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South African Families of Indian Descent: Transmission of Racial Identity

Kathryn Pillay*

INTRODUCTION

According to the 2013 mid-year population estimates, the 'Indian/Asian' 'population group' is estimated at 1.3 million which is 2.5 per cent of the total South African population (Statistics South Africa, 2013). Although the majority of Indians arrived as indentured labourers in the colony of Natal in 1860 to work on the sugar cane plantations, a "second stream of migrants" (Mesthrie, 1997:100) followed soon after under the colony's ordinary immigration laws. Although they were mainly Muslim and Hindu traders predominantly from the Gujarat area, there were some Christian Indians, including teachers, interpreters, catechists and traders who also migrated to South Africa (Mesthrie, 1997).

The arrival of the indentured labourers signaled a new era of racialisation in southern Africa and the category 'Indian',¹ which had not existed before, eventually came into being through classification, bureaucratic organization and administration, and knowledge about the people so classified.² By as late as 1950, the National Party (NP) together with its supporters attempted actively to demonstrate why 'Indians' could not be integrated into South Africa or become South African citizens (Ebr-Vally, 2001). The NP also introduced the political course of apartheid from 1948 to 1993, which was a system of government that continued, and extensively elaborated on, *legislated* discrimination and 'difference' based on 'race.' Although this had begun much earlier, it was during this time period however that the state policies and legislation institutionalised racial discrimination through systematic and deliberate efforts to segregate the 'population groups' which it had created. It was only in 1961 that the South African government accepted 'Indians' in the population landscape of

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¹ In this article, the word 'Indian' has been placed within inverted commas to signify the category assigned to South Africans of Indian descent by the - apartheid government. This racial classification is still applied in contemporary South Africa as the current democratic government still recognises it as an 'official' racial category. The inverted commas denote that the category 'Indian,' like all racial classifications, is not accepted as biologically meaningful but nevertheless is viewed as an exceedingly important social construct.

² See Hacking (2007:289) for a more detailed discussion of classification broadly.

the country as a *fait accompli*, as all the methods to drive them out had failed and the involvement of the Indian government in South African affairs was no longer welcomed (especially since the continued involvement of India held a spotlight over the atrocities committed by and discriminatory practices of the 'white' state). The apartheid government used administrative tools, such as the census and other descriptive devices that served to classify and categorise people for purposes of statistics and numbering, to organise society according to 'race,' and to allocate resources accordingly. 'Race,' therefore, was maintained and entrenched as a prominent societal feature governing economics, politics, and all aspects of society in general.

South Africa became a democratic country in April 1994 after the first general election took place. A commitment was made by the African National Congress (ANC) led government to 'non-racialism' based on a Constitution, adopted in 1996, which was inclusive of all the 'races,' accepting shared citizenship. The basis of the policies that followed represented the antithesis of inclusion by entrenching existing notions of difference through the perpetuation of 'race' categories that were previously reproduced and legitimised by the repealed Population Registration Act (PRA).³ Despite the demise of the PRA, government legislation and politicians continue to use racial categories to define and describe South Africans. Affirmative Action programmes, for instance, have centred on differences between groups. Human beings, therefore, are allocated group identities based on their physical appearance. The idea that race is a fixed and inherited identity remains widely accepted and reflected in the law. The continuation of such classification perpetuates racialisation and 'race' thinking and creates essential versions of the 'other.' 'Race' then continues to be the signifier of difference creating and perpetuating division in South African society. As Bentley et al., (2008:9) argue, "There may be no country in the world as obsessed with race as South Africa."

It is within this socio-political context then that five South African families of Indian descent have been studied to reveal how 'race' is appropriated and negotiated across generations. As Thompson (1997:43) reminds us, "Family is still the principal channel for the transmission of languages, names, land and housing, local social standing, and religion; and beyond that . . . also of social values and aspirations, and . . . taken-for-granted ways of behaving."

To what extent then, is the family responsible for the transmission of racial identity across generations, especially to those born in a democratic South Africa where the legislation that set limits to identity choices during colonialism and apartheid, has been rescinded. Does, as Lerner (1997:72) argues, "The continuity of ideas transcend time and space?"

