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EXPLORING THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM:
The Narratives of White Educational Psychologists

By

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ABSTRACT

Racism in South Africa continues to be a threat and a barrier to social cohesion while also being a contributing factor to accessing quality education. To date, little research has been done in South Africa on how white educational psychologists view issues of race and racism and the role they can play in dealing with these issues. The aim of this inquiry was to explore the narratives of white educational psychologists related to race and racism with the purpose of building an understanding on how this influences their practice. Furthermore, the purpose was to understand the role that educational psychologists can play towards ending racism and to suggest what further support and training would be needed. The inquiry draws on Critical Psychology and Critical Race Theory to understand the field of educational psychology and the issues of race and racism. A qualitative approach was utilised with a narrative design. A thematic analysis was made of the data from interviews and themes were identified. Vignettes within the study that presented examples of how race and racism were experienced and dealt with by the educational psychologists within their therapeutic spaces were identified. These vignettes were explored and analysed through the lens of the themes identified. The findings from this research provides evidence that the manner in which white educational psychologists define race and racism influences the way they deal with the issues in their therapeutic spaces. The main conclusions drawn from this study are that a colour-blind approach to race and racism predominates and that this influences the way white educational psychologists work with clients. This dissertation recommends that there is a need for support and training so as to develop awareness of issues about race and racism.

Key words: educational psychologists, race, racism, narratives, whiteness
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Harlem: A Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore—

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over—

like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Langston Hughes (1990)
1. **CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

1.1 **INTRODUCTION**

Growing up under Apartheid in a white suburb of South Africa in the 1960s, issues of race and racism were always present. It was in the air we breathed, in our thoughts, in the architecture, the landscape, the schools, the transport system ... it was all pervasive and never ending. There was no possibility of growing up without being tainted and damaged by racism in a society that was racially segregated by law, where racism was institutionalised and where we as children were socialised in our homes and schools into a racist ideology.

This research has attempted to shine a light on one aspect of this complex, messy and emotionally charged history of South Africa and how it plays out in the present within the field of educational psychology. My interest in this research stemmed from my personal history growing up under Apartheid combined with my experiences and observations studying and working as a Registered Counsellor and student Educational Psychologist. My concern was that 23 years after the dawn of democracy with the first democratic elections in April 1994, racism was still prevalent in South African society and yet many white people, including educational psychologists, have difficulty in talking about and understanding white privilege and the effects of racism. I argue that educational psychologists play an important part in schools (and in the lives of children) in dealing with racism. They are well placed to deal with issues pertaining to race and racism; they can help people in healing from the damage of racism and be part of a movement to oppose and dismantle racism. Further to this, I argue that unconscious racism might make it difficult for educational psychologists to recognise racism when it occurs or know how to challenge racism or help others confront it.

1.2 **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

South Africa recently celebrated 23 years of democracy, but democracy did not herald in the ‘rainbow nation’ and dismantle racism. Following 360 years of colonialism, 48 years of Apartheid and 23 years of democracy, racism is rife and appears to be flourishing in South Africa. Looking specifically at schools,
studies show that racism still persists (South African Human Rights Commission, 1999), (Vally, 1999), (Pillay, 2014). In the two years (from 2015 – 2017) during which this research was undertaken, incidents of racism have trended in social media, newspapers and TV coverage: Penny Sparrow calling black beach goers ‘monkeys’ (Wicks, 2016), protesting black university students being beaten by white students at a rugby match at the University of the Free State (Whittles, 2016); Matthew Theunisen spewing racial slurs about the Sport Minister Fikile Mbalula’s sporting quota decision (Feltham, 2016); and the Curro Foundation School found guilty of racially segregating learners (Corke, 2015). This is just a small sample of such incidents – every day, new instances of racism are published: A Sodwana Bay guesthouse refusing to accept black guests (Khoza, 2016); Gauteng education MEC Panyaza Lesufi being the subject of racist abuse on Twitter (Savides, 2016) and on social media the picture taken at a crèche of a black child allegedly being segregated from white children (The Times, 2016); the hair protests at girls’ schools (Pather, 2016) and more recently an elite Johannesburg school, St John’s College, being engulfed in a race crisis when a teacher was found guilty of a racist campaign against learners (Haffajee, 2017). At the time of finalising this dissertation (October 2017), another elite school, Maritzburg College, was being probed for alleged claims of racism after the school instituted charges against three matriculants who expressed support for the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) while in school uniform. The three boys had taken a photo with one holding a shirt with the handwritten words: ‘EFF, our last hope of getting our land back’ (Child, 2017).

On a national level, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established after 1994 was aimed at bringing about reconciliation by providing a platform for people to tell their stories and asking for perpetrators to reveal what they had done to promote reconciliation. Yet, as political commentator Steven Friedman writes: “The truth commission left plenty of work undone” (Friedman, 2016). The Apartheid Archive Project, a collaborative research project initiated in 2008 by two psychologists at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg (Stevens, Duncan & Hook, 2013) continued in some ways where
the TRC left off. Based on the assumption that traumatic experiences from the past will continue into the present if they are not acknowledged and dealt with, the project set out to look at the experiences of racism of ordinary South Africans under apartheid. These stories were analysed through a range of theoretical lenses in an attempt to understand the Apartheid history and “its sometimes enacted, sometimes denied, resonance in the present” (Stevens, Duncan & Hook, 2013, p.9). As Pillay argues, “adults who have not been emancipated from their past colonist, imperialist and apartheid mentality will continue to reinforce racist beliefs and practices in their children” (Pillay, 2014, p.153).

With the introduction of democracy in 1994, schools in South Africa were seen as places where democratic values could be instilled. The South African national curriculum has been built on the values that inspired the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996, hereinafter ‘the Constitution’). One of the core aims of the Constitution is to “heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights” (1996, p.1). Education has an important part in realising this aim. This is outlined in more detail in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R-12 (2011) that includes the Curriculum and Assessment Policies Statements (CAPS), an amendment of previous policies on curriculum and assessment in the schooling sector. The NCS Grades R-12 serve the purpose of, amongst others:

*Equipping learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country* (Department of Basic Education, 2011, Foreword).

The curriculum is furthermore based on the following principles:

*Social transformation: ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population.*
Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice: infusing the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 is sensitive to issues of diversity such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors (Department of Basic Education, 2011, pp.4-5).

Based on these aims and principles, issues of social transformation, race and racism should be addressed in schools. I argue that these are issues which educational psychologists have a responsibility to deal with in schools. This raises the ethical responsibilities of educational psychologists which are made clear within the Ethical Rules of Conduct for Practitioners registered under the Health Professions Act, 1974. In terms of these, psychologists should not impose any “stereotypes of behaviour, values or roles relating to age, belief, birth, conscience, colour, culture, disability, disease, ethnic or social origin, gender, language, marital status, pregnancy, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or any other factor prohibited by law” (HPCSA, 2006a, Section 12.1 ‘Professional Relations, Unfair Discrimination, p. 20).

Point 12.2 states that a psychologist shall not:

unfairly discriminate on the basis of age, belief, birth, colour, conscience, culture, disability, disease, ethnic or social origin, gender, language, marital status, pregnancy, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or any other factor prohibited by law (HPCSA, 2006a, p.20).

It is clear from these rules that psychologists should not impose their stereotypes nor unfairly discriminate against others. Yet as Jill Morawski (2005) clearly writes, the values and cultural meanings of psychologists permeate their practices. She elucidates how psychologists are resistant to addressing reflexive dimensions. So while the ethical rules make clear what the roles of psychologists are, it will be up to the psychologists to deal with their stereotypes and not discriminate. There is a need therefore for psychologists, especially in
the multiracial and multicultural context of South Africa, to develop reflexively in their practices.

1.2.1 RACISM PERSISTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Looking specifically at the context in which educational psychologists practice - in schools - issues of race and racism continue to persist. “The defining feature of South African schools and schooling is arguably the politics of race and racism” (Nkomo, Mc Kinney, & Chisholm, 2004, p.3). This extends to the practice of psychology, where the professional field of psychology is still predominantly white and female dominated (Suffla & Seedat, 2004).

Five years after democracy in South Africa (in 1999), the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) found there was little progress in ending racial discrimination and prejudice in schools. This was corroborated in a report ‘Violence in schools’ by Salim Vally (1999) where it was reported that, despite legislation introduced to desegregate schools supported by many policies, the high incidence of racism pointed to continuing violence in South African schools. Professor Jayce Pillay’s (2014) research found that racism in South African schools still persisted, twenty years after democracy. The changes that were envisaged have not taken place and policies and legislation have not eradicated racism. Pillay’s study found furthermore that, while principals considered racism to be a serious issue that needed to be dealt with in schools, many of them stated that they were not dealing with it to the extent that it deserved (Pillay, 2014, p.154). Reasons given included that people (20 years after democracy) “were not ready to cope with racism, and are fearful, especially of the harm confrontation may cause … (dealing with) racism does not get the status it deserves for a variety of reasons, including fear, lack of competency and the hope that if one ignores it, it may eventually go away” (Pillay, 2014, p.155). Educators too felt there were problems of racism in schools, with issues such as black learners being excluded; black teachers being treated differently; white teachers having racist attitudes towards black teachers and learners; and there being racial tensions and incidents between learners as well as between teachers. Pillay concludes that while many
principals and teachers acknowledge there are problems of racism in schools, there is a general lack of knowledge of how to deal with it, based on fear, ignorance and denial (Pillay, 2014).

During my recent experiences of working in a range of different schools and studying for a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) followed by Honours and Masters in educational psychology, I have noticed the silence around racism and the resistance to tackling issues of race and racism among white colleagues and fellow students. Previous studies have reported similar findings. It was found that avoidance of talking about race and racism was due to apprehension that it could lead to further conflict and a fear of being seen as racist and prejudiced or offend people. Silence is therefore seen as a way of dealing with race (Bischoping, Dodds et al 2001). Barbara Applebaum (2016) explores the phenomenon of white silence around race, arguing that it shelters white ignorance and innocence and “thereby operates, often unwittingly to maintain white supremacy” (p.391).

It feels to me that there is an ‘elephant in the room’ resulting in the silence around tackling racism. So while South Africa’s legislation and policies in terms of education and the role of psychologists clearly point to eradicating racism, this is in contradiction to the reality of racism that exists and is perpetuated. Although legislation is not an instant tool to change social perceptions on race relations, it is an entry point to build values to a more cohesive South Africa.

1.3 Theoretical approach

I approach my work in the field of educational psychology though the lens of critical psychology and transformation. Prilleltensky & Nelson (1997) make a distinction between ameliorative practices – “those that tend to the wounded, care for the disabled, and treat the infirm” and transformative practices that “aim to change systems that wound and marginalise so many in the first place” (1997, p.16). Their view is that while interventions on an individual level are important, these are not sufficient. Prilleltensky (2009) explores the relationship between well-being and justice with the view that there is a need to balance amelioration with transformation. In his view this entails a move from an
individualistic to a collective approach in psychology and from a reactive to a proactive way of working.

I believe educational psychologists are in a good position to work in communities with principals, teachers, learners and parents to facilitate an anti-racism practice and to assist people in healing from the damage of racism. This would mean moving from an individualistic and ameliorative way of working to one which embraces the collective and has an understanding and awareness of the role of power in justice and well-being. Educational psychologists are well placed to extend the continuous healing process that was started with the TRC. I believe that educational psychologists have a moral obligation in dealing with race and racism in the hope of building a decent society.

There is no research, to my knowledge on the narratives of white educational psychologists working in Gauteng schools and how they think about and deal with issues of race and racism. This leads to the purpose of this study. In this study I aim to explore the narratives of white educational psychologists related to race and racism with the purpose of building an understanding based of perceptions and making recommendations for future interventions related to anti-racism practices.

1.4 Research Question and Aims

The above stated discussion on the identified research problem led me to the formulation of the research question:

What are the narratives of white educational psychologists pertaining to race and racism?

The sub-questions included:

- How do white educational psychologists define and view race and racism?
- How does racism influence the way white educational psychologists work?
• What support and further training is needed by white educational psychologists to be able to deal with and challenge race and racism in their practice?

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In this study I aimed to explore the narratives of white educational psychologists pertaining to race and racism.

The objectives of this study were therefore to:

• Listen to the narratives of white educational psychologists pertaining to race and racism

• Analyse the narratives to get a sense of the stories, reflections, experiences and approaches white educational psychologists have when confronting issues of race and racism

• Suggest recommendations for interventions in support of educational psychologists in dealing with issues pertaining to race and racism

1.6 TALKING ABOUT RACE AND RACISM

My understanding of ‘race’ are based on it being a social construct while also being a reality, both materially and politically. This understanding comes from the work of Durrheim, Hook and Riggs:

*The idea that people are divided into groups designated as races is the outcome of historical, locally prescribed ways of seeing, thinking and talking which have their roots in the racist history of colonialism, slavery and apartheid* (Durrheim, Hook & Riggs, 2009, p.198).

Yet, while ‘race’ may be constructed, it is still real in terms of the inequalities that exist in society and the way people are divided and separated based on skin colour. The focus in this research was on the understanding of racism based on power relations.

*Racism is understood primarily as the product of particular historical relationships between groups of people in which some people have
unjustly asserted claims to dominance over others. In this sense, ‘race’ refers to a form of categorisation that reflects particular power relations between groups rather than reflecting actual group attributes (physical or behavioural). Racism, then, is thinking and behaviour that seek to preserve race hierarchy (Durrheim, Hook & Riggs, 2009, p. 199).

A central theme within critical psychology is that of power and the relationship between power and psychology. Derek Hook (2004) elucidates how critical psychology is an awareness that psychology in itself is powerful....“and that psychology plays a part in maintaining and extending existing relations of power” (Hook, 2004, p.13). While critical psychology is concerned with critiquing the oppressive uses of psychology, it is also concerned with practices that transform and disrupt power imbalances with the goal of social equality (Hook, 2004). Within the context of South Africa, the majority of educational psychologists are white, female and working in private practice. There is a necessity therefore for issues of power, privilege and race and racism to be addressed as many of the social and health problems faced by South Africans are “embedded in overarching problems such as economic inequality, racism and gender inequality” (Kagee, 2014, p.360).

Further to these definitions of race and racism, I approach these issues from the perspective that no person was born racist, yet, because racism is so systemic, no matter how hard we work at not being racist, we are. The organisation, United to End Racism, argue that “racism is contrary to the fundamental nature of every human being. All human beings begin life caring deeply about all other human beings” (Jackins, 2002, p.15). Based on this, one can assume that something happens to make us racist:

In a racist society there is a constant barrage of racist messages and practices—from family, friends, acquaintances, schools, the media, and all other societal institutions. No one can grow up in such an environment and escape its effects. In this way the society installs racism on every white person. It does so regardless of how strongly or for how long we actively resist (Jackins, 2002, pp.15-16).
As white people, myself included, born and raised in a racist society, there is no way we could escape being drenched in racism. Racism has been instilled in every white person by our society. White people lie along a continuum of believing in and acting out racist thinking and behaviour to intellectually rejecting racism and attempting to treat all people as equals and with respect. And yet we all carry racism. George Yancy, a black man, academic and philosopher, wrote a piece entitled, “Dear white America” in *The New York Times* in 2015 emphasising this:

> If you are white, and you are reading this letter, I ask that you don’t run to seek shelter from your own racism. Don’t hide from your responsibility. Rather, begin, right now, to practice being vulnerable. Being neither a ‘good’ white person nor a liberal white person will get you off the proverbial hook. I consider myself to be a decent human being. Yet, I’m sexist (Yancy, 2015).

He continues:

> Just as my comfort in being male is linked to the suffering of women, which makes me sexist, so, too, you are racist. That is the gift that I want you to accept, to embrace. It is a form of knowledge that is taboo. Imagine the impact that the acceptance of this gift might have on you and the world (Yancy, 2015).

It is with acceptance of this gift in mind that I approach this study.

