

Belonging or Longing to Be?

The sense of belonging of Coloured South-African Adolescents



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Map 1

Index

INDEX	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
INTRODUCTION	6
COLOUREDS	7
METHODOLOGY	9
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	9
DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP.....	9
IDENTITY	10
BELONGING.....	10
SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES	12
CONNECTING THE CONCEPTS	13
RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS.....	14
OPERATIONALISATION.....	14
RESEARCH AREA AND UNIT OF ANALYSIS.....	15
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	16
EXPERIENCES OF THE RESEARCHER.....	17
FEED-BACK FROM THE RESPONDENTS.....	18
WHERE DO I BELONG?	19
UCT FEMALE STUDENTS.....	19
<i>Introduction</i>	19
<i>Who Am I?</i>	19
<i>Coloured Identity</i>	19
<i>History of Apartheid</i>	20
<i>Stereotypical Coloured Culture</i>	21
<i>Class</i>	22
<i>Gender expectations</i>	22
<i>Being at Home</i>	23
<i>In and Out the Comfort zone</i>	24
<i>Conceptions of Black and White people</i>	26
<i>Conclusion</i>	27
UCT MALE STUDENTS	28
<i>Introduction</i>	28
<i>Who Am I?</i>	28
<i>Coloured Identity</i>	28
<i>A Common Coloured Identity</i>	29
<i>At Home with Coloureds and the Coloured Culture</i>	30
<i>South-Africa, home?</i>	31
<i>Conceptions of black and white</i>	32
<i>Conclusion</i>	33
UWC FEMALE STUDENTS.....	34
<i>Introduction</i>	34
<i>Who Am I?</i>	34
<i>Coloured Identity</i>	34
<i>History of Apartheid</i>	35
<i>Stereotypical Coloured Culture</i>	36

<i>Different Groups and Classes of Coloureds</i>	37
<i>Troubled Sense of Home</i>	37
<i>Conceptions of Black and White People</i>	39
<i>After All, I Am South-African</i>	39
<i>Conclusion</i>	40
UWC MALE STUDENTS	41
<i>Introduction</i>	41
<i>Who Am I?</i>	41
<i>Coloured Identity</i>	41
<i>Constraints, the Downside of Coloured Culture</i>	42
<i>Home, the Upside of Coloured Culture</i>	43
<i>A Common Coloured Identity</i>	44
<i>Religion, Filling Up the Gap</i>	45
<i>South-Africa is Home, But</i>	45
<i>Conceptions of Black and White People</i>	46
<i>Conclusion</i>	47
CONNECTING THE CONCEPTS	48
CONCLUSIONS	50
REFERENCES	51
BOOKS AND ARTICLES	51
OTHER.....	52

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Introduction

"We enter into a covenant that we shall build a society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world."
Nelson Mandela, Inaugural Address, Pretoria 9 May 1994.

1994 marked a new era in the South-African and world history, as Apartheid officially came to an end and the country started to prepare itself for the creation of a *'Rainbow Nation'*¹.

During the Apartheid years, a segregationist ideology and policy was conducted, wherein different groups in the society were living completely segregated from each other. Some groups were strongly disadvantaged, as their legal rights differed from other groups.

The end of Apartheid was suppose to bring an end to this segregation and to the inferiority of these groups, however, Foster describes that since the end of the Apartheid, the segregation in the society is still very much present, in fact he states that the South-African society has moved from a non-contact society during the Apartheid period to a minimal-contact society in the post-Apartheid period (Foster, 2006). The different groups in the society thus still have very little interaction.

In this research the minimal-contact society will be the main focus. The aim is to find out why the different social groups in South-Africa are still avoiding interaction and continue to live segregated, even though Apartheid has ended more than a decennium ago now.

Why is it that a minimal-contact society is seen as harmful and why is South-Africa striving for a 'rainbow nation', is it truly a problem if people keep living segregated? The answer is yes, as South-Africa is a very unequal society. In fact it is one of the most unequal societies among the world and economic inequalities are deeply racialised and gendered (Foster, 2006). This means that a person's race, could become a constraint to obtain success in life.

Obviously there are thus still reasons to exclude some groups from economic growth for example. Hence being legally equal, provides no guarantee for actually being regarded as equal, why is that? What is the reasoning behind the ongoing segregation, in what is supposed to be a post-Apartheid society? And most importantly, do people feel at home in a society that runs on minimal contact?

This sense of belonging in a society of minimal contact is what this research endeavours to discover and what makes it innovative. It pays attention to the segregation in the society from the point of view of Belonging or 'feeling at home', the creation of Identity and the construction of Symbolic Boundaries.

¹ The *'Rainbow Nation'* is a term that used to refer to the development of the multicultural diversity within the South-African society.

Coloureds

This research will be focused on one particular group in South-Africa, namely the Coloureds. The Coloureds are an interesting group, one could say they are kind of a middle group, not white and not black and therefore hard to describe or define.

Moreover, there is a lot of focus on the relationship between white and black people and their position in South-Africa, but the Coloureds are often mentioned more on the sidelines. Therefore, this group will be the focus of this research.

Being largely descendants from slaves and indigenous South-African people, the Coloureds today form a minority group living in South-Africa, who make up about 9% of the entire population.

Although it is quite an impossible task to try and define this group of people called Coloureds, several attempts have been made in the literature. A summary of the different definitions of Coloureds is presented here, in order to receive a better understanding of who they are.

Less than white, better than black, that is how Erasmus defines the social group in South-Africa, called the Coloureds. This group is very complex in the sense that it had a hard time forming an own identity (Erasmus, 2001:13). For one, Coloureds are neither black nor white. Erasmus mentions that Coloureds have to choose who they are, either black or white. This of course creates internal struggles and develops difficulties when forming one's own identity. Apart from the fact that Coloureds themselves have a hard time figuring out who they are, the Coloured identity is never seen as an identity on its own (Erasmus, 2001).

Zegeye adds that it is hard to distinguish a Coloured person, they can be found in all shades of skin colours and have various types of phenotypical features (Zegeye, 2001:249). The Coloureds are thus a very heterogeneous group. Why then are they named Coloureds? These otherwise scattered pockets of people were defined by governmental decree as Coloureds (Zegeye, 2001:250). The 'Coloureds' then started to act upon this distinction made by the government, this led to an invented culture (life-style and traditions). On the one hand, partly accepting the governmental decree of being one group and on the other hand being a product of an invented culture, is problematic for developing a Coloured identity.

There are however some who are pleased by the creation of a Coloured culture. To them the Coloured culture can be clearly distinguished. What these distinctions are, however differs, some suggest separate political institutions and groups, even an autonomous Coloured state ('Kleurlingstan'). Others prefer to view themselves as Coloured, but being part of South-Africa and thus contributing to South-Africa as a Coloured.

Not everyone accepts being placed in the invented culture of Coloureds, the term Coloured is even rejected by some. For them the term has been used as a means to prevent oppressed groups to stand up together against their oppressors. The only distinction that can be made is thus that of the oppressor (whites) and the oppressed ('blacks').

Adhikari claims that the Coloured identity has always been present and remained stable during the Apartheid. It only started to change in the post-Apartheid period when Coloureds tried to define themselves beyond Apartheid. They started to rethink their identity and question whether they are a Coloured, a South-African, an African etcetera (Adhikari, 2005).

There are thus different opinions among the Coloureds about the group identity, if at all present. These differences reflect the different subgroups among the Coloured community. This is not surprising, as the Coloured community exists of many different backgrounds (South-Africa, Indonesia, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Malaya, Madagascar, Mozambique, St. Helena, Mauritius and Europe), brought together into one group, called Coloured.

Methodology

This chapter gives attention to how this research is designed and conducted. Furthermore, the experiences of the researcher and the feed-back of the respondents on the research are included as well. It helps to shed light on both the restraints of this research and concurrently the good practices.

Theoretical Framework

Foster (2006) claims that South Africa has made a transition from a non-contact society to a minimal contact society. However, South Africa is often called the '*Rainbow Nation*', wherein every citizen is considered to be equal. There is thus a discrepancy between the '*Rainbow Nation*' and the reality. In order to understand how individuals deal with this, this research chooses a specific approach with a central role for the identity of the individual.

There are four central concepts utilised in this research, namely identity, belonging, symbolic boundaries and democratic citizenship. These concepts are closely interlinked and essential to provide an answer to the research question. Democratic citizenship is the normative concept, while identity is partly constructed by symbolic boundaries and belonging. An individuals' identity is partly constructed by the interaction with other people, and the symbolic boundaries created by the individual determine with whom this interaction takes place. Furthermore, an individuals' identity is also determined by the place they live. This is represented by the concept of belonging, which deals with the feeling of home and the actual place the individual is living at.

Democratic Citizenship

Democratic citizenship can be seen as the normative concept under which the other concepts in this research fall. Legally, citizenship is very well taken care of in South Africa. However, there is still very little interaction between the different social groups (Foster 2006). Apparently, people still have reasons to create boundaries for themselves, besides the boundaries created through the state. For the purpose of this research it is important to understand that citizenship is not only about the rights and obligations of people, but also about their emotional belonging to the state. Citizenship is the concept that connects a person's identity to the state (Kymlicka 1995), as well as an emotional connection between citizens (Jones and Gaventa 2002).

There are several perspectives on citizenship, with the liberal perspective being the narrowest, focusing on the rights and obligations of citizens and state only. The communitarian perspective however, puts community belonging and the socially embedded citizen central. '*Citizenship is defined through, and is seen to develop, particular 'civic virtues', such as respect for others and recognition of the importance of public service*' (Jones and Gaventa 2002:4). The group identity is essential in this perspective, and the individuals identity is created through interaction with other individuals in the community.

The relationship between citizenship and identity clearly comes to the fore in each of the perspectives on citizenship (Jones and Gaventa 2002). Since the focus of the communitarian perspective is on the rights of the individual, but also on its responsibilities towards the other community members and the community at large, this is interesting for the research. From the communitarian perspective a distinction is made between the nation and the state, the nation is viewed as a community within the state. Hence, each individual has a responsibility towards every other citizen within the nation. This responsibility is generally translated into supporting the shared values of the nation (Ai Etzioni 2007).

Democratic citizenship and the way people view their citizenship, is strongly connected to their identity. Citizenship is broader than the connection between an individual and the state only, there can be friction between the legal citizenship as described in the South African Constitution and the emotional citizenship and the connection between citizens from the various groups. Citizenship supposedly connects the wider community, but in practice it turns out to be difficult to connect everybody in the 'Rainbow Nation'.

Identity

Who you are, is partly influenced by the place you live in and the people you interact with and therefore, it determines how you view others. That is why identity is a useful concept to this research.

Franchi and Swart state that identity is important in the sense that it defines the meaning and the value of 'the Self' and the ideals and projected attributions of 'the Other' (*Franchi and Swart, 2003:211*). This individual struggle to define one's own identity is done through so called identity markers, such as race, language, ethnicity, religion, gender, social class, nationality, politics and profession for example.

Dolby (*Dolby, 2001:9*) looks at identity markers as well, but refers to them as identity categories, she adds that *these categories are not pre-given, but constitute an array of available cultural meanings and identities into which one places or sutures oneself, at the same time internalizing those meanings in an attempt to stabilize both oneself and the surrounding world.* (*Dolby, 2001:9*).

Korf and Malan, like Dolby acknowledge the fact that identity helps an individual to know who he or she is, who comes close to that and who does not. Therefore they describe the importance of having a distinctive identity, as an individual, but also in a group to compare with other groups (*Korf and Malan:2002*).

An individual thus holds different identities, a person for instance can be Coloured, a woman, Muslim, South-African etcetera. Which identity marker is used when, depends on the situation. At some points it may be vital, that a person marks him or herself as a Coloured person, while in other cases being a Muslim is more important. The same is the case for indentifying oneself as an individual or as being part of a group.

An individual can therefore have different levels of identity, both an individual and a group identity. Klandermans et al. 2001 describe collective (national) identity and stress the importance of combining different levels of identity or as they refer to it, multiple identities. In their study, in fact they show that having multiple identities, makes people more integrated into society and having different identities does not have to be conflictious.

Identity is thus a complex and multileveled concept, that is comprised of different aspects.

Belonging

The concept of belonging is important to this research, as it may explain the status quo of the segregation in the society. At the very least it will explain why people continue to live where they are, namely South-Africa.

There are different synonyms for belonging in the literature, for instance feeling of belonging, sense of belonging, feeling of home and 'homeness'. All of these synonyms will be used in this research.

Belonging is a concept used in many disciplines, each giving a different meaning to the concept. In this research, the concept will be viewed from a social sciences perspective. However, it must be stated, that the concept is continuously redefined and adapted, in a way, useful to changing contexts. Therefore, it is important to explain how it will be used in this research. Belonging here, is about 'feeling at home', having the idea that one belongs where he or she is at that moment, not just physically, but also mentally. It is important to state that this includes more than just geographical features, as 'feeling at home' is determined by multiple factors, such as cultural, social, political and other factors.

However, geographical features do matter, Altman and Low talk about place attachment. Place in their definition of place attachment covers the environmental/geographical setting, that people are emotionally and culturally attached to. The concept of place is important for the concept of belonging, whether a person belongs, cannot be detached from where that person is placed (*Altman and Low, 1992*). Place attachment used by Altman and Low, is very similar to belonging used in this research. They emphasize on the multiple factors that need to be taken into account when researching place attachment. Affect (feelings and emotions), cognition (knowledge, thought and belief) and practice (action and behaviour) are described as factors influencing especially the attachment part. When focusing on the place part, it is important to consider, the scale (earth, neighbourhood etc), specificity (urban, rural etc) and tangibility (versus intangible: heaven, promised land etc) of a particular place (*Altman and Low, 1992*).

Although these factors encompass for a large part, the concept of belonging used in this research, there are some important factors left to mention. Belonging is affected by time and change and therefore these aspects must be taken into account as well. Werner, Altman and Oxley (*Werner, Altman & Oxley, 1985*) make a clear distinction to describe time and change, they refer to this as linear, meaning past, present and future and cyclical or recurring, meaning cyclical or recurring events and activities.