In-depth interviews with South African families of Indian descent living in Durban and the surrounding areas of KwaZulu-Natal, were conducted. The participants were selected from

³ The Population Registration Act of 1950 was part of a legislation promulgated by the apartheid government which resulted in the establishment of a national record to register the 'race' of every individual in the country. The 'race group' that each person was assigned then became their "official classification" in the eyes of the state and resources were allocated accordingly (Christopher, 2002: 405).

this locality primarily because the majority of South Africans of Indian descent reside in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, with 80 per cent of this population inhabiting the city of Durban (Statistics South Africa, 2008). In addition, more information is available and better records were kept in this province particularly because the first indentured labourers arrived in what was then referred to as Port Natal. Thus KwaZulu-Natal became the location of historical records and archival material on the history of 'Indians' in South Africa. The families (South African citizens of Indian descent) identified for participation in this project have varied religious, political and socio-economic backgrounds, at present and in the past. It was also necessary to consider a gender spread within these families, as well as to trace family histories from the matrilineal line of some families and the patrilineal line of others, over approximately 150 years. Through a process of purposeful and deliberate searching, networking and informal contacts, participants were identified (Carton and Vis, 2008). In addition to contacting families who appeared in newspaper features and seemed keen to share their stories, I also contacted people via, the '1860 project' website launched by the *Sunday Tribune*; the '1860 Indians South Africa' facebook page, which at the time had 2,856 members; and through social contacts.⁴

TRAPPED IN RACIAL CAGES

'Race' in South Africa, is a significant source of identification, and differences based on 'race' are viewed and accepted as 'natural.' Although South Africans of Indian descent may have longer generational histories in the country as opposed to other citizens they are nevertheless viewed only in terms of the racial label afforded to them, 'Indian.' As discussed earlier people in South Africa have been conditioned to view themselves and others according to racial labels. Even attempts to raise children without knowledge of 'race groups' (for long that can be possible) is greeted with shock that the child does not know "who she is."⁵ There is little reservation or hesitation when asked to self-classify on official forms and documentation.

Although older family members are viewed as bearers of culture and tradition, what exactly has been passed down to the raised free and born free South Africans of Indian descent? According to Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002:59):

Families provide a social context in which individuals develop a sense of self, values, and beliefs. Parent-child interactions are ongoing, intense, and deeply integral to the interactional processes of identification, modeling, and role-playing. Children learn within the family context who they are in relation to themselves, their family, and others in society. The socialisation process, by definition, serves the purpose of transmitting

⁴ The data for this study was gleaned from a larger data set which was collected for my PhD thesis.

⁵ This is an account given to me by an 'Indian' mother, Elizabeth (not a member of the five families interviewed) who attempted to raise her child Bella 'colour-blind' for as long as she possibly could. The child's grandmother was livid when Bella expressed confusion at being referred to as 'Indian' by her grandmother. According to 5-year-old Bella's reasoning and world knowledge, Indians lived in India. The grandmother then promptly told Elizabeth to "tell the child what she is." The grandmother then accepts the category unquestioningly as 'natural.'

norms and values from one generation to the next . . . socialisation extends itself to encompass the norms and values of the unique racial group, as well as interweaving the racial group membership into the child's understanding of who he or she is...

The family is not the sole arbiter of identity, as relationships in society also serve to establish within the individual, ideas of self. For instance, teachers and peers too play a crucial role in a child's understanding of him/herself. As Elizabeth discovered when three-and-a-half-year old Bella arrived home stating that "six new Indian children joined the pre-school today." When asked by her mum, what had made her describe the children as 'Indian,' she replied that she had overheard the teachers discussing the new arrivals. How a person 'becomes who they are' as social beings, is therefore influenced by their relationships with significant role players. This influence is evident in the self-descriptions of the born-free and raised-free generation as 'Indian.'