### 1.7 The role of schools

Schools play a vital role in society in terms of social change and justice while also being a microcosm of society. They can (and should) play a role in the reconstruction project of South Africa society. A Colloquium held by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC), ‘*Reflections of school integration*’ (2004), looks at the meaning of school integration and specifically at how integration can move beyond desegregating schools to one where the divisions created by Apartheid are addressed both systematically and systematically. In the views of the editors’, Nkomo, McKinney and Chisholm:
The defining feature of South African schools and schooling is arguably the politics of race and racism. It is one of the central fault lines of South African society, intersecting in complex ways with class, gender and ethnicity. Race is historically inscribed into the functioning of everyday life through those institutions in which the majority of children spend the greater part of their lives: school. Seen as one of the principal generators, justifiers and vehicles of racialised thoughts, actions and identities, the challenge has been and continues to be whether and how the roles, rules, social character and functioning of schools can change to reverse the retrograde aspects of such formations and stimulate new and diverse identities and form of acknowledgement and social practice (2004, pp. 3-4).

Racism continues to be a threat and a barrier to social cohesion while also contributing to the ability of learners to access quality education. It is against this backdrop of schools in South Africa that white educational psychologists practice and it is therefore, I argue, a necessity that they are aware of the issues pertaining to race and racism and are able to work with these issues.

1.8 Research methods

1.8.1 Research paradigm

Research is defined by Merriam as a systematic process of inquiring into, or investigating something in a systematic manner (2009). By the end of the process, we should know more about the issue being researched than we did before engaging in the research. A researcher enters the research process holding a specific paradigm, a “set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world” (Filstead, 1979, p.34). The paradigm guides the researcher in terms of the philosophical assumptions about the research as well as in the selection of tools, instruments, participants, and methods used in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).
This research was guided by a theoretical paradigm that includes critical psychology and critical race theory, a paradigm of emancipation and transformation. In this paradigm my values were central to the task, purpose, and methods of the research. “First and foremost, a criticalist is a researcher who uses her or his work as a form of cultural or social criticism” (Ponterotto, 2005, p.130). Reality is constructed within a social and historical context which needs to be understood within the paradigm of power relations. The research goal within this framework aims, through dialogue and interaction, to reach deep insights about white educational psychologists and the issues of race and racism. This process could furthermore be transformative for both the researcher and participants. Within a critical theoretical paradigm, the purpose of inquiry is the “critique and transformation of the social, political, economic, ethnic, and gender structures that constrain and exploit humankind” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004, p.30).

1.8.2 RESEARCH APPROACH
This research is based on a qualitative research approach. This research approach offers the possibility to conduct an in-depth study into the topic of white educational psychologists and their narratives pertaining to race and racism. “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 2009, p.13).

Robert Yin (2011) outlines five features of qualitative research that indicate why it is best suited for this specific research topic. These were used in the following way: (i). Using a qualitative approach, I explored how white educational psychologists understood and made meaning of race and racism in their real world lives as professionals. (ii). Their views and perspectives were key to this study, and could not have been gathered through a quantitative study. (iii). Using a qualitative research approach, the context within which the participants in this study have grown up and presently work were explored while also being expanded on in terms of how this influenced their behaviour and thoughts. (iv). A qualitative research approach was furthermore used to produce new insights...
and to develop new concepts and understandings. Finally, qualitative research allowed for the collection of data from a range of sources, using the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection, so as to give a more in-depth and rounded description.

Data was triangulated so as to produce reliable conclusions. All of this added to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. A qualitative research approach was therefore deemed to be the most appropriate approach in understanding the narratives of white educational psychologists.

1.8.3 RESEARCH DESIGN
A narrative inquiry was utilised for this research with a specific focus on the narratives of white educational psychologists. “Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that critically analyzes social and cultural contexts of human experience” (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012, p.215). And as Merriam (2009) adds, “it is through stories that we are able to make sense of our experiences and how we communicate with others, and thereby, how we understand the world around us” (2009, p.32). Within this research, the stories and experiences of participants were used as data and as a means to answer the research question: what are the narratives of white educational psychologists pertaining to race and racism?

“Narrative inquiry is an umbrella term that captures personal and human dimensions of experience over time, and takes account of the relationship between individual experience and cultural context” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2). While stories can explain experiences, they can also be a catalyst for personal and social change – in both the lives of those telling the story and the audience (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012). Whilst narrative inquiry is often used to address issues of social justice, equity, race and diversity from the stories of people from historically marginalised groups, this study was focused on the stories of people from a dominant group. “Narrative inquiry at its core has always had the possibility to focus on positions of power and privilege, for it places the individual storyteller at the center of providing data that are valued” (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012, p.219). While narrative inquiry has often
been used to hear historically silenced voices, this inquiry was used to hear the silence around a story.

This research attempted to make sense of how white educational psychologists conceptualise and deal with race and racism. Their stories were a means to obtain these views. The narrative design furthermore called for a change in the relationship between the researcher and the participants as this was suitable for this research topic and could lead to the possibility of personal and perhaps social change. “When narrative researchers gather data through in-depth interviews, they work at transforming the interviewee-interviewer relationship into one of narrator and listener” (Chase, 2011, p.423). This involved looking at specific stories as well as having a guide to the interview questions in obtaining these stories. In a narrative inquiry, the interview questions may need to change depending on the story being told. This requires of the interviewer to be a ‘listener’ (See Appendix F: Interview questions).

A critical reflexivity approach was furthermore incorporated into this research design. “This reflexivity entails deep and critical reflection by the researcher about her own identities and her role in, and impact on, the research” (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012, p.381). To this end, my own power, privilege, stereotypes and biases were acknowledged and addressed. I also engaged in critical reflection and awareness pertaining to issues of whiteness in relation to the people being interviewed.

1.8.4 SAMPLING

The participants in this study were white educational psychologists working in Gauteng schools and in private practices. There were two key reasons to focus specifically on white educational psychologists. Firstly, this was a minor-dissertation and there was a need for the study to be focused. More stories from a broader, wider and racially inclusive range of educational psychologists will be recommended for a larger study. Secondly, and more importantly, this study aimed to explore the ‘elephant in the room’ (the silence on race issues) and through the narratives look specifically at how white educational psychologists talk about race and racism and issues pertaining to ‘whiteness’,
power and privilege. It was hoped that through this process, that which was silent could be voiced and that which was unconscious could become conscious.

Six white educational psychologists were identified through a snowballing convenience sampling method. This method was appropriate as it was through the networks that educational psychologists have with each other that participants were identified. The sample included male and female, English and Afrikaans speaking educational psychologists working in the Gauteng Department of Education, a public school, a private school and in private practice. This allowed for a range of contexts to be represented in the study.

1.8.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected using the following methods:

- In-depth interviews were held with six white educational psychologists to gain insights into their narratives pertaining to race and racism.

- Participants were asked to keep a reflective journal for one week following the interview in which they could explore any thoughts, experiences or insights following the interview.

- A group interview was planned to be held with participants to gain further insights.

- Observational field notes were kept when visiting the educational psychologists to observe their setting of work, while also documenting body language and emotions expressed by participants.

The interviews were recorded on an audio recorder with a backup recording made on a cell phone. The group interview was seen as being important in terms of bringing the individual stories into a group context and the sharing of insights. Bagele Chilisa (2012) critiques the Western-based focus group on the basis that discussions often tend to be dominated by assertive individuals. She proposes indigineous interview methods, specifically in the form of talking circles, that promote equality among participants. “Talking circles are based on
the ideal of participants’ respect for each other and are an example of a focus group method derived from postcolonial indigenous worldviews” (Chilisa, 2012, p.213). Through the talking circle, equality of members is emphasised with the researcher being a part of the circle and not the outsider looking in.

This was important in terms of the research question, given that I am the researcher and am also white. I too have a story to tell and this could be an important aspect of the sharing of the stories in terms of honesty and openness in the sharing of the stories. The talking circle could furthermore have contributed to conscientisation and healing. As Chilisa argues, “these methods can heal, encourage innovative thinking about the world, and assist participants in envisioning strategies that bring about personal and social transformation” (Chilisa, 2012, p.279). Chilisa writes in the context of working with women who are oppressed. In the context of this research, I was working with people who are in positions of power based on their skin colour and are viewed as the oppressor in terms of racism. I argue that the oppressor too is in need of healing and personal and social transformation. The listening circle could have been a start towards this process of healing and transformation.

1.8.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process of making sense of the data that has been gathered with the goal of finding answers to the research question (Merriam, 2009). It was planned that the data collected through individual interviews, observations, a group interview and reflective journals would be analysed using a narrative approach to data collection and analysis. The focus was thus on the stories being told, and how the stories were communicated - not only what was said. Heather Fraser (2004) outlines seven phases in the analysing of personal stories. These included:

- Phase one included hearing the stories being narrated and experiencing the emotions of both the participants and the interviewer (2004, p.186). Reflections were made of the body language being used and the emotions expressed.
• Phase two involved transcribing the material so as to provide an accurate record of the interviews.

• In phase three, the individual transcripts were interpreted, with a focus on finding common themes in each transcript. The main points were identified, and suggestions were made to what non-verbal gestures, silences and pauses suggested (2004, p.190).

• Phase four involved examining the stories from different dimensions and looking at intrapersonal, interpersonal, cultural and structural aspects of the stories (2004, p.193). This gave insights into how participants interacted with different dimensions of their environment and how it related to the research questions.

• Phase five of the analysis included linking the personal to the political. “This phase involves researchers deliberating how dominant discourses and their attendant social conventions constitute an interpretative framework for understanding the stories” (2004, p.195). In this phase the relationship stories had to particular discourses were explored as well as what the stories had to say about the lived experiences of class, gender and race.

• Phase six explored the commonalities and differences among the participants where the content, style and tone of the speakers were compared and contrasted. Patterns that emerged were explored and clustered into themes for further analysis. The grounds on which certain themes were identified were provided.

• Phase 7 of this process involved writing an academic narrative about the personal stories. This included making sure the written analysis corresponded to the stories that were told as well as to the objectives and aims of the research project. As Fraser says “narrative analysis offers us a way to understand the role personal stories play in the making of socio-political worlds” (2004, p.197).
1.8.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS, RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

“Reliability and validity are conceptualised as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in the qualitative paradigm” (Golafshani, 2003, p.604). In order to achieve reliability and validity in this inquiry, the researchers own bias will be limited while truthfulness increased. In order to ensure that this research was sound and reliable, a number of aspects were considered throughout the research process from conceptualisation, researching, analysing and the writing up of the findings.

This research aimed towards fairness in terms of a balance of the views, perspectives, values, concerns and voices of the participants and the researcher so as not to reflect any bias (Chilisa, 2012). A challenge that I faced in this research were my own bias, attitudes and feelings to fellow white educational psychologists. To avoid this bias, I aimed on a continual basis to reflect on the issues through written reflections and talking through the issues with my supervisors. My assumptions, beliefs and biases that may have shaped this inquiry were disclosed throughout this study.

The validity of this research was maintained through using valid research strategies, data collection and data analysis techniques that were appropriate to this inquiry. Central to the reliability of this inquiry was the concept of trust. This was maintained through following ethical processes, keeping confidentiality, keeping records of interviews and taking steps to minimise bias.

1.8.8 ETHICS

The general guideline of ethical research was adhered to in this study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg (See Appendix A). Permission was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) to interview an educational psychologist who was employed by the GDE (Appendix B). Emails were sent to individuals inviting them to participate in this research (Appendix C). Informed consent was obtained at the start of the research project where the research was explained fully (Appendix D). This included giving consent for
audio recordings of the individual interviews and group interview and the use of written or creative reflective journals.

Confidentiality and anonymity was maintained at all times. Personal data remained anonymous with pseudonyms being used and the names of the schools or details of educational psychological practices being omitted. This was important in order to protect participants against unwanted exposure. The notion of voluntary participation was communicated to the participants and it was made clear that they had the right to withdraw at any time. In striving towards an ethical practice, the accuracy of the data collection and presentation was maintained.

Principles of respect and an ethic of care that included compassion and a nurturing approach were adhered to in this research. This included the manner in which participants were approached, treated and interviewed as well as in how the findings were presented. This research aimed to explore the narratives of white educational psychologists about race and racism, a subject that is sensitive and where white people have been vilified for their views. My aim was not to denigrate participants, but to create a safe space for them to speak about issues of race and racism so as to better understand their perceptions, fears and experiences and to make further recommendations.

Narrative methods of collecting data, especially around a topic such as racism, can lead to unpredictable responses, which could cause emotional reactions. The consequences of this research therefore had to be taken into account. In considering the ethics of this research, what was constantly kept in mind were what the benefits of this research would be for the educational psychologists participating in the research, and in turn their clients. Furthermore, the harm that the research could cause was considered in all phases.

It was therefore made clear to the participants the benefits of doing this research and the potential issues that may arise out of the research. As I was working with educational psychologists, I anticipated that they had the resources and support networks to deal with the potential issues that could arise out of exploring their stories pertaining to racism.
Sensitivity and an empathetic listening approach were used in this research. It was made clear that participants were not being judged, criticised, interrogated or blamed for any views or beliefs they may have held. Challenging stories that gave rise to a range of emotions were listened to. Participants were encouraged to contact me after the interview if they had any questions, reflections or insights.

1.8.9 LIMITATIONS AND POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

There were limitations to this research as well as potential problems that could have arisen. This research was limited to a sample of six white educational psychologists and the results cannot be generalised to the larger population. It was however hoped that this small sample would be able to give insights into the research topic.

A key factor that was considered were my personal views about race and racism and how I approached, interviewed and related to the participants in the study. As previously discussed, ongoing self-reflection and processing of issues that arose were a fundamental aspect of this research (See Appendix G: Reflections).

A challenge that was faced was finding participants who were willing to talk about race and racism and who would be honest with their accounts. Talking about racism is often portrayed as a sensitive topic by white people and something they do not feel comfortable talking about. The topic can bring up feelings of guilt, shame, confusion, denial and resistance. While recognising these feelings could be an important outcome of the research process, the challenge was to allow participants to feel comfortable enough to share their possible discomfort. This was achieved in some cases through the relationship that I as the researcher was able to build with the participants and the trust that developed. Essential to this was that participants did not feel judged, criticised or blamed for their views.

Insider research and my ‘whiteness’ was both an aid and deterrent in the data collection process in a number of ways. Being an ‘insider’ and having certain
commonalities with participants was a starting point to building rapport and safety and with information being shared. As an insider, I came to the research with specific insights about white people which enabled me to develop trust and gain a deeper understanding of the participants. “One’s whiteness becomes a form of methodological capital researchers can use to question whites about the meaning they attach to their race” (Gallagher, 2004, p.207). Yet, as Charles Gallagher continues to argue, perceiving oneself to be an insider, yet interrogating whiteness from the outside, creates methodological and ethical questions (2004). “Asking questions which decontextualize and treat whiteness as normative or existing outside the established racial hierarchy makes the researcher complicit in valorizing and creating a narrative of whiteness which absolves researcher and informant of the responsibility of challenging white racism and white privilege” (Gallagher, 2004, p.207).

Having an insider status did not necessarily make the interview process easy as this engagement was affected by a number of things. My beliefs and ideologies may have differed from those of the participants and this could have hindered the interview process. The sub-identities I carry, such as my age, religion and gender, could, as Aisha Giwa (2015) argues, further complicate matters. There could have been suspicion towards me and my interest in doing this research and possible fear that I would be critical of their stories. This may have led to defensiveness or participants telling me what they think I wanted to hear and being politically correct. ‘Whiteness’ within itself carries many sub-identities and issues. For example, being an English-speaking South African, could have made me an outsider when listening to the narratives of an Afrikaans speaking person. Being an insider or outsider however called for continuous reflexivity as the position of the researcher could have affected the production of knowledge, As Gallagher argues:

*While the majority of whites enjoy many privileges relative to other racial groups, one must nevertheless critically access where one’s social location, political orientation, religious training, and attitudes on race fit into the research project* (Gallagher, 2004, p.204).
1.9 Theories that inform this research

A number of key theoretical perspectives that informed this research are discussed below.

![Diagram showing theoretical perspectives]

**Figure 1: Theoretical perspectives**

### 1.9.1 Critical Psychology

Critical psychology is defined by Derek Hook as an approach towards psycho-social knowledge and practice and to relations of power rather than a theory. “Critical psychology cuts across the various sub-disciplines in psychology and is made up of diverse theoretical perspectives and forms of practice” (Hook, 2004, p.11). Critical psychology challenges mainstream psychology with a key theme being the relationship between psychology and power and how psychology plays a role in maintaining power relations. When one adds whiteness to this, the degree of power is further extended. These ideas and concepts were valuable in the context of understanding the issues within this research project.