Low adds symbolism to the list of factors to study place attachment, these are valuable for the concept of belonging as well (*Altman and Low, 1992*). Low talks about symbolic ties that have a binding function. These ties are constructed through genealogy, that is attachment based on historical and family ties, that can be found back in language and cultural practice. Loss and destruction, the loss or destruction of a place can become a reason to get attached to a place. Economics, for example the ownership of a piece of land, which may provide social and political survival. Cosmology, the correspondence of cultural, religious, mythological and moral conceptions that people hold of the world with the landscape, thus whether the landscape fits the ideological beliefs. Pilgrimage, travelling to, dreaming of and experiencing a certain place that has cosmological meanings. Narrative, storytelling, for example myths, political accounts or family histories can function as a form of place attachment, by creating a link between people and their land through a story (including moral lessons).

Although this research focuses on the feeling of belonging of individuals, social relations are essential, as the feeling of belonging may be constructed through social interaction. It may even be the case that the collective or cultural feeling of belonging transcends the individual's feeling of belonging. Thus Families, community and culture can affect the individual's sense of belonging and may even replace the unique feeling of belonging into a collective feeling of belonging. For this reason aspects as family, community and culture or in short the collective belonging have to be discussed as well, however linking them back to the belonging of the individual.

There are thus different levels of belonging, that influence the belonging of an individual. Someone could belong to a community or to a country, but also two both. Looking at the different levels, it becomes possible to understand which ones contribute to the belonging of an individual and why. Again for the sake of finding the reasons of why and how someone belongs or does not belong.

In sum, belonging is interpreted, narrated, felt, perceived, understood, imagined and physical.

Symbolic Boundaries

Symbolic boundaries are important for this research, as they may function as a tool to explain the lack of interaction between different social groups. This, because symbolic boundaries explain who belongs to an individual's social group and whom does not. The own social group is always viewed more positively compared to other social groups and therefore may explain why the interaction taking place is so limited (Lamont and Molnár 2002).

The concept of boundaries is often used in sociology, and can be divided in social and symbolic boundaries. According to Lamont and Molnár (2002:168) '*symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space*'. Symbolic boundaries are used by social groups to define the difference between 'us' and 'them' (Pachucki *et al* 2007). These distinctions are expressed by taboos, cultural attitudes and practices and with likes and dislikes. Unlike social boundaries, symbolic boundaries are not detectable as patterns of social exclusion or class and racial segregation (Lamont & Molnár 2002:169) but symbolic boundaries can turn into social boundaries when the boundary is widely agreed upon or salient.

Boundaries are important because both individuals and groups partially base their identity on the boundaries drawn. Dominant groups can make use of boundaries to exclude other groups from certain resources, as happened very openly during the Apartheid time in South Africa. By comparing groups and making the own social group stand out positively to other groups, attempts are made to differentiate between groups. In this, the permeability or openness of the boundary can play an important role for this research (Lamont & Molnár 2002). When group boundaries are perceived as very closed, it can contribute to the social change of the group(s) with a low status, which will try to achieve the status of the dominant social group. However, studies have shown that the dominant group often constrains the marginalized group in their options to do so.

Symbolic boundaries are influenced by gender as well. Whether the individual is male or female, has a direct influence on the symbolic boundaries drawn, as for example male workers are perceived as more capable than their female counterparts. The so called glass ceiling for women in the work place is one of the most clear examples of the role gender can play with the drawing of symbolic boundaries (Lamont and Molnár 2002).

In summary, symbolic boundaries are one of the main concepts of the research because they constrain the relationships between people from different groups. The drawn boundaries also have an influence on the identity of individuals and on collective identity. The distinction between 'us' and 'them' plays an important role in access to resources and defines the relationships between members of different groups.

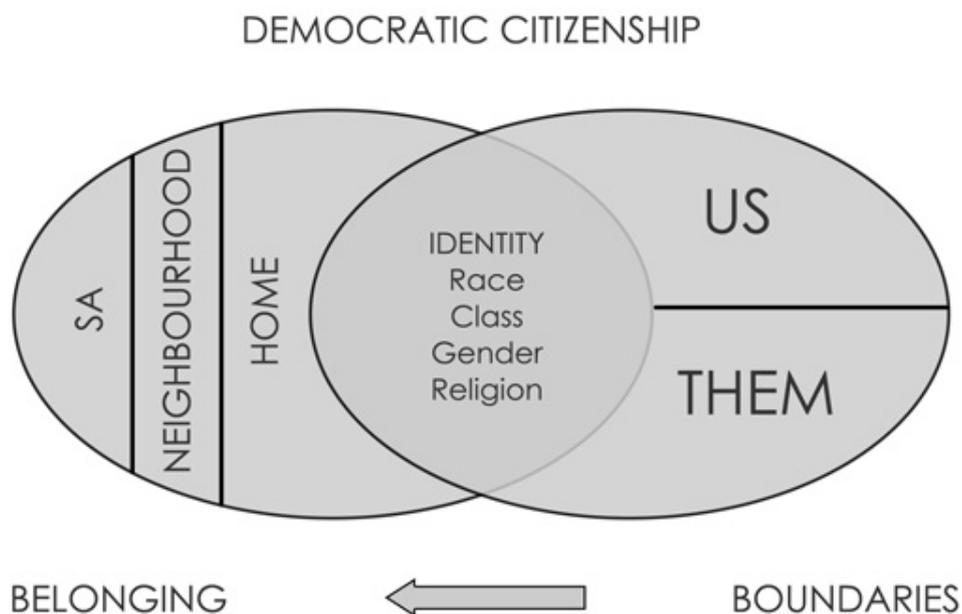
Connecting the Concepts

Having described the concepts relevant to the research, the relationships between the concepts will be explained. Identity is the key concept, as it is partly determined by, and partly determines, each of the three other concepts. First of all it is related to symbolic boundaries. Race, class, gender and religion, contribute to how these boundaries are drawn. On the other hand, the boundaries drawn by the social group someone is part of, influence how the self is viewed and how the individuals' identity is constructed.

Belonging is constructed by identity; again race, class, gender and religion have their influence on belonging, who you are determines your sense of belonging.

Democratic citizenship is closely linked with the identity of the individual. In a way, the citizenship is a continuation of the identity, as it is not only about an individuals' relationship with the state, but also about the relationship between the individual and the community. In the communitarian perspective, the individuals identity is created through the relationships with others in the community, and therefore these relationships are of importance for the identity.

Symbolic boundaries have their influence on the sense of belonging, as the boundaries drawn by an individual partly determine for example whether they feel at home in their neighbourhood. People who have a clear 'us-them' distinction have a hard time fitting into a mixed neighbourhood.



Model 1: Conceptual Model

Research question and sub-questions

In order to find the reasoning behind the ongoing segregation and especially the sense of belonging of Coloured South-African students, the following research question is designed:

What is the role of Identity, Symbolic Boundaries and Belonging in the construction of the Democratic Citizenship of Coloured students in Cape Town, South Africa?

In the main research question, the four concepts are represented. In the sub-questions the relationship between the different concepts is further explored. Furthermore, the sub-questions function as a tool to help finding an answer to the main research question:

- *How do Coloured students construct symbolic boundaries?*
- *How is belonging constructed by them?*
- *How are symbolic boundaries and belonging connected?*
- *How do boundaries and belonging link to democratic citizenship?*

Operationalisation

Below the four concepts used in this research have been operationalised. The different dimensions, variables and indicators concerning the four concepts are described.

Democratic citizenship is not operationalised, it is a normative umbrella concept under which the other concepts fall.

Concepts	Dimensions	Variables	Indicators
Democratic citizenship			
Symbolic boundaries	Objects	Important/unimportant Positive/negative Ugly/beautiful	What are important objects in neighbourhood, country, and why? Which objects are negative/ugly, and why? Which are positive/beautiful, and why?
Symbolic boundaries	People	Categorization people in social groups 'people like me/not like me'	Who are part of the own social group? Who is like you and who is not (us/them)?
Symbolic boundaries	Practices	Behaviour Action	How do you behave around people from other social groups at the university? Do you spend time with people from other social groups at the university?
Belonging	Environmental settings	Geographical features (urban/rural, nature/city etcetera)	In what kind of environment do you feel (most) at home?
Belonging	Affect	Emotions and feelings	What do you feel, when you think of home? What kind of feelings do you have, when you think of the place you live now?
Belonging	Time	Past, present, future	Is sense of belonging different from past? Will it change in future and why?

Belonging	Symbolism	-Genealogy -loss and destruction -economics -cosmology -pilgrimage -narrative	-Do you have or had historical and family ties where you live or have lived? -Is there a place that has meaning to you, because of its destruction? -Does/did the place you live(d) provide(d) you any economical benefits? -Does the landscape fit your ideological ideas? -Is there a certain place that has cosmological meanings to you? -Are you living or have you ever lived in a place that has/had a story?
Belonging	Social relations	Family, group/community relations	How is the individual sense of belonging influenced by the different social relations? Is the individual's belonging transcended by the belonging of the different social relations?
Belonging	Levels of belonging	Individual, group/community, collective/national	Which level is most influential for the construction of belonging? How do the different levels of belonging interact?
Identity	Categories of identification (identity markers)	Race Class Gender Religion	To which social group do you belong? What is your gender? To which class do you belong? Religion?
Identity	Levels of identity	Individual (sub)group Collective (national)	How many different levels of identity to you distinguish and how important is each level for the construction of your identity?

Table 1: Operationalisation

Research area and Unit of Analysis

This research is conducted in Cape Town, South-Africa (see map 1). The reasoning behind this decision, is the large population of Coloureds in Cape Town. Coloureds make up 8,9% of the total population in South-Africa and 53,9% of them reside in the Western Cape (*Census 2001 South-Africa*). Approximately 40% of the Coloureds in the Western Cape Province live in the greater Cape Town area (*Adhikari, 2005: 2*). The city of Cape Town is therefore a convenient research area.

Within Cape Town, the precise locations of this research are the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the University of the Western Cape (UWC). Firstly, because the research focuses on Coloured adolescents/students. These adolescents were about 4 years old when the Apartheid ended. In theory, this means that they no longer had to suffer from the injustice of Apartheid and were allowed to interact with different social groups. As was stated earlier, South-Africa is still very much segregated and although in theory these adolescents no longer deal with Apartheid, it is very important to see why in practice they continue to live segregated. This research deals with issues that require good verbal skills to explain and describe those issues thoroughly. Students are likely to be able to express themselves clearly and thoroughly. They are also the same age group as the researcher, which may help to break barriers when talking about sensitive issues such as identity, belonging and symbolic boundaries. Secondly, to include the different categories of identification: class,

race, gender and religion, UCT and UWC are chosen. UCT is known to be the more upper class university, whereas UWC is known to be the middle and low class university. UCT describes itself as a mixed university, it will be interesting to see, whether students from different social backgrounds interact with each other or stay close to their own groups. UWC was classified as a Coloured university during the Apartheid and the majority of its students are at the moment Coloured and black. Again, it will be interesting to study the interaction amongst different groups and to make a comparison of the two, a mixed university and a predominantly Coloured one.

Furthermore, the university is a good way to gain access to students, especially considering the amount of time available to carry out the research.

The rationale of selecting the Coloured group, has to do with the fact that there has been little focus on them compared to the black and white groups in the South-African society. The Coloureds are quite a complicated group in many ways, which makes it a challenge to study them, but at the same time, they are a very intriguing group as well. Consequently, the 'racial' background of the students is Coloured. The unit of analysis are thus Coloured adolescents/students of the University of Cape Town and the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town, South-Africa.

Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative and explorative research, whereby the focus is on the emotions, rationalities and perceptions of individuals, subjectivity will thus be central. The interactions that individuals have, influence their emotions, rationalities and perceptions and therefore constructivism will be the epistemology (*Gray, 2004*). The theoretical perspective that fits the research best, would then be interpretivism. This research searches the interpretations that individuals give to their social world, in order to find out how the emotions, rationalities and perceptions of identity, belonging and symbolic boundaries are drawn (*Crotty, 1998*). Therefore, phenomenology would be the methodology, as the aim of the research is to find out subjectivities (emotions, rationalities and perceptions).

In sum:

Epistemology: Constructivism

Theoretical perspective: Interpretivism

Methodology: Phenomenology

Different methods are used to gain data, in order to obtain triangulation. First of all, the in depth interviews with the students take up a prominent part. The in depth interviews are open interviews, but through an item list, to be sure, all concepts are discussed. The students are asked to explain how things have changed over time: past, present and future and time and change are important. Therefore, life-histories techniques are useful to incorporate and some of these techniques are incorporated.

Another relevant technique to collect data for this research, are observations. The researcher spent a couple of weeks, getting familiar with the campus area and observing how students interact, with whom and where. During these observations, small chats took place, not always about the research topic, but to get familiar with the Coloured students and other students. These chit-chats provided off record data as well. The researcher spent time with students and other Coloured people off campus as well.

Getting formal permission to conduct research is fairly difficult and requires a lot of time. Therefore, contacts were made with a couple of professors working at the universities and they agreed to help getting acquainted with students. However, the main sampling technique used in this research, is snowballing, the students are thus not randomly selected. It acquires formal permission to be able to view a list of all students and draw a random sample and so again, for the sake of time, snowballing is chosen.

The total sample size is forty. However, there are subgroups amongst the Coloureds and different categories of identification that have to be taken into consideration. The sample is designed in a way that gender, class and religion receive attention. Gender will be represented, as half of the respondents are male and the other half is female. Half of the respondents are from UCT and the other half is from UWC to include the aspect of class. Most Coloureds are either Christian or Muslim and therefore half of the respondents are Muslim and the other half is Christian. There was no distinction made between those who practice religion and those who do not, in the sense that some may be raised as Christians or Muslims, but no longer see themselves as such or do not actively practice. Lastly, students from various academic backgrounds are interviewed, to avoid the chance of ending up with a group of friends, who may all have similar interests and backgrounds, especially since snowballing is used as a method.

	Male		Female		Total
	Christian	Muslim	Christian	Muslim	
UCT	5	5	5	5	20
UWC	5	5	5	5	20
Total	10	10	10	10	40

Table 2: Research Sample

The in depth interviews provide a lot of data, that need to be structured. The interviews are transcribed in order to analyse them. Each of the four groups shown in table 1, are analysed separately, to draw comparisons and mark the differences.

