encounter with the cat and the pigeon allowed me to realise just how effective my defences are. Caught by surprise, I was forced to acknowledge that I was intimately connected to the drama that was unfolding in front of me and that my actions had real and immediate consequences. I was confronted with the struggle of having to make a
conscious decision about what action I took and how much I wished to get involved. My investment in offering support to the pigeon was shown to be limited. The inadequacy of my responses left a lasting mark. I had somehow allowed this event to enter my personal space because I did not see it coming. By comparison I was able to maintain an intellectual distance from the events of the shootings. Black on black violence has its own label to keep it contained. I was not there so there was nothing I could do! The two women were unknown to me so why should I feel connected? Yet deep down I know we are all connected and that the violence of race is played out in day to day dramas.

To continue functioning I have to disconnect emotionally. I cannot allow myself to be flooded by the overwhelming emotions that threaten to invade. I have to disconnect even from my own pain and unresolved hurts which bubble under the surface. I need to manage the distance in order to stay present with race but at the same time, avoid falling into depression. In doing so, I have discovered melancholy as a sustainable position. From this position I am able to bear witness on the operations of race, naming it when necessary without falling prey to false hope that change will come quickly. Melancholy is a position I occupy on the boundary of race, present but not fully engaged. It is a place of critique and analysis but its lack of passion can make it appear lifeless and stagnant. It is like experiencing a rollercoaster ride; you feel the fear yet remain sufficiently confident that you are securely strapped in and will be safe. Melancholy lacks spontaneity but it offers stability. In maintaining a focus on race it allows me to be a witness, tracking the intricacies of its maneuvers. I do not underestimate the value of presence. The pigeon was safe as long as I stayed around. Sticking around the boundary of race and maintaining a
critical gaze has been the challenge of this research. Arthur Frank (1997) talks about the importance of being a witness in the face of suffering. To be a witness however is to allow the experience to enter ones private space rather than being a detached observer.

Silence and shame

I experienced an intense sense of whiteness at a conference for counselling and psychotherapy research in Weimar (June 2003). It is difficult to be precise about what exactly I mean by whiteness in this context but paradoxically, it was most visible in the absence of a racial presence in the surroundings. I experienced a growing sense of unease, matched with feelings of disconnection and isolation. Working as an academic in a university and living in a rural village, I am use to environments where whiteness is paramount. The unreflexive and institutional nature of whiteness in this particular environment was however different. Whiteness could not be attributed to any particular person or individual relationship it was however embedded in the social fabric. It was there in the adversarial relationships based on power, control and status; part of which was noticeably patriarchal. It was there in the assumed superiority of a modernist objective and quantitative approach to the world of research and relationships. Moreover, it was there in silence as a sacred presence, an unnamed boundary that could not be exposed.

To survive in this environment I felt compelled to be white and join the conspiracy of silence, and to avoid exposure by keeping my sense of otherness off stage and blending
into the background. I was aware of choosing whiteness as a conscious decision in contrast to other areas of my life where not being ‘black enough’ or being ‘too white’ is a commentary that I receive on my position. Being white in Weimar was typified by my silence and inability to bring attention to the institutional whiteness. It gave me the opportunity to reflect on my whiteness. I felt silenced when I brought up the topic of race, it sat as an uncomfortable presence which seemed act as a conversation stopper. I learnt that in doing so, I was transgressing an unspoken taboo. Since I did not want to offend and through a desire to fit in and be accepted, I honoured silence as a politeness. In my silence, I noticed that I was afraid of calling attention to myself. Consequently, I felt isolated in my experience not knowing who I could trust with my story. The absence of words also acted to prevent feelings from surfacing. In this way I could remain cut off from my history, from my shame, from relationship with the world and from myself. I felt trapped in an external environment split off and alienated from myself with a disturbing lack of sense of unity.

During the conference I delivered a paper which gave me a small audience and permission to tell the story of some of my earlier relationship with race. Not surprisingly the paper was met by silence. When the silence was questioned, one person reported that he was too moved to speak. The following day a woman admitted that she was unable to speak because she was dealing with feelings of guilt which had arisen. Delivering the paper reminded me of a workshop on race that I had run recently with a group of psychologists. This was the last time I had experienced the same intensity of whiteness. In

---

9 Fluid Space: Engaging with the Other

233
this case, bringing race into the arena and asking the group to acknowledge and own their whiteness resulted in a direct confrontation and I was summarily punished by exclusion.

Reconnecting with my story, I found it increasingly difficult to maintain the masquerade of whiteness.

*The past 24 hours has seen the surfacing of many difficult emotions. Partly being the outsider. Perhaps it is a little foolhardy to be critical of the SPR for this because my research on the experience of being on the edge means I have to experience that state. Old feelings of rejection are back which I didn’t realise were still around so powerfully.* (Journal entry 29/06/03)

I was glad to see the end of the conference in which I struggled to maintain the code of silence. Instead of challenging whiteness however I found myself increasingly irritated with its surrogate; quantitative research.

As I reflect on this experience it becomes clear how race operates under the cloak of silence and invites individuals as co-conspirators in maintaining the status quo. There is an injunction against bringing it into private space. This has been a common experience. As a participant in a personal development group as part of my counselling training I remember the struggle to get my experiences of race seen as significant. I received comments from other members such as “we would like to get to know you as a person but you keep bringing race in”, the group leader interpreted my attempts to bring race into the group as resistance to joining the group. I felt that my voice was silenced whenever I
wanted to use race as a context for interpreting and understanding my experiences. It seems that in Weimar I had learnt my lesson.

The nature of silence is well explored in the literature; in relation to the avoidance of stories of the pain of suffering (Frank, 1997, Charmaz 2002, Mazzei 2003), and in relation to guilt (Batsleer1994). Lewis Hyde (1998) however, makes an intriguing exploration of silence in relation to shame. He suggests that whereby guilt is internally regulated, shame is subject to the critical eye of a particular social environment and cannot be atoned in the same way that guilt can. He suggests that it is a more powerful barrier in maintaining the sanctity of sacred spaces. His work helped me recognise the roots of shame in my own silence. Hyde suggests that it is only the trickster or the psychopath who is able to perform the shameless act of speaking the profane in the place of the sacred. Reflecting on the nature of shame put me in touch with a recurring dream that I have been having where I awaken to the consciousness that I am naked from the waist down. Constantly I have to go and hide my shame. It is apparent that my effort to cross the race boundary is silenced by shame.

Script restoration.

This story was presented by a member of the group at a group meeting. I am telling it as her story whilst recognizing that it could also be my own. She was recounting how she had made the effort to reframe the race script that she normally operated in. She was in a post office with her son when a man who had the appearance of a skinhead pushed in

---

10 Group Meeting 17th March 2003

235
front of her in the queue. This is a common enough experience that warrants interpretation as a racist incident. When this activates the racial script it is easy to fall into the position of victim, to feel alienated and powerless. On this occasion she summons the courage to reframe the script; the superior position is taken and the skinhead is offered a place in the queue ahead of her if he needs it. The result of this is a transformation; the skinhead becomes an ordinary person, apologetic and friendly.

The most revealing aspect in the telling of this story was that she had expected the skinhead to respond with abuse and found his friendliness particularly disconcerting. She became convinced that he was playing some kind of trick on her and started to create new stories to explain his behaviour such as: perhaps he is not a racist but instead gay. She even fantasized tracking him down to find out who he really is and to prove that his friendliness was an aberration. Although she has successfully experimented with new behaviour which should contribute to growing confidence as she recognizes her own power, she feels out maneuvered and desperately needs to reestablish the status quo.

This response struck many chords for me. It made me reflect on how we cope when the stories we use to make our lives and position ourselves in the social world reveals themselves as fictions? I have found that the initial euphoria that accompanies the prospect of change and the new possibilities that it offers soon give way to doubt. I was reminded of another occasion some years ago when I was running a workshop on professional development for black workers. I started off with an exercise where participants were invited to identify and celebrate all the good things about being black.
The exercise was planned as an energizer but as it progressed the mood in the group was getting noticeably deflated. When we reflected on the experience, participants reported that it was initially fun and empowering but started to feel as if they had crossed an invisible boundary and were trespassers in a territory where they had no right to be. Consequently the exercise felt increasingly false and shameful.

My interest in crossing race boundaries has drawn attention to the risks involved. Maintaining physical and emotional safety has depended on being able to read and access signs of racial threat. Crossing boundaries and destabilizing common practices means that I lose the security of the known world. Rather than having to renegotiate all relationships it is easier to seek alternative stories that maintain the continuity of our experiences. In a fluid world can we afford to take the risk of not taking heed of the scripts that warn us of danger? Furthermore my identity and way of life are invested in my position; both are put at risk by crossing boundaries. I feel threatened when other people shift their position but equally I have become aware of the discomfort I cause to others when I shift mine. In the past when I was accused of being too white, this would either be experienced as a put-down or an invitation to me to defend my black credentials. In these situations I have found that if I accept my whiteness my challenger will attempt to reposition me as black. In effect they are acting to reassure their own identity.

This story alerts me to our dependency on rigid stories (Roberts1994). Loss of predictability is experienced as loss of control and agency. It is through predictability
that we become suitable screens for someone’s projections. If we get our projections back as in the story it may be disconcerting to know where to place them.

This is consistent with Bly’s second stage in exiling, hunting and retrieving the shadow. He suggests that the discomfort caused when the projections start to rattle because the scripts do not fit any more may trigger an effort to manipulate the situation so that the original script is restored.

Inscription of identities

I am sceptical of people who say that they do not see race. The romanticised view that ‘I meet people as people’ does not fit with my own experience. I am all too aware that my relationship with others is mediated through a whole range of ascribed characteristics such as race, class, gender, age and ethnicity. All of which are significant in positioning me and scripting the relationship to come. On a train to work one morning I was playing with the idea of what it would be like to see people as people, unencumbered by any preconceived characteristics. All of a sudden I found myself surrounded by a mass of ghostly figures. It was such a shock, I felt out of phase, disconnected from the rest of the world and completely alone. This situation was intolerable for more than a few seconds and I quickly snapped back into my normal mode of operating where people once again had recognisable characteristics which were grounded in a world to which I could connect. Most significant in this experience was the realisation that with the return of recognisable characteristics, people also had stories I could give them which described who they were and my relationship with them.
My encounter on the train was a profound experience with lasting effect. As I reflected on it, I was able to uncover many layers of meaning inherent in the experience which give insight to the operation of identity and agency. On this occasion, a potentially superficial and mundane experience based on shared occupancy of space is transformed in an instance into a relational space. The space is seized by my imagination as I gain an awareness of the way I am able to project my stories on to others in order to materialize them and call them into being. The process of storying gives meaning and form to the group at large and serves as the primary way in which I establish connection with others. The process involves imbuing selected characteristics with symbolic meanings which are then expanded into rich dramas. In the action of storying people’s lives, I am transported into a dramatic and intimate connection with them, where the landscape of form is transformed into landscape of fantasy, desire and intrigue. I play out a role in which I reproduce my personal history as I enact the stories that dramatize unresolved issues of the past and hopes and fears for the future.

Storying people’s lives is an act of refiguring the public sphere in a manner that carves out a space for connection. The connection is not discursive. No conversation or negotiation is necessary to materialize both an individual and a communal becoming. Instead, there is a process of inscription, in which I give people stories based capriciously on their physical presence. Although there is a primacy in using visual markers such as skin colour, hair, body form and facial features in selecting appropriate scripts, other sensory data - sound, touch, smell - are also used in making a symbolic attachment.
There is therefore a sensual intensity that permeates the relationship. Stories are a formulation of personal memories, intuitive leaps and scripts acquired from the social environment which I use to position myself in relation to others. I realize that, yes, I do see race, and I pick it out automatically in visible physical characteristics, in accent, in dress. It is difficult then not to inscribe the binary; inferior / superior, saviour / victim scripts of race which come into play in my daily dramas. Race is only one of several intersecting subjectivities however that is materialized and, perhaps, not the most salient. Gender, age, class and sexuality are also powerfully active in defining a physical presence. All of which stimulate personal and collective meanings which are storied.