### 1.9.2 Critical Race Theory

The respect for human rights is a fundamental principle within the ethical rules of conduct pertaining specifically to psychology (HPCSA, 2006b). An awareness of cultural diversity and caution not to impose one’s stereotypes on
clients based on race, gender, age, sexuality and so forth is central to these rules. While these principles embrace cultural diversity and recognise the importance of tolerance, understanding and respect for other races and cultures, they can, as Laura Abrams & Jene Moio (2009) argue, unintentionally promote a colour-blind mentality that could obscure the importance of institutionalised racism. The problems inherent in this ‘cultural competence model’, as referred to by Abrams and Moi, can be addressed by Critical Race Theory (CRT).

CRT is a perspective and a set of interrelated beliefs that outline the significance of race/racism and how it operates in society (Gillborn, 2006). This perspective provided insights and conceptual tools that were used as a method of inquiry in this research to better understand the impact of race and racism as it occurs on a systemic and institutional level. It was furthermore used as a way to critique and enhance the way in which the conversations about race and racism were conceptualised.

1.9.3 CRITICAL DIVERSITY LITERACY
Melissa Steyn’s (2010) notion of Critical Diversity Literacy (CDL) was used as a conceptual foundation in this research and when analysing the narratives. Steyn defines the concept of CDL as a ‘reading practice’ through which one can perceive and respond to perceptions in the social environment and structures of oppression. She argues that there is a need to be literate in reading the complex world where oppression based on race, gender, culture, sexuality and so on is prevalent. It is through CDL, an informed analytic orientation, that one can begin to read social situations and understand, amongst other things, power relations and issues of dominance, privilege, oppression and internalised oppression. The criteria outlined in Critical Diversity Literacy provide the analytic skills which can enable one to recognise, think about and interrupt existing social relations where oppression exists. Steyn argues that the process of developing Critical Diversity Literacy is one of conscientisation, a path and a process that is cognitive, affective and relational (Steyn, 2010). The
understanding of CDL and the analytic tools related to it were important in this research.

1.9.4 WHITENESS STUDIES

‘White privilege, unpacking the invisible knapsack’ an article by Peggy McIntosh (1990) presents and discusses the concept of white privilege. The understanding of this concept and how it works is relevant in understanding how one can effectively pursue anti-racism work. White educational psychologists in the South African context hold positions of power and authority based on their professional position as well as their whiteness. Whiteness studies and understanding white power and privilege were an essential component to this research.

1.9.5 LIBERATION PSYCHOLOGY

With social transformation as the goal of psychology, liberation psychology has its roots in the writings of Paulo Freire and the work of Latin American psychologists such as Martin Baró and Maritza Montero. Liberation psychology developed in countries that experienced slavery and colonialism and is well suited to the South African context where the impact of poverty, inequality, racism and oppression are still being experienced. Liberation psychology moves away from the individualistic tendencies found in mainstream Western psychology to one in which the social-political and economic contexts impacting on people are addressed. An understanding of Liberatory Psychology in the context of South Africa was one aspect that informed this research study.

1.10 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 2 contains a detailed literature review, presenting theories of critical psychology, critical race theory, critical diversity literacy, whiteness studies and aspects of liberation psychology in order to frame the narratives of white educational psychologists and shed light on the research problem.

Chapter 3 contains an analysis and interpretation of the data collected.
Chapter 4 will conclude the study with a discussion of the themes identified in the previous chapter. The limitations of this study will be explored with further recommendations being made for interventions and future studies.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has described the background and rationale to this study and presented an overview of how the problem was approached. The aim of this study was to explore the narratives of white educational psychologists pertaining to race and racism. The reason for this research is that racism in South Africa is still rife 23 years after democracy and continues to be a barrier towards social cohesion and quality in education. Educational psychologists can play (and ethically should play) a critical role in dealing with racism towards building a decent society. The specific research objectives were, within the context of the practice of educational psychology in Gauteng schools, to find out how white educational psychologists think about and deal with issues of race and racism. The purpose was to build an understanding based on these narratives and to make recommendations for future interventions to support and train white educational psychologists in developing an anti-racism practice.

The messiness and complexities of tackling race and racism from the perspective of a white woman listening to the narratives of white educational psychologists was tackled in undertaking this research. In conducting this research, I attempted to take to heart Yancy’s plea to white America when he wrote:

*I have a weighty request. As you read this letter, I want you to listen with love, a sort of love that demands that you look at parts of yourself that might cause pain and terror, as James Baldwin would say. Did you hear that? You may have missed it. I repeat: I want you to listen with love. Well, at least try* (Yancy, 2015).
2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW - EXPLORING RACE AND RACISM

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This literature review aims to lay a foundation for the investigation of the narratives of white educational psychologists pertaining to race and racism. The context within which this question is placed is specifically within the education system in South Africa, 23 years after democracy.

In this study my argument is that as white educational psychologists practicing within the South African context, it is imperative that we locate ourselves within the framework of transformation and social cohesion. Within this frame and considering our historical past, understanding race and racism is important. Further to this, I argue that as educational psychologists we are well placed to play an important role in promoting and dealing with issues of transformation and social cohesion, and challenging issues related to race and racism, in the schools we work in and in our practice as educational psychologists working with learners, parents and teachers. From my own experiences and observations, talking about and dealing with race and racism appears to be a messy and emotionally charged issue for the majority of white people and I have found there is a fear and resistance to tackle this issue. My research therefore aims to listen to the narratives of white educational psychologists so as to further understand this issue while also attempting to shed light on the potential for transformation among white educational psychologists.

The theories that inform this study will be explored in order to frame the context within which this study is placed. As an example, to further illustrate these theories, the findings of a report by Harris, Nupen and Molebatsi Attorneys submitted to the Gauteng Department of Education on the 1st December 2016 will be explored. This report presents an investigation into allegations of racial abuse and victimisation at Pretoria High School for Girls (PHSG). As Oupa Bodibe, the spokesperson for the MEC of education said on a radio talk show on the 5th December 2016, the racial abuse at the above school points to the
important fact that our assumptions that non-racialism would arrive on its own after 1994 was false (Bodibe, 2016).

In exploring the role of educational psychologists within this context, I will consider the historical context of race and racism in South Africa and how race and racism is constructed today. The report on allegations of racial abuse at PHSG I would argue is not specific to this school but gives a picture of the trends in many schools in South Africa. I will explore what impact this has on the well-being of learners and teachers as well as its impact on education and learning.

The assumptions that non-racialism would ‘just happen’ post 1994 were due to many of the policies that were introduced following the first democratic elections. The policies within education focused on ideas such as multiculturalism, which did not necessarily mean a commitment to dealing with transformation. I will explore issues related to whiteness studies including the discourse of denial and white power and privilege.

With this as a foundation to the research, I further explore the role of educational psychologists within this context, specifically from a critical psychology perspective.

2.2 Theories that inform this study

This research is approached from a critical point of view. Sharan Merriam (2009) claims that critical research “goes beyond uncovering the interpretation of people’s understandings of their world. In critical inquiry the goal is to critique and challenge, to transform and empower” (2009, p.10). She continues to argue, “those who engage in critical research frame their research questions in terms of power – who has it, how it is negotiated, what structures in society reinforce the current distribution of power, and so on” (Merriam, 2009, p.10). White educational psychologists hold positions of power both in terms of being white and in being psychologists given the role they play in society. “Recognizing white privilege and understanding its connections within the larger social relations of power is a basic step toward understanding racism and other
forms of oppressions” (Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004, p.83). There are a number of theories that I will explore to further this critical approach to understanding the narratives of white educational psychologists and their views of race and racism in South Africa.

2.2.1 CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theory that has grown out of law and legal studies in the USA and is being used in many fields, including psychology and education. “Critical Race Theory (CRT) seeks to examine, from a legal perspective, the ways in which prevailing conceptions of race (and to some extent, culture and identity) perpetuate relations of domination, oppression and injustice” (Modiri, 2012, p.405). CRT theorists question the social and cultural assumptions of whiteness and blackness.

The basic tenets of CRT as outlined by John Michael Lee (2007) are the centrality of race and racism in society; the challenging of the dominant ideology especially the notions of colour-blindness, neutrality and meritocracy in society; the centrality of experiential knowledge in analysing and understanding racial inequality; an interdisciplinary perspective that acknowledges the intersectionality of issues such as race, class and gender; and finally a commitment to a social justice agenda that focuses on the elimination of the oppression of all people (Lee, 2007).

By placing these concepts within the context of South African schools, I argue that race and racism are central issues that influence all aspects of education and learning, issues that educational psychologists should take cognisance of.

Taking the notions of colour-blindness, neutrality and meritocracy and how this plays out in South Africa post 1994, I refer to a study by George Gushue and Madonna Constantine (2007). They ask if it is important to talk about race in therapy and point out that that the American Psychological Association’s (2003) multicultural guidelines “highlight the limitations of a racially ‘colour-blind’ perspective for clinical practice” (2007, p.321). ‘Colour-blindness’ refers to the notion of denying, avoiding or distorting the impact of race or refusing to
consider race as having an impact on people’s lives. Philip Mazzocco et al. define racial colour-blindness as simply an opposition to racial categorisation. (Mazzocco, Cooper, & Flint, 2012). ‘I don’t see colour and I treat everyone the same’ is what teachers and possibly educational psychologists would say. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2010) argues that colour-blindness is the newest tactic employed by white people in the maintenance of racial hierarchy. It is through ‘not seeing race’ and ‘treating everyone the same’ he argues that racism can continue in the policies and institutions of society. Bonilla-Silva’s writes of white Americans, claiming “I don’t see any colour, just people” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p.1), comments that can also be heard in South Africa. Added to this could be statements such as, ‘they are playing the race card’, ‘if they only worked harder they would succeed’ and ‘why can’t black people stop talking about the past and move on’. As Kerri Ullucci outlines in her review of Bonilla-Silva’s book, ‘Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States’ (2006), while people are not overtly racist, colour-blindness still has the same end goal as overt forms of racism: the maintenance of white privilege:

Colour-blindness is a powerful means of justifying racial inequality because it unraces race. It takes racism out of the picture and replaces it with a liberal discourse of fairness and equal opportunity.... Colour blindness ignores the lived reality of people of colour. In arguing that race is not a factor, colour-blindness makes race-based solutions obsolete (Ullucci, 2006, p.538).

Further to clarifying concepts, CRT has an activist dimension. “It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p.3). A colour-blind mentality will not bring about change. Hopefully through an understanding of CRT, awareness can be built so that issues of racial inequality can be addressed. CRT furthermore includes an understanding of the intersectionality of issues, going beyond race to include gender and class.
Figure 2: Critical Race Theory Framework (Source: Lee, 2007, p.7)

The diagram by Lee gives a pictorial understanding of how issues can be analysed using CRT. The example of the Pretoria Girls High School ‘hair issue’ will be analysed using this perspective. The ‘hair issue’ at this high school involved a group of black learners protesting against the school’s code of conduct around hair which did not take into account black girls’ hair and how the girls’ had to fit into the school’s view of tidiness. The learners said the code of conduct, for example, did not take into account dreadlocks and black girls’ natural hair, instead enforcing a white view of how hair should be kept. The learners took a stand against the institutional culture and racism, thereby “holding their school to account for racism” (Pather, 2016). Based on Lee’s diagram, his five core concepts will be considered in analysing the hair issue in terms of CRT:

- *The centrality of race and racism in society*: In understanding the hair story, and specifically black hair, race and racism is central. Hair has historically been used in South Africa to racially classify people, with the
‘pencil test’ used in the Apartheid era being an example. In the pencil test, the blackness or whiteness of a person would be determined by whether a pencil would slide out of their hair. “The curliness of someone’s hair (a supposed indicator of blackness) was judged by sticking in a pencil; if it slid out the person in question was counted as white” (The Economist, 2012).

The story of hair plays itself out among females, with there being pressure to conform to ideals of what hair should be like. Cheryl Thompson (2008) states in Black Women and Identity: What's Hair Got to Do With It? “For young Black girls, hair is not just something to play with, it is something that is laden with messages, and it has the power to dictate how others treat you, and in turn, how you feel about yourself” (Thompson, 2008 - 2009, p.1).

An unpublished study I have done on young black girls and their experience in their choice of hair styles (2015) revealed that there is enormous pressure and policing on girls to conform to hair styles and subsequently handed identities. Research by Jeffries & Jeffries (2013) looked specifically at girls and their relationship to hair. They deconstruct messages about hair norms amongst African American adolescents whilst also showing the cultural power of hair. In this study, the value of natural hair and the struggle to conform to the norms of European beauty in the American context is explored. This is confirmed by the findings of Simon (2000) where she links self image to hair and hairstyle choices. Euro-American beauty standards have a negative effect on African American women and as Brenda Randle (2015) argues, the pressure to have ‘good’ (straightened) hair as opposed to ‘bad’ (natural) hair is something faced by many African American women, with ‘bad’ hair resulting in much teasing and pressure to conform and straighten one’s hair.

From a South African perspective, the views of hairstyle choices are argued differently from that of the perspective of the USA. Natural hair of black women in the South African context can be seen as a marker of confidence and pride in being female while having straightened, woven or braided hair can be viewed as a form of creativity and self expression – and not about imitating whiteness
This view may be true for some women in some South African contexts, as some of the learners at Pretoria Girls High School attest to, however, at the same time, it must be remembered that in historically white contexts there is pressure to conform to the norms of white hair which includes straightening one’s hair.

- **The challenge to dominant ideology:** Applying CRT to the hair story at a school makes it possible to analyse the rules of the school and the practices through a race conscious lens. Understanding the issues related to hair in the context of South Africa’s history can in turn lead to a challenge of the dominant ideology. The rules of hair at Pretoria Girls High School that resulted in the student protests in 2016 were very similar to those in place when I attended said school in the 1980’s, then a school only for white girls. So, 23 years into democracy, the remnants of racially devised and divisive practices are still in place and one needs to challenge this ideology in order to achieve the project of transformation in South Africa. The protests of the girls in this school challenged the dominant ideology of the school and spread to other schools, thereby raising awareness of issues.

- **The centrality of experiential knowledge:** The experiences and the stories of the young women at PGHS with regard to their hair and other allegations of victimisation and racial abuse have been pivotal in exposing pervasive racism experienced by them. In the report by Harris, Nupen and Molebatsi Attorneys (2016), learners who made allegations against educators were interviewed as well as those against whom the allegations were made and based on this, recommendations were made.

- **The interdisciplinary perspective:** In the stories told one sees the intersectionality of race and gender. CRT gives the perspective of how race, class and gender intersect and need to be understood in relation to each other.
Commitment to social justice: As a result of the girls taking a stand and expressing themselves, an investigation was done and the findings submitted to the Gauteng Department of Education (Harris, Nupen, & Molebatsi, 2016). This report expresses a commitment to social justice with findings and recommendations being made in relation to this in the report. For example, one of the reflections related to allegations of racism in the classroom was:

There appears to be a lack of understanding on the part of certain White Educators at the School about Black hair. This is confirmed by Educator 8’s statement that she held the workshop to enlighten White Educators on Black hair and the management thereof. Most Black learners interviewed stated that certain White Educators did not understand that African hair is not like White hair. (Harris, Nupen, & Molebatsi, 2016, p.15)

In conclusion the investigation found that the allegations made by black learners regarding white educators to be substantiated.

It has been recommended that those educators should be the subject of disciplinary proceedings. In respect of the disciplinary proceedings, referred to above, it is cause for real concern that certain of the findings in this Report confirm certain of the allegations of racism and discriminatory conduct on the part of certain educators in the School. It is also confirmed that the actions of those educators resulted in the humiliation of those Black learners towards whom their actions were directed. This is unacceptable and should be immediately addressed by both the GDE and the School (Harris, Nupen, & Molebatsi, 2016, p.54).

While these findings are important in that the girl’s perspectives were taken seriously and the allegations in many cases were substantiated, the recommendations in themselves do not guarantee social justice.