In this research, there are a few ethical points that are taken into consideration. First of all, the respondent were able to make an informed decision about participating in the research. Therefore informed (oral) consent was required before the interview was conducted. At that point it was made clear that the respondent can stop the interview at any given point and that the conversation will remain anonymous.

Experiences of the Researcher

Being in a city like Cape Town, it is not very recommendable to take public transport, therefore a car was hired to be able to drive to UWC and UCT. Driving on the highways to the campuses, is like driving into two different worlds. UCT has a beautiful campus on a great location, where one can overlook the city. Driving to UWC, which is about half an hour away from the city centre, miles of shacks are encountered on the side of the roads. It is not difficult to see which campus has more money. Arriving at the campuses, there was a very warm welcome and always full assistance in whatever was required. Most of the students at campus were very willing to participate in the research and helped to find other students as well.

Once everything got on a roll and the interviews started to take place, the real challenge of gaining the trust of the students began. Speaking about identity and race, questions about the researcher's identity were often raised as well: Who are you, Where are you from and Why are you studying Coloureds? All these questions and others were answered after the interview took place, to avoid influencing the conversation. However, being a female born in the Netherlands with Asian roots, has its influence on what the students felt comfortable speaking about. Would the researcher have been a black or a white person, some of the students may not have spoken openly about black and white people. In turn, being a foreigner, it took some time to gain trust. Some of the students were at first a little sceptical, but they lost their scepticism quite quickly. The interviews were an hour and a half on average and often when the interview ended, the students would stay to reflect on the interview and spoke about the research and other issues that were on their minds. Some of the students would send out an invitation for various activities that they were planning to attend and whenever possible, the invitation was accepted with great pleasure.

Besides the interviews, conversations with other Coloureds were held as well. To achieve a better understanding and to get familiar with the culture and the people, different Coloured areas, such as the Bo-Kaap and Mitchel's Plein were regularly visited. However, all off record conversations are excluded from the research, they served merely to provide a better understanding and to be able to view the interviews in their context.

Feed-back from the Respondents

The majority of the respondents stayed to talk about how they experienced the interview. They were surprised that it touched many issues that are very important to them, but they had never reflected on before. Often, there was a feeling of relief, one of the students described it as a *'therapeutical session'*. Mostly, because the conversation enabled them to talk about issues openly and to get things clear. A student who was struggling with her identity, joked and said she figured out her identity. The conversation played out certain things that she did not recognize before and it certainly did not solve the struggle of her identity, but it gave material to think about and reflect on. Thus, overall the interviews were valued positively and useful.

Where Do I Belong?

In this chapter a description and analysis of the main findings of this research will be presented. It consists of four parts that deal with the concepts of Identity, Belonging and Symbolic Boundaries. The four groups are respectively, UTC female students, UTC male students, UWC female students and UWC male students. Each part begins with a group profile, to provide a sketch of the most important characteristics of the group.

UCT Female students

Introduction

Warm and stable homes, strong socio-economical backgrounds and a positive outlook on their own and South-Africa's future, is what marks the female students of UCT. They come from middle to high class families and are in a position to fully explore their talents and strive for self-development, opportunity is the key word. Half of them live in so called white or mixed neighbourhoods, such as Plumbstead and Diep River, the other half reside in areas like Walmer estate and Athlone, that are known as Coloured areas. Nonetheless, their fairly comfortable lives, cannot take away the difficulties of dealing with a Coloured identity and overstepping the symbolic boundaries that are drawn between the different groups in the contemporary society.

Who Am I?

Very grounded, hectic, soulful, cosmopolitan, independent, patriotic, fond of family, happy, quiet, very opinionated, an artist, quirky, happy person, young woman, Muslim, Christian, South-African, these are all characteristics that are named to describe themselves. South-African, being proud to be a female and Christian or Muslim are the most important characteristics of their identity. It is remarkable that Coloured is only hesitantly mentioned by one of them, when in fact all of them feel a connection with being a Coloured.

Coloured Identity

The relationship with the Coloured identity is one of great ambivalence. On the one hand, there is a strong sense of belonging to being Coloured and Colouredness, simultaneously, there is a desire to move away from it. The decision to either seek distance from it or to form part of it, is one that constantly returns and at times can lead to distress.

An art student describes this ambivalence and difficulty of feeling Coloured and belonging to the Coloured group, but at the same time feeling a disconnection to all of it. Originally coming from a low social economical position, she has spent some years living in a Coloured Township with her grandmother. She moved out with her mother and sister when the opportunity to leave arose and they have been residing in white areas ever since. Taking her background into consideration, she states as follows:

“Yeah, I do see myself as a Coloured, but it's quite strange, cause I mixed a lot with white friends and white areas, so my accent and that sort of stuff, like my Coloured friends or cousins would be like, oh you're so white or you're such a whitey, you can't be Coloured. It's a big thing in some communities, like if you're an Indian, you can cook a good curry, but if you can't, than it's tjees, you're Indian how can you not cook a good curry. I work with a Coloured guy and he's got the Cape Town accent, the lifestyle, the way he talks and everything. It crept up where he said, yeah your accent is not Coloured, you don't behave like a Coloured or you don't have Coloured friends or whatever. Sometimes I feel a bit cut off from that community, sometimes in South-African culture, it creeps up and you wanna affiliate with that, you wanna align yourself with that humour or that Coloured identity, but most of the

time it's distance away. Sometimes it's a bit offending, cause I know a lot about Coloured culture and I wanna jump in and say something, sometimes I feel I can't say anything, cause I haven't lived in a Coloured community or culture long enough."

What she describes here, is the internal debate she has when trying to find her sense of belonging. She explains that there are certain occasions where she wants to be part of the Coloured community of which she holds dear memories. Having lunch with her neighbours and being surrounded by the *'the same sort of people'* made her feel she was at home. Since she moved out of that Coloured surrounding, those lunches and people coming together just to talk, have been missing. It is these sort of memories that connect her to her Colouredness. At the same time, she explains that moving out of that Coloured area and from then associating mainly with white people, created a gap in her lifestyle and that of other Coloureds, which became prominent when she went to a mixed High School.

"Like in High School Coloured friends would sit together in the break and it's fun, but do I want to see myself like that, I'm an artist and I grew up in this white neighbourhood, so I think totally different to them, just the different behaviour and mindset, going clubbing in the weekend and that stuff, moving around in the Coloured community, having Coloured friends in a Coloured community. Maybe with my white friends as well, they behaved in a certain way and their lifestyles were different, but maybe art and music and those things interested them, whereas my Coloured friends would just think, ok what club are we going to this week."

The gap in lifestyles is not only a reason for her to move away from the Coloured community, but also to re-evaluate her Colouredness. How much does she really know about it and if she knows enough, is she entitled to speak about issues concerning Coloureds, since she does not *'behave'* like a Coloured. Although she feels that she has distanced herself from being Coloured, more than embracing it, she is offended to be regarded as non-Coloured by other Coloureds. There is a part of being Coloured that she cannot identify with and a part that she wishes to deny, nevertheless, ultimately it is what she is and where she belongs most.

This sense of eventually belonging to the Coloured group is shared by all. Notwithstanding, the path leading to this conclusion is, as illustrated by the art student, one of incertitude. There are certain parts of being Coloured that are embraced, while other parts are refused and negated. The basis for the latter is to be sought in the negative label that has been attached to the term Coloured. It consists of two main factors, namely the history of Apartheid and what is referred to as the *'stereotypical'* Coloured culture.

History of Apartheid

'Well I don't identify myself in race, because I don't think it's a valid thing.'

It is the context of the history of Apartheid which gives the term Coloured a negative label. An immediate association with race comes to mind when hearing the term and it is exactly race that they wish to step away from. Since Apartheid has ended, race should no longer be a legitimate form to distinguish people from each other and thus the term Coloured is disparaging.

"Yeah, I think that there are parts of me that I can't share with my family and your friends are kind of a place that you can stop thinking I'm Coloured, because it doesn't matter anymore, like race doesn't matter anymore. A lot of older people in my family, they still have that in their minds, they still racist you know, so, they still have their ideas of what people are like, when they come from different backgrounds."

Although Apartheid has not always been experienced directly, but through the memories of parents and grandparents, there is a consciousness of the influence it has had and still has. It is an awareness of the role of race and what place it gives them in society. Being conscious of the legacy of Apartheid and that its remnants and psyche still linger in society, there is an intention to move away from race and overstep the boundaries it has created. Hence, there is rejection to being boxed as a Coloured and to be seen as that middle group, that has certain privileges over black people, but are disadvantaged in comparison to white people. Identifying with the Coloured race or labelling yourself as a Coloured, is seen as old Apartheid thinking and thus avoided.

Stereotypical Coloured Culture

The second factor that contributes to a negative label of the term Coloured, is what is referred to as the 'stereotypical' Coloured culture, also known as the *Gam*² culture. It is a particular lifestyle that can be recognized by certain characteristics.

"This is the stereotype I'm gonna give you. They wear a lot of gold, they like R&B and nowadays, they like house as well, they wear All Stars and hang around and they do, do this (live up to the stereotype), it's a stereotype, but a lot of them do it and they're just very laid back, they love to drink and party and have braais.³"

Different aspects of lifestyle, such as language, clothing and music are used to mark this stereotypical culture. Language is a prominent identity marker, wherein the focus lies on accents and the choice of words. The way the language is spoken, the mix of English and Afrikaans and the accent of a person, is important in determining the belonging to the Coloured group. More specifically, *Gam* language or slang are very clearly seen as part of the stereotypical Coloured culture. It is a very specific way of speaking, to which there is no identification felt. Most of them have what is called a 'white' accent and they could be mistaken for a white person, purely judged on their accents. Their accents and way of speaking are part of the disconnection they feel with that stereotypical culture.

'I don't talk that way, you don't have to talk that way.'

In clothing, it is specific brands that are attached to this culture, Jack Purcell, All Stars, Timberland and other big brands, accompanied by certain gold accessories, particularly jewellery. Again there is a desire to move away from this stereotype by expressing that they are different.

'I'm not gonna pull out my front teeth and put gold slits in it.'

This difference is also expressed to state the difference in interests. It is not only a matter of stepping away from the stereotype and showing that they do not form part of it, but it is also to show that there is a genuine difference of interests. Not listening to R&B or Hip Hop music is not a deliberate act to separate themselves from the stereotype, it is simply a matter of different interests.

'The music I like is rock, not the sort of hip hop and that sort of things.'

Nevertheless, this difference of interests contributes to the disconnection with the stereotypical culture, together with the need to move away from all of this, it forms one of the main reasons to view the label of Coloured as negative and therefore to refuse it.

² Gam is a derogatory term to describe working class Coloureds

³ Braai is Afrikaans for barbeque

Class

A student of Commerce and Accounting, who currently resides in a white neighbourhood, but used to live in the Cape Flats area⁴, describes her view on the stereotypical culture and how that can be linked back to class.

“I think there’s a Coloured culture, the very stereotype culture, with gold teeth, the Buffalo or the Timberland shoes, jeans like under the bum, the slang, the Gam language. The stereotypical Cape Flats Coloureds. That’s not the Coloured I see myself as. You get the low class Coloureds and you get us, the normal people.”

The stereotypical lifestyle is thus directly linked to class, in the sense that it mostly prevails among the lower economical classes of Coloured people and not among the middle and high classes. It provides her yet another argument to distance herself from the stereotypical Coloured people, she does not belong to the low class. In another example, a Law student explains how her parents teach at a disadvantaged Coloured school, where the students use slang and wear clothes of American brands. In a more subtle way, she links their lifestyle to their economical background. Others use class as well to present the disparity amongst Coloureds, the divide between rich and poor. However, they do not necessarily connect it with the stereotypical culture.

Gender expectations

It is clear, that there is a disconnection with the stereotypical Coloured culture and that it is one of the main explanations as to why the term Coloured is rejected. Nevertheless, this disconnection goes deeper than just the superficial stereotypes. The gold teeth and the Buffalo shoes certainly form a strong argument to seek distance from Colouredness, but there are less visible stereotypes as well, that provide ground to rethink their belonging to the Coloured group. Gender stereotypes are an important example of this. A Visual Art student, who comes from a Cape Malay background and resides in a Coloured area describes these gender stereotypes.

“As a woman, you know, even though we are allowed to have jobs now, most Cape Malay boys still expect the woman to do the cleaning, to do the cooking, they haven’t grown out of that mentality. I don’t know, I mean it’s starting to happen, but not really and it doesn’t really matter, like my aunties, they don’t ask how’s your studies going, how are you doing, like tell me about your interesting thing, tell me about the scholarship you’ve been given. They ask me, do you have a boyfriend yet, we need to get you married, are you gonna have kids. I’m not interested in it, there’s more to me than that.”

She experiences a clash between her own ideas and worldview and that of her family members and community, they hold expectations that she refuses to live up to. The image created by her society of a proper Cape Malay woman, does not match her pursuit for self development and independence. It reinforces her thoughts of doubt of whether she feels a sense of belonging to this culture and more importantly, whether she belongs to the Coloured group.

This resistance against the gender stereotype and from that the lack of belonging, can be found in other issues as well. A Organisational Psychology student, who lives in a Coloured community, feels a disconnection to most of the girls in her community.

⁴ The Cape Flats is a flat area that is situated to the Southeast of the CBD of Cape Town. During the Apartheid it was a designated area for non-whites only.

“Everyone is about eating and oh what you gonna do for lunch and everything is about the food and getting dressed up to go to someone’s house and they all chill at the house, eat and have tea and Koeksisters⁵ and I’m like, ok mmh, I wanna go do something that’s interesting to me and they’re like, ok let’s go out to Kenilworth, to the mall and hang out at the mall. I just feel I have different interests, so I guess it keeps me from integrating in the community.”

In both cases, not conforming to the rule and the majority, but being different and having different ideas and interests leads to a disconnection with the Coloured community. It distances them from what they view as Coloured behaviour and feeds the dubiety of their Colouredness.

Being at Home

The other half of the explanation for this dubiety can be found in the parts of Colouredness that are embraced. There are certain factors, classified as Coloured by them, that contribute to affirming a sense of Colouredness in them and create a feeling of home. It is a familiarity with the Coloured culture and the people.