The practices of inscription bring about a transformation in space and enable individuals and groups to have form and presence. I realize that through my inscriptions I am able to experience a similar becoming. My experience on the train has made it possible for me to understand that identity is not predicated on shared experiences but is instead substantiated on subjective impressions. As I use stories to call people into being and give them identities I am simultaneously establishing my own identity in the process. Part and parcel of the process of inscription is projection of split-off and fragmented aspects of myself on to other people. Most noticeable are the shadow and the anima which bring with them an emotional intensity into relationships which would otherwise be devoid of passion. The projections connect me with unresolved strivings and provide an opportunity for healing whilst in pursuit of escape from isolation and loneliness. The dual processes of inscription and projection blurs the boundaries between self and other.
Although my identity is grounded in stories based on fantasy, myth and reconstruction of memories, it is not wholly imaginary or delusory. Conversely, it reveals itself as a complex and evolving drama that portrays hidden and unconscious parts of myself with which I need to remain in relationship. To feel cut off from them is to experience fear of loss and the intense sense of loneliness during the moment that I experienced the ghosts in the carriage.

Identity is not just about positioning oneself in an abstract symbolic order; it is materialized and physically enacted as an ongoing drama. When I see identity in this way it increases my capacity for agency and makes identity work an act of personal transformation. Rather than crossing boundaries by attempting to not see race, I find that by paying it respect, by noticing its character and letting it speak to me I am able to develop a deeper awareness of the way that I have internalized the myth of race and use it to inscribe identity on others and ultimately on myself. I recognize the shadow moving through my relationship with others and value the opportunity this sets up to reintegrate disowned and repudiated aspects of myself. Most importantly I recognize how I become stuck in rigid stories which are repetitively re-enacted. By telling a different story and experimenting with new behaviour, I give myself the chance to heal. I become sensitive to other people’s projections onto me and have the choice whether I am prepared to hold them or not. I become conscious that my projections can be a burden to other people and attempt to take them with me. I am aware of the principle of reciprocity in action here; I recognize that I am subject to the inscription and projection of others and therefore constitutive of their identity.
Inhabited boundaries

In her book ‘Living on the edge’ Elizabeth Wilde-McCormick (2002) advocates the use of an imagery to name and deepen individuals understanding of their personal edges or boundaries. I used this exercise to deepen my understanding of my relationship with the race boundary. I had come to realise that my earlier conceptualisation of the race boundary, as the space between black and white, was limited because it reaffirmed the distinction between the two and trapped me in a binary world of difference. In this world, crossing the race boundary would entail gaining freedom of movement between black and white. My initial intention in this research was to blur the distinction between the two. One way of doing this would be to get rid of the race boundary, the loss of which would mean that race ceased to exist. Although this position is ideologically desirable, I recognise that my identity is so penetrated by race, that to assume a raceless position would be a denial of the significance of race in my life. This was clarified by my encounter with the ghosts on the train. I have concentrated my attention on the space where black and white merge. This requires a fluid boundary where individual identities are comprised of both whiteness and blackness in a recursive relationship. The visualisation I arrived at was a beach which signified the boundary between the binary and the fluid.

The beach is explored as a boundary between the fixed and enduring nature of the rocks which represent the binary world and the shifting, alluring nature of the sea, typical of the
fluid world. Both of these worlds shape each other; the rocks by containing and setting parameters, and the sea by impressing itself on the rock in a timeless fashion to create new spaces. At the boundary the changes are more catastrophic; this makes it a dangerous place. You can be feeling safe at one moment only to find yourself suddenly exposed and having to hide or suffer the consequences. Surviving the boundary means being able to negotiate transitions and make prudent choices. The boundary itself is not a fixed space and at times can disappear from view leaving one in a binary relationship based on difference and repetition; one which leaves no room for marginality. It is only those that can fly who can remain in a fluid relationship at these times otherwise they are liable to be casualties.

The boundary is an inhabited space. Rather than being barren and secluded it is highly contested with shifting balances of power. It has its thrill seekers, attracted to the change and danger it offers. Besides the adrenalin rush, the boundary provides the opportunity for people to test their skills and develop mastery of their environment. It is also a place for tourists who want to rest, to escape the tedium and predictability of daily life and to contemplate new adventures. Traders are able to exploit the rich potential of the boundary, to sell their wares to an undiscerning crowd. These are temporary visitors. As the boundary becomes less hospitable they have to decide where their security lies. In most cases this would mean returning to the binary world. The fluid world remains however, a place of mystery and awesome power which calls out to be explored. This is a journey into alternative realities.
The story of Little Wayne that I introduced earlier in this study was developed during a weekend course in Playback Theatre in which I participated (June 2004). Playback Theatre is a way of exploring stories through the spontaneous re-enactment of the story by actors. The playback of the story in a dramatic form, transforms the story by allowing the teller to experience it through someone else’s eyes. Playback deepens the experience and insight that can be gained from the story, bringing into view subtle nuances and in allowing intuition to arise. During the weekend, I worked with the story of little Wayne in playback. I was attempting to make a connection between past and present versions of myself. The story is told in three scenes.

○ Scene one

It is a cold wet afternoon. Little Wayne has just arrived England. Nervous and looking for a friend, he experiences racist abuse on his first day of school. The abuse this time does not lie in the words he hears: ‘Wog, Blackie, Nigger’ but instead in a dark mist which emanate from his attackers. The mist clings to the skin of little Wayne, it suffocates and drains his energy. The effort in fighting the mist is of no avail, it only adds to the depletion of his energy and reduction in his sense of wellbeing. As little Wayne becomes more familiar with these attacks he soon learns to dodge the toxic mist which is being hurled out. He has no defence however, against the benign mist that rises from people
around him that bear him no apparent malice, teachers, shopkeepers, ordinary members of
the public. Their mist rises unwittingly and contaminates the air. When he tries to point
this out to them they are unaware of to what he is referring, they cannot see the mist. In
time, little Wayne learns to hide from the mist by compliance, conformity and the
achievement of excellence in sport. He learns to suppress his anger and accept his
subordinate status. When this becomes second nature, he no longer even notices the mist.

  o Scene Two

Wayne is approached by a group of black people at a conference who suggests that he
acts as if he does not see the mist. For the first time other people acknowledge the
existence of the mist and he does not feel so isolated and alone. He discovers that by
standing together they are able to keep the mist at bay but it hovers around them like a
dark cloud restricting their independent movement. Wayne is able to regain his anger and
restore self esteem in his depleted self. He takes on the mission to make the mist visible
to everyone so that they can take responsibility in managing their own toxic emissions: or
learn to stand together to protect themselves from them.

  o Scene Three

Wayne is disappointed that his mission is of limited success. Some people are simply
unable or unwilling to see the mist and recognise its dangers. Others are so overwhelmed
by their emotions (anger, rage, guilt) that when they see the mist that they fall into
depression or retreat into denial. Another group of people are able to see the mist but are afraid to venture out alone and get stuck in a futile, group struggle against the mist. Wayne decides to concentrate on his own growth and recovery, engaging with research on how to detoxify the mist.

In the telling of this story I made the switch from the narrative of racism to focus on ‘the mist’ as a metaphor of the shadow projections. This was initially done make it easier for the actors since playback is predominantly a visual form. The switch was an intuitive one and fortuitous, because ‘the mist’ remains with me as a powerful image. It depicts racism as pervasive and something which cannot be fought directly. The enactment of fighting the mist showed it to be a futile energy sapping endeavour. The mist presents racism as an amorphous presence that implicates everyone in its distribution. I particularly like the sense that the mist is something that people unwittingly leak despite their best intentions. This really captures the experience of working with race. The mist that is hurled, depicts racism in its violent and aggressive forms. In many ways this is less dangerous because with experience I have developed competencies in dealing with it and have managed to organise my life and activities to avoid its most virulent forms. I am conscious however not to become complacent and underestimate the potential for harm it poses if it catches me unprepared. As I reflect on this it becomes apparent that anti-racism can only really address the mist that is being hurled, it would be ineffective against the benign mist which is unintentional.
A real benefit of receiving playback is that it provided the opportunity to objectify experience. As I see my story coming back to me from another source, it is not the same story, it is now a shared story influenced and modulated by the interpretations of other people, yet it is closer to me than before. I am able to feel the shame of little Wayne that has driven him to silence, the anger of Wayne as he struggles to find a place in the world and the despair in my current search for authenticity. It has been important to restore these connections so that I am able to listen to myself and touch the areas that most need healing. The playback of the story allowed other people to connect to their own stories of otherness, survival and rejection. This was a touching and poignant experience. Acknowledging interconnectedness broke the isolation I was feeling and allowed me to revisit old wounds which was vital to my own recovery. It gave me new respect for the projected shadow and its impact on diminishing the sense of self.

I become excited when I think of the mist as a shadow projection. Little Wayne is initially shocked by the violence of these projections but learns to accept them and in doing so accepts his inferiority, he learns to invest in his physical attributes rather than his mental ones, he takes the position of the victim and feels powerless and overwhelmed in the outside world. All of this leads to compliance and subordination; he lives a life where he has constantly to prove himself. There is reciprocity inherent in the relationship. In the exchange little Wayne projects out on to others his sense of power and competence, which weakens his sense of self and elevates others. During his black empowerment phase, Wayne armours himself against the projections not realising that Little Wayne already carries them. The armouring cuts him off from his inner self and the outside.
world. He becomes dependent on travelling companions on a similar journey to break his isolation. His struggle for equality belies a deep rooted sense of inferiority. Wayne is a wounded helper trying desperately to rid the world of racism. If only people could control their projections! Yet he remains unaware of his own leakage and the effects it may have on others.

As I reflect on the heuristic journey taken in this research I realise that it is a therapeutic process, coupled to but separate from the process of inquiry. The two processes come together in the act of looking and connecting. I have touched on the value of bearing witness earlier in this section. It takes patience and confidence to see it as a valid act. I often feel the imperative to do something even when there are no answers. In my case, the wounded helper needs to pay attention to his own wounds. As a researcher and a person this has meant allowing myself to be vulnerable. Attempting to protect my fragility detracts from my own growth. Like insects that need to shed their skin to grow, this necessitates being prepared to be vulnerable. Vulnerability is the road to healing and recovery. It means being open to my pain and recognising my dependencies. It also means being open to the pain and suffering of others without being consumed by guilt. The journey to recovery is an inner directed journey which involves learning to be shameless. This means finding a voice and not being silenced by shame. This aspect of the journey has been particularly difficult. It is reflected in the gaps in my personal journal and the constant reminders to myself that I need to learn to express myself with spontaneity. I still find myself waiting for permission to speak. Assuming responsibility for my projections has demanded that I am able to reclaim them and cope with paradox
and accept a fluid view of the world. Such a view offers little security but instead the
tension of opposites which need to be reconciled.

Beyond race

I had a dream that my research had produced all of the answers for which I had been
searching. In my dream I had an idea that I ought to write them down. The dream
however had such extraordinary clarity that I thought that I would not need to write them
down. I woke up in the morning feeling excited but then disappointed when I realised that
I could not recall the content of the dream. The following night the clarity returned, the
dream has distilled the essence of meaning in my research. This time in my dream, I
reminded myself that I had lost the insight by not writing it down so I got up and wrote it
down. I was even more disappointed the following morning when I awoke to find that the
writing down was also part of my dream and that the insight from the dream had once
again disappeared.

These dreams seem to me to be a playful reminder that although the unconscious may
communicate that it holds knowledge, it does not necessary have to surrender it. Reeder
(2002) refers to anticipation as a signal from the unconscious of knowledge to come. I
waited eagerly with the feeling that I had reached a profound insight which would reveal
itself.

_The feeling of anticipation rises in my lower abdomen like a warmth that radiates._

_In thinking about race I feel removed, it seems and feels less important and_

11 24th February 04
difficult to engage with. I witness the anger and pain in others but do not directly connect with it. (Journal entry 14/02/03)

Reflecting on this experience although I can theorise a fluid world, I do not have direct access to it. Instead my day to day existence is in the binary world of duality and difference. Although in my unconscious journeys and fleeting reality slips, I am able to cross over and touch the fluid world the knowledge does not translate into a language of the binary world. My brief excursions across the boundary energise me and fill me with the hope needed to continue the journey. The journey speaks to me of an emergent spirituality and a connectedness which contrasts bleakly with the binary world of difference. It was at these times that I lost touch with the subject of race which had begun to feel insignificant. The boundary of race had become more of a threshold or a portal into another way of being.