Many have argued that this is so because the label 'Indian' is not just a 'race' classification but has meaning to South Africans of Indian descent as their 'homeland.' The findings of this research reveals that India has no historical validity for the generation of young people interviewed for this paper who are all fifth and sixth generation South Africans of Indian descent, ranging in age from 16 to 26. All of whom grew up without the experience of apartheid. The respondents in this study view India as, as 16-year-old Edward from *Family 1*⁶ stated, "just another country." Aarti, from *Family 3*, who was three years old at the advent of democracy in South Africa, states too that she feels no special connection to India:

Aarti: . . . its far down the line, it doesn't really impact me. It does but I don't really feel it and I guess, we don't even appreciate what our ancestors did for us. It was a pretty big leap to leave your country and come into you know a foreign land, just to give us a better education And here we are living like you know, it never happened.

Her statement is ambivalent, while acknowledging the significance and sacrifice of the decision of her ancestors to come to South Africa she nevertheless still does not consider it imperative to 'know' about the past. As Sabheeha from *Family 4* states, "I don't feel like my roots are in India, I feel like they are here so I don't feel much connection there." Pravin, born in 1979, states too, ". . . I am not Indian, I know I am not Indian. I am only Indian by classification." Their relationship with India then is as a place where distant ancestors arrived from and not as a meaningful 'motherland.'

The older generation too expressed similar sentiments. Prem from *Family 2*, who was 47 years old at the time of the interview, who has extended family in India, although stating that she views India as a motherland, argues, "I just look at it [Indian] as a race, you know what I mean? No deeper into it," implying then that she does not attach any ancestral value to the label 'Indian' in South Africa. Fifty-two-year-old Mogie from *Family 5*, echoes these views by stating that it is *only* because her grandfather arrived from India that she feels that she

⁶ To easily locate the individuals depicted in this paper within their family unit, a number has been allocated to each family that participated in this study.

“owe(s) a little bit” of who she is to his homeland. Deepa, from *Family 3*, who was 80 years old at the time of the interview stated, “I like South Africa . . . this is what I consider home. India is a place of holiday (laughs).” Jane from *Family 1* similarly stated that she did not think of India as a motherland or homeland stating, “I’m a South African . . . this is the only thing I know . . .” A sentiment similar to her 16-year-old grandson Edward who stated “I just consider it to be like any other race . . . I’m South African.”

There is no compelling desire then to visit India as a ‘motherland’ but more of a curiosity to visit where ‘distant’ ancestors arrived from. In addition those who do have a fascination have only an imagined idea of what India is and many have come back to South Africa disappointed after a visit. As Hansen (2012:207) discovered in his anthropological study in Chatsworth, “After returning to South Africa, Mr. Pillay felt strange about his visit to the village and expressed very mixed feelings about India, although his wife found the country beautiful and harmonious. For both of them, though, India was ‘disturbingly unknown;’ it made them feel very alien and South African, and also made them realise ‘how inauthentic their own embodied sense of Indianness was.’” Further, as this study has uncovered, some South Africans of Indian descent also have an image of India as poverty stricken and backward; for example, Pravin from *Family 3* recalls how his sister once commented that she was “. . . ever so grateful to her ancestors for having come to South Africa because she doesn’t see herself wearing a sari every day and covering her head and working in the poppy fields.” This one dimensional image of India can be attributed to the stories passed down of ‘what it was like’ in India when the indentured labourers left and what life would have been like had they chosen not to leave India.

In addition the complexity of the lived experiences of those categorised as ‘Indians’ is a far cry from the homogenous group that the label perpetuates. For example, Daniel’s mother Jane, born in 1934, does not identify as an ‘Indian.’ Neither though does she identify with or relate to being a ‘coloured’ person.⁷ Jane’s ‘colouredness,’ according to her, lies in her ancestry and her upbringing,⁸ being raised by her Catholic, ‘coloured-looking’ mother who identified herself, according to Jane as ‘coloured,’ and who was her primary care-giver and thereafter being raised by her ‘coloured’ grandmother. At the age of 20 Jane married an ‘Indian’ man and subsequently relocated to an area set aside by the government for ‘Indians.’ Her extended ‘coloured’ family paid little attention to her as many considered themselves to be “pure coloureds” and wanted to dissociate themselves from any ‘Indian’ relatives.