“I do feel comfortable with Coloured people. There’s just that familiarity, the language they speak, the mix of English and Afrikaans, the type of humour.”

Aspects of Colouredness that serve as arguments to move away from it, concurrently form arguments to be part of it. Language is a clear example of this. Although most of them speak English with a white accent, the Coloured language is something that contributes to feeling at home. It is a way and manner of speaking, regardless of whether they can speak that way, that can only be fully understood by a Coloured.

The Commerce and Accounting student, who draws a line between the ‘low class Coloureds’ and herself, the ‘normal people’, used to live in Grassy Park, a Coloured area in the Cape Flats. Since she moved into a white area, Grassy Park is home to her, in spite of the fact that it can be seen as an area with a low social economical status. The white neighbourhood where she currently resides, lacks the community feel that was present in Grassy Park.

“It’s very, very close, everybody knows everybody, you can ask anything, they will lend it to you. Whereas this place, it’s predominantly white and the neighbours don’t know each other. I don’t know who lives next door to me. They keep to themselves. That’s why I feel at home there (Grassy Park). Everybody knows me and I know everybody there.”

Despite the fact that in many ways she does not identify with the Coloureds who live in Grassy Park, she feels most at home there. To her, that strong community feel is something specific to Coloureds and appeals to the Coloured part in her. There is another clear example of this appeal. The Visual Art student, who doubts her belonging to the Coloured group, as her ideas do not coincide with those of her family members and at times even feels suffocated, feels a strong sense of belonging to them. They create a feeling of home for her. The relationship she holds with her family, connects her with the Coloured part in her.

“What makes you Coloured, definitely comes from the people you feel at home with. Who your mother is to you, the kind of relationship you have with the people in your family.”

Family is a very important factor in defining home. The concept of family encompasses both immediate as well as extended family. All live with either their parents or their extended family and there is constant interaction. These close-knit family ties are seen as an important aspect of the Coloured culture. It is an aspect that they can connect with,

⁵ Traditional Coloured sweet dessert

because their family provides them with a stable home and a constant and reliable support system, that they can always fall back on.

Another aspect of the Coloured culture that is positively valued, are certain socio-cultural events such as Eid⁶, Christmas, Easter and the Coons Festival⁷. These events are seen as typical for the Coloured culture, since Eid and Christmas for example are celebrated in a way specific to this culture. There is a sense of happiness and home during these events.

“Easter came, a while back and we’re a Christian family and that brings back memories of how the Coloured community has celebrated these sort of things. There’s a lot of cooking and the same sort of food repeated, like pickled fish and that sort of stuff and when you ask about it, you find out that pickled fish wasn’t really a Coloured thing, it was more like a Catholic thing, where they only eat fish, but you have a sense that it belongs to your community or identity and that’s where the family gets together and you feel a sense of belonging in those sort of times.”

Hence, positively valued aspects of the Coloured culture, contribute to feeling a sense of belonging to it and a sense of home. This feeling of home can only be understood in the context of South-Africa. The Coloured culture and the term Coloured cannot be found anywhere else and form part of seeing South-Africa as home.

“South-Africa you know, so many problems, there’s not enough electricity even, corruption, but that’s why I don’t feel like I want to leave, because it’s such an exciting time, but such a careful time at the same time and I think if all university students decide to go because of the situation of the country, where’s it gonna leave us. I do feel that kind of responsibility to the place, yeah.”

There is a strong sense of responsibility and loyalty towards the country and an impression that there is a momentum for change and opportunity for the country and the people. Apartheid has ended, leaving the country with some wounds, however that is seen as one of the reasons to stay and try to contribute in the healing process. The end of Apartheid has also presented new opportunities, that were not always there for their parents. They have seen a different side of South-Africa and hardly endured any hardships. They wish to give back for the opportunities that have been received. Moreover, their social economical position allows them to develop themselves and provides some stability to build a future in the country, which in turn leaves little incentive to leave. All of them would like to travel and explore new places, but with the intention of eventually settling down in South-Africa. The few who consider to move, would do so mainly for economic reasons, if they are not able to find a good job and build the life they have pictured, then moving is the only solution. They do state that they still belong to South-Africa and it will always be referred to as home.

The reason to mark South-Africa as home is twofold. On the one hand, there is hope that the country’s situation will improve and the belief that their contribution is necessary to realize this. On the other hand, it is the Coloured culture that defines home, such as the all time supporting system of the family and the special events. It is a familiarity with the Coloured culture and people, that is unique to South-Africa. Hence, no other place than South-Africa can or will be home.

In and Out the Comfort zone

All, with the exception of one, spend most of their time outside of university with Coloured people. The reason for this segregation is believed to be a matter of better understanding

⁶ An Islamic holiday celebrated twice a year

⁷ Traditional New Year’s celebration which originally marked the one day off a year that the slaves were given by their masters

amongst people of the same group. The familiarity and understanding within the group offer a comfortable situation. Nevertheless, the transition of moving in and out the comfort zone is not always a smooth one, it is a switch that has to be made between two worlds. The problem is that in neither of these worlds they are fully understood.

Inside the walls of the university environment there is a need to step out of the comfort zone. Classes and project groups are mixed and in some cases there are no other Coloured fellow students. There is therefore no way around the interaction with other groups. However, this interaction takes place on a superficial level, as soon as the formal activities end, the majority seeks their own group again. The students observe this lack of interaction when they look around at their campus.

“The majority is segregated. There are a fair few mixed groups. You can see it at the Jamie steps during lunch, when the whole campus is out there. You see, black, black, black and then white, white, white.”

It is not always easy to make a switch between the home environment and the university. There are parts of them that they do not express at home, but are known to university friends and there are parts that are unknown to their university friends, but are expressed at home. Some parts are hidden, because they are not understood or approved of. The Visual Art student describes this lack of understanding and disapproval.

“I think that I have many faces, I guess I’ve had to, I don’t think my family would accept who I am, outside of that community. I guess they would disapprove of how I dress and you know. Whereas a lot of my friends don’t even know that I am Muslim, which is actually a very big part of who I am, but they don’t know it. I guess a lot of my friends aren’t Coloured, especially now that I’m at Michaelis, which is a predominantly white institute, a lot of people don’t really understand what it means to be who I am, because it’s just so easy to fit in with what they’re doing, it’s difficult for them to conceive what my life is made up of, like the other day I took my friend to the area I’m from, cause she said she wanted to see and she was surprised, she was genuinely surprised, because they don’t think that somebody that comes from there, could end up there, where they are now, I guess yeah. Some people see me as a very wild party girl, some people see me as this normal, sweet, innocent girl, you know it’s very ranged, haha.”

To be accepted in both worlds, there is a need to adapt to each of them. At the university, she participates in activities that her family would not approve of, such as drinking for example. It is easier for her to adapt than to try and explain who she really is, since her university friends have difficulty understanding her Coloured culture. She explains this through two artworks she made on her own identity.

“I did a performance called koeksister girl, but among the Cape Malay, like when a girl is typical Cape Malay, we call typical Cape Malay girls koeksisters, but it’s kind of a derogative term, it’s not like saying it a nice way, kind of like, yeah you’re just a fucking koeksister, what do you know, but at the same time, we all are. I made the koeksister back home and I made a body print, I smeared it all over myself, it was very disgusting and I made body prints of it and I sold it to the class, but I priced kisses, so they had to basically like snugg me in order to buy, but the only guy that did it, was actually the only Cape Malay boy in my class and at the time he was the only Cape Malay boy at Michaelis.”

None of the white boys in her class ‘bought’ her body prints. They did not understand the meaning of the ‘koeksister’ and what it meant for her and her identity. The only Cape Malay boy however, knew very well what it meant to her. In her second artwork, where she bathed in tea and then served it to him, she made a conscious decision to serve it to him, as he would be the only one, who could fully understand and appreciate it. Also, she felt more

comfortable giving it to him, even though any other guy would have probably accepted it from her.

Her family in turn, does not understand what goes on in her life outside of home and what it precisely is that she is studying, so at home, she adapts herself and becomes the 'sweet and innocent girl'. Although she is not always understood at home, eventually it is where she belongs most.

"There is kind of this mutual understanding of the Coloured people, like I don't know, like you could say I maybe feel a little bit more at home with them."

This feeling is shared by all, it is the reason they spend most of their time with Coloured people. Those who live in a Coloured community have a lot of interaction with their community and neighbours, in contrast to those who live in a white neighbourhood, they often do not know who lives next to them. The ones who previously lived in a Coloured neighbourhood, state that they felt more at home there, because of the people and the culture. They see differences between themselves and black and white people, that hamper the mutual understanding and interaction.

Conceptions of Black and White people

There are three main arguments used to explain the differences between Coloured, black and white people, namely class, culture and previous racial classifications. These differences are essential to understand why they feel most at home in the Coloured culture and spent most of their time with Coloured people.

"The blacks still get a little bit more of a hard time, the Coloureds get less of a hard time and the whites are fine."

The white population is viewed as upper class, having endured no hardships, not in the Apartheid past and not at present time, whereas the Coloured group had to struggle more in the Apartheid and are still in a less comfortable position economically. Although these students may not have dealt with problems directly and are in a good financial position, their parents had to struggle to reach the social economical position they find themselves in at the moment. The social economical position of the black population is seen as the opposite of the white population, they have and to a great extent still are struggling to make ends meet and are considered low class. The social economical position of both the white and black group do not coincide with that of the Coloured group and is presented as an argument for non-identification with these groups.

"I don't come from a people that have suffered as much as black people have suffered, but I don't come from a people that have been as privileged as white people have."

Culture is the second factor influencing the interaction amongst groups. The black culture is clearly seen as the most difficult to understand, because of its richness in traditions.

"Just dating a black guy or marrying, there's just all sorts of cultural differences, that you don't know, that you'd have to grapple with."

The white culture is seen as a more global culture, that everyone seems to be adapting and are familiar with. Nevertheless, that does not take away the fact that it is very different from the Coloured culture. The difference in cultures and the understanding of what they comprise are consequently a barrier for intensive interaction with other groups.

The last, but certainly not least important factor is a result of the Apartheid, namely, the racial classifications that were drawn in that period. The position in society of the different groups is for some still connected to the racial ladder, developed by the Apartheid regime and to the level of interaction with the other groups. The black group is considered to be the lowest group on the racial ladder, giving little stimulation for thoroughgoing interaction. Often, these classifications stem from the upbringing they received from their family in the aftermath of the Apartheid. They are aware of the classifications they make and disapprove of it, but unconsciously hold these ideas of the different races.

“ I could definitely never be black, which is very strange, I think that’s from my family, that discrimination and separation from the black race, that they’re maybe lower than the Coloured race. I think in the new South-Africa it has influenced my thinking.”

The white group, who is seen as the top of the racial ladder, does not reflect the racially disadvantaged position of the Coloured group and cannot understand what it means to come from such a position.

These three factors form the main obstacles for intensive interaction with the other groups. The boundaries of the white group are however easier to overstep than those of the black group. Belonging to the white group is far more advantageous, when looking at each of the factors. Social economically, they would fall in the upper class category, racially they would climb to the top of the ladder and culture wise, it would be easier to adapt the white global culture, than the perceived complicated black culture. The hypothetical decision to choose between the white or black group is then made fairly easy.

“I Could imagine being white, cause I see them as spoilt and everything put with a spoon in their mouth, just having everything you want in life. Whereas I feel as a Coloured, you have to work, you have to work hard to prove yourself sometimes. Being black I don’t think so, I see them as being worse off and being third in the racial ladder.”

Back to reality, class, culture and race strongly influence the boundaries that are drawn, that in turn cause the lack of interaction amongst different groups and prevent them from stepping out of their understanding and familiar surroundings, their comfort zone.

Conclusion

Who am I? Coming back to this question of identity and specifically Coloured identity, it can be stated that the answer is somewhat ambiguous. At first sight, there is a need to move away from Coloured identity and especially the label of Coloured. It is an idea developed by Apartheid, that is nowadays associated with a certain type of people, that no identification is felt with. However, the connection to the Coloured identity is far too strong to ignore. There is a sense of belonging to it, as there are certain elements to it, that only a Coloured could understand. It is exactly these elements (language, family bonds, a type of humour etcetera) that they eventually identify with and feel most at home in, certainly when compared to other groups in the society.

“I think it’s something that both defines me and sets me apart.”

UCT Male Students

Introduction

Living in Coloured middle to high class areas, such as Crawford, Wynberg and Fairways, life from a socio-economic view is fairly comfortable. The male students of UCT come from loving and stable homes, where they can relax and be at ease. However, the comfort of home, is not always found back in the broader South-African society. The political and economic situation of the country worries them and even though there is a strong connection to South-Africa, for some it is still a reason to rethink their sense of belonging.

Who Am I?

Easy going, eccentric, happy, caring, friendly, quirky, chilled out, eccentric, not aggressive, an ordinary guy, womanizer, son, rower, Muslim, Cape Malay, Coloured, South-African. These are the characteristics that are found important to present a self description. For the Muslims, religion is an important identity marker, whereas it is of less importance to the Christians. However, a part of their identity, that is essential and self-evident to all of them, is their South-Africaness. Coloured is more controversial; in spite of the fact that all of them feel a connection with their Colouredness, only half of them would identify themselves as a Coloured and take pride in it.

Coloured Identity

There is indubitably a connection with being Coloured, nevertheless the expressions given to it and the pride taken, differ amongst this group. There is a divide between those who do not wish to describe themselves in terms of race and reject the term Coloured and those who do not see it as a problem and feel a need to include race.

The former refuse to do so, believing it would keep racial boxing alive and since Apartheid has ended, the thinking installed by it, should too. There is a strong resentment of racial classifications and they feel it is time to move away from it. In order to overcome this issue of race, they do not label themselves as Coloured, but choose to be South-African. Race is seen as an illicit characteristic to classify a person, whereas their South-Africaness oversteps that. No matter what race you are, white, black or Coloured, you are first and foremost a South-African.

“Like I don’t think anyone, no one should be saying you’re part of this group, there are no groups anymore, now we all equal, so yeah I would never say I’m part of a group. I’m proudly South-African.”