This example reflects how CRT could be used in the South African context. “CRT in education should be viewed as making a valuable contribution to praxis, as it supports reflection and action to promote psychological well-being,
organize collective action, and develop a liberating education” (McGee & Stovall, 2015, p.495).

Joel Modiri (2012) argues that reconceptualising CRT from the perspective of the USA where it was developed is too limiting for the reality of post-apartheid South Africa. He continues to argue that “a post-apartheid CRT should entail an interweaved exploration of at least three points, namely: (1) a critique of law and legal institutions implicated in perpetuating racist ideology; (2) an analysis of the racialised patterns of wealth distribution, economic inequality and poverty (and specifically how they are enabled by law and tolerated within the legal culture); and (3) an engagement with the dynamics of race (and also culture and identity) in ‘post’-apartheid social and political life”. (Modiri, 2012, p.407).

Modiri outlines two foundational principles of CRT:

(1) the centrality of racism: that racism is a normalised and ingrained feature of the social order which appears often in nuanced and covert ways; and (2) that white supremacy does not refer to right-wing extremist racist hate groups that consciously promote white domination, but rather denotes a system (political, legal, economic and cultural) in which whites maintain overwhelming control and power (Modiri, 2012, p.406).

I argue that white educational psychologists are in these positions of control and power, a position that they may not be aware of in terms of their own control, privilege and power. It is through understanding CRT that one can become conscious of one’s power as well as privilege.

CRT gives an understanding of racism that goes beyond the personal. Racism is understood within the context of systems and institutions, within the frame of power and privilege. This is important in terms of understanding white educational psychologists. It is not about ‘personal’ racism. While training to be educational psychologists, we are encouraged to explore our personal views and to be sensitive to people of other cultures with a focus on individual attitudes and being respectful. White people often say, ‘I am not racist’, ‘I respect people from different backgrounds, races and cultures’, ‘I don’t see
colour’ – and while this may be true, we need to have an understanding of how the system and institutions give us (as white people) privilege and power and thereby perpetuate racism. So while Apartheid has ended, racism has not ended. The system and the institutions within this system have not been challenged and white people are still in positions of both power and privilege. I argue, as educational psychologists who are trained in a Western model of psychology, we continue to be in a position of power. CRT gives the insights and conceptual tools to understand systemic and institutionalised racism and with these understandings we can be better able to challenge racism.

2.2.2 CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Critical psychology means to question – “to question the underlying assumptions of theory and practice and the way in which they may maintain and perpetuate ignorance, inequality, oppression – in short, - the stuff of human suffering.... though a commitment to exploring the processes – conscious, unconscious, social, historical and ideological – that come to constitute subjectivity” (Barbara Duarte Esgalhado in Sloan, 2000, p.223).

While psychology has developed in the West, the discourse of critical psychology has to a large extent not included the African voice. A. Bame Nsameng challenges the Eurocentrism of psychology (in Sloan, 2000, p.91). He regards the goal of critical psychology to “inspire a revision and a formulation of broad-based frames of reference that can permit and foster the development of paradigms, epistemologies, theories, methodologies and so on, that are sensitive to all forms of psychological reality” (Sloan, 2000, p. 93). He argues from the view that psychological reality is subjective and diverse and suggests that the nature of psychology may have been different had it been “discovered and cultivated within world views different from the Eurocentric – say the African or the Chinese” (Sloan, 2000, p.102).

Hook defines critical psychology as “an approach, a kind of orientation towards psychological knowledge and practice – and to relations of power in general – than any one kind of theory, any one set of concepts” (Hook, 2004, p.11).
Critical psychology can therefore be viewed as a process that takes into account the subjectivity and diversity of people and their backgrounds and worldviews, while as Frosh argues “subverting the dominant assumptions of mainstream psychology” (Sloan, 2000, p.60). Critical psychology is therefore relevant to this study as a means to analyse and understand the construction of identities as well as to consider how psychology can contribute to a more just society. Yet, as Prillentsky (2000) argues, it must go beyond critique. He follows the words of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator, stressing “the need to engage in annunciation as much as denunciation” (Sloan, 2000, p.68). By this he means one must move beyond critique to agency and action.

Critical psychology is an important theory to use when looking at issues such as racism given that one of its central themes is the relationship between psychology and power. “It is an awareness that psychology itself is powerful – perhaps more powerful than we may at first expect – and that psychology plays a part in maintaining and extending existing relations of power” (Hook, 2004, p.13). Through this lens, the nature of power within psychology and how psychology plays a role in maintaining power relations can be understood. When one adds whiteness to this picture, and more specifically, white educational psychologists, the level of power is further extended. When speaking of power, Hook argues:

In the South African context, this means that a pre-eminent objective of critical psychology is the critique of how the knowledge, the practice and the organisational structure of psychology itself came to perpetuate what must be South Africa’s most characteristic form of power: racism (Hook, 2004, p.361).

“Critical psychology is concerned both with critiquing oppressive uses of psychology and with disrupting imbalances of power” (Hook, 2004, p.13). Furthermore, critical psychology is about doing psychology in a critical way, it is as Collins argues, “a sustained and systematic attempt to transform through critical analysis” (Hook, 2004, p.23).
Thus, approaching the hair story at PHSG through a critical psychology lens would firstly require an understanding of the politics behind hair, especially in the South Africa context. The experiences of girls and their stories on the pressure to conform, the unjustness of the rules around hair that have been made by white people who do not understand the experiences of black girls, and the expression of identity and self confidence in the choice of hairstyles. The debate around hair can be used to open up broader discussions that could lead to challenging the status quo in the school.

Related to these theories are the understandings that come from whiteness studies which give important theories of power and privilege and help to further understand the narratives of white educational psychologists.

2.2.3 WHITENESS STUDIES

It is important to explore the notion of ‘whiteness’ and white privilege in order to dismantle racism.

Peggy McIntosh in the seminal work ‘White privilege: unpacking the invisible knapsack’ (1988) defines white privilege as:

An invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, tools and blank cheques that white people, for the most part unconsciously, carry with us every day (McIntosh, 1988, p.165).

McIntosh adds that racism was something she as a white woman was taught was putting others at a disadvantage, but she had not been taught to see white privilege as putting her at an advantage (1998). By noticing white privilege, she argues, one has to give up notions of meritocracy (that progress is based on talent, ability and hard work, rather than on race, class privilege or wealth) and that democratic choice is available to everyone.

While awareness of white privilege is seen as important to raise consciousness about racism, there is resistance among many white people to acknowledge this. Tema Okun (2010) has coined the term ‘privileged resistance’ – “a term
used to designate the ways in which those of us holding privilege resist or deny that we benefit from the unearned assets that come with being a member of the dominant group…One of the ways that our culture reproduces racism is by keeping us oblivious to our participation in its construction” (Okun, 2010, pp.xiii-xxv).

She argues that the resistance stems from the fact that generally if white people talk about race and racism we are going to feel bad, guilty, angry, and ashamed. So we resist talking about it, or we talk about it in a way that reflects us as ‘good’ white people, we are ‘not racist’, we ‘don’t see colour’, we are ‘colour-blind’. Helms (1995), argues that for white counsellor trainees to develop a non-racist white identity, they must accept their ‘whiteness’ and acknowledge the ways they collude with and benefit from racism. This however is difficult as racism has distorted how we think about race and our white identity. Joyce King (1991) calls this a ‘dysconscious process: “It is not the absence of consciousness (that is not unconsciousness) but an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race” (p.135). She continues to argue:

*Our thinking process has been impaired by racism. It’s not that we are simply unaware (unconscious) about race (thus all we need to do is become aware and conscious). Rather, racism has fundamentally distorted how we think. Understanding racism as a dysconscious process makes clear the work that we need to do* (King, 1991, p.135).

She advocates for a liberatory pedagogical approach that includes a critique of ideology, identity and miseducation while including the dimension of power and privilege in society.

Jonathan Jansen (2009) speaks of ‘knowledge in the blood’ when understanding second generation Afrikaner students. He views this as “knowledge embedded in the emotional, psychic, spiritual, social, economic, political, and psychological lives of a community” (Jansen, 2009, p.171). It is in this way that whiteness is reproduced, circulated and perpetuated.
2.2.4 CRITICAL DIVERSITY LITERACY

This leads to the work of Critical Diversity Literacy which points to what white people can and need to do, not only to become conscious and aware, but to change how we think and thereby act and behave. This approach is not about tolerance or about embracing and celebrating difference. It is more about asking the question, what is this democracy project of South Africa asking of us? It is about helping us to think critically and differently about the issues faced. Melissa Steyn’s (2010) notion of Critical Diversity Literacy is that it is a ‘reading practice’ which recognises and responds to social climates and prevailing structures of oppression. It provides conceptual tools that enable one to think critically about social issues, including issues of identity, difference and power:

Critical Diversity Literacy is designed to provide students with theoretical concepts which can be applied to everyday contexts and prepare them to function effectively and sensitively as professionals in social contexts characterised by diversity (Steyn, 2010, p.55).

It is a process of conscientisation and becoming literate in terms of being able to read what is going on in the world around one, both politically and socially. This process of conscientisation is cognitive, affective and relational.

I would argue that whiteness studies lie at the crux of this research. Green, Sonn & Matsebula (2007) claim that research on whiteness could contribute to decolonisation and through this, work towards social justice. They argue that through understanding whiteness, there is a possibility to “start to think differently about racism, race relations and anti-racism. These different ways of thinking include interrogating power and privilege in the analysis of racism, which in turn may lead to more effective and critical action addressing racism” (Green et al., 2007, p.389).

These theories will be used as a tool to examine the narratives that white educational psychologists have with regard to race and racism and to shed light
on actions that could possibly be taken towards creating a more just and socially transformed society.

2.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT OF RACE AND RACISM

In understanding how the participants in this study talk about and understand race and racism it is important to place it in the context of the history of the discourse of race and racism in South Africa. The historical aspect of how race was constructed in South Africa has been explored by Deborah Posel (2001), outlining the ambiguities and inconsistencies in defining people. After the union of South Africa in 1910 and prior to 1948 when the National Party won elections and brought in official policies of Apartheid, there was vagueness, inconsistency and ambiguity in how people were racially classified. “In short the statute books produced a dense conceptual fog on the subject of race, leaving the bureaucrats entrusted with administering the laws, on one hand, and the courts, on the other, to grope their way through it. They did so in strikingly different ways” (Posel, 2001, p.91). She went on to consider the impact of apartheid policies:

*The architects of apartheid racial classification policies recognized explicitly that racial categories were constructs, rather than descriptions of real essences—a version of the idea of race which enabled the bureaucratization of ‘common sense’ notions of racial difference and which contributed directly to the enormous powers wielded by racial classifiers* (Posel, 2001, p.87).

The conception of race that underpinned the apartheid project was as Posel explains, not just the science of race. “Apartheid’s social engineers drew deliberately and explicitly on a conception of race as a socio-legal construct rather than a scientifically measurable biological essence” (Posel, 2001, p.88). At the same time, “race was socially constructed in ways that drew heavily on the myths of racial science” (Posel, 2001, p.89). Race was bureaucratised and normalised and as Posel argues, became part of people’s ‘common sense’ (Posel, 2001).
The 1950 Populations Registration Act created legal and bureaucratic machinery for racial classification which provided very clear and strict criteria for racial classification (Posel, 2001). There was a shift from the fluidity and impreciseness of racial classification prior to 1948 where it was possible for people to move between the so-called race classifications of white, coloured or Native, to one where racial classification became binding and could not be negotiated. The purpose of this was to preserve ‘racial’ purity and white supremacy.

The definitions used in racial categorisation during this period were controversial due to the fact that if they were only based on science and the blood and ancestry factor, many white people would have been found to have non-European blood. Verwoerd, a major architect of apartheid saw the differences between black and white as “social rather than biological” (Posel, 2001, p.101). The complexity of how the state categorised people racially into whites, Indians, coloureds and Africans has as Posel argues, been normalised and for many, has become a fact of life (2001).

In post-apartheid South Africa, these racial categories are still clearly in existence and in many ways remain an obstacle to the pursuit of a non-racial democracy. The historical ambiguities and inconsistencies in which the project of racially classifying people was constructed in South Africa, is a backdrop to the discussion in the present day and how the participants in this study themselves define race and racism. The contextualisation of the issues brings forward the following words: ‘ambiguity’, ‘inconsistency’, ‘vagueness’, ‘groping one’s way’, 'constructs’- words that are important in understanding the narratives in this study.

*Because of the legacy of racism that continues to unsettle and trouble South African society and because of presently racialised patterns of health, life expectancy, education, housing, access to employment, land, service delivery, wealth distribution and income and general standard of living, what meanings we attach to race, and how we choose to approach it, is an obviously important starting point* (Modiri, 2012, p.411).
Modiri proposes a conception of race, “where race and racism is not located exclusively in social relations such as prejudice and stereotyping based on skin colour, but rather which understands racial oppression as primarily an institutional and systemic problem” (Modiri, 2012, p.411).

2.4 South African Psychology through a Critical Psychological Lens

Viewing the South African context of psychology through a critical psychological lens is according to Duncan, Stevens & Bowman (2004) important in order to “critique how the knowledge, the practice and the organisational structure of psychology itself came to perpetuate what must be South Africa’s most characteristic form of power: racism” (Hook, 2004, p.361).

Duncan et al, quoting the work of Adelaide Magwaza (2001) argue how historically, psychology in South Africa, instead of addressing issues of institutionalised racism, played a key role in the perpetuation, elaboration and reproduction of racism. Derek Hook expands on this, saying:

*Psychology aided the reproduction of racism not only through its routine denial of the centrality of the phenomenon in South African society, but also through to the academic justifications or ‘authorisation’ that it provided for the phenomenon. This ‘authorisation’ was evident also in terms of the highly racialised nature of its own disciplinary and professional practices and organisation* (Hook, 2004, p.363).

In Mohamed Seedat’s 1998 analysis of South African psychology journals between 1948-1988, he argues that South African psychology is an extension of the colonial and western ethno-scientific enterprise and that “psychology is shown as neglecting the black psychosocial experience and alienating blacks and women from the processes of knowledge production” (Seedat, 1998, p74).

His findings in relation to the articles he analysed show that within the field of educational psychology, the fifth most popular category in South African psychology journals “Incorporates the areas of academic learning and cognitive development (3.6%), educational measurement (2.4%) and vocational attitudes
and counselling services (1.7%). In contrast, counselling programmes directed at black school children (0.1 %) and the physical education of black pupils (0.1 %) are accorded insignificant attention” (Seedat, 1998, p.79).

The overwhelming focus on mainstream fields of inquiry, the domination of knowledge production by males who are mostly white, and the under-representation of blacks in empirical studies bears testimony to the assertion that psychology remains ensconced within the legacy of colonialism, apartheid and patriarchy (Seedat, 1998, p.83).

South African psychology was in general silent in the face of racism under apartheid according to Duncan et al and the question they pose is why? They suggest that psychologists, like everyone else “were socialised by and into the prevailing dominant ideologies” (Hook, 2004, p.366). They do not start as psychologists as a ‘blank slate’, neither do they function in a social vacuum. Being products of a racist society, psychologists they argue would have possibly “supported and reproduced aspects of the apartheid state’s racist practices and policies” (Hook, 2004, p.367). The question remains, what of educational psychologists training and practicing today in a democratic post-Apartheid society, that may argue they are not racist and do not see colour?

2.5 MULTICULTURALISM AND THE RAINBOW NATION

There was an assumption around 1994 that non-racialism would arrive on its own in South Africa with the advent of democracy. Within the education system, policies of multiculturalism were implicit, but no real policies or programmes were put in place to implement non-racialism. It was hoped that through multiculturalism, change would occur (Soudien, 2007).

Crain Soudien speaks of the ‘marriage’ between the National Party and the African National Congress (ANC) in the 1990s during negotiations leading up to the elections where the apartheid government and the liberation movement made compromises. In terms of this, major social institutions including schools were reformed but not dismantled as the former apartheid and Bantustan bureaucracies were integrated into new systems. This led to social institutions
being restructured on the basis of the existing rules and bureaucracies in place under apartheid. There was not real transformation as the political and administrative apparatus did not change (Soudien, 2007). The rules at schools such as PGHS are a clear example of this. The schools were reformed and girls’ of all races were allowed entry, but they were not transformed in such a way as to recognise the diversity of the girls. So in this case, the black girls had to fit into the rules. As Ra’eesa Pather argues in the Mail & Guardian, “There is a place for school rules. But when they are racist and attempt to protect the white status quo over a black child’s well-being, then they are no longer just rules. They are violations” (Pather, 2016).