When speaking about her feelings of ‘being different’ the issue of accent came to the fore and Jane stated “. . . when I opened my mouth to speak everybody turned to look because I wasn’t speaking like them [referring to ‘Indians’].” She recalled the time she spent at a hospital for ‘Indian’ patients and recounted very proudly “. . . I was walking past the nurses and they were talking about the patients and . . . one says to the other . . . but she doesn’t speak like these people hey.” There was a sense of satisfaction that even though she appeared

⁷ As discussed earlier, Jane is of mixed ‘coloured’ and ‘Indian’ ancestry.

⁸ Timothy abandoned Jane, her mother and siblings when she was very little. When asked how old she was when her father left she states “I don’t know my father. I don’t ever remember him being around.”

'Indian;' she did not speak like 'them.' When discussing the declarations of 'race' that all South Africans are obliged to make on official documentation, such as for the purposes of applying for a job or entrance to University, Jane, in talking about the box that she would tick on an official form to signify her 'race,' says "So I'll just say, non-white."⁹ Jane therefore constructs her identity in relation to 'whiteness' as being the norm. In addition this also reveals that her self-image is controlled by the boundaries of the 'race' categories available to her and when she discovers that she cannot 'fit' in neatly into the available boxes, she chooses to identify as 'non-white.' Daniel recalls how he realised early on that his mother did not identify with being an 'Indian:'

Daniel: We used to visit my father's sisters, his brothers...but I think that because my mother was mixed, they didn't really identify. . . to me from what I gathered . . . she wasn't like an Indian in the sense that I would have liked her to have been. I think she was really mixed up you know coming from a mixed family I think that really mixed *her* up . . . I don't know, it was like she was more coloured than Indian. I got the feeling that she never really identified with the Indians and I think she just looked Indian. But for all intents and purposes, I think she was more coloured.

What is revealed here is Daniel wanting his mother to identify as 'Indian,' which is evident in the tone that he uses when speaking, and the words he uses to express his feelings about his relationship later on in the interview, with his mother. When speaking about his granny, Francine (Jane's mother), Daniel says:

Daniel: . . . we never interacted with her, I never felt that she was my granny in the sense of like a motherly person . . . she looked coloured, she was a fair coloured, I couldn't really identify with her . . . when we had family functions, I couldn't really identify with the coloureds, like I couldn't be friendly with them, it was like I was trying to cross over a barrier, you know, like I am trying to reach out to you as to opposed to . . . you know that we were just friends and family. There was a divide. But obviously there wasn't the same divide with my uncle Niel . . . he looked coloured but he stayed with the Indians. Or George who was a very friendly person or with Louis, but Louis looks Indian, and obviously with Harry, Harry looks coloured but there wasn't a problem with them because they were always around us. But the other family that lived in Wentworth, when they came to parties and stuff . . . the cousins that came, it was like there was a void between us.

Niel, George, Louis and Harry are Jane's half-brothers. Interestingly, it was two of her full siblings who had married 'coloured' women, moved to 'coloured' residential areas, and who maintained a distance.

On the other side of the spectrum Jane recounts how she was treated differently by her in-laws because they regarded her as a 'coloured' person:

⁹'Non-white' is not an official racial category of the state, but was used often during apartheid as a blanket identification for those not classified as 'white.'

Jane: . . . when I was about 18, I think I was about 18 or 19, they used to bring him home . . . so that's how I got married to him . . . I went and stayed there but then life was even worse because they didn't like me, I was supposed to be a coloured girl marrying their Indian son, and he didn't want anybody else. So they treated me like a servant over there.

KP: Now do you think that this was the case because you were regarded as being a 'coloured' person and not for any other reason?

Jane: Ja that's what it was. Coloureds didn't like Indians and Indians didn't like Coloureds

. . . Ja, they didn't like it . . . even if you were pregnant you had to slog and do work like a servant and then when I gave birth to Amy she was two weeks old they told me I must go pick wood . . . and she'd [husband's sister] put the biggest bundle on my head because she hated me you know . . . and she used to do the same thing with the coal she'd put the biggest one and when I come home when I touch my head I couldn't feel my head

. . . and do you know why she did that? Because I was not her nation.