Wanting to take distance from race, is part of the argument to reject the label of Coloured. The other part has to do with the negative connotations and stigma that are attached to the term Coloured. It is specifically how Coloureds are viewed by others that is disturbing to them. There is a direct connection made by others between a Coloured and the *Gam* culture. Hence, to be Coloured means that you are part of a certain lifestyle of people who are loud, violent, alcoholic and on drugs. This image is what they try to move away from by not labelling themselves as Coloured. They see that this *Gam* culture occurs amongst a group of people who usually come from lower social economical backgrounds and that it is only a group of people.

“Well Coloured identity today, could probably be associated with gangsterism and drugs and rude behaviour. So if you would say somebody is Coloured or with a derogatory term, if somebody is Gam, then they would hold connotations. I think it’s an identity that is developed and during Apartheid, there was a more positive Coloured identity or more positive things

associated to it. Coloured people were celebrating and therefore many events on the calendar and it led to show and dance. There's also a great amount of respect and dignity for the other and a greater sense of community than what there is now. Now I think, I say someone is Coloured, but I would be referring to these negative things, stuff that I said before, this thug mentality. There are various people that don't have that thug mentality, but what I was trying to say is that if somebody else would say, oh you're a Coloured, it would be connected to this thug mentality."

Nevertheless, not wanting to carry the label of Coloured, does not mean that they do not wish to associate with being Coloured at all, in fact there is a strong sense of belonging to it. Although the term Coloured bothers them, they feel most comfortable with the Coloured culture and thus they express their Colouredness in a more indirect way. They rather describe certain things that are seen as Coloured that give them a sense of belonging to the culture and the people, than to directly state that they are Coloured. Yet, after taking distance from the negative image of being a Coloured and rejecting the previous racial classifications, there is a feeling that they are Coloured and belong to that group and culture.

"I've been told I am Coloured, so I am, on the sheets. Well I'm not white, I'm not black, not Indian, not Chinese. Yes I'm Coloured, why am I even debating this."

There are also those who do include race directly when describing themselves, the reasoning behind this inclusion is twofold. It is the context of South-Africa and a sense of pride of being Coloured and being part of that group. Albeit the resentment of racial classification and grouping is also strongly present, encompassing race in the description of their identity, is done out of the consideration that it would be naive to believe that race and race related issues have been totally banned out of the South-African society. The question of who you are, cannot be answered without a reference to race, if they refuse to do so, someone else will do it for them anyway. The history and thinking of Apartheid are still too strongly rooted in the society and cannot be neglected, even if desired, subsuming race is thus seen as a necessity. Moreover there is a sense of pride to be a Coloured and to be part of the Coloured group. There is a pride taken in the history of Coloured people, both pre and during the Apartheid and in the fact that they are people of mixed genetics.

"We're proud, proud of who we are and where we come from, what we been through, not that I've suffered under Apartheid, like I was 7 years, I barely remember, but we know where we come from."

A Common Coloured Identity

Whether the expressions of belonging to the Coloured group are direct or indirect, there is a common feeling that there should be something of a clear Coloured identity, since there is such a diversity amongst Coloureds. The differences that exist in the Coloured group, are on the one hand what define them as such, but on the other hand they create groups within the group. The problem is that this divide between the groups is hampering the creation of a strong unified group to which all Coloureds can identify and be proud of. A Drama student, who grew up in the Cape Flats and has experienced these different groups and the lack of pride of being a Coloured, explains the need to have a common Coloured identity.

"Coloured as it's called, who really are yearning to be a united people, but lot of political and internal issues will always drive them away from uniting. This idea that we don't all look alike in a country where race dominates, it will always shake our people, because we'll always have the group that will associate themselves with white South-Africans and people who will associate themselves with black South-Africans and we have a group of people who

associate themselves with Indian South-Africans. So because of politics and the fact that everything is so raced, the Coloured society is torn apart because we yearn to be part of a pure race, when we shouldn't have to, because that's everything, because Coloured South-Africa, is the future of South-Africa, the idea that we are all one people and that racial and genetic history shouldn't influence us. We're a bunch of fortunate or unfortunate people, who can fit into any other racial category in a country where race dominates, so we should be lucky, we should consider ourselves lucky, but then politically they called us a race, so we were established as a race, part of that was, constantly wanting a powerful one group. I think I'm passionate for the development of Coloured people and the preaching that we are Africans, although some people would say we're not, but if I'm not African, what am I, where am I from, because white people say, they're from Europe, black people say they Africans, Indians are from India, where am I from, because I'm all of those, yet I'm none of those. So I think we need to install within Coloured people a sense of African pride, to show that we are from here. We're very happy people, I would say and people who have come a long way, but who still have to go further and start claiming that we are African, because it still exists, specially because we are racial descent, a lot of people in our country want to, as little as they can, associate themselves with being African. We have Coloured people of Malay descent, who truly believe that they're Malay, they never been to the Malay island, can't speak Malay anymore, but their only connection to this land is that some great, great, great, great grandfather came from there, but that doesn't make you Malay anymore, you might look Malay, but the fact is, you from this country, but you don't take pride in the fact that you from here. There's a lot of Coloured people who now want to associate themselves with Khoisan⁸ people and they're part of our history, there part of our genetics, but they're not who we are anymore. We have developed into a different group of people and we should take pride in that. So I think pride, I think we are people, who to a large extent lack pride, in what we are, because we are so many conflicting people, which can create conflict within an individual. So I think we need people who can really invest in developing the idea that we are a people and taking pride in that, like I said, we are jovial people and people with no genetic constant and in a country where race and genetics builds up society, I think we're in a fortunate position and I think we need to embrace the fact that we are in a fortunate position in that regard."

He mentions that the divide amongst Coloureds, can cause conflict within an individual, in terms of whether you belong to the Coloured group or not. There is a feeling that a unified group could contribute to feel a stronger sense of belonging and lead to less internal conflicts. A common identity to them means having a sense of pride to be a Coloured and to feel part of a group who is different from other groups in the society, such as the white and black group. To them it is not about certain characteristics that are attributed to the Coloured culture, but about:

"The happiness in themselves, to be content with being a Coloured person, just be content with being Coloured, just contentedness, that's all that matters."

This contentedness is missing for some of them, partly because there are groups within the Coloured community, to which they do not identify, like the *Gam* Coloureds and partly because the term Coloured was developed during the Apartheid years. Embracing the differences and taking pride in the fact that they are part of that diverse group called Coloured, should uplift the contentedness within them and contribute to feel that they truly belong somewhere.

At Home with Coloureds and the Coloured Culture

In spite of the fact that some refuse to wear the label of Coloured and struggle with being content to be a Coloured, all of them feel most at home in the Coloured culture. Moreover, there is a connection with Coloured people, even when they sometimes feel misunderstood by them. A Photography student, who has been living in a Coloured community for twenty years, explains how he feels less and less at home there.

⁸ The ethnic groups of the KhoiKhoi and the San, who were the native inhabitants of southwestern Africa

“I feel like I don’t want to be there anymore, I want to move out. I used to play with the kids when I was younger, but now with my hair and my piercings, I don’t fit in anymore. I walk to the bus station with my hair and everything and people laugh, because I have a Mohawk now, Coloureds feel the need to say something about it, to put me down.”

He feels alienated not only from his community, but from other Coloured people as well, since he is not accepted by them. He wants to move away, so that he will no longer be confronted with them on a daily basis. At the same time, studying at a predominantly white institute, he feels more at home with his Coloured friends than with his white friends, it is an issue of comfort and understanding. His Coloured friends understand the culture and are able to grasp certain issues that his white friends could not. The balance of where he feels more at home leans towards Coloured people and even though he might not always be accepted by them, they do contribute to make him feel at home, even if it is just by being there.

“My friend had this thing and it was this Afrikaans bar and I walked in and was the only Coloured guy and I guess to be honest it would have been nice to see some Coloured faces around.”

Inside the university, interaction with different people cannot be avoided, after all classes and working groups are mixed. All of them interact with different groups and have friends from various backgrounds, however the majority spends most of the time outside of university with Coloured people. All, with the exception of one, live in a Coloured neighbourhood with their family and for most the community plays an important role to feel at home. Those who moved from poorer areas into more affluent areas, felt more at home in their previous communities, since these were more close-knit. People needed each other more, as they often had to cope with hardships of poverty. An African proverb, *“It takes a village to raise a child”* is used to depict the role of the community. Community is viewed as an extension of family, where everyone looks after each other. This type of relationship with their communities is seen as a significant aspect of the Coloured culture.

The great sense of community is not the only aspect of the Coloured culture to which they feel a strong connection. The Coons festival, Eid, Ramadan and Christmas are mentioned as events that are specifically celebrated by Coloured people and are part of the Coloured culture. During these events they feel a greater sense of belonging and sense of home, as people get together and celebrate. Another significant aspect of the culture is the language, which is often used as a measure to determine if someone is Coloured.

“The fact that when I speak Afrikaans, I speak with an accent, that if someone hears me from the other side of the room, they will know I’m Coloured. All these things, when I look Coloured to a lot of people and to a lot, I also don’t, but these are all things that makes me acting Coloured. I come from a group of people who do their things in a certain way.”

That certain way is, his accent, the specific events he celebrates, his connection with his community and his appearance, his mixed genetics. It is this certain way, that they all feel connected to and most at home in. The culture and the people provide them the tools to build their sense of belonging as part of the Coloured group in the South-African society.

South-Africa, home?

Although they feel at home in the Coloured group, for some, being part of this group means to be excluded from the broader South-African society. As a Coloured they are a minority in the country and hold the middle position, that they were given during the Apartheid. The term *Apartheid reversed* is used to describe the current political situation, wherein black people are in power, white people are on the bottom and Coloured people are still in the

middle. As a result of this, they question whether they are allowed to view South-Africa as their home.

“I mean just being South-African in general for me as someone of Coloured descent or mixed race so to say and people called Coloured, it’s almost this idea that we’re slowly, but surely being alienated from the country, it seems that everything is becoming so pro black, not that I’m opposed of pro black, everything is becoming so pro black to the extent that it’s becoming anti everything else and that definitely has influenced my idea of home, because it feels like this home is the only place I know, I know no other place, I don’t have a different passport from a different country, I’m South-African, but it feels more and more, like I’m becoming less South-African, not because I want to, but politically I am forced out of this country, not necessarily to leave, but I’m not as South-African as I was ten years ago.”

Policies such as, Affirmative Action and Black Economic Emancipation⁹ are named to explain why they feel disadvantaged. In spite of the fact that leaving the country is seriously considered, South-Africa is still home to them and will always be home. Where some feel that being a Coloured constrains their right to be a South-African, others feel they have the right to claim they are South-African, because they form part of the Coloured population. They believe that Coloureds are part of the country and its history. An Electrical Engineering student explains the early links that Coloured people have with South-Africa and how he feels at home in the country, because of that connection.

“South-Africa is unique because of its people. South-Africa is unique because of this diversity and the way in which it has dealt with this diversity. It’s also unique of its history experienced beyond Apartheid. The Khoi and the San coming all the way through slavery and the British. It’s something I recognize, something I connect to, something I am part of. Something that I know, something I am familiar with.”

It is a familiarity with the Coloured culture and the people, which is something that all of them experience. It contributes to be at home, even for those who feel that as a Coloured, they are in a disadvantaged position and therefore less at home than other groups. South-Africa, but more so Cape Town is home, as there is a large percentage of Coloured people in the city. It is Cape Town, where certain events like the Coons are celebrated and where other aspects of the Coloured culture can be found.

“I’ve travelled round South-Africa, often it’s nice to be in other parts of South-Africa, but I feel at home in Cape Town. I feel like ease, like I’m part of the majority, haha, not the minority.”

Conceptions of black and white

Feeling most at ease and at home with Coloured people, in comparison to black and white people, has to do with certain differences in lifestyle. There are parts of being Coloured that cannot be substituted and there are parts of being white or black that they cannot identify with.

“There are things about my upbringing as a Muslim, a Cape Malay, a Coloured that, you could not substitute and the same for being black or white. Ok it’s primarily related to my parents and my grandparents and the associations that I have based on the stories they told, things they would do, the things they would eat on that specific occasion. Those form part of my upbringing and therefore my association of being Coloured.”

⁹ Policies that try to emend the inequalities of Apartheid through the advancement of the previously disadvantaged groups in the South-African society. These groups are given economic opportunities that were previously unavailable to them.

The majority cannot identify with either white or black people, those who can, identify more with white people. They attended predominantly white schools and developed friendships with white students. A lot of emphasis is given to the difference between black people and themselves, for which various reasons are delineated. First of all, there is a negative image of black people, they are considered selfish and lazy by some.

“Could I imagine being black, no, because they’re extremely selfish in the SA context, they usually don’t care for anyone else, but themselves and their race. To them it’s the most important thing and to them if you’re not part of them, then you might as well bugger off and be on your own.”

“This might sound harsh or anything, but I don’t like black people. I don’t like South-African black people, black people of other places in the world, especially of the African continent, I see them as hard working, they don’t expect stuff to get served to them on a plate like the South-African black person, that want to live on a social grant, that wants jobs to fall on their lap. South-African black people just wanna sit at home, get hand-outs, expect education to be for free. I see black people as lazy, useless almost.”

Others believe that black people are stereotyped as criminals, which is a label they could not imagine living with. Furthermore, the life of a black person is thought to be filled with hardships. Coming from poor areas such as Khayelitsha¹⁰, where gangs prevail, life can be rough, to the extent that as a Coloured person, they could not cope with it.

“Like I won’t survive man, I would be a dead brother.”

Lastly, the difference of culture is brought up as a barrier to identify with black people. An important aspect that is named as part of the black culture, is the initiation process and the circumcision rituals. The circumcision ritual is something that they cannot understand, unless they had actually undergone it.

It is the negative image, the stereotype, the hard life and the culture of black people to which the majority of them cannot connect. Additionally, the majority cannot fully connect with white people either, however the distance between them and a white person is for some not as much as a black person. White people are to them, people who come from advantaged socio-economic backgrounds, their lives are seen as unproblematic. This augments the desire to identify with them rather than with black people. Nonetheless, they feel most at home with Coloured people and would not want to be anything else.