Soudien elsewhere queries how education is contributing to social change in South Africa, claiming that the main outcome of the process of integration in South African schools is that of assimilation (Soudien, 1994). In his research into the attitudes of teachers he found that:

… schools manifest attitudes of what may be called racial inexplicitness. In other words, although there is recognition of differences amongst pupils, and indeed attempts are made to accommodate difference, much of what is taking place does not engage with the broader social realities that different children bring into school (Soudien, 1994, p.286).

The policies of multiculturalism that exist in schools’ manifest as an ethos of respect and caring. Multiculturalism is viewed as a priority in enhancing such values amongst learners of different race groups, but there is no real commitment in national and provincial departments of education towards implementing programmes or policies that deal with issues of transformation, and specifically with issues of race and racism. So while it is clear that schools should be places of tolerance where racism is not allowed, and while teachers may embrace an ethos of caring, respect and discuss issues from a historical perspective, they are often not able to deal with issues in the present in the classroom. (Soudien, 2007; Teeger, 2015). Furthermore, little is implemented in the form of programmes to change attitudes and deal with issues such as racism, beyond perhaps culture share on Human Rights Day or Freedom Day.
It must be made clear that multiculturalism is not non-racialism, and non-racialism is not colour-blindness.

The concept of a ‘Rainbow Nation’, a term coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu after South Africa’s first fully democratic elections in 1994, presented a false hope for South Africa. There was a hope that we would be a nation of people from different races, united and together in a democratic South Africa. South Africa today has not completed the healing and reconciliation process that should have continued from 1994 and that could have led to a non-racial society. The structures that gave rise to racism have not been dealt with or dismantled. The evidence of this is explicit in the case against Pretoria High School for Girls.

2.6 RACISM IN SCHOOLS AND THE IMPACT ON LEARNERS

The report by Harris, Nupen & Molebatsi Attorneys submitted to the Gauteng Department of Education on the 1st December 2016 presents an investigation into allegations of racial abuse and victimisation at Pretoria High School for Girls (PHSG) (Harris, Nupen, & Molebatsi, 2016). The report summarises a number of allegations which include the following (2016, p.4):

- “The use of black languages on the school premises not being tolerated”
- “Learners feeling that they were not allowed to wear black hairstyles, such as Afros. The school policy limiting the length of hairstyles, with this policy being arbitrarily interpreted by educators”.
- “Racial abuse and victimisation by both white educators and white learners, in particular the use of hurtful terms such as ‘monkeys’, ‘kaffir’, and being told learners belong at Mamelodi High School” (a school in a township) and not at Pretoria High School for Girls.
- “Management and senior officials in the school dealing flippantly with learner’s complaints about racial abuse and victimisation. For example, when learners complained they were told to ‘get over it’ or ‘toughen up’”.


• “Heavy-handed response by the school in calling the police and private security”.

• “Harassment and victimisation not only limited to the school grounds, but extending to school excursions”.

The findings of the report confirm some of the allegations of racism and discrimination of certain educators towards black learners, with the actions of these educators leading to the humiliation of black learners (2016, p.54). The report further finds that there is a need in the school to address issues of “diversity, cultural inclusion and social cohesion at the School. This would obviously include the complete elimination of all forms of racism and discriminatory conduct” (2016, p.55). The report shows that there are issues relating to race and racism that require intervention and action. It further elucidates on the sensitiveness and emotional nature of the issues that have been investigated and recommends intervention programmes that include diversity training and cultural awareness programmes, for educators and learners. “To ensure there is a proper understanding in relation to matters of race and culture amongst learners, and between learners and educators. The SGB should also be included in this intervention (Harris, Nupen, & Molebatsi, 2016, p.57).

While this report dealt specifically with the issues at PHSG, a year later, another elite school in Johannesburg was embroiled in a racism issue. A report by the Johannesburg Parent and Child Counselling Centre (JPCCC) in June 2017 (Berkowitz, Michael, & Ribeiro, 2017) elaborates on the psychological effects of racism on learners. This followed the ongoing racial and prejudicial statements and comments made to learners by a teacher at an elite Johannesburg school, St John’s College. The findings of this report were that racism had an adverse effect on the learners and could cause mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, anger and hostility. Shame and embarrassment were also experienced by learners who witnessed the racial incidents. Their recommendations were that counselling be offered to those that experienced the racism as well as those that were witnesses.
As Harris, Nupen & Molebatsi state with regard to PHSG:

*The issue of race in South Africa is an extremely sensitive issue given the history of South Africa and the fact that Apartheid involved the systematic and brutal oppression of Black people in South Africa. It remains a legacy that has to be comprehensively addressed. Accordingly, it is imperative that all parties at the School exercise caution and sensitivity in the manner in which they interact with one another, particularly in matters pertaining to race* (Harris, Nupen, & Molebatsi, 2016, p.61).

I would argue that this is a role that an educational psychologist could play in the school in helping learners, educators and the school governing body to address. An educational psychologist can play the role of what Soudien calls, ‘interlocutors – or sense makers’ – “people who assist in the current disorientation experienced as a country” (Soudien, 2015).

### 2.7 The Role of Educational Psychologists in Schools

From a critical psychological perspective, I argue that the role of an educational psychologist working in schools is to move beyond individual and personal mental health issues. Their role with this perspective would be, for example, to understand the impact of systemic and institutional issues of racism and how it impacts on individuals. The issues of hair and hair styles at Pretoria Girls High School could be understood as not just a personal issue of how girls keep their hair and the rules of the school. Educational psychologists, I would argue, would need to understand the historical context of black hair in South Africa and how hair has been used to oppress women with the pressure to conform to the standards of white hair. The psychological impact of this on girls is important to understand including the effects of bullying to conform to such standards, peer pressure, the amount of money used to conform, as well as the unhealthy hair products that need to be used. The empowerment of girls in being able to claim their natural hair and able to give voice to their concerns is significant in the context of South Africa where such voices have been minimised by white hegemony in schools.
More than the racial element of the hair issue at the girls’ school, it also speaks to the rigidity of the school system, the lack of human agency through a compulsory conformist practice in the name of discipline and the prevention of personal identity. Although the black girls were subjected to the rule of white hair, the white learners are confined to conformity. Educational psychologists can aid the process towards understanding identity and enabling agency and empowerment.

Based on an understanding of critical psychology, what specifically could an educational psychologist’s role be in dealing with such issues in a school such as PGHS, a former Model C school? Model C schools were former all white government schools that during the negotiation period towards democracy in South Africa between 1990-1994, were given what was called ‘Model C-status’. This referred to a model of desegregation where white schools were given the option to enrol black students as long as 51 per cent of the student body remained white. This provision for Model C schools was revoked by the 1996 South African Schools Act which declared that schools had to open admissions to all learners (Carrim & Soudien, 1999). The schools are now known as former or ex-Model C schools, schools that have adopted a multicultural assimilation model. So, while having a mixed racial body of learners, the teaching body and the culture of the school tends to be predominantly white:

*Desegregated South African schools tend to value the dominant cultural capital that white students bring from home and often end up reinforcing, rather than dismantling, racial boundaries and hierarchies* (Teeger, 2015, p.230).

Within this context an educational psychologist, I argue, would firstly need to understand that they can play an important part in contributing towards transformation. Further to this is an understanding of the history of South Africa and the psychological impact of racism and oppression on all South Africans. An educational psychologist can work on many levels within the school, with individuals and with groups, to deal with issues and facilitate change.
A key place to start would be working with white teachers who have had to deal with changes within not only the learner groups but with the changing curriculum. As discussed previously, non-racialism did not arrive on its own post-1994, and teachers perhaps have not had opportunities to deal with their fears, prejudices and attitudes. I would argue that many teachers may not conscious of their own prejudices, attitudes and racism. The impact of the allegations of racial abuse and victimisation at PGHS and the report has brought these sometimes conscious, but often unconscious, attitudes to the fore. The space can be created to facilitate transformation by awareness by introducing, for example, Critical Diversity Literacy programmes that can contribute to developing awareness and knowledge around race and racism. Added to this, I would argue that an educational psychologist can create spaces for the expression of fears, anger and other emotions in a non-judgemental and confidential space. This would be important as it could lead to personal insights and change which could impact on how teachers interact and treat learners.

Working with groups of learners in dealing with issues of race and racism can be an important role that an educational psychologist can fulfil. The research by Dr Chana Teeger (2015) finds that “in failing to talk about race and racism in schools, teachers do not make racial inequalities disappear. Instead, they often perpetuate these very inequalities” (Teeger, 2015, p.228). Teeger continues to argue that “in contexts where teachers do not talk about race and racism, young people may learn to mute their perceptions of racism at school” (2015, p.228).

Teeger investigates history teaching in schools and explains how history teachers, while teaching about issues of apartheid and race, are unable to deal with the potential conflicts that arise in the classroom debate. They quickly revert back to the curriculum when discussions become heated, thus suppressing any dialogue. On a structural level, “teachers restored order in their classroom by downplaying the salience of contemporary racial inequality” (Teeger, 2015, p.227).
These conversations are important for learners to have, they are issues that they deal with on a daily basis and they may not necessarily have the information and insights from their home and families. Racism can be perpetuated through the socialisation at home. School can play an important role in going beyond the fostering of caring relationships and developing respect. The educational psychologist can help to develop critical literacy with groups of learners, while also developing the space to engage with issues beyond heated discussions by developing listening skills and encouraging dialogue that can lead to understanding and transformation.

Teeger furthermore looks at what happens in schools when learners report experiencing racism. This is often translated as them playing the ‘race card’ and in one school learners were disciplined if their allegations were found to be false. This had the result of silencing learners and stopping them from identifying issues as acts of racism or of reporting them. Teeger’s findings were that a strong normative climate operates in schools that discouraged learners from interpreting racially charged incidents as racist. “Like experiences of racism, experiences of being unsure of whether an incident is or is not racially motivated can have serious emotional and physiological consequences” (Teeger, 2015, p.228).

In some cases, learners were referred to a psychologist, but, as she argues, this turns the blame onto the client and it is seen as a personal psychological and mental health issue. Her understanding of the role of the psychologists is limited to looking at personal and individual issues. I argue that with a critical psychological framework of the understanding of racism and its impact, one can move beyond the personal to the political. Learners need the space (and the support and guidance) to be able to talk about their experiences and thoughts of racism while also being able to listen to the thoughts and experiences of others so as to be able to reflect and make changes.

An educational psychologist, who has a critical psychological frame of understanding and is able to facilitate dialogue in groups, can help individuals to dismantle their prejudices and work towards transformation:
Examining how schools deal with interpersonal racism is thus of fundamental importance if we are to understand not only the perpetuation of racial boundaries and hierarchies in schools but also the possible long-term consequences of such experiences for individual health and well-being (Teeger, 2015, p.228).

2.8 FROM RESISTANCE TO VULNERABILITY

Talking about and dealing with issues of race and racism tends to be emotionally charged and complicated for white people. The feelings that these discussions evoke can be strong and uncomfortable, which can be one of the reasons for resistance to engagement (Zembylas, 2012).

In this chapter various theories have been explored that give a framework for talking about race, racism, whiteness, power and privilege. Yet the question remains to how one gets white people to engage with these ideas and theories. With the complexity of emotions that may arise, one can understand the resistance to engagement. Furthermore, understanding the theories, on a theoretical level, does not in itself suggest that there is a change in consciousness or behaviour.

Alison Bailey (2015) explores white people’s talk about race, white privilege and racism, using the phrase coined by Alice McIntyre (1997), ‘White talk’. This is the responses we as white people have such as, ‘I don’t see colour’; ‘some of my best friends are black’; ‘I also grew up poor and struggled’; ‘I have adopted a black child’; ‘I worked hard to get to where I am’; ‘why do black people always make it about race?’ ‘Apartheid is over; I was born after Apartheid; it is not my fault; I am a good white person’. Bailey calls these responses “a predictable set of discursive patterns that white folk habitually deploy when asked directly about the connections between white privilege and racism” (Bailey, 2015, p.2).

While McIntyre’s analysis on white talk is confined to what people say, Bailey adds to this a bodily component. She argues that we need to be mindful to not only white talk, but also to what our bodies are doing while we talk. “What our words say and what our bodies are doing are not always in concert” (Bailey,
The nonverbal communication that is expressed in body language reveals tensions, fears and anxiety. The examples she gives are of white people claiming they are not racist while their bodies tense up and their eyes dart around. It is this tension that is expressed in white talk combined with body language that reveals the emotions we carry as white people. And it is these emotions that are too hard to bear that cause us to ‘flutter’. Bailey uses the word ‘flutter’ to describe what white people do, in their talk and their body language - they remain on the surface of things and resist going deeper.

We flutter when we resist lighting upon or dwelling in spaces where we feel unsafe and vulnerable. We flutter when we look for detours, distract ourselves, and pull into our bodies. We flutter when we blame others, become defensive, or treat people of colour as our confessors. We flutter to avoid hearing people of color’s histories, experiences, and testimonies. We do everything imaginable to avoid confronting and owning our anxieties and fears (Bailey, 2015, p.6).

At the crux of white talk, Bailey argues, is fear: “White talk distracts us from rather than engages us with the heart of the white problem: fear” (Bailey, 2015, p.7). She argues that white talk is designed and scripted “for the purposes of evading, rejecting, and remaining ignorant about the injustices that flow from whiteness and its attendant privileges. I want to suggest a new point of entry—a way to flip the script, so to speak” (Bailey, 2015, p.3):

… one that resists turning the conversation into either a forum about white goodness or into an ignorance management project. Remember fear is at the root of the white problem. But, what drives the conversation is not fear itself, but how vulnerable we feel in the face of this fear. We can either plaster over our fears with white talk, or we can humbly acknowledge that they make us feel vulnerable and learn to treat this vulnerability as a source of knowledge. What if we made a conscious choice to embrace that vulnerability and used that realization as an entry point into the question of what it means to be a white problem? What if we replaced white talk with a discourse of vulnerability? (Bailey, 2015, p.12).
Our vulnerability results in resistance to talk about the issues as well as to understand how we as white people play a key part in maintaining racial inequalities. Bailey continues to argue for the need to replace white talk with a discourse of vulnerability, “where vulnerability is defined not as weakness, but as a condition for potential” (Bailey, 2015, p.4). It is this place of vulnerability that can be a source of knowledge and it is in the process of making a conscious choice to embrace vulnerability that Bailey argues we as white people can stop ‘fluttering’ and where alternatives to white talk can emerge:

*What if we treated fear, anger, shame, and guilt not as feelings to be squashed, escaped, ignored or reconfigured favourably, but as genuine sources of knowledge? What if we followed people of color’s lead into discursive spaces where we felt fragile, rather than into spaces where we felt comfortable? What if we attended to our feelings through our interactions with one another?* (Bailey, 2015, p.13).

Could it be that as white people our fear of facing the unbearable is at the root of our inability to engage? And could it be the fear of feeling bad about ourselves that keeps us blinkered and ‘fluttering’? In Bailey’s words:

*What if collective white fears and anxieties have been the source of real life injustices and harm from the start! What if racism really is a white problem! This is immense. What if we took time to dwell together in our anger, fear and discomforts together? What if we listened patiently and carefully to one another’s stories and to the connections between these narratives? Would a more complete picture emerge? Would the problem at least come into focus?* (Bailey, 2015, p.15).

It is this I argue that is a critical role an educational psychologist can play working with learners, teachers and parents in a school community. It is through listening patiently and carefully to one another’s stories and to the connections between these stories where changes in perceptions and attitudes can be made. Creating the spaces in which this is done, while having the openness and willingness to be vulnerable, is fundamental to this process.
2.9 Conclusion

Racism is a constant feature of the landscape of South African psychology’s history....it must be acknowledged and addressed if (psychology) is to recognise itself as a discipline capable of making a meaningful contribution to the future of a deracialised and egalitarian South Africa (Duncan, Stevens, & Bowman, 2004, p.388).