I am reassured by the view put forward by Frank (1995:139) that “consciousness loses sovereignty when the frames of reference that once could assimilate experience are hauled over the postmodern divide”. Whilst it is possible to talk of the race boundary quite succinctly from a binary frame of reference it is much more difficult to do so and make a claim to knowledge from a fluid frame of reference. The notion of the sovereignty of the conscious reminds me of Reeder’s (2002) exposure of the ‘arrogance of the conscious’ which attempts to bring the unconscious within its claim. In striving to establish the meaning of my research I may have to content myself with the understanding that much will remain unknown even though it resides inside me as a ‘felt
sense’ (Gendlin 1978). In the dream I experience a different type of silence. It is not a shameful silence or a guilty silence but a silence that tells me that I am up against my limit of knowing and experiencing something that is inexpressible at this moment in time. It may be that the transcendent knowledge that I embody has no language or place in the binary world.

Jung (1960: CW:132) identifies a number of factors that mediate against the unification of the conscious and unconscious. To begin with he suggests that the conscious possesses a threshold intensity which limits what it can contain. It defends itself from what it is unable to tolerate by banishing it to the unconscious. The unconscious therefore contains:

- Paradoxical material which is incompatible with material in the conscious and therefore cannot easily be reconciled.
- Fantasy material which cannot be assimilated
- Archaic material which relate to the narratives accumulated through the individual’s personal history or inherited through generations and which lie out of reach.

Creative Synthesis

"Could he write something original? He was not sure what idea he wished to express, but the thought that a poetic moment had touched him, took life within him like an infant hope" (Joyce, 1914: 71).
Moustakas posits the creative synthesis as the final process of the heuristic inquiry. The creative synthesis is an attempt to add new layers of meaning by invoking tacit and intuitive resources.

Throughout the research I have struggled to find voice, especially a voice that would do justice to the lived experience. I have become wary of discourse on race which is wrapped up in the cloak of rhetoric and therefore, intuitively, I knew that the more subtle nuances of my experience needed to be surrendered in a poetic form. This in itself was a challenge since I am unaccustomed to communicating in poetry. I was encouraged however by the view put forward by Johnson (1993) that poetry has a unifying quality which is able to connect opposing elements and make unity of a fragmented world. Denzin and Lincoln (2002) furthermore stress that the primary goal of poetry is to represent lived experience. In the following statement they set the standard that I aspired to reach in communicating my research journey.

The poetic form juxtaposes voice (the implied and real narrator), temporality, point of view, and character, while privileging emotion and emotionality. A primary goal is to evoke emotional responses in the reader, thereby producing verisimilitude and a shared experience. (Denzin and Lincoln 2002:155)

The poems that follow are the result of sitting down for one week and letting my experience speak. The final act of synthesis is the creating of a story that draws together the separate themes into a unifying experience. The story exploits the gestalt principle that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
The poems and story as presented are intended to capture the essence of my journey across race boundaries. As such, they should be complete in themselves and speak directly to readers by resonating with their own experiences. There is always the danger however that they are seen as self indulgent or narcissistic. Certainly, producing this material did have a cathartic quality; a colleague described the poems as a scream at the world. In writing the poems and the story I experienced a sense of vulnerability as a researcher, increased by the sharing of personal details. In spite of this, I view the focus of the research as being less autobiographical and more on my relationship with the race boundary which I hope has a wider significance. Essentially, as a researcher I am moving from an insider position to one of an outsider. The search for meaning entails the development of consciousness. The poetic voice and the mythical voice that I will use is a consequence of my struggle to find a language to communicate my lived experience.
Melancholy

A sharp crack cuts the air at the end of the day
Silence falls
Knees crumple
Like a marionette in its final dance
A body slowly meanders to the floor
Crimson threads creep across the pavement as life ebbs away
The night is cold and grey
Looks like rain again

A girl was shot last night
A bystander caught
In a battle of power and honour
An innocent victim of gun crime
For somebody
A daughter, a sister, a friend, a neighbour
Has died
Violence made real
Personified

Inoculate against violence
There is nothing new here
Instead it is more of a tragic tale
She had not crossed my path
But was instead
A story
For consumption
For analysis
For voyeuristic pleasure
Whilst buried inside
A muted voice screams at the world
And silent tears are shed
White in Weimar

Enter the air conditioned space
With its clean cut lines
And magnolia walls
Pick up your registration pack
Sign up to the straitjacket of convention
Shaped with familiarity and
Fitted with politeness and a smile
Prepare for the masquerade
Tune into the script
The task for today
To search for
The quantity of relationship
The statistics of spirituality
Measured by degrees
And PhD’s

The other as an unseen presence
Brings unacknowledged shame
Keep it at bay by joining conspiracy of silence
Now you have crossed the line
You’re one of us
And everyone is safe

The child within
Wants to play
Wants space to breathe
Wants spontaneity
Wants love
Reaches out
Looking for a pulse
But beneath the veneer
 Finds only an empty heart
Aching for connection
An inside outsider
Gate crashing a party where he does not belong
Except as a fragment of himself
No longer sure what I’m doing here
Can’t get up and walk away
Glued to predictable routines
Carved in protocol

255
Skinhead on holiday

You cropped haired, tattooed racist brute
In your army fatigues and red laced boots
I summon my courage to question you
Why do you need to jump the queue?

You teenaged beer swilling lager lout
You nationalist who want blacks out
Can I trust your warm and friendly grin?
And your apologies for pushing in

Your deception leaves me all confused
I was expecting to be abused
Why is it that you’ve gone all soft?
I suppose it must be your day off
Ghost in the carriage

Travellers from another realm
Come share my journey
On this sleepy Monday morn
Your unstoried presence
Like a dip in an icy pond
Takes my breath away
Let me give you a story
To materialise you in my world

A glimpse of the soft curve of a breast
The brush of a thigh
The warmth of sunlight filtered through red hair
Is all I need
To raise a tingle of excitement
And release a hidden treasure of stories
Stories of desire, of longing, of rejection
Memories of a life unlived

A flat tum
Supple skin
A strong arm
Attracts stories of times gone by
The vitality of youth
The promise of adventures to come
Things I no longer see in me
Triggers my sadness and envy

Tired eyes
Greying hair
Spreading waistline
Things I see reflected in a mirror
But not inside my head
Brings attention to mortality, dependency
And surrendered dreams
Stories that fill me with dread

I have plenty of other stories to go around
Stories of race, class and gender
Tales of power
The dominant and the dominated
Exploiters and survivors
Just give me a sign
And I will give you a story
Life on the boundary

Early morning mist rolls over the bay
The sea relaxes its grip on the land
In answer to the call of the moon
From the rock pools,
Strewn with seaweed like an unmade bed
Troops of tiny pink crabs
Set out on patrol,
Scavenging for casualties
Of the night.
Cockles eagerly bury themselves
In the soft wet sand
To take refuge from prying eyes

The day is bright
On a hot a summers day
The sun rising in a cloudless sky
Drives moisture from the sand
Pink crabs are baked
As the water in shallow rock pools evaporate.
Windbreakers claim territory in strategic places
And deckchairs advance down the beach
Like a malignant growth
The smell of sun cream in the still air
Hover above lithe nubile bodies
Prostrate offerings to the browning rays of the sun
Insistent traders parade their goods
Eager for a quick sale

The air is full of the cry of seagulls
That circle and swoop for discarded scraps.
Screams ring out
As the chill of the water catches the bare flesh
Of people taking to the water
To swim
To splash
Or just to be held in its healing arms
Men in white coats
Keep a watchful gaze
For crazy people who venture out too far

The sun goes down and shadows lengthen
Fishermen send out lines
From the safety of the rocks
To plunder the treasures of the sea
Surfboards lovingly crafted to catch the waves
Guide their riders back to the safety of the sand
Waves that return to kiss the toes of babies
Conceal their persistence might
That timelessly carve caves
Like a womb in the rock.
Sandcastles melt
And day trippers retreat from incoming waters

On the horizon heaven and earth becomes one
The sun lays down
A shimmering red carpet upon the water
And sirens sing
A welcome home
To weary travellers
Recovery

Today my skin began to split
It could no longer contain
The communion of my many selves
The steadfast patience of the trees
Nor the spirit of adventure blowing in the wind
Time has come to shed the nigger skin
Brittle with shame
Saturated with the toxic waste
Of other peoples lives
Time to peel back the layers
To provide space to breathe
Space to grow
And to enjoy my vulnerability
Nurtured by the sound of the stars
Knowledge from a sacred space

Rises
from the centre
with the a fury of molten lava
only to arrive
at the surface
like a puff
of air

Floats
Like a soap bubble
which cannot owned or be held
but needs to be honoured
in the moment
of its short
life

Appears
during dreamtime
to reveal all the answers
only then to vanish
with the rising
sun

Comes
like a knowing smile
in the presence of the beloved
flickers for a moment
and silently
returns
In this section I have focused on some significant events and defining moments in the research and called upon the poetic form to grasp and convey the experience as a creative synthesis. I now want to draw on the notion of emplotment as elaborated by Paul Ricoeur (1984, 1985, 1988) to develop my exploration of the nature and meaning of crossing the race boundary. I now call this going beyond the binary. In his works, Ricoeur investigates the mediating operations between lived experience and discourse. His primary interest is the manner in which time is narrated into being, recognising that our ability to speak meaningfully of time shores up the assertion about the being of time Ricoeur (1884). The same could be said of race. I find his view that we narrate things and ultimately ourselves into being, an exciting and an elegant answer to the paradox of race. Ricoeur (1984) uses the notion of emplotment to refer to the process of imposing a narrative structure on to lived experience. The process grasps and pulls together multiple and disparate events and experiences integrating them into a coherent whole. He describes emplotment as a retrospective reconstruction of different episodes within a persons lived experience to shape a story which has characters, a plot and a beginning, middle and end. The strength of Ricoeur’s conceptualisation of emplotment is that lived experience is constituted by a range of narrative resources which include recollection of events in memory as well as intuition and other fictive resources such as myth, fantasy and archetypal stories. The sheer variety of the resources brought together in the creation of the story confers an agency which prioritises intelligibility and meaning making over chronology and
evidence. Emplotment gives a prominence to the integration and forging of connections which make it a suitable tool for articulating experiences of the fluid world.

I will now attempt to draw together the poems which represent different episodes of my lived inquiry to emplot the story of crossing the race boundary

**Splitting Hairs**

The king was worried. In his dream, he had seen growing strife and unrest in his land. The following morning he called the magician and told him his dream. The magician said that with a hair from the kings' head he could ensure continued wealth and happiness in the land. The king gladly gave him a hair with which the magician created a spell. That night while the people of the land slept, the spell took effect and banished all the elements in each person that made them anxious or uncomfortable.

The timid woke up in the morning and found that their hero had gone, the charitable had lost their greed, the meek their bully. As time went by, happiness returned to the land. Some people never noticed the parts that were missing, they just felt more comfortable and at ease with themselves. Others felt a sense that something was missing but they were not sure what it was. The banished parts however, went out into the world to save, to exploit and to conquer in doing so they brought much wealth to the land.
The magician was pleased with what he had achieved and established a ritual where on their first day of school, children would face the other children in the playground who would decide which parts of them were banished. Richard was the son of a poor blacksmith who was a stranger to the land. During the ritual he was set upon by the other children. By the end, he found that he had lost that part of himself that was lovable and he was left feeling lonely and full of shame. The only time he felt comfortable was when he went walking in the woods where he felt connected to the trees.

Many years passed and Richard had learnt all the skills for survival that he needed and had become a successful blacksmith with his own family. Although he maintained a vague sense of being incomplete he had lost the memory of the ritual. One day, during one of his walks through the woods, he came across a young woman sitting under a tree wearing a vibrant multicoloured shawl. He was captivated by the warmth of her smile and the kindly look in her eyes. She did not say anything to him, instead holding him in her gaze. Richard found the pressure of her gaze discomforting, it was as if she was able to look straight to his heart and see the part that was missing. The woman stirred feelings buried deep inside, a mixture of longing and sadness. Without the use of any words she spoke to the core of his being to tell him ‘you are more than you are’. She then disappeared into the woods. Every time Richard walked in the woods from that day, he hoped he would meet her again but she never showed up. Over the coming years he carried the image of the woman as a beacon of hope.
After many years, the old king died and the spell began to weaken. The banished elements returned and gathered on the borders of the land, taking the appearance of a mist that would not disperse. The presence of the mist struck fear in anyone who approached it. The land thus became cut off from the rest of the world. As a consequence, strife and unrest started to grow. The new queen sent her finest knights in shining armour and sharpest swords out into the mist to cut through it and clear a path. The knights charged out into the mist on their horses uttering a chilling war cry. Moments later they returned dazed and confused. They were trembling as if they had seen a ghost and were unable to talk of the unspeakable horrors that they had encountered. It took all of the skill of the queen's counsellors to help them return to normal.