Conclusion

Even though half of them do not wish to wear the label of Coloured, all of them feel connected to Colouredness and to the Coloured culture. It even goes as far as the desire of an unequivocal Coloured identity. Presently, Coloureds are divided into many groups and generally lack a sense of pride of being a Coloured. Some of them share this lack of pride, as there are certain negative connotations attached to the term Coloured. This is harmful, because it hampers a strong sense of belonging to the Coloured group for them. Hence, there is a longing to create a unity and develop a sense of pride amongst Coloureds, so that they may form a unified group, that all of them can form part of and belong to. Especially, since they feel most at home amongst Coloureds, compared to other groups in the society.

¹⁰ Khayelitsha is a black township in the Cape Flats area

UWC Female Students

Introduction

Coming from the previously disadvantaged areas, better known as the Cape Flats areas, life is marked by struggle. A struggle to survive in areas of gangsterism, drugs and poverty. A personal struggle to belong somewhere and finding something to hold on to, when everything else around is unstable. A struggle to get out of that situation by moving up the economical ladder.

Belonging to low class and the lower end and middle of middle class, there is a strong urge to strive for upward mobility and move out of areas such as Mitchell's Plein and Valhalla Park, areas where the youth falls prey to Crystal Myth (tik) and gangsterism, but most importantly there is an urge to move out of the areas that are reminders of personal traumas. Seeing someone getting shot through the head, having a father who abused his wife, working hard to make ends meet, these are all issues that have passed in life and that they have dealt with, but the scars are often still visible and constantly remind them of the past.

There are thus a multiplicity of factors, that are the cause of a desire to escape the status quo, however this desire is accompanied by hope, a strong believe that the situation can be bettered and will be bettered and a hope to belong somewhere.

Who Am I?

Tranquil, strong, caring, soft, sensitive, honest, friendly, easy, nice, female, educated, open minded, assertive, philosopher, Christian, Muslim and South-African. The latter is the most important characteristic to describe who they are. It supersedes everything else, especially the necessity to include the label of Coloured as a part of their identity, since it is a term that they all strongly reject.

Coloured Identity

The connection with the Coloured culture and Coloured people is predominantly one of rejection and spurn. There is a strong resistance of the term Coloured and a will to escape racial boxing. Growing up, these feelings of rejection became more vigorous, as is illustrated by an English language student.

“Growing up, I never really felt the sort of past feelings of Apartheid until I went to High School, my mother and my father really sacrificed to put me in a very good school, the school I have been to, would have been classified as a white school under the Apartheid system. When I came there, I never saw so much white people in one place and I think that was when I started feeling that there was a difference. Like when I grew up thinking I'm equal and feel that you are and then when I came to High-School, that's when I saw the difference in race, but also in class. When I came to High-School I didn't feel at home. I struggled with an identity crisis in High-School, because I couldn't understand why there was such a negative stigma, that went along with being Coloured. I really wanted to be white, I really wanted God would have made me white, my life would have been easier. I did history in High-School and we studied a lot on Apartheid and South-Africa and it was a bit harsh studying that, because I had to hear what the whites thought of Coloured people, that we were and I quote: “The no people”, the in between's, the left over's of South-Africa. I struggled with being Coloured, because, I felt that in the old Apartheid my people weren't white enough and in the new Apartheid my people are not black enough. I did not like feeling, that I was a non-white or a non-black and don't say I'm a non-something. I didn't always feel at home. I did feel like I was a left over and that I was an in between. I don't agree with that anymore though,

because I realize that the fact that I'm born, calls for reverence, honour and celebration every day. The colour of my skin doesn't matter, like Martin Luther King said, it's the content of my character. That white people classify and label Coloured people doesn't mean that I'm what they say I am, I am what I am and through reading lots of multiracial books and listening especially to people like Oprah about being proud about the colour of your skin, I was able to say, you know what, this is my home and it doesn't matter if I'm black or white. This is where I belong, I'm also South-African"

This struggle of being a Coloured is shared by others as well and attributed to various reasons. First of all, there is a resentment of racial classifications, since Apartheid has ended, there is no legitimate reason to use race to label people. Moreover, they attach the term Coloured to a certain type of people, that they seek distance from. For them there is a stigma ascribed to being a Coloured. On top of this, they question whether the term Coloured is capable of describing the people it is supposed to represent. They see a lot of different groups within the Coloureds, to which there is no connection.

History of Apartheid

Feelings of indignation come up when the history of Apartheid is discussed. It has been the architect of the term Coloured and the racial classifications that are still present in the contemporary South-African society. Although Apartheid is part of history, it is still something they struggle with, in their daily lives.

The term Coloured is viewed as an improper label given to them through the system of Apartheid. However, since there is no longer a need to describe and label people according to race, as everyone is constitutionally equal, they wish to move away from that label. Unfortunately, they see that there are still people in their surrounding who have what they refer to as an 'old Apartheid mentality', which causes frustration and is experienced as suffocating. A student living in a close-knit Coloured community, depicts the remnants of Apartheid in her community, that she is trying to fight against.

"If you ask others, they will tell you I'm Coloured and my culture maybe is Coloured, because of the community that I live in and because of the lifestyle that I have, but I'm not a Coloured in terms of my mentality, because, you know what Coloured mentality is? That you're not gonna have a fine life, that you'll have, what your parents have and it's gonna be sad and hopeless and bitterness for the rest of your life. You're not gonna achieve anything and you're not gonna go anywhere, you're gonna live in the same house the rest of your life and not go anywhere in this world. I don't want to think like that, I'm God's child, the limits that have been put on my mind, the negativity, I've been released from that. I'm truly free, because my mind is free, not just because I have opportunities that my parents didn't have. Unfortunately we don't have all the opportunities available to us, we have more opportunities than our parents had. Just because we have more opportunities doesn't mean we're free, because people's mindsets are still the same, they haven't treated the real battlefield, which is the mind."

She is not the only one who has difficulty dealing with a different mindset of her immediate environment. A psychology student felt and to an extent still feels constrained by the ideas of her family imprinted by Apartheid. The fact that she is studying at the moment for example, required a struggle, since her family did not support her. It has impacted negatively on her relationship with them and especially with her mother.

"I still struggle with their mindset, so negative, it's like they still think they're allowed to do a certain amount of things, like the Apartheid told. Like my mom thinks white people and black people and certain people do certain things. They never thought outside the box man. I just

realized one day, this can't be right. I did grow up in a house where they thought white people are superior and they still do and black people are inferior and they still do and Coloured people, they can just do nothing, which is horrible. Still now if you try to change that mindset, they will still say, but you can't do it, they won't cross that border. So I struggled a lot with that trying to please my mom, a lot in my life has passed because she fucked it, because of the Apartheid."

The history of Apartheid thus influences the avoidance of the label of Coloured in two ways. First of all, race cannot be a valid argument to discern different groups in the society any longer and secondly, as a consequence of splitting people up according to race and attaching certain behaviour to it, boundaries are created. Whenever they wish to cross these boundaries, they come into conflict with their community and family. Their Colouredness is questioned by their community and family, but coincidentally by themselves as well. They wonder if they want to be Coloured, if being Coloured means that their lives have to be lived in a prescribed way. The answer is no, they refuse to describe themselves in terms of race or to be bound by an Apartheid mindset and so they decline the label of Coloured.

Stereotypical Coloured Culture

Another important reason to view being a Coloured as a strain, is a stereotypical culture that can be found amongst Coloured people. There are certain characteristics attached to this stereotype, that are hard to connect with.

"I struggle to wrap my head around the concept of Colouredness. For some reason I attach Coloured to celebrating on a Friday night, drinking and braaiing and I don't know. I think it's just a stereotype about what it means to be Coloured. I spoke to one of my lecturers and he said, why do you struggle so much with accepting that you are Coloured and I was like, I don't know. I don't know why, but I just can't. I'm classified on my ID as Coloured, but I don't think that I am a Coloured. I think that I am South-African."

She has a hard time believing that she is a Coloured, because for her there are negative connotations attached to the term itself. Even though others would classify her as a Coloured, she disagrees with that classification, as she cannot detach Coloured from those negative connotations. Others have difficulty with existing stereotypes as well, however instead of stating they are not Coloured, they clearly seek distance from people who fit the stereotypes.

"In the Southern suburbs you would see a lot of Coloureds wearing Krugerrand earrings, Caterpillar boots, three-quarter pants that hang, loose t-shirts and another thing that bugs me about some Coloured, they pull their front teeth out and put gold slits in it, it's just something as a Coloured person, I can't stand it."

The behaviour of these Coloureds, makes her query her own Colouredness. The stereotype she presents, is one that she comes across often in the Coloured community and that disturbs her. Although she still considers herself a Coloured, these stereotypes contribute to the fact that she often moves away from the term Coloured and identifies herself as something else instead, such as a South-African or a Christian. The stereotypical Coloured culture thus adds to the reasons of coalescing the term Coloured with negative aspects and therefore to withdraw from it.

Different Groups and Classes of Coloureds

Another problem of the term Coloured, which was noted, is that it is supposed to represent a group of people, who are incredibly diverse. There are several groups within the Coloured group, that are different from them in many ways, often so disparate, that they would rather not have the label of Coloured on them, to avoid being associated with those groups.

“There’s different levels in the Coloured community, there’s different mind sets in the Coloured community. Some people in the Coloured community, they want to be educated, they strive for financial gain, they think they are the cream of the crop. Then you get people in the Coloured community, they just happy, they don’t strive to have more, they don’t bother. They live from day to day, hand to mouth, for years. Then you get people in the Coloured community who just don’t give a damn how they live, they don’t care if they’re clean or dirty, they don’t care if their kids are dirty. Then you get our upper classes who looks down at the lower classes.”

Class and linked to that, certain behaviour, is the most important factor with which to differentiate Coloureds. A Psychology student living in a middle class area, compares herself to Coloureds in low class areas. She emphasises the fact that she cannot identify with those Coloureds, as they are so different from her. The difference is primarily between herself and the lower class Coloureds, although she mentions high class Coloureds as a distinctive group, she does not stress the difference between them and herself.

“We stay in Parow, then you have your Coloured group in Delft and in Belhar and more of those areas and you would further move along and more and more Coloureds are moving up into upper class areas. What makes it different is the so called social classes or economical. In that sense the worldviews are so different and why I can talk to you about this is, because my parents worked in more disadvantaged areas in Elsies River. So I would see some of my mother’s customers and how they would raise their children you know and the basic thing you would teach your child, that would not be important to them. For example etiquette, the way you sit at the table, the way you speak to somebody and so on and it’s just not important, so there are definitely different classes amongst us.”

A Social Work student living in a low class area, detects this difference in class as well. She has observed a clear divide between high and low class students at the university. It is something that bothers her and even though she is automatically excluded from the high class students, she would not want to be part of that group, as they look down at low class students.

“Guys with nice cars and girls with nice cars, they would stick together, because they think they form a social group together. Even on campus you would see that certain people who have money to buy their lunch in caf everyday, sticks together and I’m talking about Coloureds here.”

Class is connected to certain behaviour, such as etiquettes and whom you interact with. The differences in behaviour are however too strong to be able to identify with the various groups within the Coloured community. To be distanced from the groups that they would rather not identify with, they want to avoid being labelled as a Coloured.

Troubled Sense of Home

The struggle of being a Coloured, affects the sense of home quite starkly on different levels. Living with their family in Coloured communities, it was not always easy to grow up and to be at home, certainly not whenever they wished to try and step away from certain Coloured traditions. A student describes the conflict she had with her immediate family, when she

decided to change her food pattern and deviate from what is supposed to be Coloured food, according to her family.

“There was this time when I became a freak, a health freak, haha, I would eat only what God put on the earth, nothing man made. I became slim and felt more energetic, they thought I’m nuts. They eat cabbage food, that’s like heavy stuff, so I made carrots and peas and that’s when they said, why you eat like white people.”

Examples like these, where she diverged from the prescribed Coloured behaviour by her family, alienated her from them. Until today, she has a hard time feeling at home in her parental house and her community.

“I never really felt, to be honest with you, in the Coloured community a sense of essence of who I am, of belonging. Like growing up in the Apartheid era, I have very curly hair, it was an issue back then¹¹, I was often ridiculed for it, still now, but obviously now I can open up my mouth, then I was a child. My nose wasn’t sharp enough, my lips were too big. I grew up feeling ugly, because of what I was told. Lot of the time I felt unaccepted, still do. I still feel I belong somewhere else, I feel like I was stolen from somewhere and put here.”

Her physical features were not in accordance with what were and sometimes still are supposed to be the physical features of a Coloured according to her community, for instance straight hair and a sharp nose. Being systematically excluded from both her family and her community, has been crucial for not feeling at home in her house and community, but also in the Coloured culture. This feeling is shared by others as well, however, to avoid conflict, some choose not to express how they truly feel about certain issues, such as being labelled as a Coloured.

“I don’t see myself as being classified like a Coloured. However, if I’m asked that question by my community and I answer it like that, I will be prosecuted. Yah, you don’t wanna know who you are, you deny who you are, you wanna keep you higher than what you are, you know. So it’s a bit difficult, because Coloured is indeed the term that was given to my people, but I do not want to be labelled.”

In spite of this struggle to be at home and to be themselves in the Coloured culture, it is still what marks home. Even though living in a Coloured community is generally experienced as stifling by them, the supporting system of their family and community are an important factor to define home. The same people who on the one hand are stuck in the ‘old Apartheid mentality’ and put up constraints for them, are on the other hand, the ones who create a warm and supporting home.

“They are the kind of people, like I went for a job interview today, they the kind of people that are kind enough to send you an SMS with good luck or kind enough to say I prayed for you. When I matriculated, my entire church and my entire neighbourhood was at my house. The road was full and the cars were parked down the road, that’s the kind of people they are. They support you, they more than just neighbours. They play a very important role to make me feel at home.”

Other than the Coloured community, there are certain Coloured traditions and events, that contribute to feel a sense of belonging to the Coloured group. The Coons festival and

¹¹ The idea that a Coloured needs to have straight hair comes from the Apartheid era, where the so called pencil test was done to define who belonged to the Coloured group and who did not. It was a simple test where a pencil would be stuck in someone’s hair, if the hair was straight enough, the pencil would fall out and the person would be classified as Coloured, if not, the person would be classified as black.

religious holidays like Easter, Christmas, Ramadan and Eid are mentioned as contributors to a positive feeling of homeness.