In this chapter the literature related to this study into the narratives of white educational psychologists pertaining to race and racism were explored. The theories that inform this study were expanded on – these being Critical Race Theory, Critical psychology, whiteness studies and Critical Diversity Literacy. The study was placed within the context of race and racism in South Africa while also exploring the South African context of psychology through a critical psychological lens. Understanding issues of multiculturalism and the rainbow nation were considered as these issues have a bearing in understanding racism in schools and the impact it has on learners. The role of educational psychologists in schools was explored and finally the issue of challenging ‘white talk’ was considered and evaluated.

These various theories give a framework for talking about race, racism, whiteness, power and privilege. This was followed by posing the question of how to get white people to engage with these ideas and theories. The concept of being vulnerable was introduced with the challenge to white folk to stop ‘fluttering’ at to start to listen and explore their fears, insecurities, anger and discomfort. The following chapter will explore the data analysis and findings from this inquiry and will make a link to the literature from this chapter.
3. CHAPTER THREE: DATA GENERATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As described in Chapter 1, this study aims to explore the narratives of white educational psychologists related to race and racism with the purpose of building an understanding on how this influences their practice. Furthermore, the purpose is to understand the role that educational psychologists can play towards ending racism. The findings of this research will hopefully support the professional development of educational psychologists and add knowledge to this area of inquiry. The sub-questions included:

- How do white educational psychologists define and view race and racism?
- How does racism influence the way white educational psychologists work?
- What support and further training is needed by white educational psychologists to be able to deal with and challenge race and racism in their practice?

The narrative process of research undertaken in this study has focused on what Christine Bold (2011) argues as being, “the importance of subjective meaning and emotions in making sense of social events and settings, together with the need for reflexivity in that sense making” (p.13). The analytic process involved in this narrative research has aimed to fit the purpose of the research and to answer the research questions while also supporting professional development and adding to an understanding of the area of inquiry.

The sample group consisted of six white educational psychologists working in private practice, at an ex Model C school, a private school and the District Office of Education. The sample included English and Afrikaans speaking, male and female participants ranging in age from 28 years to 58 years old.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Place of work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td></td>
<td>Private Catholic School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliot</td>
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<td>Private practice &amp; NGO</td>
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<td>Taylor</td>
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<td>Private Afrikaans school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asha</td>
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<td>Department of Education</td>
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<td>Alk</td>
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<td>Private practice</td>
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<td>Colin</td>
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<td>Ex-Model C school</td>
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Figure 3: Participant details

This chapter will focus on an explanation of the analytic process undertaken in this research including what was done with the data collected, an analysis of the data and a presentation of the findings of the research study.

3.2 Overview of Data Generation and Analysis

As discussed in Chapter 1 in section 1.8.4 the participants were identified using a snowballing sample, with the interviews being semi-structured. The paradigm through which this qualitative research study has been conducted is that of critical research with my theoretical framework being Critical Race Theory (CRT) and critical psychology as outlined in Chapter 2. “The purpose of analysis in qualitative research is to enquire deeply into the meaning of different situations and different people’s understandings of the world” (Bold, 2011, p.35). A critical inquiry has the goal of critiquing and challenging in order to empower and transform. A narrative analysis approach was used with a significant part of the analysis being a review of the data for recurring themes of interest and relevance to the study, aiming to identify how the participants construct and talk about race and racism:
Narratives necessarily tell the events of human lives, reflect human interest and support our sense making processes......narrative research usually sets out to explore an interesting phenomenon and sometimes its aim is to instigate change (Bold, 2011, p.16).

In this research, the phenomenon of race and racism was explored with the aim of instigating change.

3.3 The Analytic Process

In the process of interpreting the stories that were documented in this study, I followed the six phases of analysing personal stories that Heather Fraser (2004) outlined (see Section 1.8.6 in Chapter 1).

• **Phase 1**: As the stories were being narrated, they were recorded on a digital recorder and on my cell phone as a back-up. Listening to these stories, I was aware of the emotions of the participants and myself as the interviewer. Notes and reflections were made of the body language and emotions expressed with these being used as clues leading to possible meanings in the final interpretation.

• **Phase 2**: The interviews were transcribed and during the transcription process, notes were made related to thoughts, insights and possible codes.

• **Phase 3**: The transcripts were interpreted with the focus on finding common themes. Main points were identified and suggestions made as to what the silences, pauses and various other linguistic features may suggest.

• **Phase 4**: The stories were examined from different dimensions such as intrapersonal, interpersonal, cultural and structural aspects. This was done to gain insights into how the participants interacted with different dimensions and how the stories related to the research questions.

• **Phase 5**: In this phase the stories were linked from the ‘personal to the political’. This understanding is based on the feminist term Carol Hanisch (1969) coined referring to the theory that personal issues are linked to systemic issues in society. Thus in this phase the link was made between
the personal narratives of race and racism and the systemic nature of race and racism in the South African context.

- **Phase 6**: The commonalities and differences among the participants in terms of content and tone was compared and contrasted.

Combined with the above phases, I was interested in the social context and the meaning of the narratives. As Clandinin & Connelly (2000) argue, within narrative inquiry there is an acceptance that events have a past, a present and a potential future. Research cannot ignore history and the stories therefore need to be understood within the context of temporality. Furthermore, one cannot assume that the story told to me as the researcher will be the same when told to someone else. So while the story is essentially the same, it will unfold in different ways depending on the context within which it is told. It must therefore be understood that the narratives presented represent the participant’s experiences, perceptions and thoughts at the particular time of the interview and not necessarily reality.

### 3.4 Understanding the Data

#### 3.4.1 Stage One

After the data was generated in the form of interviews, the interviews were transcribed and each one was read a few times to get an overview and impression of the content. An initial summary of main insights was written for each transcription. Henning (2004) calls this process where initial themes are identified as open coding – a process whereby codes are selected based on what meaning the data makes to the researcher (See Appendix H: Excerpt of transcribed interview with coding).

Using different coloured markers, units of meaning were ascribed to sentences or phrases. These codes were then grouped together and each category was given a name. These categories, also known as themes or findings are the answers to the research question. In this study, the broad research question being ‘what are the narratives of white educational psychologists about race
and racism?’ These themes are a reflection of the subjective perceptions of the participants and the subjective interpretations of the researcher:

A thematic approach to analysis is most effective if you have a clear focus for your research from the start and your interview questions lead the interviewees into providing the information you seek (Bold, 2011, p.131).

So, to summarise, themes were developed to identify how the participants defined and understood race and racism. This was done through a process of coding the data whereby interesting elements in the raw data were identified and given codes. For example, ‘I don’t see colour’ and ‘we are all the same’ were given codes. These codes were reviewed and combined into themes. Themes were identified and meaning created from the answers participants gave in response to the questions asked.

Data analysis is defined by Merriam (2009) as the process of making sense of the data in order to answer the research question. This involves “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning” (Merriam, 2009, p.176).

3.4.2 STAGE TWO
Vignettes within the study were identified that presented examples of how race and racism were experienced or dealt with within the therapeutic spaces of the participants.

3.4.3 STAGE THREE
These vignettes were explored, discussed and analysed through the lens of the themes identified in Stage 1 of the analysis.

3.5 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS
Once the data analysis was complete, it became evident that there was a connection between three identified themes linked to how the participants constructed race and the issues in their therapeutic spaces that dealt with race or racism. This connection will be discussed in detail in section 3.6.4. A brief summary of the themes is offered in the figure below.
Figure 4: Themes arising from narratives

This diagrammatic representation illustrates the three themes of how race and racism were constructed by the participants. This was then reviewed in relation to the influence it had in the therapeutic space and on the cases described.

In exploring this, I will firstly introduce the participants, followed by a presentation of the themes of race and then the therapeutic vignettes will be presented. This will be followed with a discussion on how one’s racial lens impacts clients in the therapeutic space. In conclusion, there will be a discussion of the support and further training educational psychologists may need.

In the findings below, quotes from participants will be identified by their name followed by the line number of the quote within the transcription and is noted as, for example (L.8).

3.6 Research Findings

3.6.1 The people in this study and the context
A story has a beginning, middle and a possible ending and this story begins with the participants of this study and the researcher who need to be introduced. Six white educational psychologists were interviewed in this research, five of them at their place of work and one at a Wimpy as it was the
most convenient place for both of us to meet. This sample is not representative of all white people or all educational psychologists, but their stories give a glimpse into how a sample of white educational psychologist’s construct and deal with issues of race and racism.

In order to respect and protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were used, namely Asha, Elliot, Taylor, Linda, Alk and Colin. A research study by Ruth Allen and Janine Wiles (2016) argues for a shift where participants are asked to provide their own pseudonyms rather than being allocated these by researchers. In their study ‘A rose by any other name: participants choosing research pseudonyms’ they found that allowing participants to choose their own pseudonyms was a helpful and respectful way of inviting some ownership and input into the research. Giving pseudonyms and renaming participants is not just a technical issue but has “psychological meaning to both the participants and the content and process of the research” (Allen & Wiles, 2016, p.1). Pseudonyms chosen by the participants were therefore used in this study (See Appendix E for the email asking for permission to supply pseudonyms). What follows is a brief introduction to each of the participants.

A. Taylor

Taylor was born in 1989, so was 5 years old when South Africa transitioned from the system of apartheid to a democratic nation. She comes from an Afrikaans speaking background and as she says, “my parents are Afrikaans speaking, we are typically, I would say Boere Afrikaans speaking people” (L.26). She adds that she is Christian and Afrikaans, that they are very loving in their home and very allowing and open when it comes to diversity. On reflection, when asked about her awareness of people being treated differently because of their skin colour when she was younger, she commented that she was not very aware as a young person. Her awareness of issues developed in her post graduate studies and as she says, “all these issues started popping up and people began expressing their anger more and I became more aware” (L.95). For Taylor, the combination of the media and her studies had a big influence on the development of her awareness of issues, something she
admits she did not have before. Her developing awareness affected her in two ways – she first became bitter because she felt that it was her duty to start fixing the past and to rectify what was wrong from the past. This to her felt unfair as she did not feel she had that level of influence. At the same time she presently acknowledges that she has the responsibility to be aware “even though I can’t fix everything, I, me as a white Afrikaans speaking person” (L 110).

Taylor works in a private primary school that she terms ‘multicultural’, with more black children than white children. The teaching staff is predominantly older and mostly Afrikaans speaking people, who she notices are less flexible towards change. She adds that she is not perfect and there is a lot for her to learn.

**B. Asha**

Asha was the oldest of the participants interviewed. She grew up on a farm under Apartheid - matriculating in 1976, the year of the Soweto uprisings. Her mother was a student from Wits who protested against racism while her father “was a typical Afrikaner Boer, but coming from a family background where his ancestors came to South Africa as missionaries to Lesotho” (L.55-56). For her, she says race was never an issue, she played with the children on the farm and she felt they were treated exactly like her. Her father paid for the education of the foremen’s daughter who was her friend. “While I was going to another university and that was very hard for me because in those days, it was stupid. She had to go to university of KZN, actually close to Richards Bay and I had to go to the Free State University. So ya, it was like so unnecessary” (L.181-184). She became aware of the political issues through the media, learning about Hector Pieterson’s death in the Soweto uprising, for example, from newspapers.

Asha works in a Gauteng District office of Education, providing therapy for a wide range of children from disadvantaged to advantaged backgrounds. She claims that her passion is to work with the previously disadvantaged children because she wants to make a difference. “I want to try make life better. I want to make the injustice of the past better for today and being a white South
African, that’s like my whole motto. So I will sometimes catch myself working harder in those areas than looking after the previously advantaged” (L.65-68).

C. Elliot

Elliot sees herself as a South African, brought up in a Christian home and speaking English. Her ancestors came from the 1820 settlers from England as well as Scottish settlers. As Elliot said with laughter, “So all I suppose colonial, if you want to use that word” (L.42). Elliot is 54 years of age and grew up under apartheid in a small mining town where her father worked on the mines. She grew up being aware of Apartheid and the unfairness of the system, noticing as a young person that when she went to the shops, the storekeeper would serve her before a person of colour. “That’s the way it was” she commented (L50). She recounted an incident of how the woman who worked for their family was treated by the police. “The police would come and knock at the door at night and say, ‘where is your pass?’ and that type of thing. That made you very aware of the unfairness. How come we were allowed to sleep in our house and no one looked at us? Meanwhile she could not. And she didn’t have her children staying with her, her children always used to come and visit for the holidays. You didn’t go to the same schools; you didn’t have any friends that were of colour. It was just you and all your white friends” (L55-64).

She grew up in a family where she was taught to treat everybody the same, to treat people with respect, no matter who they were or what work they did. Her father would take a stand against the police when they came knocking on their door to find out who was staying in their house. Her brother became a political activist when he was a student and there were many political debates in their family.

Elliot works in private practice with most of the children she sees coming from good ex-Model C schools and private schools. She sees quite a lot of children who have been adopted into families, “black children adopted by white parents”. She also works in a non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in a Soweto.
D. Linda

Linda was born in 1979 and is 38 years old. She sees herself as a proud South African. Her great grandfather came to South Africa from Dublin, Ireland and her great grandmother was Spanish speaking from Argentina. Linda is English speaking, though her father’s mother was Afrikaans. She is Catholic, although sees herself as being more Christian than Catholic. She went to a private Catholic school where there were black children in the school, saying that in the culture she was brought up in there were black children. “My maid lived on our property with us and her daughters would come and stay there by her in the holidays. So even in our own house, I would sit and watch TV with them. I remember the one fell into the pool once and she didn’t know how to swim and my mom had to jump in and save her. So in my immediate environment I was brought up with black children” (L76-81).

She recalls being 8 or 9 years old under Apartheid and asking her mother why people were treated differently because of their skin colour. She also recalls standing up for injustice, not just based on skin colour, but if people were being bullied for any reason, she would stand up for them. As she says, “it wasn’t for me a thing of culture or race, but more standing up for people...not so much a race thing, but just as equality. Someone is being treated unfairly” (L96-99).

She works in a Catholic school attended by predominantly black children, with a number of children coming from other African countries, including Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Nigeria. She has observed challenges between the foreign children and the South African children in that they do not mingle and tend to stay in their language groups, with the foreign children feeling isolated. Linda started the interview stating there were no issues for her around race and racism at the school.

E. Alk

Alk was born in the United Kingdom in 1964 and came to South Africa when he was a young boy. He recounted an early memory of noticing people being treated differently because of their skin colour when he was 10 years old. When
his family relocated to South Africa his father made friends with people in the company where he worked. One of his friends came from Swaziland. This friend was invited to come and stay with their family and this became an issue for the neighbours, as there were black people staying in the neighbourhood. He remembers his father being very angry and having a fight with the Afrikaans neighbours. He also recalls going to visit this family in Mbabane and noticing everyone was black and he was white. As a 10-year-old he noticed this – though he says he did not perceive this as negative or positive, just noticeable. He also recalls matriculating at Damelin College and for the first time studying with different students, noticing “for the first time I was exposed to students of other races in my class and equally clever as I and equally capable as I and that was an eye-opener. I had come from a lily white traditional Transvaal Education Department school and I remember that being somewhat of an eye opener and initially a bit of.... not so negative, but disconcerting, uncertain how to handle it” (L88-92).

Alk went on to do a wide range of jobs after school until he joined the police force at the age of 21, working with 17-year olds that he called ‘rabid racists’. He recounts the dehumanising impact the police force had on him and how he got sucked into the “vortex of racist narrative and racist belief and action and without too much questioning, became one” (L 139-140). He continued saying “we were a gang in uniform”, with hindsight saying “I think that was my biggest disappointment was in myself. That I hadn’t recognised the propaganda that was happening and that I had in fact been brainwashed and the fact that it had happened to me was a deep resentment that (a) at myself for allowing it to happen but (b) the mechanisms that perpetrated is as well” (L141-145). He continues to add that he felt he had lost his humanity and a belief in himself as an independent thinker who had freedom to formulate his own thoughts. Alk’s story of reclaiming his humanity and the process of healing from his past behaviour has impacted his work as an educational psychologist.