Next the queen sent out a group of the wisest men and women from the land to study the mist. Keeping a safe distance from it, they sent out probes to measure its density and composition. After their meticulous investigations they could only report that the mist had no substance and therefore must exist only in the imagination. The queen was unhappy with their conclusion and locked them away to continue their study.

The border became a place of fascination for many people. Religious orders were set up to honour the mist. The brave and the foolhardy engaged in the challenge of testing how far they could go into the mist before they broke down. Some people gained a reputation for their ability to go into the mist and come out unscathed.
The more stories that Richard heard about the mist, the more attracted he became to it, he felt deep down that it held the answers to the sense of emptiness he had experienced since his encounter with the woman in the woods. He resolved to travel to the border and enter the mist. But first he decided that he needed to take a final walk in the woods. On this occasion he was not surprised to see the woman again sitting under the tree waiting for him. This time she spoke directly to him. She introduced herself as the high priestess and passed on her knowledge of the secrets of the mist. She told him to enter it as a witness and not a warrior, that he needed no weapons or armour but instead should enter the mist with a curiosity to get to know it. Most importantly she said that not only did he need an open mind but he also needed to open himself to make space for new content. Richard wanted to ask what she meant by this but already he knew that there was an empty space inside him that needed to be filled. He thanked the high priestess for her counsel and travelled off to the border, nervous but excited.

On his return, Richard went straight to the woods. As he expected, the high priestess was waiting for him. He recognised her this time as an ordinary woman, and also the mystery whose image he had held for so many years and also the free spirit who blew through the trees and kept his company since the time he was a child. He talked of the many selves he discovered in the mist and the real struggle to make space for them all. During his time in the mist he had endured depression and madness but finally he had found joy and spontaneity and the spring of vitality. The worst came however when he left the mist. On returning to the land everything seemed shallow and impoverished, even the colours.
seemed duller. He told her that since leaving the mist he felt lonelier than ever before and would gladly have returned to the mist but it was no longer there.

The high priestess listened and said nothing but from the look of sadness in her eyes, Richard could tell that she knew. Finally she said that he could live in the woods with her if he wished. Richard felt torn. That was all he could wish for but that would mean leaving his family and everything that he knew and had felt attached to. The high priestess smiled and said you know where to find me. Richard remained rooted to the spot in his turmoil.

Eventually the magician appeared out of the darkness and said "With a hair from your head I can give you happiness and wealth.

I end here on the mythical story which integrates the core themes emerging from the research, drawing them together into a coherent whole. Through the story I have attempted to convey the multidimensional nature of my changing relationship with the outside world brought about by my attempts to cross the race boundary. The story is intended to capture the mood, emotion and essence of my heuristic journey. In its incompleteness, it reflects the nature of heuristic research as an ongoing journey and in effect a work in progress. Arthur Frank (1997) identifies the testimony as a particular type of story which positions the self as witness to one's own story. This powerfully captures the nature of heuristic inquiry. Furthermore the testimony is told as a political act of
bearing witness to that which is common to other people’s experience but often silenced and rarely told. The testimony is necessarily incomplete because as Frank says:

Incompleteness – ‘the more that is told, the more we are made conscious of remaining on the edge of silence. How much remains that can never be told is unknown. (Frank 1997: 138
Chapter seven: Analysis: Reflections on paradoxical spaces

Introduction

The portrayal of heuristic inquiry by Moustakas (1990) places validation as the final phase of the inquiry. Moustakas's account of validation recognises that the phenomenological nature of heuristic research does not make it amenable to quantitative or objective measurement. Instead, he argues that it is more important that the manuscript presents an accurate, vivid and comprehensive account of the experience being investigated. He suggests that the researcher achieves this through a process of constant appraisal of the content and presentation of the experience in order to ensure its accuracy and completeness. Where appropriate, this could involve returning to participants in the research for confirmation and endorsement of the account. I have found that the process of developing emergent themes through poetics and storying has enabled me to add texture and subtle nuances to my depiction of the experience of engaging with the race boundary. Furthermore, the process of dialoguing with my research group has enabled me to check out that my depiction of the experience moves beyond a personal or idiosyncratic account and allows me to claim it as a shared account. When I revisit the mythical story written as a creative synthesis of the research journey it reverberates with something within me at the deepest level in a way that honours the heuristic inquiry. The story connects me to archetypal energies which speak to a 'knowing sense' within me. This leaves me however, with the question of what validation of heuristic research would mean in a positivist world unable to connect with the tacit knowledge. Kvale (2002)
offers a valuable discussion on the validation of phenomenological research. Like Moustakas, he identifies ‘craftsmanship’ and ‘communication’ as dimensions of validation which raise the questions: is the research credible and does it capture accurately and depict the experience it set out to investigate, does the research enable conversation and dialogue about a shared social reality? I am satisfied on both of these counts. Kvale adds ‘application’ as a third dimension of validation. This is an important consideration because it brings attention to the usefulness of the research and how the knowledge it offers can be validated through practice; does it shed light on issues of wider social concern? This question leads me to reflecting on the following three broad themes that brought me to the research study in the first place.

1) I was tired and frustrated with current policy initiatives which emphasised racial categorisation and monitoring and wanted to find new ways of challenging racism.

2) I wanted a better insight into the meaning and significance of race in the counselling relationship and how counsellors can be better equipped to deal with it.

3) I wanted discover new ways of supporting mixed race young people and be able to understand the challenges and opportunities that a mixed race perspective opens up.

The research journey so far has culminated in the creative synthesis expressed as a mythical story. The real value of the story lies in how it speaks to the reader and connects with their own lives. I will however attempt to draw out the meaning inherent in the research journey and consider how it could inform the challenges set out above. I will be speaking from a position gained as a result of focused attention on my relationship with
the race boundary. The heuristic emphasis on self reflection allows me to be a witness to my own relationship with the boundary. The role of the witness is well expressed by Barwick (2004):

The activity of bearing witness is the means by which we as individuals and as a society, struggle to capture the truth about something and, in so doing learn a little more about ourselves, each other and the world. (Barwick 2004:126)

My encounters with the race boundary have been at times painful and isolating. In the ‘Wounded Storyteller’ Arthur Frank offers an evocative exploration of the role of being a witness to one’s own suffering. Bearing witness in this case means to be able to break the silence and deliver one’s testimony. Frank proposes that it is not sufficient to maintain the testimony as a private story; it has to be told to another person. He sees this essentially as a political act because in the act of telling, one implicates the listener and makes them party to the story. He notes that the personal embodied story only becomes a testimony when it is received by another who in receiving it his or herself becomes a witness.

The listener must be present as a potential sufferer to receive the testimony that is the suffering body of the teller. (Frank 1997: 144)

I will continue by unravelling the story of my encounters with the race boundary and invite the reader to share the role of witness.

The contours of race

As I read the mythical story, I can see in it an account of the history of race relations in Britain. It reveals the projective and socio-economic base of race used to promote a
feeling of inner wellbeing and to create the ‘other’ to exploit and enslave in the creation of wealth. This latter aspect is the story of empire. As the empire weakens the shadow returns in the form of immigration which increases proximity between the self and the split off and disavowed aspects of self. This feared and hated aspect is first approached with violence and discrimination and later with exclusion and eventually becomes subject to investigation and monitoring. In the process, the issue of race becomes contested, with different groups set up to honour, support or exploit the race boundary. This aspect of the story provides a context for the inquiry. At a deeper level, however, the part that has the most resonance for me is the healing journey involved in the search for an authentic unified self. I am particularly struck by the challenge of living a whole and integrated self in a divided world. This story captures the essence and energy of paradox which is derived from confronting one’s shadow; that aspect of ourselves that we split off and project out to the outside world in order to avoid the discomfort that it generates.

During the course of my study I have experienced race as having an outer – social dimension and an inner – psychic one. In the outer world, race is an inter-group phenomenon which takes meaning through exclusionary practices. In the inner world, race is transpersonal and takes meaning through splitting and projection. The outer and inner dimensions work together to shift race from being a linear relationship to it becoming a spatial one. I will clarify what I mean by this in the discussion which follows and consider how it informs the challenges previously mentioned.
The outer world of Race

Figure 3 shows the familiar view of race; configured as an inter-group relationship operating within the terms of mutually exclusive binary oppositions, created and sustained by the myth of difference.

Fig 3: Race as a binary Opposition

This configuration is typical of the paramount reality of everyday life. It is based on a shared perception of the world predicated on the belief that people can be placed into distinct categories. The race boundary separates white from black and shapes distinct white and black identities. Racial categorisation reinforces and perpetuates the assumption that significant biological differences exists which separate black from white. Visible features such as skin colour and physical characteristics are primarily used as markers of difference. Although, in the absence of visible difference, race is considered to be an inheritable characteristic and as such can be inscribed through reference to
parentage or bloodlines. Nonetheless, in a world of binary oppositions, race is embodied and as such inseparable from the person.

Race, as a binary opposition, is potentially fragile because of its reliance on, and belief in, fixed and enduring natural differences which separate black and white. This belief has never been substantiated. On the contrary, it is widely recognised that the claim for racial difference on scientific or biological grounds is invalid. Despite this the binary perspective has remained remarkably persistent; no doubt because it serves the economic and political interests that thrive on the notion of difference needed to maintain white and black in a dominant/subordinate, superior/inferior relationship.

In the binary world, racial identity tends to be experienced through exclusionary practices which position blackness as different and ‘other’. The polarisation of race into black and white then becomes an exercise of power based on the ability to subjugate and exclude. In the current context, the forces that hold whiteness together are more secure than those holding blackness together and therefore has greater powers to exclude. Consequently, it is more common for black identity to be experienced through exclusion and alienation. White identity on the other hand is less likely to be experienced through exclusion and as a result, whiteness tends to be absent, operating in the background and more difficult to bring to conscious awareness.

A black or a white identity defines an individual’s position and fixes him or her in a historical relationship. In this context, models of racial identity development refer to a
person adopting the correct label or coming to awareness of her or his positioning within a racial hierarchy. Moving from a white identity to a black identity or the reverse is therefore acceptable in the binary world as long as the trajectories are towards a person’s socially allocated position. Racial identities which reproduce the polarities of black and white are accepted unquestioningly as long as the identity claim is consistent with the embodied markers otherwise the person is considered to have a maladjusted identity (Clark & Clark 1939). In this mode of operation, identity development is considered to result in a person’s ‘correct’ alignment with their socially prescribed position (Cross 1971, Thomas 1971, Parham & Helms 1985) or coming to awareness of themselves as racialised beings (Frankenberg 1993).

The literature on racial identity tends to reproduce a binary sense of the world that generates binary racial identities based on a black–white polarity. In the binary world, racial identity is seen to arise as a result of a personal and potentially painful struggle:

1) as a reaction to oppression (Cross 1971, Thomas 1971, Parham & Helms 1985)
2) in the experience of alienation or displacement (Hall 1989)
3) in the search for affirmative relationships (Jones 1999, Ifekwunigwe 1999)
4) in gaining awareness of privilege and power inherent in one’s social location (Frankenberg, 1993, Sue & Sue 1990, Katz 1978)

The inner world of race

Figure 4 configures race as a bi-polar relationship. The opposing elements of black and white are not separate and independent entities but are instead held in tension; bound by a subliminal connection. My engagement with the race boundary during the course of this
this study has heightened my awareness of myself as 'other' and the reciprocal relationship that exists between both my white and black frames of reference. I experience them as aspects of myself that co-construct each other and at the same time threaten to annihilate each other. Although Melanie Klein did not apply her theory of the paranoid-schizoid defence to understand race, it provides a valuable tool for conceptualising race as the divided self and understanding the anxiety that race provokes.