The specific way Coloureds speak their language is another very important aspect to determine their belonging to the Coloured group. When it comes to the way they speak, they perceive themselves as Coloureds.

The Coloured culture and people are simultaneously factors that make and break the sense of home. Despite the blurry sense of home and the struggle of being a Coloured, they feel most at home in the Coloured culture and amongst Coloured people. The majority spend most of their time in and outside of university with Coloureds.

Conceptions of Black and White People

Perhaps the most important reason to explain why they feel most at home amongst Coloureds, is the fact that the distance between them and Coloured people is less in comparison to them and other groups in the society. Even though they struggle with their Colouredness, they recognize at least part of themselves in the culture and the people. It is a comfort and recognition that the majority cannot find with black and white people.

“I don’t know for some reason, I associate white people with being rich and having more resources and having had much more than what I’ve got, so I don’t know if I could be white, because part of who I am is struggling, all my life we struggled for what we wanted, so if I gotten everything I wanted would I still be the same person. I don’t think that if I had grown up in an African black community and I celebrated African traditions, that being initiated as a young woman, I think I would be a different person. If I was any other racial group I’d be a different person and I think that the person I am now is because of where I come from, because my life, my family, the community, the people at the university, I think, all of those together have made me who I am, so I think it’s difficult for me to try and think of myself as any other race, as the one I am, even though that is also confusing.”

There is generally an idea that white people come from more privileged backgrounds and have therefore not experienced any difficulties and complications. Furthermore, white people are sometimes still seen as viewing themselves as superior to black and Coloured people.

“I can’t imagine walking with a carrot up my ass. It could sound like I’m stereotyping, but a lot of white people are still like that in South-Africa.”

The difference between them and black people is predominantly one of culture and religion. Black culture is associated with spirits and initiation processes, which they find difficult to understand and at times a little frightening.

“The majority of black people in South-Africa, are not Christian. They worship their dead ancestors and I really, maybe I’m a bit still dogmatic, but I really think it’s, ag I don’t wanna worship dead people and call out spirits, you know that’s evil and freaks me out and then I don’t agree on what they pass as ethically right, appropriate in society or morally right, ehm killing people to make potions, things like that, putting curses and spells on people. I don’t call that worship of the ancestors, I call that witchcraft.”

After All, I Am South-African

Notwithstanding the fact that they are most at home amongst Coloureds and in the Coloured culture, it is clear that being labelled as a Coloured causes anguish. The best way to avoid this label, is to claim that whatever race they may be, everyone in the country is eventually a South-African.

“In the past we have been given this identity and now we can say we are South-African and we don’t necessarily have to use the term Coloured.”

They tend to take legitimacy out of being a South-African to avoid being called a Coloured. South-Africa is where they were born and raised, not in ‘Colouredland’, as one of the students describes it. There is no such land as *Colouredland*, from which they could extract their roots. They take great pride in being a South-African and define South-Africa as home. Amongst all the uncertainties they have and the struggles they face, it provides them some stability, something to hold on to, something to belong to, to be part of and to remain hope for a better future.

I am really proud to be South-African and I don’t think I would change my identity for anything. I think I have always been proud to be a South-African, since I’ve become conscious of what it really means to be a South-African. For me to be South-African means to live here, to belong to the country, to follow the rules, to want to improve the country and make it better, so I’ve always been happy to be here, I know there’s lots of crime and violence and poverty and lots of problems, but I think we can make it better and I am happy to be South-African.

Conclusion

Compared to other groups in the society, they feel a sense of belonging amongst Coloureds. However, there is in spite of this, still a strong rejection of the label Coloured and none wish to identify themselves as one. The reasoning behind this rejection is threefold; it is the resentment of racial classifications, the negative connotations attached to the term Coloured and the various groups amongst Coloureds which they cannot identify with. The solution that is sought for this rejection is their South-Africaness, it provides them the legitimacy to respond to any questions raised on their sense of belonging to the country.

UWC Male Students

Introduction

Life in low and the lower end of middle class areas has brought many hardships for the male students of UWC. They reside in areas such as Mitchel's Plein, Elsie's River and Bishop Lavis, where they are confronted with crime and poverty on a daily basis. Home, thus is not always a very warm and stable place to go. Hence, their priorities lie in trying to stabilize themselves and climbing out of the difficult situations that they find themselves in at the moment.

Who Am I?

Kind, strong on family ties, friendly, sociable, responsible, bibliophile, Coloured, African, South-African, Christian and Muslim, that is who they are in a nutshell. From these characteristics, religion is the most prominent one used to describe themselves, at the end of the day, they feel that Christianity and Islam define them. Religion is the compass that will guide them in finding their way out of their current difficulties, into betterment. Although Coloured is taken up in their self descriptions, it cannot provide the guidance that is found in religion.

Coloured Identity

Being a Coloured is not directly rejected, however there is no strong connection to it either. There are times when they recognize a Coloured in themselves and times when they feel that being part of the Coloured group is constraining them. The latter part is what they fight against most, being a Coloured and therefore having to live up to a certain image of Coloureds painted by others, that hinders their self development.

"In Bishop Lavis, people my age, we don't know who we are, common frustration, especially we young people, we always have to hear about it (Apartheid), well we don't give two sakes about it, I personally don't, because I didn't experience it, but my father and my mother did. So being the age that I am, we in Bishop Lavis, we don't care about Apartheid, we care about personal fulfilment and getting out of the situation and finding a new home, a new home in Europe, a new home in Korea, Australia or America or in the southern suburbs or in the northern suburbs. So home is a point of frustration, so we're waiting for that tipping point and for me personally that's my PhD."

A Linguistics PhD student who lives in a Coloured working class area called Bishop Lavis, describes his frustration of living in a Coloured area and of constantly being reminded that he is a Coloured, because of the history of Apartheid. Although he has been told over and over that he belongs to the Coloured group, it is not so pellucid for him and for many other youngsters in his area. In fact, he is making an attempt to develop a new identity, one that will allow him to move beyond the boundaries of being a Coloured.

Even though he often regards himself as a Coloured, at the same time, he tries to evade his Colouredness. Being a Coloured inhibits his most important goal in life, namely personal fulfilment; moving out of Bishop Lavis and improving his current economic situation. The only way to accomplish that is by leaving a large part of his Colouredness behind. It is something he does not grieve over, considering the existing stereotypes of Coloureds, that are veracious according to him.

"I think a Coloured person can largely be defined as a working class person, that falls prey to stereotypes of social ills of gangsterism and drugs, it has a history of slavery, but not a very broad cultural base, but a new identity of Colouredness is only to be found in the individual."

No matter how successful he may become, he believes that he will always be perceived as a Coloured and therefore his affiliation is Coloured. However, being a Coloured is not entirely

negative, he believes there are many educated and intelligent Coloured people too, who could contribute to improve the country and who are able to initiate a new Colouredness. A Colouredness that rises above the conception that Coloureds are gangsters and drunkards and a Colouredness that highlights the positive side of Coloureds.

There are thus three important reasons to explain why the Coloured identity is not fully accepted nor fully rejected. Firstly, the rejection aspect is ascribed to the constraints that accompany the Coloured identity. Secondly, there are positive aspects to the Coloured identity as well, that are embraced and accepted and the third reason encompasses both rejection and acceptance. Despite the fact that they observe a lack of positivism around the Coloured identity and try to step away from that part, they envision an unequivocal new Coloured identity, that can be accepted and comprehended by all Coloureds.

Constraints, the Downside of Coloured Culture

The most important negative dimension of the Coloured culture, is the hindrance to personal fulfilment, posed by their family and community. Getting out of their status quo, is something the majority constantly work and long for. The complication lies in the fact that their family, but moreso their community discourage them, rather than encouraging them to better themselves. A Sociology student, residing in Mitchel's Plein explains this discouragement.

“Coloureds are like Lobsters in a bath, as soon as one crawls out, the rest of them will try and pull him down and that much is true, because you still see, when someone is trying to get out of, not out of the community, but making an effort to be successful, they would rather shoot him down, rather than say there’s an example in the community, why not follow him and that’s just the way it is.”

This feeling of trying to pull those down, who wish to become successful in life, is also very evident, when the abbreviation of PhD is described by one of them. He explains that PhD stands for ‘Pull Him or her Down syndrome’. Instead of viewing a PhD as something meaningful and supporting the attempt to get the degree, there is a sense that the community tries to block this. There are a few explanations given for this behaviour. The scars of Apartheid and what is called the ‘old Apartheid mentality’ are the main causes. Coloureds who lived through Apartheid and have been affected and disadvantaged by it, hold resentment against the youngsters who have opportunities to improve their situation.

“You got this old guard of Coloureds, that has this old Coloured Apartheid mentality, they are not successful and I think their self esteem got a hard knock.”

Besides the lack of self esteem and feelings of resentment, the ‘old Apartheid mentality’, represents the idea that Coloureds have a certain place in society that today is still believed to be valid. The thought that a Coloured from a low class community could climb up to middle or even high class, is an unrealistic one, according to those who hold the ‘old Apartheid mentality’. This inflexible image of a Coloured, is something they contend and that upsets them. Apartheid has ended and with that, the position Coloureds were given in the society and thus they try to break those barriers.

“The idea of employment, like for me it’s not a big issue. When I look at my grandparents generation, they will work and work till the age where you can retire and have your pension, but working for one place, cause you know steady job, steady income, things like that. My parents generation, they slowly started to get out of the idea of working for a single employer the rest of their life, but the generation now, they more, ok, we can start our own businesses now, see what we can do around and the way I see that, it is also how the people’s ideologies have changed over time.”

To instil this change in ideology, there is often a need to battle existing Coloured traditions and values.

“It’s part of Coloured culture, my mom decided not to let me come and study, well I forced her signature, haha and I did come to study, I refused to be trapped in a vicious cycle, where the oldest goes to work in a factory and has to think less of himself, cause he needs to support the family. It has been of effect on my other brothers, cause they started studying as well.”

Lastly, there is a belief that Coloured people in general have difficulty with the success of other Coloureds, as Coloureds tend to abuse their power when they reach success.

“It’s sad that many Coloured people who have the best intentions, once they’ve become popular, they’ve been in power, it’s gone to their heads, they forget where they come from, they would abuse their power and even when someone comes to work at your home, people would say, I would much rather trust a white guy.”

A culture of mistrust is observed amongst Coloureds as well, they would rather trust a white person or a black person, than a Coloured. A Bio-Informatics student, links this mistrust to the aspect of safety. He would prefer to travel in a train carriage with black people, because he believes it would be safer than travelling in a train carriage with Coloureds.

“If you’re robbed in that carriage by a gangster, none of the Coloured people in there would want to get involved and help you, even as a girl being helped. If I was in the black carriage and there would be an attempt of rob by a black guy in the carriage, the black people would prevent it, because of a sense of pride. If it was a Coloured guy, they would beat the living daylight out of him. So I feel safer.”

The abuse of power and the culture of mistrust together with the ‘old Apartheid mentality’, form the part of the Coloured culture that withholds them from reaching their goals in life and so they wish and endeavour to escape this element of their Colouredness.

Home, the Upside of Coloured Culture

There is however a part of the Coloured culture that they embrace, because it contributes to amplify their sense of homeness. In spite of the fact that their ideologies and mindset often diverge from those of their family’s and community’s, at the end of the day, they do feel most at comfort amongst them and other Coloureds.

“There’s just a different type of atmosphere, the way people interact, with Coloured people, even if you don’t know each other, you would make conversation, especially with your elders, you would call people aunty and uncle, even though they’re not related to you.”

The hospitable and informal way in which Coloureds interact is identified as an essential part of the Coloured culture that ameliorates their sense of home. Without the same people that at times create asperities, home would never be home. It is a strong community feel, wherein everyone knows and looks after each other. They mention their tight-knit communities where neighbours watch their houses in absence and where community members are allowed to discipline any child in the community that misbehaves. A child becomes the child of an entire community and the homes of community members become their homes.

“In our community, if you go to a friend’s house or someone’s house that you’ve known for a long time, after a while you’re not as hesitant anymore, you can just walk in and scratch in the fridge and stuff like that, you know the mother won’t bother you for anything like that. So in a sense that’s their way of making you feel at home, so after a while, their house isn’t their house anymore, it’s your house, you can just walk in, so that kinda makes you feel at home.”

Apart from the people, there are certain traditions and events that they partake in and that are described as typical Coloured. These traditions and events also play a significant role in developing a sense of belonging in the Coloured culture and in feeling at home. The Cape Coons festival for instance, is an important event that evokes this feeling.

The Cape Coons, it defines what it means to have culture for Coloureds. There's a sense where Coloureds, a certain time of the year, they just stand still and then they take part in the culture that was developed long time ago, before Apartheid, a sense of freedom, we are a people, that have an identity. When we see a Cape Coon, I mean I was a Cape Coon when I was little, walking in Cape Town, swinging that umbrella, that makes you feel at home, that it's worth it, you know and we might not know who our ancestors is, but that's not important, what we do know is, that we have something to look forward to every year and believe me, ask every Coloured, every year, there's a sense of it's our time, that's why we party so much, haha.

A theology student who was raised in Elsies River and currently lives in Belhar elaborates on this sense of home in the Coloured culture by describing Coloured characteristics. To him, language and more specific, his accent exposes that he belongs to the Coloured group, which is something that the others confirm. After all, any person hearing them speak, would understand that they are Coloured.

Even though it is hard to pinpoint exactly what Coloured behaviour is, they recognize certain things in themselves that are generally defined as Coloured according to them. The theology student explains that the way he celebrates for instance, is a type of behaviour that was starkly influenced by his community.

"There are things about me, that are typical Coloured, the way in which I celebrate, birthdays, and every other thing. I'm a bit afraid to stereotype people, but when it comes to celebrating that's the fun part of being Coloured. Coloured people tend to go extreme, go overboard, they often don't know if they'll have money tomorrow, but what is more important is now. In a typical Coloured community that I grew up in, weekends, specially on Friday evening, it was the day of the week, because on Friday you would have sausage and chops and all of these things and Sunday is obviously the big traditional Sunday lunch, as for Monday, they would start looking for money, because they spent the money on booze for the weekend. Then obviously the way I talk, there's something about the way Coloureds conduct themselves, the way they do things, that I see also in me."