He presently works in private practice, with a mixture of children and adults. The majority of his clients (80 per cent) are white clients with his psychological-educational assessment clients being children - 50 per cent being black
children and 50 per cent white. During his counsellor training he worked with a client base that was 95 per cent black clients.

F. Colin

Colin was born in 1985, so at 31 years old, the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa were a childhood memory. Colin comes from mixed English and Afrikaans descent, with his ancestors being of French Huguenot descent as well as German and English descent. He comes from a Christian background although not strictly practicing.

Colin’s earliest memories of noticing people being treated differently because of their skin colour were from Grade 1 where there were a few black children in the class. He remembers differences in terms of language and accents and that white children were in the majority. He also has early memories of domestic workers and gardeners being treated differently and noticing their living quarters were very small and they were served food on enamel plates and cups with separate cutlery. He started to be more aware of issues when he was about 12 years old. He had a history teacher who taught history in such a way that he thought more about race, realising what a contentious issue it was and sometimes feeling quite defensive about being white. As he explained, being insensitive to race at the time, he found it was easy to provoke people and joke around. “We teased each other, black and white, racist jokes, stereotypes, stereotypical stuff, mimicking each other’s accents, that sort of thing” (L68). He recalls how adults intervened, but in a punitive manner. He would have appreciated if the adults had helped him to be more sensitised to the issues that they were dealing with.

Colin works in an ex-Model C primary school where he is employed by the school governing body. In this school 90 per cent of the student body is black while the teacher body is racially mixed although still predominantly white. He also works in the afternoons with an outreach programme that is connected to a private boy’s school. He works with students that live in the inner city and attend various schools in the city.
G. The researcher

I was born in Pretoria two months after the Sharpeville massacre in which 69 people lost their lives at the hands of the apartheid police. I turned 16 a few weeks before the Soweto uprisings, and a few weeks after my disabled brother died due to his heart condition. My mother always says that if she had not been so involved with issues around disability, she would have become involved in politics. My earliest memory of noticing skin colour was my connection to Mary Mogase, the woman who worked in our home and looked after my siblings and me, while her three children lived elsewhere and were brought up by her mother. As a young person I remember once swimming with her daughter and noticing her brown skin next to mine under the water. I remember grappling with the concept that this was illegal and we could go to prison for something that in my mind was natural, innocent and fun. I was aware of different queues for white and black people and practising my new found reading skills on ‘whites only’ and ‘nie-blanke’ signposts on park benches and entrances to shops. I recall being confused by the irrationality of these signs and feeling powerless in the world of adults who made what appeared to me to be senseless decisions.

My grandparents came to South Africa as Jewish immigrants from Lithuania and Rumania. They were escaping the persecution of Jews in these countries and to make a better life for their families in a country which accepted them. It was also a country where they were told they would be able to make a living.

As a white person I have for many years been on a journey of interrogating, reflecting and healing from my early stories especially with respect to healing from white racism. This is an ongoing process and journey.

With this brief introduction to the participants in this study, the story continues with how they each construct and view race and racism.

3.6.2 THE RACE TALK

In answer to the research question, ‘how do white educational psychologists define and view race and racism’ three themes emerged from the data (see figure 3 above). These themes will be unpacked further in this section.
Theme 1: Everybody is the same and I don’t see race

“In my eyes, everybody is the same...it is all about the human being, not about where they come from, what is your cultural background, how do you look” (Asha)

The above response by Asha was in answer to the question ‘how do you define race?’ This view of race is one of sameness and not seeing race or difference, and was put forward by Asha, Linda and Elliot. In the literature this view is termed the colour-blind view of race, “the racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity” (Williams, 2011)

Linda has another way of putting forward a colour-blind view of race when she says that she does not see any issues around race or racism reporting that she looks “beyond the whole race thing” (L.51). However, she does indicate that one cannot get away from race. “I mean, I am a white person, but I have always been brought up, especially by my mother, she is a very, she is a humanitarian for sure and she has always taught me to see people for who they are”. She reasons that her wedding guests included friends from diverse backgrounds, saying, “it was a cultural hot pot because we had coloured friends, Indian friends, black friends. I just love people for the people they are, rather than...although I identify myself as a white person, I would say I don’t identify other people so much or look at them by their, by their... and say that person is black and that person is um. So I would say, ja, I try to.... I’m not racist, put it that way. Sometimes when I hear people talking about race at school, it’s a very touchy subject for me. Because you know, people will put people in categories and say, ‘you know, black people are like this’ and I would say ‘No, not all black people are like that, maybe that black person is like that’. But, you know what I am saying? I am trying to just see someone for who they are, beyond the outside and see the inside”
Linda continues to say that she loves the idea of equality and not putting people into categories based on where they come from, their culture or their race. Asha also proposes this view when she says the following:

*In my eyes, everybody is the same. And I can tell you, I am going to tell you this story. I actually learned that we are like Smarties. Different colours on the outside, but our insides it is exactly the same...inside, our chocolaty parts are exactly the same. We must get past looking at the outside and look at the person and work with the person and forget about the outsides* (Asha, L.34-36).

Asha metaphorically compares race diversity to Smarties. Smarties is a box that contain round chocolates covered in different colours – pink, yellow, green, blue and they are all chocolate and brown on the inside. They are sweet and children love eating them. This is perhaps a way of explaining a complicated issue to children – we are the same on the inside as people, we are all human, we have feelings, hopes, dreams – we are the same, we are one.

Yet as another participant, Taylor says, we are still in boxes.

*I think wrong perceptions create racism in the sense that my world of boxes needs to understand people. So I need to put you in a box to understand you. So my box labelled ‘black people’ has certain things in it. And you are black, so you belong in this box* (L. 393 – 396).

Asha continues that we adults make race an issue. She challenged me, saying:

*If you look at little ones, you don’t see race, I dare you to go to a crèche, they don’t see race. It is when you get older, we polarise race for our own gain and that’s where we get race, not in the little ones. And if you treat everybody equal, you won’t have a racial issue* (L86-88).

Both Asha and Linda put forward the idea that we are all the same and that they do not see race, a position that Elliot also holds, saying “*I have to say to say to them, ‘but you are a teacher, you are teaching children. How can you see colour, they are all the same’*” (Elliot, L257-258). Elliot later makes a
The idea of equality is important to Asha, Linda and Elliot and the assumption appears to be that if everybody is treated equally there won’t be any racial issues. Kerri Ullucci (2006) argues that this colour-blind view is a “powerful means of justifying racial inequality because it unraces race” (p.538). She suggests this is a liberal discourse of fairness and equal opportunity, one which replaces racism. “Colour blindness ignores the lived reality of people of colour. In arguing that race is not a factor, colour blindness makes race-based solutions obsolete” (Ullucci, 2006, p. 538).

Through this liberal construct of race where race is not seen, the complexity of race is not explored. Instead the view is that if one looks beyond race and if everyone is treated equally and the same, there would be no racial issues. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2010) argues that the modern trend (in the USA, but also applicable in the South African context) is that people act as if they do not see race. His criticism of this is that it assumes we live in a post-race world which he argues is not really the case. He contends that “we should be embracing race as a way to examine social conventions and seeking to understand race so that it can be minimised” (p. 54).

The colour-blind view of people as embraced by the Smartie metaphor that Asha uses where people are described as coloured sweets, with different colours on the outside but all chocolatey on the inside, diminishes and simplifies the impact that the history of racism has had on us all and silences the discourse of race. As an educational psychologist who is in a position of power by nature of the role one plays in society, by using the metaphor of Smarties, one looks beyond (or silences and ignores) the impact that race and racism has on people and by so doing, perhaps misses the individual stories of the ‘Smarties in the box’. It furthermore diminishes the impact of colonialism and Apartheid and ignores the remnants of these ideologies. Asha’s view that
we must get past looking at the outside (our different colours) and work with the person, is linked to the view of not seeing colour.

The view that ‘we are all the same’ and are all humans is a reality. We are humans, the human race, biologically having more similarities with each other than differences. Yet we come into the room with different backgrounds, histories, experiences and hurts. It appears to be a white South African view that one should get over the past and move on, something that is possibly linked to white guilt. As commentator Sisonke Msimang argues about us as South Africans, the white discourse is one of ‘I can’t remember’ and the black person’s response, ‘I can’t forget’ (Msimang, 2017). Asha and the others views suggest that we should be at the place of recognising our sameness and move on from the past. The question is: can we say we are all equal when we have a history of inequality and deficit?

The argument of ‘sameness’ takes away the historical inequality and the present deficit in which people are living and have to navigate in the new South Africa. This construction of race ignores the socio-economic disadvantages and inequalities in which race was and still is constructed in a South African context. Williams (2015) explores the concept of colour-blindness, arguing that “colour-blindness alone is not sufficient to heal racial wounds on a national or personal level. It is only a half-measure that in the end operates as a form of racism”. Holding this view makes talking about racism a taboo subject, something which the findings attest to by the participants feeling uncomfortable in the talk, and as Elliot says, ‘it’s not something I like to talk about’. In the view of Williams (2015) on the web page Psychology Today, “if you can’t talk about it, you can’t understand it, much less fix the racial problems that plague our society”. The reality is that in our South African society race does matter because it still impacts on one’s educational opportunities, job opportunities, where one lives, one’s income, medical care and so forth. This colour-blind view comes from a lack of awareness and knowledge of white privilege.
Theme 2: The cultural view of race

I don't like to use the word race. I think people are a different culture or a different religion. I don't think we have to say people are of a different race. It's just, I don't think, it's not a term that I have really thought about, but it's not a term that we use, or that I use, But I just think that if you look at people, if you say people come from a different culture or a different religion, but not from a race point of view (Elliot, L.92-96).

The second theme that became evident in this analysis was one where people were seen in terms of their culture or religion rather than skin colour. In the above response, Elliot makes it clear that she does not like to use the term ‘race’. The discomfort and embarrassment Elliot has with talking about race is conveyed in this quotation, while she clearly states that she sees people in terms of culture and religion, and not race. This could be seen as a selective construction of social identity. What is of importance with Elliot expressing her discomfort with talking about race is that she later in the interview recounts a counselling session which involved a conflict between a black boy and white learners. The issue of race is not explored in the counselling session between Elliot and her client. This factor will be explored in more detail in section 3.6.4.

Asha also said she saw race as cultural, “And where do you come from, from a cultural background. And to be very much aware of your cultural background is to me very important” (Asha, L.30-34). A few lines later she says that in her eyes, everybody is the same, like Smarties “different colours on the outside, but our insides is exactly the same” (L.36). The view that Asha holds slips between thinking we are all the same and the cultural view, saying that while she does not see race as colour, with people being all the same, who you are is based on your cultural background.

Two participants defined race in terms of both the colour of the skin as well as culture. Taylor said that what she understood by race was that race is defined by “your, well I would say the colour of your skin. And I also think it goes deeper than that. I think it is also about how you are raised” (L.47-49). Taylor clarifies this understanding by saying that a black child can be adopted by other colour
parents and can grow up in their culture and race, “so I think culture and race go together” (L51). Although not the focus of this account, Taylor is aware of black children being inclined to be adopted by white parents and how they can lose their identity through assimilation. When she speaks of culture, however, she is making a race reference.

Her view was similar to Colin’s definition where he says, “Look, I suppose skin colour, but it also has got to do with, um... so I don’t believe it is a social construct. It has got to do with your background in terms of where society positions you. I don’t know if I have just contradicted myself?” (L.86-89).

Colin’s hesitancy in putting forward a definition and wondering if he had just contradicted himself in terms of it not being a social construct, points to the confusions we have as white people in thinking about and talking about race. One reason it is so confusing is that we do not talk about race, or we talk about it in boxed ways or with a colour-blind view. This is a critical point, indicating how the body is racialised.

Testament to how confusing understanding race is in South Africa is the following comment made by Asha who initially said we must get past looking at the outside and that we are different on the outside, but the same on the inside:

>You know what, it’s such a grey area. Race is not colour. Race I think it’s more a thing that’s inside you because a lot of times people with a different colour, won’t see race. Or they will be so westernised that you don’t even see that (L.21-23).

This comment by Asha presents a distancing from race and race issues. One possible understanding of the cultural construction of race that some of the participants put forward is that as educational psychologists they may have been trained in a cultural competency model. According to the Health Professions Act (Act No. 56 of 1974), psychologists may not discriminate against any client based on their cultural background. Therefore, to prevent discrimination, a psychologist ought to have the competence to work with clients from different cultural backgrounds. Lenate Bodenstein & Luzelle Naudé
(2017) define cultural competence as the ability to function effectively within an unfamiliar cultural environment and to be able to communicate competently with individuals from various cultural heritages. Citing Campinha-Bacote (2002), they argue that within a psychological setting, cultural competence refers to the on-going process in which psychologists strive to achieve the ability to work effectively within the cultural context of the client, which includes the individual, family and the community.

Yet as Humphrey Ngcobo & Stephen Edwards (2008) argue, focusing on culture can also obscure issues of class and power. This view is corroborated by Nathan Orians (2014) who criticises the cultural competency model, arguing that by only seeing culture, and only taking into account and respecting people’s diversity and culture, one does not address the underlying problems of racism. The cultural competency model or framework of understanding people does not take into account what critical race theory puts forward, according to Orians, the understanding of the systemic nature of racism. One may feel more comfortable because one understands another person’s culture, but racism is not dealt with nor is it combated:

In order to address the systemic problem of racism it isn’t enough to inform oneself and become culturally competent. Problems of racism can’t be fully addressed because individual acts (between client and psychologist) don’t begin to address the scope of racism” (Orians, 2014, p.33).

Talking about culture within the South African context, Soudien (2012) argues that culture is substituted for race. “In taking on the discourse of multiculturalism it may be concluded that race, as a term of anxiety has been substituted by that which is less dangerous and seemingly more benign, culture” (Soudien, 2012, p. 21).

Theme three: The genetic (biological) view of race

Race would be defined as one’s genetic heritage. Um....your biological make up in terms of ... characteristics of skin colour, features, hair,
This definition put forward by Alk encapsulates the genetic view of race where your race is determined by your biological features, where historically the “physiognomy of the face, skin colour and hair texture were decisive markers of racial identity” (Soudien, 2013, p.16).

The genetic view of race was not given much credence in this study, with only one participant constructing race in this way. This is possibly due to the inability, especially as psychologists, to work with the view that people are genetically predetermined. This is confirmed by Linda when she says “you know, people will put people in categories and say, ‘you know, black people are like this’ and I would say ‘No, not all black people are like that, maybe that black person is like that” (L.58). Soudien (2013) cites the work of Jorde & Wooding (2004) who argue that the human genome project has confirmed that “levels of genetic variation within populations are much greater than they are between population groups” (Soudien, 2013, p.17). Race cannot be proven and has no biological basis. It is socially and culturally constituted based on historical and economic contexts and the meaning with which people give it. As Soudien says, “we remain mired in confusion around the meaning and significance of ‘race’” (2013, p.15).

Based on the construction of race by the participants, what follows are their views on what racism is. The following stories give some insights in their views.

3.6.3 WHAT IS RACISM?

*But I think racism is like a, let me just think about my metaphor: An octopus. It has many tentacles; it has many ways of showing itself (Taylor, L 352-355).*

Taylor’s definition of racism above is a vivid metaphor that frames the talk around race and racism – something that has many ways of showing itself, and like the tentacles of an octopus, it is quick to entangle us and make us its prey. The metaphor also helps to explain the complexity and confusion found in the
definitions, both of race and racism. Interestingly enough, despite the different ways participants defined race, they have similar interpretations of what racism is.

Colin takes the viewpoint on racism “that it is a historical phenomenon of the oppression of people of colour by Europeans, or people of European descent” (L.82). While this definition views racism as an oppression of people of colour by white people, it sees it as a historical phenomenon, thereby denying the present persistent and glaring reality of racism in the South African context. Taylor on the other hand sees racism as being towards any person, understanding that white people can be racist to black people and black people towards white people. “Anything that has to do with the colour of your skin, whether it’s positive or negative, affects you that are racism.”(Taylor, L 56). In explaining what she means by positive or negative Taylor says:

    What I mean by that is any consequences that you gain or that has a negative impact on you in life. So for example, if I say by gaining I mean if you get a better job or a better position that is gaining and that is also not positive. But anything that you lose based on the colour of your skin is also racism. So anything that’s judgement upon you based on your skin, that’s racism to me (L.55-62).