Her theory compliments Jung’s identification of the shadow as the split-off and disavowed aspects of self. The task of the race boundary is to manage distance between the opposing elements in order to avoid inner conflict. It does this by maintaining the knowledge of the intimate connection that exists between self and other outside conscious awareness. However, a person’s tacit knowing will alert him or her to the threat of a potential confrontation with his or her shadow should race enter into her or his private space which gives a great incentive for keeping race in the public sphere. The inner world of race is paradoxical. Robert Johnson (1991) suggests that we enter the realm of paradox when we are confronted by the shadow. Johnson proposes that paradox can be a creative space; a place of personal transformation and escape from the painful situation of being trapped in contradiction bought about by oppositions. He says however:
We hate paradox since it is so painful getting there, but it is a very direct experience of a reality beyond our usual frame of reference and yields some of the greatest insights. It forces us beyond ourselves and destroys naïve and inadequate adaptations. Most of the times, we support two warring points of view and evade the confrontation. This is the character of modern times. (Johnson 1991: 77)

Figure 5 illustrates how I conceptualise race being pulled into a spatial relationship by bringing together of the binary outer world of race and the projective inner world. The greater cohesion of the white pole of the race dyad encloses a binary space at the centre. The weaker boundary that connects the black pole encloses a paradoxical space beyond which there is a fluid space. The value of thinking about race in spatial terms is that it offers a variety of ways of exploring our relationship with race. Space can be conceived as territory to claim or to defend, a place of containment. Or place to be inhabited.

Fig 5: Race as a spatial relationship
The binary space is familiar and well researched so I will not need to go into detail about it here. It contains the material and social conditions of everyday life including the meta-narrative that prescribes what is allowable and what is not. The oppositional group relationship between black and white promotes an emphasis on 'race relations' which encompasses concerns for:

- Racism experienced as violent and exclusionary practices geared towards the maintenance of white privilege.
- Inter-group conflict and the defence of territory.

Race strategies are geared towards binary space; they emphasise resistance to racism. Whilst acts of resistance have been important in shifting racism from dominative to more benign forms they also tend to reify race and re-affirm binary oppositions. Despite the heroic struggles of resistance and survival individuals have engaged in to confront racism the hierarchical relationship is likely to continue as long as it serves the prevailing social condition which is able to exploit difference. Recent postmodern discourse on the deconstruction of race has also had little impact in binary space because it merely shifts race from being a biological reality to being a social reality without influencing the underlying hierarchy.

Fluid space is a place of emergent spirituality. My experiences of fluid space have been hinted at but not developed in this study. This is partly because I experience it as fleeting and transient. Perhaps, also because it is a sacred space which does not surrender itself to the language of the binary world. The fluid space speaks directly to tacit knowing. When I look at race as a spatial relationship (figure 5), I am reminded of the rabbit story I
introduced earlier. The rabbit was close to freedom but was bonded to those that were imprisoned. Seated outside the hutch, the rabbit inhabited a paradoxical space. Unlike Du Bois's depiction of the race boundary as an impenetrable sheet of glass that imprisons blackness, paradoxical space is a boundary that imprisoned whiteness in binary space which like the hutch in the rabbit story provides shelter and security.

Access to fluid space comes when one connects for a moment with one's authentic self that is not divided. In considering the potential for transcendence of race, Fanon notes:

Man is a yes that vibrates to cosmic harmonies. Uprooted, pursued, baffled, doomed to watch the dissolution of the truths he has worked out for himself one after another, he has to give up projecting onto the world an antinomy that coexists within him. (Fanon 1986:10)

In this statement he alludes to the challenge that paradox poses by bringing a person's shadow into proximity. To stop projecting the shadow is to confront one's own fears and anxieties in a search for authenticity. In this statement Fanon is anticipating a resolution of an existential complex by re-integrating the split off elements and seeking to transcend race and thus grasp a foothold in the fluid world. I conceive racial identity in the fluid world to be free floating (Fig 6) A free floating identity is created by collapsing paradoxical space and reconciling the opposing elements.

![Fig 6 Free floating identity](image-url)
My research journey effectively led me to take up residence in paradoxical space. When I did an exercise to name by own boundary, I visualised the race boundary as a beach; a transitional space between the fluid space of the sea and the binary space of the land. I saw it as an exciting space with many hidden dangers which accurately depicts my experience of paradoxical space. Ellison’s hero in Invisible Man discovers paradoxical space to find himself disorientated and feeling exposed and vulnerable. He has to retreat from social life to give himself time to recover and to develop the competencies needed to survive in this space. My own experience of paradoxical space has given me the opportunity to pay attention to those aspects of myself that most need healing. Time spent in paradoxical space has been a journey to recovery. The journey has involved:

- Acknowledging my own woundedness
- Recovery of lost and silenced stories
- Reconnecting with earlier versions of myself
- Growing awareness of my own projections and taking more responsibility for them.
- Not accepting other people’s projections
- Overcoming the barrier of shame and learning to bear witness
- Accepting my vulnerability
- Learning to wait
- Enhancing agency

Whilst the journey to healing opens up the potential for agency and greater authenticity, I have noticed that the more I have been able to integrate my blackness and whiteness, the
more isolated I have felt. It seemed that the binary world is not able to accommodate an integrated self. Moving towards a reconciliation of the opposing poles of race and achieving a free floating identity collapses paradoxical space and threatens to disrupt the integrity of binary space (Fig 7). In the realm of mental health, recovery often means becoming better adapted to the binary space of paramount social reality By contrast recovery in terms reconciling split off aspects of self is likely to leave the individual less able to fit in and consequently be seen as more crazy. This is certainly my own experience.

This leads me to consider how counsellors are able to deal with race issues. Carter’s exploration of race in the counselling relationship (Carter 1995) is the most thorough I have come across. His view that counsellors are ill equipped to help clients deal with impact of race in personal and interpersonal lives gives some cause for concern. It is however consistent with my own experience as a trainer working with counsellors around the issue of race.
I also recognise that therapists working with clients in the discordance of this paradoxical space may themselves be caught in the binary world of paramount reality which they may attempt to impose on the client in order to restore them to a binary perspective. In doing so they may take the role in preservation of social order taken by the magician in the story. Alternatively, they may find themselves implicated in the suffering caused by racial dichotomy if they are called to be a witness. At least in a binary world, blame can be projected onto the other and personal responsibility can be avoided.

I am going to pursue this discussion by reflecting on Carl Rogers’s work with a client which is profiled in the demonstration film ‘Carl Rogers Counsels an individual on Anger and Hurt’ (Whiteley 1977). I will be offering new insight by using the perspective of paradox to go beyond our usual frame of reference. In doing so I am in effect returning to the scene of the crime as it were by revisiting the film that set the seed for this research study so many years ago. Moodley et al (2004) offer a critique of the Carl Rogers’s film on ‘Anger and Hurt’ in the book entitled Carl Rogers Counsels a Black Client. It is significant that during the session the client himself does not claim a black identity. On the contrary he is constantly making an effort to distance himself from race. It is telling when he refers to the difficulty he has showing people that he is hurt as “something to do with being a man, something to do with the … the race thing” In this statement he clearly avoids saying ‘something to do with being black. The client explicitly communicates that he does not wish to be labelled or viewed as a reflection of wider society.
In viewing the film I recognise different racial versions of the client being pulled into a relationship with Rogers. To begin with, there is the precious self as a seven year old that Rogers introduces at the onset in his recap from their previous session. The seven year old represents the self that is damaged and hurt under the pressure of social expectations. I presume he is referring to the dehumanising impact of racism experienced at a young age. This version of the client resonates very strongly with my story of ‘little Wayne’; he represents the vulnerable and alienated black self. The second version of the client is his white self achieved through working hard and conforming to the dominant external environment. This self has been nurtured under the protection and affirmation of his father-in-law. With the death of his father-in-law he once again finds himself exposed to the dehumanising presence of race. This exposure shatters the absence that he obviously valued and allows him to view whiteness as a masquerade and an inauthentic state of relationship. According to the Cross (1971) model of black identity development one would expect that such an encounter with racism would be sufficient to push him on a trajectory towards a black identity. Blackness however connects him to unresolved painful issues associated with his former self that he wants to avoid.

[C] “It almost seems like whatever’s happening in my environment – or whatever happened, is pulling me into again, the kind of system that I don’t particularly care”[for]

In his references to race, it is apparent that the label black carries for him the narratives of militant, vulnerable, being a victim and losing control. All of these are emotive and significant themes around which that the session revolves. The client that has presented himself in the counselling relationship has lost the security and privilege of absence and
is resistant to the suffering of alienation. He chooses neither of these sites to do his identity work. Instead he presents in confusion. In this paradoxical position he makes a claim for personhood. The client is able to articulate that what he does want is reciprocity, love and affirmation of his personhood. This paradoxical position has implications for the counselling relationship because Rogers appears to be operating from a binary perspective in which he assume that he is counselling a black client.

When I view the session from a paradoxical frame of reference, it appears as if Rogers is determined to shift the client’s identity back into a black perspective. The therapeutic goal of doing so is to connect the client with the anger and hurt that Rogers wants him to be able to express. An unconscious goal could also be to maintain his own whiteness which is under threat from the clients’ paradoxical position. These goals could account for Rogers’s uncharacteristic directiveness in the interview, which is highlighted by Brodley (2004). The impression that I get throughout the interview is that the client articulates race as something external to himself, as other people’s projections, as their sickness. Rogers interventions however, tend to call on the client to internalise race. This is seen in the following examples:

When the client suggests that he experiences attacks of racism as deteriorating his mind in the same way that leukaemia is deteriorating his body, Rogers response is “what the culture did to you is given you a cancer of the mind”. Clarke (2004) interprets this as an exact empathetic response. In the context however where the client has been stressing that racism is other people’s sickness, Rogers locates the sickness within him as his sickness.
In the following exchange we see the same again. The difference between being beaten and being defeated is again a shift from the external to the internal.

[C]

I'd like to be able to say that - yea I was screwed over and I got hurt and everything else like that or whatever, - but this is almost an admission in a way on another level of saying that they got the best of me - you know... and I really don't want - I really don't want anybody historically to have gotten the best of me - but they did, they did - they beat the hell out of me.

[T]

You don't want to say that I've been defeated at times but yet that's the truth

When the clients mentions if only he could cry Rogers is quite enthusiastic about it but is unable to accept the client’s view that on these issues it would not be constructive to cry because he would not be crying for himself. I hear the client saying that unlike going to a sad movie that moves him personally, racism is a tragedy but not something he wants to shed tears over. Rogers however, suggests that he fears crying for himself.

The client articulates a consistent postmodern perspective that he is racialised by other people’s projections and he is thus possessed by other people’s sickness [shadow]. His fantasy is that these projections could be exorcised or at least vomited up like the green slime in the film The Exorcist. Rogers on the other hand wants him to own the feelings of
anger and hurt associated and express them. This is taken to extremes when Rogers invites him to be angry: "I want to say its ok with me if you are angry" he reaffirms, "its ok with me, if you feel like being angry you can be angry" Clarke (2004) interprets this as Rogers demonstrating his acceptance of the Client. The client however has to check out if he is being genuine: "do you really believe that?" Rogers has seemingly lacked empathy with an exchange that had occurred just a few minutes earlier:

[C] And there is nobody that I can put my finger on you know. The person that started the whole thing, that process. That probably would be a lot better for me you know then I probably would try to do that person in.

[T] If you could put it on one person then your rage would be justified and you could really get after that person.

In considering his offer, Rogers is blissfully unaware of his whiteness and that that he could be implicated in the discussion to the extent that he could represent the oppressive forces that client wants to do in. At this point Rogers is not very present in the relationship or cognizant of the power differentials inherent in the relationship. I wonder if the client was talking about Rogers when he later remarks.

[C] I encountered another person, you know. Very intelligent sort that was talking about intellectual garbage; feelings and things like that - I really saw in him the society and culture right in him - you know - and I just wanted to deck him.
The client's discussion on how other people's racism has hurt him in the second part of the interview draws the remarkable comment from Rogers which seemingly comes out of context:

[T] You get some satisfaction at saying you people don't realise how much you hurt me. They might not be able to hear that message but you get some satisfaction out of expressing hurt, out of letting yourself know, letting others know- god I've been hurt.