This recognition and the positive homeness resulting from that, explains why they also accept the Coloured identity and call themselves a Coloured at times.

A Common Coloured Identity

The fact that they cannot precisely pinpoint what Coloured Identity is, does not necessarily concern them. What does, however is, that attempts to define Colouredness frequently end up in stereotypes and negative elements, when in fact there are many facets of the Coloured culture that are positive to them. Nevertheless, there is a bigger frustration, namely that Coloured people to them are disjointed people. There is a range of different groups within the Coloured group, that hamper unity.

"There are different groups within the Coloureds. What makes it so difficult and complex to be Coloured is I think, I see this with white people and I see this with black people in South-Africa, they are in many ways united, often among black people you would see someone would do something and it would be wrong, but he would still be supported by black people, I'm not saying it's right, but when it comes to Coloured people, we are divided, the Coloured

people are divided people, because they aligned themselves with so many things, they do not speak with the same premise, they do not speak with one voice.

A common Coloured identity is almost presented as a panacea. It would especially be beneficial for the coming generations of Coloureds, as they will not have to undergo the struggle of finding out who they are and where they belong.

“It is important because, when the next generation comes, they can draw on tradition, they can draw on artefacts, which defines history for example. We don’t have a history, we are embedded in a history that was defined for us. If we weren’t called Coloured then honestly I don’t know what we would have been called today, but somebody called us Coloured and by that act we have tried and try to define us. So if I still call myself Coloured, my kids is gonna ask me what does it mean to be Coloured, I can’t say, we’re hybrid people, just live with it, that doesn’t provide a sense of belonging and that’s the most important thing, to cultivate a sense of identity that further creates a sense of belonging.”

Having one single Coloured identity brings the possibility of uniting Coloureds and provide an alternative to the negative image that is attached to it. More importantly, it present an opportunity to find out what it means to be Coloured and to truly be part of something. It would install pride, so that there is no longer a hesitation to align with the Coloured group. In sum, it could create a strong sense of belonging.

Religion, Filling Up the Gap

Where they struggle to find a sense of belonging in the Coloured identity, the majority find that in religion, Christianity and Islam are extremely important in defining their identity. Who they are and what they do is directly extracted from their religion and has been a cure for many problems that they faced, such as drug abuse. Religion is described as a life-altering experience, since it is only recently that they deepened their interest in it, now that they have, it has become their ‘moral compass’.

“It’s actually a very general part of my identity, because if you read the Bible carefully, you will have to obey to certain things in it. Basically all the things I said now, trying to move away from them and us, getting closer to the family, become more focussed on study. My religious identity probably had the base for all of that to change, because it’s only the past four, five years that I’ve taken my religion seriously, this is when all changes have come about.”

South-Africa is Home, But...

South-Africa is their home and will always be their home, but there is simply no way around the issues the country is dealing with at the moment. There is an unstable democracy, high rates of crime and unfavourable politics that do not cater for Coloureds.

“With the new government, which is mainly black, although they claim to be non-racial, it is not so. I think what people don’t realize is that Coloured people suffered under the Apartheid too, not as much as black people or Indian people. Right now I feel there is reverse racism in South-Africa, if I can call it like that. I think in general South-Africa’s voice isn’t heard, when government decisions are made.”

These issues play an important role in the consideration to move out of South-Africa and look for greener pastures. Perhaps the most fundamental reason for this thought is the high rate of unemployment that concerns them, especially since they are not black. There is a feeling that being a Coloured puts them in a disadvantaged position.

“There’s the thing that we’re not black enough. I feel like I always have to be twice as much to feel at home, to feel a sense of security, that I can succeed in this country as a graduate. All my friends are overseas and that’s not a very good picture.”

The majority wishes to go abroad for a couple of years to ensure their personal development, but with the plan to come back and invest and settle in South-Africa. Moving permanently would mean that they are running away from the difficulties, which goes against their feeling of responsibility that they hold towards South-Africa. They see the problems, but they also see opportunities for improvement. Even along racial lines, there is hope that people could come together in the future. As long as that hope is still alive, South-Africa is home.

Conceptions of Black and White People

“You feel more at home amongst people like you.”

People like them, are Coloured people and they do feel most at home amongst Coloureds, which is why they interact mainly with Coloureds. It is not that they do not wish to interact with black and white people, but there is a difference in lifestyle experienced that often hinders intensive relationships.

A Social Work student who had a relationship with a white girl for a while, explains that their relationship ended due to the differences in lifestyle.

I had a white girlfriend for a while. We were too different, she’s a rich white person. I’d be going out with her friends, I didn’t have a good time, we went to listen to rave music and I had to wear skinny jeans, felt uncomfortable all night. There were very few Coloured people. She’d be out with my friends, she didn’t have a good time. Sometimes we just having a braai. We sometimes drink from the same glass, she didn’t like that, she wanted her own glass. I took her to my house and she didn’t know how to handle, how to interact with my family.

Others experienced this difference and lack of understanding amongst white people of what it means to be a Coloured as well. White people are perceived as the upper class, who feel superior to Coloured and black people.

“I have white friends, I have what is then obviously considered black friends. It’s weird, because on a party recently, one of the white people, a white lady commented that often when you Coloured people come together, you only complain, I said to her, it’s easy for you to say that, because you come from a place where you never experienced lack and unfortunately, we always been disadvantaged, but often when I expose all these different race groups to each other, when I have something at home or whatever, you can see there are boundaries, no matter how we try to pretend, that we accept each other, but there are boundaries, for example, if any white person speaks down to a black person or a person of colour, as Coloured people, we go immediately on to defence, we’re so used to being oppressed, that even when someone remotely makes a comment, we make a big issue out of it. I don’t want to create the impression that I’m against white people, but I think often, what puts me off is that, you always feel as if you sometimes have to prove yourself and no matter what you do, you are often not good enough.”

This sense of superiority is also detected with black people, however Coloured people look down at black people too, it runs both ways. Dating a black girl for instance would be seen as taking a step backwards by other Coloured guys. Many complain that Coloureds in general are still very much stuck in racism, when it comes to the conception of black people. Although they believe they have overcome this type of racism, it does not protect them from being victims of racism themselves.

“I experienced it many times, especially in the gym, cause the dominant race that goes to gym stays here on campus and are black and they associate with themselves. The blacks talk to

me in a different way they talk to each other. Like hey u done, u done? I always argue with them and say, no I was first. They talk to me like that because I'm a Coloured person, if I would be a black person they wouldn't talk like that or if I was a white person, they wouldn't talk like that either."

There is a difference of culture between Coloured, white and black people as well, which varies from aspects like food to values. White people seem to have different values in comparison to Coloured people.

"I see in white people and this is a stereotype, certain values that I would not necessarily want to. A lot of white people don't have a lot of modesty, walking around half naked is not necessarily an issue for them, it may sound like I'm an puritan or something, but for example Coloured girls, yes they walk around half naked on the beach maybe, but they're always covered up, so there's a sense of decency in the Coloured and black culture that whites don't necessarily have."

The most important difference between Black and Coloured people, is the language. Not being able to speak any African language, such as Xhosa or Zulu, disqualifies them to be part of the black group. Besides the language, there are certain traditions in the black culture that they cannot identify with.

"Coloureds have their own culture. The blacks have the Labola, you need to pay a certain amount of money to marry the daughter, cows or something like that and things like that. We have braais and things, that's our culture."

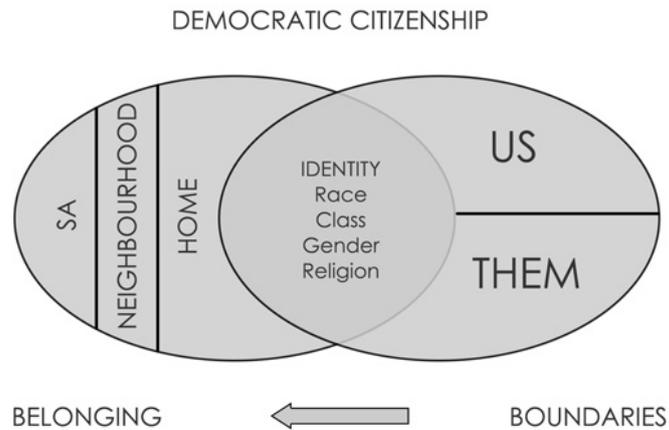
The difference in culture, class and the previous Apartheid classifications, are significant characteristics which influence their construct of identity such that comfort and home is felt most with Coloured people. There is however more of a connection to black people, than to white people, for which the explanation can be sought in class and previous racial classifications. Black people are social economically closer to them than white people and even though black people sometimes look down on them, there is a feeling that white people have a stronger sense of superiority, stemming from the Apartheid, which they resent.

Conclusion

In their search for personal fulfilment, they try to overstep those aspects of Colouredness that pose constraints and embrace the elements that contribute to a sense of homeness. After all, they are most at home amongst Coloureds, certainly when compared to other groups in the society, who at times still have racist attitudes towards them. Despite all their personal struggles, there is still hope that they will be able to improve their current situation and that they can build a place in the South-African society for themselves.

Connecting the Concepts

This chapter connects the concepts of Identity, Belonging and Symbolic Boundaries, so that the relationship between them can be understood.



Model 1: Conceptual Model

Who you are is partly determined by the interaction with others and in turn determines who you interact with and who you feel at home with. Who you are can be defined through so called categories of identification, such as race, class, gender and religion (the identity markers used in this research).

The former two categories of identification, race and class play a vital role in determining the symbolic boundaries that are drawn by the students. Race creates a line between 'us', Coloured people and 'them', white and black people. Even though there is a strong resentment of racial classifications, ultimately Coloured people form part of 'us', because Colouredness forms quite a substantial part of who they are and with what they are most at home. Within the broader South-African society, they belong to the Coloured group more than any of the groups that form 'them'. Class is also described as a category that divides the different groups within South-Africa, since white people are perceived as high class, black people as low class and so Coloured people, who are generally seen as middle class, again form a distinctive group.

Yet, class is of most importance in marking the distinctions within the Coloured group. Although, they are most at home amongst Coloureds, they draw boundaries within their own group and use class to explain these differences. Students from middle to high class backgrounds see a difference in behaviour when they compare themselves with the lower class Coloureds, *Gam* behaviour is often mentioned to exemplify this. Students from the lower classes, in turn feel a disconnection with the higher class Coloured, as they feel looked down at by them.

Another important boundary within the 'us' group is drawn through gender. The female students experience more personal constraints from their interaction with other Coloureds, in comparison to the male students and therefore seek alternatives to define their identity beyond Coloured. The male students have a more positive outlook on their Colouredness, which becomes evident from their desire to have an unequivocal Coloured identity.

Religion creates boundaries within the Coloured group as well, nevertheless it does not necessarily hamper the interaction of Muslims and Christians for these students, which is the case for race, class and gender.

The boundaries of *'us'* and *'them'* that are drawn by the students through race, class and gender, influence their sense of belonging at the different levels of respectively South-Africa (national), neighbourhood and home. At the national level, *'us'* and *'them'* are differentiated through race (Coloured versus non-Coloured), at the neighbourhood and home level, boundaries are marked through class and gender. Consequently, their sense of belonging at the neighbourhood and home level is at times constrained by these boundaries. Living in predominantly Coloured neighbourhoods, the *'us'* and *'them'*, have to be readdressed. *'Them'* is redefined as other Coloureds, often distinguished through class. *'Us'*, becomes South-African, African, Christian, Muslim and other alternatives to draw a line between themselves and other Coloureds. At the national level, the same people who cause them a troubled sense of home, are the ones, that create a sense of belonging. When compared to *'them'* (non-Coloured) at the national level, *'them'* (Coloureds) at the home and neighbourhood level become *'us'*.

Hence, there is a need to switch back and forward between their multiple identities. These multiple identities are partly influenced by their symbolic boundaries and partly create these boundaries. Together they form their sense of belonging at each of the three levels.

Conclusions

It is time to return to the initial starting point of this research, namely the dream of a 'rainbow nation' and how that ideal has not been able to be realised yet in South-Africa. Why is it, that people keep living segregated within the boundaries that were once established by the architects of Apartheid, especially since they have been given the freedom to overstep these boundaries more than a decennium now.

The main curiosity of this research was to discover, whether people could feel a sense of belonging in a society, where people live next to each other, instead of with each other. For reasons explained earlier, the decision was made to study this belonging amongst Coloured adolescents, which eventually led to the following research question:

What is the role of Identity, Symbolic Boundaries and Belonging in the construction of the Democratic Citizenship of Coloured students in Cape Town, South Africa?

It has become evident that Identity, Symbolic Boundaries and Belonging play an essential role in constructing the Democratic Citizenship of these Coloured students. The influence of the three concepts can be best observed in the emotional part of their Democratic Citizenship. Although some wonder whether their Legal Citizenship is truly assured, since policies of Affirmative Action have been implemented, the majority believe that legally, they are just as South-African as any other citizen. Their citizenship is supposed to connect them to other citizens and to the so called wider community. However, studying the boundaries that they draw, especially between themselves and other groups in the society and the fact that they feel the strongest sense of belonging amongst Coloured, it is clear that this connection with other citizens is lost and diminishes their Emotional Citizenship.

Who they are, whom they interact with and where they feel most at home, are all predominantly linked to their Colouredness and determine the lack of emotional belonging to the state, but more so to its citizens. Hence, for these students it weakens their Democratic Citizenship.

Do they then feel at home in South-Africa, having a weak sense of belonging in the wider community? The answer is yes, they do. However, this belonging is somewhat restricted. Yes, they feel at home in South-Africa, yes, it is their country and yes, it is their home. However, South-Africa is mainly home, because they feel a sense of belonging in their homes in Cape Town, where the majority of Coloureds reside, to whom at the end of the day, they belong most. Therefore, they both belong and long to be part of South-Africa.

It seems it will take some more years to overstep the boundaries that still linger in the South-African society through the remnants of Apartheid, before these students and the next generations of South-Africa can truly be at home in a 'Rainbow Nation'.

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Map 1: South-Africa information: <www.South-Africa.org.za> (25 October 2008)

Image on front page: The Belonging Initiative <www.plan.ca> (10 January 2008)