Not being of her sister in laws 'nation,' Jane was viewed as being 'different,' an 'other,' and an outsider. When I told Jane that 'non-white' was not an official category of the state she replied that if forced she would say that she was 'Indian' although she has no thoughts of India as a 'motherland.' According to Jane, her 'Indianness' lies not in the fact that her father and grandfather were both South Africans of Indian descent or of any shared heritage with 'Indians,' but in the final analysis she attributes it to marrying an 'Indian' man, living most of her life in an 'Indian' residential area, and appearing 'Indian.' Apart from that, this classification has no meaning for her. As Hall (1996:14) states:

“ . . . individuals as subjects identify (or do not identify) with the 'positions' to which they are summoned; as well as how they fashion, stylize, produce and 'perform' these positions, and why they never do so completely, for once and all time, and some never do, or are in a constant, agonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating the normative or regulative rules which they confront and regulate themselves. In short, what remains is the requirement to think this relation of subject to discursive formations as an articulation . . . ”

Daniel in discussing his mixed ancestry states that: “. . . I come from a mixed family . . . and I hated what I have come from you know. Not knowing, being in this confused world, I would like them [his children] to just find their own way.”

Edward, Daniel's 16-year-old son adds:

Edward: Mmmm, I'll be honest with you. I never really hear much stuff so. They don't really talk to me about the ancestors or anything . . . don't really go in depth with that . . . erm it's not really as important . . . er well I guess it's kind of interesting to know where you came from . . . but it doesn't really affect me because this is modern times now, that's the old years . . .

Despite any conscious effort by his family to 'teach' or socialise him into a racial identity, 16-year-old Edward, nevertheless unproblematically accepts the category 'Indian' stating "I am an Indian, and there are other [race] groups like whites . . . I classify myself as Indian." As a child born into a free society, his appropriation of the label is telling in terms of the cogency of apartheid legislation in a democratic country. Edward resides in Chatsworth, a township created for 'Indian' occupation as a result of the Group Areas Act,¹⁰ he attends a school in Chatsworth which comprises of predominantly 'Indian' teachers and learners. His spare time involves "hanging out" with his friends from school in the area in which they live "watching TV or playing with the Playstation" stating further, "We stay here. We don't ever go out of Chatsworth." There is no safe public transport for him or his friends to be able to socialise outside of Chatsworth. They do not have relationships with people other than their own 'race.' He 'knows' that he is 'Indian' because he is told that by his family, his teachers, the media, and his government. Jenkins (quoted in Goldschmidt, 2003:206) argues that the label becomes appropriated by the individuals so labeled and their "own senses of identity [are] mediated by the labels which had been ascribed to them." Edward, like his peers, appear to be 'Indian' by experience, scripted into a reality already created for them, living in a present that has been imposed on by the past. Although not denying agency, agency is confined to the script and can be viewed relative to the constraints posed by society.

Being referred to as born 'free' or raised 'free' then is not *entirely* true. What is true is that children like Edward born post-1994 are no longer bound by apartheid legislation but these children who emerged towards the latter days or in the ashes of apartheid are still trapped by the legacy of these acts and confined in racial cages, not completely free. The legacy of apartheid hounds and envelopes this young generation and it is and will continue to be challenging for them to escape the label 'Indian' as they are surrounded by reminders of 'who' they are.

People in South Africa draw on the classifications already made available to them. For Bella's grandmother, letting her granddaughter know *'what'* she was, as Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002:40) note, meant making it possible for 'others' to situate her in society and for her to situate herself in society. Even though these understandings are problematic, they are accepted by people in the everyday course of their lives. Identity then, as Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002:40) discuss " . . . is the direct result of mutual identification through social interaction . . ."

Understanding identity using the social constructionist, symbolic interactionist framework implies that identities are legitimised when others identify you as you identify yourself. What this means then is that an individual cannot, or only with difficulty, attribute to him or herself an identity that is not 'accepted' in society (Rockquemore and Brunnsma, 2002: 40), in other words, perception of self is reliant on perception of others. For instance, an 'Indian' person cannot choose to identify only as 'South African' as both legally and socially he or she is

¹⁰ The Group Areas Act of 1950 was a piece of legislation enacted by the apartheid government which segregated residential areas according to 'race.' It has often been argued that this Act caused the greatest amount of damage to South African society, with its effects still being felt to the present day.

perceived in more minute terms, as 'Indian.' Daniel from *Family I* contends with this restriction:

Daniel: I am South African I don't want to tell people I am Indian. I want to tell people 'I am South African' because I am South African...The moment you are classified as Indian, you are associated with India. When they ask me my race and they always want to know my race, I thought that would change now [in the new South Africa]. I say South African of Indian descent. Because there is nothing else I can put there . . . because Indian really implies that you are from a special country. They don't call whites Europeans, so they belong here . . . Indians, you don't belong here . . . We need to change that . . . they need to make it neutral, I don't know how they are going to do it...They call us Indians, we say 'No man we are not Indians, sorry' . . . What you see as an Indian is a South African of Indian decent. If you want an Indian, there is one billion. You go and read their passports and it says Indian. If you read my passport it says South African...I am a South African...I am not Indian, why do you call me an Indian, I am not from India? I have never been to India, I don't even know what it is like...at the end of day now, we are still in a country where being Indian is not very good for your health, and they can just turn on you on a dime . . .

It can be argued that Daniel wants to *choose* how he identifies himself, which is not possible in South African society, as he has already been marked as 'Indian.' Through a complex matrix of "rules, assumptions and laws" these racial categories are preserved (Rockquemore and Brunnsma, 2002:11). These classifications then reify the reductionist images constructed through political and social discourse perpetuating categorisation, hierarchy and difference. Fanon (1986:114-115) argued a similar point when he expressed, "I shouted a greeting to the world and the world slashed away my joy. I was told to stay within my bounds, to go back to where I belonged."

The physical appearance of an 'Indian' person provides the immediate connection to their 'race' by others. Rockquemore and Brunnsma, 2002:56) argue that:

Appearance provides the first, albeit socially constructed, information about an individual to others in the context of face-to-face interaction. People's appearance helps define their identity and allows them an embodied means to express their self-identification. It is in this process that identities are negotiated and either validated or contested.

I argue that appearance traps individuals into a prescribed identity that is socially constructed and enforced by the official discourse. A person can never truly identify as anything other than what society says he or she is because of their appearance and the pre-identification markers that go along with it. Appearance, on its own, closes off any engagement on 'who' the 'other' is. In South Africa the lines are clear, you are who you *look like* you are. Stone (1962:103) maintains that appearance "sets the stage for, permits, sustains, and delimits the possibilities of discourse by underwriting the possibilities for meaningful discussion." As Daniel expressed this point:

Daniel: I realised now that if you look Indian, you are not going to be accepted as anything else in this country, you know what I mean? If you try to be something else, then you are blocked, if you look Indian then you might as well *be* Indian then . . . So for all intents and purposes, I am Indian . . . For me I grew up in a mixed up world, I didn't know what I wanted to be. I tried to be nice to other people and friendly with them, but they don't accept that if you are Indian. They want to put me in a box so I am just going to have to be Indian . . . So now I actually am *learning* to be an Indian, let's just put it that way . . . I want to be South African and I want to be accepted as South African, but the more I try to do that the more they make me feel like an Indian . . .

Daniel, argues that he is marked as an 'Indian' even though he identifies as South African. Classifying oneself as 'Indian' not only implies appropriating a racial label but also membership, voluntarily or not, to a 'race group.' "Subjective definitions imprison individuals in spheres of prescribed action and expectation," notes Cerulo (1997:338). This marked judgment originates with the state and filters through society through media and popular discourse. As Sartre (1965:69) states, "The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew: that is the simple truth from which we must start...for it is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew." Daniel then, in the absence of any other options, has now resigned himself, to "I am who you say I am." Farhana the mother of Sabheeha from *Family 4*, similarly states,

Farhana: . . . Indian South African, I see it as somebody born of Indian origin in South Africa ...we are called Indians because we have been classified as Indians and because we are of Indian origin . . . I am a South African but I am an Indian because the whites called me an Indian, an Asiatic . . .

South Africans of Indian descent are in awkward position in contemporary South African society. It appears impossible to identify as anything other than the label presented to such people yet when a claim to an acceptance of the label is made, they are viewed as claiming to be Indian and belonging elsewhere. Although the category 'Indian' is accepted in everyday social interactions, it serves as an instrument signifying exclusivity, exclusion and difference.