On this point the client who up to now has been very compliant has to disagree. I can only imagine that the discussion had brought race into the private space of Rogers and in this response he was showing his discomfort and disapproval. I can see that race, rather than being absent in the interview, is very present as a hidden narrative. The paradoxical position that the client was presenting with in respect of race, meant that he was stuck. He resists connecting to his former seven year old black self which embodies the feelings of anger and hurt that he is unable to express. His white self has been shattered, showing itself to be an illusion. His postmodern self is able to deconstruct race seeing it as other people's projections. From his paradoxical position he is clearly able to articulate his feeling with a rational detachment but is unable to make progress in the session. Rogers is firmly located in a binary world of black and white and consequently finds it difficult to stay with the client or to help him move on.
In the counselling interview, the client is introducing Rogers to his shadow. To stay with the client, Rogers would have to take responsibility for his own projections and not dump them on his client. Rogers is not able to offer his client the reciprocity that he asks for. Instead, he wants to communicate directly with the seven year old. An aspect of the client’s paradox is that he himself is unable to reconcile himself with this split off part of himself. If Rogers was able to be with him in a paradoxical space it may have helped his client’s recovery and his ability to heal the split.

As I write this now, I can see that the significance of my research group was never the content of our discussions but the gift of being able to spend time in paradoxical space with a group of witnesses. My group experiences have been central to my own recovery and my ability to reconnect to earlier versions of myself. In this respect the research has been a healing journey. The journey started my recovery of the story of little Wayne. This is a story that I have since become accustomed to hearing from other people. I realise that race enters traumatically into the lives of children. This is a prevalent form of child abuse that is not sufficiently recognised and acknowledged. It is particularly damaging because the source persists throughout life.

One of the questions that led me to this study has been how to support mixed race young people who embody the race paradox. My interest in this area stems from my experiences as a youth worker and a parent. When I started this study, in listening to the stories of mixed race young people and adults I had become accustomed to hearing about the difficulties they experience when they attempt to fit into a world polarised between
the oppositions of black and white. Such stories are featured in a research study that I had conducted earlier (Richards 1993). It may be however that if our relationships are framed in a dualistic world, then we are likely to elicit presentations of self which largely conform to it. Our implicit expectations and assumptions are likely to shape the interactions and the relationship that we are able to establish. This is a point stressed by Alldred and Gillies (2002) as an ethical concern for researchers. They suggest that we need to pay particular attention to the ‘space’ constructed for the work to occupy. Research and literature exploring mixed race experience has tended to be framed with a binary view of the world; consequently, the stories they offer revolve around the struggles of young people as they attempt to accommodate themselves in a binary world. The study by Tizzard and Phoenix (1993) is presented in a book entitled Black, White or Mixed Race? The title itself anticipates the binary frame in which the stories of young people are being interpreted. Katz’s (1996) book: The Construction of Identity in Children of Mixed Parentage is also framed within the racial duality. It is a shame that the notion of mixed metaphors which is the subtitle of the book is not developed as an alternative frame for analysis. Even where researchers are able to establish critical analysis of the race as illusion (Ifekwunigwe 1999), the experiences and stories told of the research participants remain framed within the binary world.

I was interested in how the stories elicited would be different if mixed race young people were offered an alternative to the binary frame to explore their experiences. To explore this proposition I invited my two sons into a discussion using the story of The Emperor’s
new clothes to introduce a paradoxical frame. The tale by Hans Christian Anderson tells of an Emperor with a passion for clothing who is duped by two men who pose as weavers and offers to make him a suit of the finest fabric. They proposed that not only was the fabric exceptionally beautiful, it possessed a magical quality that would make it invisible to those either unfit for office or extremely stupid. The Emperor and his courtiers, in fear of exposing their own stupidity parade before the public with the emperor wearing his imaginary suit. Members of the public likewise, not wishing to be seen as a fool are caught up in the collective illusion until a small child is prepared to say what he sees and expose the nakedness of the Emperor. When I asked them what they thought the story was about, they felt that the essence of the story was the problem of “living a lie” or “pretending to be something you are not”. When asked how this story related to their own lives, they were quickly able to articulate how in their own experience, the binary division of race into black and white did not make a great deal of sense. The reality of their lives was that race was fluid; they could claim identities which embraced both black and white elements or alternatively which were defined by neither. The emperor’s clothes were seen to symbolise the invisibility of race. They identified with the child in the story who cannot see what everyone around them says they can see. But unlike the child, they were unwilling to speak out. Rather than risk exposure to ridicule or being thought stupid and with concern for not causing offence or being seen as different, they were prepared to support the illusion of race. The essence of a fluid identity is its capacity for movement and like water, it is able to take on the shape of its containing environment. The mixed race identity as a fluid identity is thus able to fit the contingencies of the binary world. Individuals are thus able to configure themselves as black or white as appropriate to fit an
appropriate environment. (Jones 1999, Ifekwunigwe 1999). This is of course a masquerade, an act of deception which involves collusion and imitation. Either way individuals are able to fit the expectations of others. Individuals with a mixed race identity are thus able to fit into the binary world as long as they are prepared to go along with the crowd. Otherwise, their experience of the binary world is a confused and marginal one, with individuals being uncertain where they fit in.

This was the most open and expansive discussion I remember having with my sons on their experience of race. Offering them a space that was free from the constraint of the binary account and one which offered them an alternative story through which they could reflect on their own fluid experience was empowering. They were able to articulate the strategies they employ for dealing with the external world and in doing so were able to show themselves as active agents holding the balance between a dualistic world and a fluid one. They operated in many roles; mediating, bridge building and maintaining communication networks. Despite race not being as important to them as to other people, they went along with other people’s efforts to position them. In their discussion, they were able to articulate how they struggled with the very tangible yet invisible nature of race but could not see how they could easily escape it. They saw that the real power lay with the storytellers who in this case were the weavers. They recognised however how everyone was colluding with the situation because everyone had something to lose; position, integrity and respect. This was related to the people’s investment in the maintenance of the status quo in society today. It was evident that they showed little confidence in the possibility of change unless someone was prepared to stand out from
the crowd and take the risks that were so clearly identified. This raised the question: who is responsible for breaking the conspiracy of silence? Does it mean that mixed race young people have less to lose just because they are not readily afforded a place to fit into a dualistic world? This would seem to be a further exploitation of their position.

The resilience of mixed race young people needs to be credited. They are able to adopt a range of strategies for surviving which include various identifications, with black, white and mixed categories in order to fit the demands of the binary world. However, they could offer a testimony that provides a challenge to the way we are all positioned in a racialised environment. These testimonies are silenced and individuals are led to doubting their own experience if confined within a binary view of the world. Weirenga (2001) warns of the dangers of losing significant stories or having stories which are constitutive of the self, trashed or made unbelievable. Provision of paradoxical space invites the testimony of individuals which could give access to different ways of being in the world. Having someone to receive a testimony provides an opportunity for individuals to recover from the wounds of race accumulated through their lives. The meetings of the research group provided a paradoxical space which offered respite from the demands of the binary world where identities could be fluid and new ways of being experimented with in safety. This was a fixed paradoxical space, dictated by time, place and contract. Mahtani (2000) however, depicts a ‘mobile paradoxical space’ which is created by actions of individuals that subvert the binary space and generates indeterminacy. This is an exciting perspective. Whilst the paradoxical space tends to be a private space, Mahtani portrays the mobile paradoxical space as a public performance and political act. Frank (1997) brings attention
to the embodied testimony where a person’s body by itself tells a story just through its very being. This could be the case for mixed race individuals whose very existence poses a challenge to the dualistic nature of race and would potentially place individuals in a mobile paradoxical space regardless of their performance. Mahtani’s depiction of mobile paradoxical space is compelling, she explores performances that can engender paradox, and in doing so she maps the space but does not explore it as a lived experience. My efforts to cross or resist the race boundary automatically generate a mobile paradoxical space. I am going to reflect on the experiences of living in that space. Living in mobile paradoxical space requires a high degree of reflexivity, and an ability to examine my own scripts. Most significantly it raises awareness of the power dynamic one is operates in which affirms certain stories and silences others.

There are a number of simple performances that I can use to generate paradox; for example to refuse to identify myself with or accept a racial category; to choose the ‘wrong’ category to label myself or the other person; or to question the racial category someone chooses for themselves (what do you mean by black/white?). The deconstruction argument is easily accommodated intellectually. It is only when then implications of people facing the threat of losing their racial positioning that paradox is created. If the person I am relating to him or herself is aware of their basic duality, then generating paradox is spacemaking. They are liberated from the binary account and a more authentic relationship becomes possible. If however the person is embedded in a binary identity the paradoxical space becomes a contested space. I have found, for example, that when I identify myself as white, the claim is often met with silence,
although I have experienced it successfully countered with the response ‘yes! I understand why some black people would like to be white’. The debate has then shifted to whether or not I have a maladjusted identity. The ability to hold a mobile paradoxical space then becomes a test of individual agency which relies on the power one has in any particular situation.

The availability of paradoxical spaces can offer a necessary respite from adjustment to a dualistic and oppositional world. The respite that comes from being able to experience fluidity even with its hidden dangers, is well expressed by Albert Camus:

‘Go for a swim. It’s one of these harmless pleasures that even a saint-to-be can indulge in, don’t you agree?’ Rieux smiled again, and Tarrou continued: ‘Really it’s to damn silly living only in and for the plague. Of course a man should fight for the victims, but if he ceases caring for anything outside that, what’s the use of fighting?’

For some minutes they swam side by side, with the same zest, in the same rhythm, isolated from the world, at last free of the town and of the plague. Rieux was the first to stop and they swam back slowly, except at one point, where unexpectedly they found themselves caught in an ice-cold current. Their energy whipped up by this trap the sea had sprung on them, both struck out more vigorously.

They dressed and started back. Neither had said a word, but they were
conscious of being perfectly at one, and that the memory of this night would be cherished by them both. When they caught sight of the plague watchman, Reiu guessed that Tarrou like himself, was thinking that the disease had given them a respite. (Camus 1960; 209 – 210)

I will end this section by returning to the issue of spacemaking. By this I refer to the process of using the transformative potential of paradoxical space. When I introduce students to the paradoxical nature of race in the black studies module that I teach, they always find it a struggle to consider how to live with their familiar binary perspective of the world and at the same time maintain a perspective of the dualistic nature of race. Students quickly find that spaces where they can talk about race in this way are rare. They report that people either ignore them or say that they are crazy. The creation of paradoxical space is more that engaging with the deconstruction of race in a theoretical sense; it is about repositioning oneself in relation to others. Spacemaking entails being prepared to listen to and promote voices, not as an objective observer but as a participant in the construction of reality. To hold a paradoxical space means to be able to hold a contradiction and appreciate alternative ways of being in the world. Spacemaking is thus about making room for alternative views. It aims to challenge accepted reality and to extend choices in the way individuals see themselves and their place in the world.
We did not come to remain whole.
We came to lose our leaves like trees,
The trees that are broken
And start again, drawing up from the great roots;
Like mad poets captured by the moors,
Men who live out a second life.

From Home in Dark Grass

Robert Bly

Plate 2
Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Introduction

I had anticipated reaching this point with joy and sense of pride in the discoveries I had made on an amazing journey. I can see now that that romanticises the research. It has been a tough and arduous journey both intellectually and emotionally. I now write from a sense of stillness and wistful sadness. The joy of the research is that it has been a shared journey with fellow travellers, but on this last leg of the journey I have been alone. The challenge of a PhD is to contribute to knowledge. This is a daunting task. Any knowledge I have to offer is not new, it has been there all along. I feel that in this study I have had the courage to look and bear witness. I am pleased that my voice is not an isolated voice I hear it echoed in the writing of many writers and poets. The research has given me the gift of being able to connect with the voice of the poet which has been a most unexpected outcome. I find myself moved by the words of poets (Robert Bly, Rumi, T.S. Elliot, Adrienne Rich) in ways that could not have happened before. Their ability to tell their truths simply, to look below the surface and tell things as there are, whilst maintaining a sense of hope is something that I would like to be able to emulate in this conclusion. The research has made me aware of my own woundedness and put me on the road to recovery. I have not achieved a unified self although I have touched the feeling of being whole for fleeting moments. That sense of wholeness shatters under the impact of the binary world. I have managed however to bring fragmented and split-off parts of myself
into dialogue with each other and therein lies the hope for recovery and personal transformation.

The potential that heuristic research offers for personal growth and transformation, not through the effort of doing, but through the watchful awareness of being, compliments the phenomenon of race under investigation. It is pointless to chase shadows, but by sitting still and watching patiently we can see its movement through time and space. On approaching this study, initially I thought that my attempts to cross the race boundary would blur it. Instead, I can now see that it has brought it into sharp focus. The blurring happens when race is studied through its associations with class, gender and culture. This allows race to hide and continue operating out of focus in the background. Throughout the course of this study I have been involved in many arguments about whether race could be studied independently of culture. I think that it is a strength of this study that I have been able to do so. I realise that my depiction of the experience of race could easily be transferred and applied to other binaries: man-woman, straight-gay, old-young. Moreover, I found that in attempting to cross the race boundary, the integrity of all the other boundaries was also under threat. These fragments were also seeking integration into a coherent whole.

I still struggle with the heuristic challenge of finding meaning in experience. I know that the experience has been meaningful. Perhaps if I shake it hard enough, meaning will drop out. The best I can do in this conclusion is to draw together the main points and
observations, mindful that I need to find something I can claim as an original contribution to knowledge. As a result of the study, I see the world of race differently. The unknown current that I trust my research journey to has become better known. I hope that if I am unable to map the journey I can at least share the essence of it. I will move on from here to summarise my main findings, then go on to considering the implications it raises for trainers, counsellors and indeed anyone concerned with race issues. I will finish with an overview of the research journey before I put this phase of it to rest and gain some much needed respite before I pick up the journey again.

Summary of main findings.

Race, identity and agency are the core themes that underpin this thesis. In the introduction to the study I recalled the question “why would you want to challenge something you don’t understand?”, posed by one of my students to her professional development group about challenging racism. This question sets the context for this study. It generates an imperative to understand race, its impact on self and others and to understand how it shapes racial identity. Furthermore, I wanted to gain insight into whether racism could be challenged by resisting definitions of essentialised notions of race. I refer to this process as crossing the race boundary. The process entails first a shift in my vision necessary to disembody or to denaturalise race, seeing it instead as a social construction and then to exercise agency in choosing the way I accept or impose racial labelling. In the study I have shown race to be a relationship with stories and with time and space. I have included stories about a rabbit, a wren and a pigeon which were my teachers from the natural
world who offered me an alternative perspective to balance the socially constructed world. In this section I will revisit the core themes and summarise how I have drawn meaning from my experience to understand the core themes of race, identity and agency.

**Race**

- Race has meaning only in terms of a split between black and white as separate oppositional categories. The distance between them is exploited to maintain a power differential.

- Race can be experienced as a phenomenon in public space or in private space. Public space offers sufficient distance for individuals to be protected from the impact of racism in their personal lives. As such it can be experienced voyeuristically or intellectually. In private space individuals experience the impact of racism as a felt sense. In private space, race is a discomforting emotional experience which brings with it a sense of responsibility.

- Race has an outer dimension and an inner dimension. In the outer dimension it exists as an inter-group relationship maintained by exclusionary practices which serve economic and political interests. In the inner dimension, race exists as a transpersonal relationship maintained by splitting and projection which sustains a sense of inner wellbeing.
○ The inner and outer dimensions interact to configure race in spatial terms. The race boundary is conceived as a paradoxical space, a projective space which simultaneously separates and links the oppositional poles of black and white. Paradoxical space encloses a binary space which contains the narrative and material resources of paramount social reality.

○ ‘Race relations’ can be seen as a territorial struggle for control of, and access to, the resources of binary space. In the current social context in Britain and perhaps throughout the rest of the world whiteness has controlling power.

○ Paradoxical space is a place of ambivalence and inner conflict reminiscent of the depressive position theorised by Klein (1986) A place of despair but also a place of healing if the split-off elements (the shadow) can be reconciled and re-integrated

○ Paradoxical space is an interstitial space between the binary space and the fluid space. The fluid space is conceptualised by Buber (1937) as the ‘You’ world; a space of connectedness and emergent spirituality. It is experienced as transient and with hidden dangers.
Identity

I borrowed the notion of identity sites from Cohen & Taylor (1992) to conceive of identity as a performance in which individuals orientate actively themselves in time and space. This introduces an element of agency in that identities are not received passively but instead become an action on the part of individuals. I identified three identity sites which I found valuable in providing a language to capture the expression of racialised identities without reifying or essentialising race:

- Absence
- Alienation
- Confusion

Occupying the site of absence means to be able to keep race in public space and thus being able to avoid personal connection with it. Race here tends to exist in the realm of the ‘other’, this tends to be achieved by occupying a privileged position which does not result in the experience of exclusion or discrimination. Otherwise, it can be achieved by denial or repression. Although individuals may claim to achieve absence by transcending race, this raceless claim often masks race avoidance. Guilt or shame is commonly associated with absence.

Alienation is commonly experienced when race enters private space through being a witness to or having direct experiences of discrimination or exclusion. It is generally
associated with powerful feelings of powerlessness or anger and rage. The activity of alienation is to protest or to offer resistance which often involves seeking solidarity with others and group identification on the basis of shared experience of adversity. Absence and alienation tends to be experienced in relation to the binary world and forge identities based on group belonging consistent with the work of Tajfel (1919) and Lewin (1948)

Confusion is the site occupied through coming to awareness of one’s basic duality as a result of encountering paradoxical space. Mixed race identities which claim occupation of the two opposing worlds of black and white, are often associated with this site. Identity work in this site involves attempts to reconcile ambivalent elements residing within the self and in one’s relationship with the outside world. Confusion is associated with feelings of fear, depression and despair.

Perhaps one of the most significant insights I gained through the study was the recognition of racial identity as a narrative identity. I became alert to the power of the story and how stories of race travel through time to fix individuals in historical scripts. Inspired by the work of Ricoeur, I was able to give attention to the narrative resources available to construct identities. I was alarmed to witness the way that I scripted other people’s identity and consequently my own in relation to them. (See Ghost in carriage). This challenged Erikson’s (1968) theory that individuals developed their identity in relation to how others see them. I discovered that my identity is based on how I see other people and the stories I project on to them. It is only then that I plot my identity in relation to the scripts I have given them. I felt very attuned to Ricoeur’s (1984) view of
personal identity arising out of the narrative resources available in the social environment and how these are reconfigured in relation to experience and imagination to make sense of oneself in the world. Ricoeur’s work provides a model of identity which encompasses both continuity and the potential for change. It opens up the potential for individuals to have greater agency in their identity.

In the latter part of the study, I conceptualized a free floating identity commensurate with the fluid space. My experience is that this is transient and cannot be related to as a feature of personal identity. In attempting to cross the race boundary I have not been able to transcend race boundaries in the presence of the binary world which pulls me unerringly into racialised scripts. I remain sceptical of others who claim to be able to transcend race boundaries because inscription of identity is the primary means by which we connect to others in the social world.

agency

It is perhaps an understatement but, I have found that letting go my identity is not an easy or straightforward thing. For too long I have been defined as a racial being by my skin and likewise, I have been doing the same to others for as long as I can remember. I have been enmeshed in stories of race that penetrate to the core of my being. My experiences
in the outside social world are given meaning by understanding myself as a racial being. When I consider this, I realise it is a naive expectation that deconstructing race offers an answer to the endemic problem of racism. As an historical being the identity I hold now can only sit alongside other identities carried by other versions of myself that travel with me through time. The research process has allowed me to find and communicate with by black self that I experience in relation to my body, my white self that I experience in relation to positions of power and privilege I hold and, my mixed race self. Within this study, I wanted to understand what limits my choice of expression of racial identity. I have found that agency in this area lies in having the power to hold the space for identity to occupy. In this respect identity is not negotiated but instead contested.

Implications

I sat yesterday struggling to write, trying to bring this study to a conclusion. I was asking myself “what are the implications of my research for race training, counselling and work with mixed race young people?” As I progressed, my thinking was getting more disjointed, lacking in depth and meaning. I felt that I was losing control of the study at this vital stage. I broke off for a while and read some stories of the exploits of the trickster Nasrudin, looking for inspiration. I came across the story ‘What a Bird should look like’:

Nasrudin found a weary falcon sitting one day on his window-sill. He had never seen a bird of this kind before. ‘You poor thing,’ he said, ‘how ever were you allowed to get into this state?’ He clipped the falcon’s talons and cut its beak
straight, and trimmed its feathers. 'Now you look more like a bird,' said Nasrudin.

(Shah 1983: 65)

I realise that I was trying to present meaning in an objective form to fit an image I had of a PhD thesis rather than accepting the research for what it is and seeing its beauty. I had to stop and take a break. Today I ask myself 'what is my research?' ‘What is it telling me? I found myself going back to the beginning to ponder on what had brought me to the research in the first place. I wondered what was the underlying passion and desire the heuristic process has seized to drag me into this torturous, painful but at times sublime journey. I must have been asking the right question because in a synchronistic manner Frick’s article on heuristic inquiry as a symbolic growth experience (Frick 1990) caught my attention and claimed to be revisited. In reading it, things began to fall into place and I found that I could fit the research study into the context of my life.

The research journey perhaps started with little Wayne being traumatically introduced to race in the playground. It was many years after that though that I took a professional interest in race as a race awareness trainer. With all its apparent failings and reliance on blame, shame and guilt, race awareness training did at least bring race into private space and make individuals look at themselves. I am in agreement with Young (1999) when he says:

No amount of ‘race awareness’ training will cathart away something that is so deeply set in the foundations of cultures. This makes the erection and enforcement of laws and conventions of good behaviour all the more important, because what
is bad underneath will not easily go away. We must be liberal in the public sphere and radical in our knowledge of the deeper issue. (Young 1999:17)

But as race training moved away from the private sphere to the public sphere and became more reliant on legislation and policy, I became more estranged from what had become the race industry. I have been critical of this shift in race strategy because of its emphasis on categorisation and monitoring re-affirming race boundaries. Despite this I fully respect its value in harm reduction and damage limitation but realise that the search for the deeper issue demands a return to the private sphere. There is a real dilemma here which demands a personal stance. In the short term there is a need for resistance to racism but in the long term it is the binary structures and institutions themselves which need to be changed. This calls for the radical and subversive action of helping to support the development of healthy integrated individuals. Stuart Hall (1992:277) suggests that “The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy”. I probably agree with him to the extent that what such an identity would require does not exist in a binary world, but would certainly challenge the integrity of the race boundary. I would advocate something less all encompassing by suggesting that integrating the opposing elements of race would in itself be a move to health and would at the same time weaken the race boundary. Alongside the need for current models of race training geared towards practices for reducing discrimination and oppression, there needs to be work which supports the recovery of practitioners from the violence of splitting and projection. Bringing race into the private space of the inner world does not require specific knowledge but the need to undertake healing journeys in the company of others; bearing in mind that healthy integrated individuals do not fit into the binary world.
I can see now that I took my interest in race to the counselling field in order to keep it in the private sphere. It has been my real disappointment to find that counsellors continue to resist taking account for their own subjectivity when dealing with the issue of race. I feel that counselling has so much to offer in providing paradoxical spaces needed for the healing journey to integrate the split-off ambivalent elements that characterise race. Instead, the therapeutic space tends to be a binary space which aims to readjust people to fit the demands of the binary world of paramount social reality. In this respect I see the counselling relationship to be corrective rather than emancipatory. My reflections on the Carl Rogers video in the previous chapter suggests that working effectively with race in the counselling relationship cannot be reduced to a set of skills or techniques. This would have implications for the structure of counselling services from initial training through to supervision. Counsellors and supervisors cannot themselves offer a paradoxical space unless they have embarked on their own recovery. I have encountered very few counsellors who have done any significant work on race in their own personal therapy. Furthermore, the increasing efforts of the counselling profession to gain credibility in modernist, scientific communities would suggest that the movement is towards the binary rather than away from it.