'RACE' AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE

In a foreword to the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1998:2) stated the following,

Ours is a remarkable country. Let us celebrate our diversity, our differences . . . South Africa wants and needs the Afrikaner, the English, the coloured, the Indian, the black . . . Let us move into the glorious future of a new kind of society where people count, not because of biological irrelevancies or other extraneous attributes, but because they are persons of infinite worth created in the image of God.

The ANC government did make "biological irrelevancies" relevant with the promulgation of various legislations that required people to be categorised and enumerated based on external physical appearance. Archbishop Tutu, who coined the term "rainbow nation" to describe the

'new' South Africa, while attempting to stress inclusivity in the above extract also gives relative prominence to "differences" between South African citizens. The rainbow nation discourse, although widely accepted as a metaphor of acceptance and inclusion of the various 'races' that inhabit South Africa, is in itself flawed as it represents the antithesis of a common South African identity envisioned by the ANC prior to the 1994 election.

Throughout the years since the advent of democracy the discourse on nation building is fettered with both inclusion and difference. The narrative of the nation promulgated by the ANC was based on inclusive citizenship and not 'race.' However 'race' features as a focal point around which South African society orbits. These differences based on 'race' do not resonate with the commitment of the state through the ambit of the Constitution to inclusion based on shared citizenship. Although the metaphor of the rainbow nation is captivating it nevertheless still emphasises *colour*.

Sabheeha, a fifth generation South African of Indian descent from *Family 4*, strongly rejected this description of the nation arguing,

Sabheeha: . . . It is definitely not a rainbow nation . . . people like to claim that it's a rainbow nation but I feel that we will never get away from the whole racial stereotype . . . and I just feel that if it was truly a rainbow nation and everybody was equal then there would be equal job opportunities, there would be equal everything . . . I don't think that we are a rainbow and everyone is equal . . . to label yourself as the rainbow nation, that is just another race label to me. Because it deals with colour so I feel like why do that [in a 'new' South Africa]?

The "equal job opportunities" that Sabheeha refers to in the extract above relates to legislation aimed at redressing past inequalities. The democratic, ANC-led government promulgated legislation such as the Employment Equity Act (EEA), which has as its basis Affirmative Action to "redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups,"¹¹ Designated groups, according to the act, refers to "black people, women and people with disabilities," however 'black' is further broken down into 'Africans,' 'Coloureds,' and 'Indians.'

Appointments to workplace positions then are based on physical external appearance and hinges on self-classification. In order to obtain employment, people are compelled to classify themselves whether or not they identify with any one of the racial categories outlined in the EEA. It should be noted that there are no longer any *legal* definitions of each 'race' as the PRA has been rescinded. Classification then is left open to limited interpretation by the persons classifying, as classification can only occur within the confines of the phenotype of

¹¹ The purpose of the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998, as described in Chapter 1 and Section 2 of the Act, is " . . . To achieve equity in the workplace by (a) promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and (b) implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce." (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

the person being classified, and no other variables are considered. According to Christopher (2009:107) “. . . the census enumerators were advised that a population group was: ‘A group with common characteristics (in terms of descent and history), particularly in relation to how they were (or would have been) classified before the 1994 elections.’” According to this definition then, people born and raised post-1994, like Sabheeha, are also included under the umbrella of the ‘race’ categories defined according to the rescinded PRA, and are thus still burdened by the yoke of the apartheid states ‘race’ classification.

Apart from entry into employment, applications for everything from scholarships, to entry into university which is based on a quota system for certain disciplines such as Health Sciences, are all based on ‘race’ and require a person to self-classify. Maré (2001:96) refers to this constant requirement for classification as the “banality of race confirmation” which he argues is pivotal to the establishment and maintenance of ‘race’ thinking. Thus “extraneous attributes” (Tutu, 1998:2) indeed govern every sphere of an individual’s life in South Africa.

‘Race’ remains a marker of the ‘other,’ as racial ontologies of apartheid continue to inform so-called ‘non-racial’ practices espoused by the democratic state. This perpetuation of ‘race’-based categories in post-apartheid South Africa and the unproblematic usage of racial terms in the political arena, the media and social discourse have indeed contributed to the continuation of apartheid-esque ‘race’ thinking and racialisation.

At the end of the “rainbow” then, lie the remnants of legitimised separateness of apartheid, reborn into categories ‘required’ for redress which ultimately creates and maintains ‘separateness’ in the psyche of South Africans by encouraging people to continually think in terms of ‘race.’

South Africa’s socio-political context therefore, has contributed to unique racial experiences for families. The Group Areas Act, created residential, social and economic segregation and left a lasting legacy of socio-economic catastrophe in the country. Although ‘Indian’ people are heterogeneous in terms of religion, original language and class, the creation of these exclusively ‘Indian’ locations to house only South Africans of Indian descent, further entrenched the construction of ‘Indians’ as a homogenous group. Relationships with people assigned to other ‘race groups’ were limited as everything from education to hospitals were segregated along these lines. The different residential locations for each of the ‘races,’ in contemporary South African society, has been the virulent legacy of apartheid. Although the Group Areas Act has been rescinded most suburbs have retained its ‘old’ racial composition especially formerly ‘Indian’ and ‘black’ townships. The effects of ‘race’ and the material reality caused by legitimised racial segregation still persists and families then are constrained by their geographical location in society and parental financial capital as a result of past racial inequalities. According to Collins (1998:63), “Families constitute primary sites of belonging to various groups . . .” in this instance South Africans of Indian descent are deemed to ‘belong’ to the category ‘Indian’ and this is supported by the material, physical as well as the socio-economic and political context, which then affects the family structure and function. Inequality is therefore maintained through continued categorisation from which the family cannot escape.

CONCLUSION

What is most apparent post-1994 is the efficacy of the apartheid racial categories which has led to continued 'race' thinking and racialisation in a supposedly 'non-racial' society and which informs everyday thinking and discourse. The legacy of apartheid legislation apart from the Population Registration Act, such as the Group Areas Act, are still very much intact, with a minority of people having the resources to relocate to areas that were once deemed 'white' only. South Africans remain trapped physically, in the case of those victims of the Group Areas Act, and mentally in a stronghold based on 'race.' This maintenance of the racial classifications of the apartheid government by the democratically elected ANC, who are stewards of the constitution which proclaims that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, serves to preserve 'race' thinking and ultimately racial hierarchies. The change in political power in South Africa then did not alter the psyche of 'race' thinking that is still profoundly engrafted in South African society, as the racial discourse is also entrenched firmly in legislation. In addition the legacy of the apartheid legislation is still evident in South African society though racialised spaces, residential areas, educational institutions and the like.

The data demonstrates that despite agency, South Africans of Indian descent including the born-free and raised-free generation are still trapped in racial cages. I argue that the categories persist in everyday discourse and practices because it has been implemented in state law. The individuals in the families interviewed in this study, from the various generations assert a strong South African identity, but nevertheless uncritically accept the label 'Indian' as a 'race' classification with some pointing to its ties to 'culture.'

It has been argued that we become who we are as social beings as a result of the 'language' produced by the discourses in society (Burr, 1995:57). The influence and power of the official discourse of the democratic state is no different to that of the apartheid state in that both coded 'race' into the DNA of the apparatus of government through legislation and policy. As a result, it informs every aspect of an individual's life from education to employment and thus has become 'normal' and taken for granted in society. As Alexander (2007:93) argues, "The state, or more generally, the ruling classes, in any society have the paradigmatic prerogative of setting the template on which social identities, including racial identities, are based. Subaltern groups and layers of such societies necessarily contest or accept these identities over time . . ." A major shift in the discourse on 'race,' did not occur in the transition from apartheid to democracy i.e., discourses which constituted people as racial subjects remained integral to the new dispensation and were left undisputed.

Many argue (see for example Davies and Harré, 1990), that individuals have choices within the discursive narratives, however, regarding racial identity in South Africa, choices are limited if not non-existent. As Christopher (2002:401) notes "Individuals find themselves firmly fixed as members in various groups of a particular dimension and substance." The fact that South Africans are products of "an experiment in human engineering" (Gorra, 1997:67), are largely ignored and this is chiefly because 'race thinking,' exacerbated by state emphasis

on race classification, has become so embedded in the national psyche and continues to be passed down to each generation.

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