It was my work with mixed race young people that eventually brought me into the research. Mixed race young people often find themselves caught in a conflicted world of race; polarised between notions of blackness and whiteness. In doing so, they embody the
paradox of race and bear witness to the illusion of racial duality. The mixed race experience is often portrayed as confused or in crisis because it is commonly judged from a binary position. My heuristic journey has been an entry into the mixed race world of paradox. I have been drawn to the research by the need to heal; not the outer world but the divided self that constitute my inner world. As I was reading Frick’s article and thinking about what significant symbolic growth experiences I had during this study it suddenly struck me that I was avoiding putting words to what the research really meant for me. I was too busy trying to consider the meaning it may have for others. There was also a fear in saying that the most significant discovery was to know that I am a spiritual being trapped in a binary world. Having said it now, it seems like a trivial statement not worthy of years of study, but in saying it I feel the same sense of loss and sadness that I felt when I wrote the ‘Splitting Hairs’ story. I have travelled to a point of emptiness where it is difficult to connect with the outside world. I feel the gravity of the binary world trying to shape me and reclaim me. For the present I sit in paradox. I understand Ellison’s ‘Invisible Man’ even better now. The research as a whole is a story about my path to recovery from the damage done to little Wayne. The recovery is not yet complete, I have not found my unified self but I have found my mixed race self which allows me to communicate better with other mixed race young people who also sit in paradoxical space. We can meet in our mobile paradoxical spaces; we can learn to enhance our agency by refining our trickster skills which allow us to exploit the pace of indeterminacy. Moreover we can continue to heal. Frick describes the healing function as an integrative function, Jung calls it a transcendent function but more bleakly Klein refers the position of healing to as the depressive position. Klein’s naming of this position
really fits and it describes why paradox is such a difficult place to be. If Counsellors are unable to offer paradoxical spaces as a place for healing, then others concerned with their own recovery need to start establishing them.

Endnote

As I come to the end of this study, I feel that I have been on a profound journey. Now weary and perhaps a little wiser I know that the journey remains incomplete. I have attempted to draw on my data to communicate the experience as accurately and completely as possible. In doing so, I have strived for authenticity in presenting myself as a researcher; present and growing through the research. I am pleased to have found a voice and discovered the ‘mad poet’ within. Breaking silence on the paradox of race and bringing the difficult and painful topic into the open has been an important achievement. Bearing witness exposes my vulnerability as a researcher increased by the sharing of personal details.

I am wary that heuristic research, with its emphasis on exploring the researcher’s own experience, faces the charge of being self indulgent or narcissistic. I guess that there is an element of this which will inevitable be true since I have privileged my own voice. Nonetheless I am claiming that I tell a shared story or at least that my own story has been enriched by the voice of others. On many occasions I have been tempted to bring their voices into the text but these were times when I had lost confidence in my voice and felt it needed substantiating. When I regained confidence, I reminded myself that I was not intending to make a truth claim beyond telling my own truth. If at times I have gone too
far and made undeclared speculations, this was unintentional. I hope that the reader is able to apply the insights from this study to the subjectivity of her or his own life.

When I consider the weakness and limitations of the research, I realise that heuristic research lies on the fringe of respectability in modernist research traditions. At times I hear a voice in my head that says ‘where is the evidence?’ I have to remember that this is a question incompatible with what I set out to do. I have honoured the spirit and principles of heuristic research elucidated by Moustakas and endeavoured to be thorough and disciplined in my use of the methods for conducting the research that he lays out. My own application of heuristic methodology has been complemented by the addition of action research and systemic perspectives, both of which support the self reflexivity and critical subjectivity that gives the research its distinctive flavour. At the onset of the research I had some confusion regarding the status of the research group that I had established. I initially conceived of them as a co-operative enquiry group within an action research tradition (Reason 1998, Heron 1998). But this conflicted with the heuristic process that directed the study. I resolved this by giving greater emphasis to maintaining the space than to the group itself. The space was a place of respite for fellow travellers to gather, to share experiences, to lick wounds and to find support and encouragement to stay on the journey. The group also enabled cycles of reflection which was a feature of the research and which produced dramatic insight. I prioritised the heuristic process and chose to dwell on my experiences in the group rather than the experiences of the group members. Within this research study I suffered simultaneously from too much data and insufficient data. It was not possible to capture the full extent of my lived experience. I
tried to maintain a clear and consistent focus on theme of crossing the race boundary. I
was very strong on maintaining my vision on race and was careful not to get distracted by
related issues like culture. Throughout the research process and coming through the data
presented the issue of gender as clearly significant but this was not developed or
analysed. In the group discussions, attachment and parenting issues often recurred. I had
a tacit sense that these were significant themes but could take them no further because
they remained in the background without fully emerging. I was aware of the issue of
depression coming through many of my encounters with people who inhabited
paradoxical space. I could not filter this through my experience beyond recognising my
own melancholy which I used as a defence against depression. In this particular area, I
felt that the study was limited. This was an area that I could have pursued to get the voice
of others. I believe however that this is a significant theme which I intend to pursue in its
own right as a focus for future research.

I have taken abstract concepts such as deconstruction of race, paradoxical space (Rose
1993) and mobile paradoxical space (Mathani 2000) and attempted to ground them in
lived experience. this has awakened me to a kind of spaciousness in which there is more
room to live and to be and to the possibility of becoming more authentic in my
relationship with others. In the future I need to find a way of being that makes this space
available to self and others because of its healing potential. The research has been a
healing journey for me. My initial assumption that the heuristic researcher is an insider
with sovereignty over his or her own experiences and thus having access to privileged
knowledge proved to be false. On the contrary, in my own research I was surprised to
discover the many ways in which I am alienated from my own experiences and thus an outsider to myself, still needing to negotiate access to experience and meaning. Along the way I have recovered many lost stories and found some new ones to sustain me. Ultimately I have benefited by bringing little Wayne, Wayne, Richard and my many other selves into communion with each other.

As I reach the end of this study I realise that I have been touched by a profound experience which I have attempted to share with the reader. I feel a sense of hope which comes from defining a new space. I am excited about the transformative potential that this space offers but at this stage I need to hold it and nurture it rather than expose it prematurely. I am still a wary of the border guards and stakeholders invested in the binary space. At this point in the research I feel that it would be premature to attempt to go any further than I have already to make generalisations or to consider the practical implications for my findings. Perhaps the first task is to find a home for them. The research journey has been somewhat nomadic. It is now time to rest and give the raw edges a little time to heal and to forge new relationships.

Here is where the journey ends
A quiet understated retreat
Away from those who without insidious intent
Would perpetuate
The deception of a false dichotomy.
Not a time to celebrate
But to take respite
And contemplate
How to circumvent
The lie
And provide a sacred place to heal
And to nurture precious seeds.
Finally to take the chance
To rest to dream and learn to dance
Bibliography


Angelou, M 1984 *I know why the Caged Bird Sings*. London: Virago


Baldwin, J. 1963 *The fire Next time*. Penguin

*Group Analysis Vol 37 (1): 121-136*


Bell L. A. 2003 *Telling Tales: what stories can teach us about racism.* *Race Ethnicity and Education, Vol 6 No 1, 3-27*


Bonnet, A 1996 Anti-Racism and the critique of ‘white identities’ *New Communities 22*(1) 97-110


316
Charmaz, K. 2002 Stories and Silences: Disclosures and Self in Chronic Illness. 

*Qualitative Inquiry* 8(3) pp 302 - 328

Chauhan, V. 1989 Beyond Steel Bands 'n' Samosas: Black Young People in the Youth. Leicester, National Youth Bureau


Eysenck, H.J. 1973 Fourth Impression *Race, Intelligence and Education. Published in Association with New Society, London: Temple Smith.*


Folarin, S. *Images of Race*. Unpublished Paper


Gendlin, E. 1962 *Experiencing and the creation of meaning*. Chicago, Free Press


hooks, b. 1990 Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics. Boston: South End Press


Heron, J 1992 Feeling and Personhood. London: Sage

Heron, J. 1998 Co-operative Inquiry. London: Sage


Hesse, H. 1972 The Journey to the East. St Albans: Granada.


Ignatiev, N. & Garvey, J. 1996 (Eds) Race Traitor London: Routledge


Knowles, C. 1990 *Mixed Race Children. Talking Point, Association of community workers. No. 110 pp 3-4*


323
Krishnamurti, J. 1992 *On Relationship*


Lyotard 1984 *The Postmodern Condition*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

Malik, K. 1996 Universalism and difference: race and the postmodernists. Race and Class, 37, 3. pg 1-17

Malpas, S. 2001 Introduction Post Modern Debates. Basingstoke, Palgrave


Modood 1997 *Ethnic Minority Groups in Britain: diversity and disadvantage*” Policy Studies Institute


Parham, T.A. 1989 Cycles of Psychological Nigrescence. *Counselling Psychologist* 17(2) 187-226


Park, R. E. 1928 Human Migration and the Marginal Man *American Journal of Sociology* 33 (6), 881-93


Polanyi, M. 1969 Knowing and Being. (Greene, M Eds) Chicago, University of Chicago Press


Chicago: University of Chicago Press.


London: sage

Roberts, J. 1994 *Tales & Transformations: Stories in Families and Family Therapy*.

New York, W. W. Norton & Co.


Rose 1993. *Feminism and Geography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press


Segal, H. 1988 *Introduction to the work of Melanie Klein*. London; Karnac Books


Senna, D 2001 *From Caucasia With Love*. London: Bloomsbury


Sivinandan, A. 1985 *RAT and the degradation of the black struggle*, *Race and Class* XXV1 (4) 1-33.

Sivinandan, A. 1996 *La traison des clercs* *Race & Class* 37(3) 65-70


Solorzano, D. G. & Yosso, T. J. 2002 *Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical framework for Education Research*. *Qualitative Inquiry* 8(1), 23-
Sage Publications.


Sue, D.W. & Sue, D. 1990 Counseling the Culturally Different. New York: Wiley & Sons


Terry, L. 1995 ‘Not a postmodern Nomad: A Conversation with Stuart Hall on Race, Ethnicity and Identity. *Arena Journal No, 5*


Wideman, J. E. *Fatheralong: A Meditation on Fathers and Sons, Race and Society.*

London: Picador

Wierenga, A. 2001 *Losing and finding the plot: the value of listening to young people.*

Conference paper: International; conference on young people and informal education, Glasgow September 6-9, 2001

Wilde McCormick, E 2002 *Living on the Edge* : London : Continuum


Wright, R. 1940 *Native Son.* New York: Harper

Young, R. 1999 *Projective Space* : http://www.shef.ac.uk/~psyc/mentallchap6.html
APPENDIX 1

Census question

What is your ethnic group?
Choose ONE section from A to E, then tick the appropriate box to indicate your cultural background.

A White
- British
- Irish
- Any other White background, please write in

B Mixed
- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed background, please write in

C Asian or Asian British
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background, please write in

D Black or Black British
- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black background, please write in

E Chinese or other ethnic group
- Chinese
- Any other, please write in
Appendix 2

Conference Papers

2001 What about the Children:

Conference paper delivered to BACP Counselling Research Conference May 2002

2003 Fluid space : engaging with the 'other'

2004 The Emperor's new Clothes
Appendix 3 Participants Consent Form
University Of Manchester: School of Education

Dear

Re: Research Inquiry Group.

Thank you for attending the two introductory sessions in respect of my research into the experience of crossing race boundaries. It has been a privilege to have you as part of the group and I hope that you are willing to continue with the group for the next two years. We have agreed to meet at three weekly intervals to discuss our experiences.

The questions the research is asking are:

To what extent is the notion of race a fixed and enduring phenomenon?
Is it possible to escape the racial conditioning we have been subjected to?
What happens when common practices of taking on racial identity are broken?

The venue will be Fircroft College. And the sessions will run between 6.00p.m. and 7.30p.m. The journey ahead is a huge commitment and I wish to re-iterate that will be able to withdraw from the process at any time.

The research is a heuristic inquiry which means that the ideas and insights that you share have will be woven into my own understanding and being. In this respect I will not be attempting to interpret anyone else's position other than my own. The result of this is that I would wish to use the ideas and stories you have shared in dialogue and writing without referring them back to source. In order to do that I will need your permission to use your material without direct acknowledgement. If you are in agreement to continuing with the project with this understanding I would be grateful if you fill in the Participant agreement form below.

Participant consent agreement

I... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... Agree to Participate in the research group being facilitated by Wayne Richards as part of His PhD Study at Manchester University. I understand that the Group will meet regularly to discuss our experiences of challenging the race boundary. It is clear that the sessions will not be recorded but the discussions will be a source of reflection which will be presented through the eyes of Wayne Richards as the principle researcher. I understand that I can withdraw from the research group at any time without obligation.

Signed

Date

334