This definition takes racism beyond the perceived negative and hurtful aspect of racism, to what people can gain because of their skin colour, perhaps alluding to aspects of black economic empowerment (BEE) which some white people seem to find hurtful.

Taylor continues that it is her perception that in our country we focus only on black and white, saying “But I think it influences all races, it goes way past the boundaries of black and white. I think it is just how our media prefers for us to focus on. But I think it goes further than that” (L.64-67). This perception is that anyone can be racist and that racism is linked to stereotypes, something that Alk confirms when he says racism is “any kind of discrimination whether it is covert or overt that... intentional or unintentional based on the person’s racial profile” (L.35-36).
Elliot defines racism as “intolerance of people toward other people’s religion, colour or culture, regardless whether it’s South African (L.81). She says that a racist is “someone that is easily frightened because they feel threatened that other people are better than them and they have a complete lack of understanding of another person, and absolutely no respect of people’s, whatever affiliation they are” (L.87-90).

Asha’s view is that racism is used for political gain: “And it’s like, I will get you and I will use that and it’s a political thing that is everywhere and racism is not unique to South Africa” (L.48). In explaining further what she means, she says, “… to me, it’s something of a status, something of a political issue, something of a cultural background, socio-economic background and that to me is more where it comes from. In South Africa we made it colour. In terms of how we use it, the media will do it, people will do it for political gain and even if you want your way, I will throw the race card to get my way” (L.48-51). This comment also points to the view that any person can be racist.

Linda gives another example of how she understands racism between black people, framing it in terms of people being treated unfairly and that it is not so much about race, but about equality:

_It is here all the time at school, where the kid’s judge each other. They say, ‘Oh Miss, this child said you a yellow bone’ you know. And then they call each other those kinds of things. And so, even within their own black culture, there is still racism, if you can call it … because they judge each other according to their skin tone and their language group._ (L.99-103).

The colour-blind view of race is evident in this definition of racism, combined with the view that black people can be racist to black people. A child calling another child ‘yellow bone’ refers to their lighter skin colour. Due to the history of Apartheid and the mistreatment of people based on their skin colour, combined with the fact that people could be reclassified as white and thereby have better economic and social opportunities, there is still today what can be called internalised oppression between black people based on their skin colour. Karen Pyke (2010) documents the theory of internalised oppression whereby
the victims of racism begin to believe the ideology that they are inferior to white people and that whiteness is better. This is elaborated by Tim Jackins (2002):

Internalised racism occurs when people targeted by racism are, against their will, coerced and pressurised to agree with the distortions of racism. In our societies, racist attitudes are so harsh, so pervasive, and so damaging that each of us is forced at times to agree with some of the conditioning, thereby internalising the messages of racism (Jackins, 2002, p.9).

Wanting to have a lighter skin, or teasing people for being ‘yellow boned’ can be viewed as internalised oppression. “We come to mistreat ourselves and other members of our group in the same ways that we have been mistreated as the target of racism” (Jackins, 2002, p.9). This mistreatment is played out, in this case between black students.

Based on their interpretations and understandings of race and racism, my study continues to explore what happens in the therapeutic space and how the educational psychologists’ practices are informed by how they construct race and racism. I will now present vignettes that two participants recounted in answer to the question of whether they have to deal with issues of racism in their practice.

3.6.4 IN THE THERAPEUTIC SPACE
As the researcher I was interested in whether the participants believed they had experienced issues of race and racism in their practice in any form and if so, how they dealt with it. The following story was recounted by Elliot. It involved a black boy who had white classmates:

I’ve had a little boy who was actually … he is a black boy who told his class that when black people came into rule, if the EFF took over, none of them would have jobs. So the school sent him to me for counselling. And the parents were quite embarrassed about the whole situation and they didn’t know where he had heard it because they weren’t even supporters, but dad is very high up in the government anyway. So it was very
interesting, and he said, ‘ja, but it’s true’. So it was quite, it wasn’t difficult to counsel him through it, he was in grade 5, so I did a lot of looking at the differences in people and taking away their colour and who are all his friends. And they were a whole mixed bunch of children, it didn’t matter what culture they were. So I’ve had that (Elliot, L.154-163).

The EFF – the Economic Freedom Fighters - is a South African political party led by Julius Malema who is seen by many people as being controversial. He has made comments such as “his party’s main objective is to defeat white monopoly capital” and “I am here to disturb a white man’s peace, the white man has been too comfortable for too long ... we have never known peace” (ENCA, 2016). Comments such as these could be discussed by adults where children would hear them, and in the case above, be repeated by the children to each other.

Further on in the interview Elliot again referred to this case. The boy was sent to counselling because he made comments about white people and objections were made to the school by some of the parents:

The school objected because the parents went to complain so his mom actually phoned me and said that, because then what happened a group of his friends ostracised him and all of a sudden he didn’t have friends, he didn’t want to go to school, started having a sore tummy and all that type of thing. So then mom asked me to see him. The school recommended. They didn’t want to use the counsellor at the school because then he would have felt like a bit obvious (L.195-200).

The case was resolved in the following manner:

He basically, he wrote a letter to his class. I gave him an option. I said to him, do you think you need to apologise and he said no he didn't think so. So I said how are you going to let the other children know what you said was hurtful. I didn’t say to him what he said was wrong, I said what you said was hurtful. And I said you are quite young to understand politics but you do know that in our country people do unfortunately
judge you by things that you say. And he said no he does understand and so I said how would you like to make it right? So he thought of a whole lot of, we used a lot of solution focused, like to try think of how would he feel if someone said that to him. And eventually he said no, he would like to say sorry to the class. But would I come with him. So we went together and he just got up and he said he knows that people are different and what he said was hurtful, and he hopes that people can still be his friend. That was quite amazing, because you know little children always, oh okay... I don’t think they realised it as much as their parents did. So one of the kids went home and said oh so and so said this to us today so the parents got themselves in a flat spin (L.202-216).

This incident further illustrates how the educational psychologist (and the parents and teachers) are in positions of power in relation to the children. This is based on their age, status, education and positions and as such a decision is made as to who is right and who is wrong. In this case, white parents are offended and in a ‘flat spin’ and based on their objections, combined with the fact that the child has been ostracised by his class-mates and has developed stomach aches and does not want to go to school, the black child is sent for counselling and through the process, apologises to the white children for hurting their feelings.

In analysing this incident, Elliot’s views on race and racism need to be taken into account. Elliot (as expressed in section 3.6.2), was not comfortable with using the word race, saying “it’s not a term that I have really thought about, but it’s not a term that we use, or that I use”, continuing to say, “I just think that if you look at people, if you say people come from a different culture or different religion, but not from a race point of view” (L.95-96). She had also commented about teachers, saying: “I have to say to say to them, but you are a teacher, you are teaching children. How can you see colour, they are all the same” (L.257-258). Through her colour-blind view, race is silenced and made invisible – “I don’t see race, I don’t see colour – I only see people”.

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The implications of her statements around race are that in this case the issues are not seen in racial terms and the result is that a black child is blamed for something he has said and has to apologise to white children. Elliot further said (in L.226-227), “because if it was a white boy saying that in a black situation, it would have been the same type of thing. People would have taken offence”. My interpretation of this comment is that the offence would be seen as racism and it could possibly have been in the media. The confusions in this case are multiple and are dependent on one’s definitions of race and racism. The participant does not see the comments as racist, rather as offensive.

Interesting in relation to this case is a very recent incident (October 2017) in an affluent school, Maritzburg College, where three learners held up T-shirts in support of the EFF and land reform. There has been an outcry about these learners as well as alleged racism at the school. Columnist Mondli Zondo, writing about this issue in *City Press*, says he “found astounding… a sentiment expressed by many that school children should not make political statements and suggestions that these learners have shamed their school in doing so. Others went on to say that because these learners aren't adults they lack the capacity to make informed political decisions. What hypocrisy and absolute nonsense” (Zondo, 2017).

He argues that our education system should prepare learners to confront these challenges and thus should make space for such discussions. Silencing their voices because they are on school grounds or because they are wearing school uniforms, “is as he says is “baffling and insulting to the youth of yesteryear on whose shoulders this generation stands…. Our education must prepare us to confront these challenges. We must never buy into this notion that schools aren't places to engage in political debate when schools should actually be a place where they can learn to think critically and independently” (Zondo, 2017).

Elliot also narrated another case involving a group of black girls:

*They were just basically targeted by a group of white boys about how they dressed. And the boys were very, very derogatory about them calling them stupid and they wouldn't amount to anything and black*
women were just there for ... because unfortunately one of the girls had just been sponsored by a much older white man to go to school and these boys just saw it as that whole ‘blessing’ and ‘blessed’ you know scenario that they talk about. But it wasn’t, it was actually a family, but they only every saw the dad there, and they just used to make very, very nasty comments about it (L.164-172).

In this case which is presented as an issue between white boys and black girls, the two groups are separated, the girls working with the educational psychologist and the boys with the social worker. (Note that the issue of the differences between the roles of these professionals are beyond the scope of this dissertation). There are two issues here, gender and race, however the aspect of race was silenced and gender was focused on as the issue. As a gender issue, the girls are possibly perceived as weaker, are traumatised because of their identity and are sent to the educational psychologist for counselling and support. However, it was white boys that targeted them. The issue of gender was addressed, (by the educational psychologist) but the issue of race was ignored. The issue of gender also appeared to be the issue for the boys as the following quote suggests:

The boys, I said to them I couldn’t work with both of them and then the boys went to the social worker in the school. And she found it, I think she found it more difficult than I did, because they were questioning her because she was a white woman, and saying to her but why are you telling us to be equal, when actually the boys aren’t equal to the girls. It was quite sad because a lot of them were very hurt by it and they said it made them think about white men in a different way (L.176-181).

In this case, the boys and girls are separated and the issue dealt with separately. The boy’s view that they are not equal to girls is expressed, while the girls express that they see white men differently. The opportunity to deal with this issue as a racial issue was not taken up, but the girls were instead given tools on how to address such gender related issues in the future. The issue was also described as ‘nasty comments’ from the boys to the girls, again
not seen as a racial issue between white boys and black girls, but possibly as a bullying issue. The intersection of the identities of race, gender and possibly class in this case were not seen and thereby the opportunity to assist learners in understanding the issues was missed.

A third incident was accounted by Taylor, something she overheard on the playground:

*I listened to a conversation between two learners, the one child is a white boy and the other one is a black boy and they were teasing each other about something and the black boy said to the white boy he is happy he is not white, and it shocked me initially and I could not deal with it right away as I was angry at the black boy saying this. So unfair* (L.152-157).

Taylor expresses her outrage that a black boy says this to a white boy. I wonder what Taylor’s reaction had been if the boy had said instead “I am proud to be black”.

When asked what made her angry, Taylor said that it was because he had no reason to say this, continuing to say “and even the white boy was wrong in his behaviour, it was a very harsh statement to make. So I did discuss it with the boy, the black boy and he um ... he actually didn’t say this out of his own. He heard this somewhere else, so he picked it up from other kids at another school and it was interesting how kids sometimes pick up language that they don’t really understand themselves …He was eleven” (L.160-164).

I argue that it is the educational psychologist’s role to listen to what is being said and help people make sense and meaning of what they say or help them to deal with the conflicts that arise between them. In this case, Taylor appears to feel it was unfair what the boy said, but the way she understands the issue is by saying, ‘he did not know what he was saying’ and that ‘he picked the language up from other children’. The view that he did not know what he was saying puts the young person in a position of not knowing compared to the adult who is more powerful and does know. She continues to emphasise this point:
He felt ashamed, because he didn’t really realise what he was saying, he just said it and I think when he realised what exactly it meant what he said, he felt embarrassed. Because it didn’t come out of his own heart and mind, he didn’t feel this way, he just mentioned what the other people said before him, so that was interesting and for me it was a learning curve because not everyone who says things mean those things, especially children pick it up from adults or other kids um who pick it up from other kids, so I think it is very important to give people a chance to explain themselves before we jump on our horses and say ‘how dare you say that’ (L.166-173).

Taylor describes how a black boy felt ashamed for what he said, for hurting the feelings of the white adult and child. Furthermore, what he says is negated by Taylor when she says, “he didn’t realise what he was saying, he just said it”. Taylor however contradicts herself in the last line when she says we must give people a chance to explain themselves. Her giving the boy a chance to explain himself results in her assessment that he did not know what he was saying and that he had picked it up from adults and other children. The power relationship that exists between Taylor, a white educational psychologist, and an eleven-year-old black boy needs to be interrogated and understood in terms of understanding what plays out in this interaction.

The three therapeutic cases presented suggest that the participants’ therapeutic practice is informed by how race and racism is constructed. These examples reflect specifically on the impact with which the colour-blind construct of race and racism has in the therapeutic space. Williams (2015) looks more deeply at the implications of holding a colour-blind view as a therapist arguing that “colour-blindness alone is not sufficient to heal racial wounds on a national or personal level”. She explores the word ‘blind’, saying that the word implies not seeing something, and in this case, not seeing the broader picture. She continues to say that as a therapist, one should not be blind to anything, especially to something as critical as a person’s racial identity. “Colour-blindness does not foster racial equality or respect; it merely relieves the therapist of his or her obligation to address important racial differences and
difficulties” (Williams, 2015). A more nuanced and critical view of race and racism would automatically impact the therapeutic practice and how individuals and the issues are seen and dealt with.

Based on how the participants in this study construct race and racism and the incidents they reported, I was curious to know whether they thought educational psychologists had a role to play in dealing with issues of race and racism and if so, what training they thought they would need. This is in answer to the third question posed in this research: what support and further training is needed by white educational psychologists to be able to deal with and challenge race and racism in their practice?

3.7 The Role of the Educational Psychologist

I think pluck some feathers boy, we really got to shake that chicken (Alk, L459).

The above quote by Alk sums up what needs to be done to unravel the confusions in our minds and to figure out what needs to happen for white educational psychologists to address issues of race and racism in their practices and what training they would need to be able to address such issues. The suggestions made by the participants about what further support and training needed, is in line with their views on race and racism. As Alk says:

I think there is a role to play in terms of educating students who like to think that they are not racist, and I am the father of three wonderful children…But they have grown up non-racist, they have grown up in a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial school, umm.....and yet they still ‘birds of a feather tend to flock together’. And on the playground you will still see most of the white kids sitting together and mostly the black kids sitting together., and most of my daughters friends are white, yet she goes to a school where most of the children are black (L.352-358).

Alk’s view points to the insidious nature of racism which Jansen (2009) calls ‘knowledge in the blood’ – “knowledge embedded in the emotional, psychic,
spiritual, social, economic, political, and psychological lives of a community” (p.171).

Alk believes educational psychologists are in the perfect position to fulfil the role of dealing with issues based on the fact that as part of our training we interrogate issues:

*The fact that we scratch beneath the surface, and we don’t take things at face value and we constantly say never take things at face things, it’s something we learn as an ed psych, is to look for the meaning behind the madness type of thing. And I think so much of that could be conveyed and almost a sort of racial sensitivity training should be an integral part of schooling and call it exactly that. Don’t shroud it in what’s it called? Life skills or it’s called happy hour. It’s not, it’s being sensitive to other people’s races and accents and ethnicities, you know. And ....I think we pussy foot around, too much PC, we don’t call a spade a spade, we should actually call it a spade and say you are actually being racist and stop it* (L.359-368).

He continues to say: “I think we need to be talking - we tend to tip toe around it and I think that the training could be a bit punchier” (L.438). And further: “Let’s sit around a table and let’s sit in an open space and let’s say “Listen you whities, when you say that, do you know how much it hurts me” (L.454-455).

These comments come from a participant who has been through therapy to interrogate what he calls his ‘deeply racist attitudes’. He has grappled with his own conscience, his past actions and appears to be constantly questioning and looking at his own thoughts and racism. His views were supported by Colin who said he supposes “one would also need to be quite sensitive or sensitised to issues of racism itself before attempting such work and have worked through any of their own issues to do with race” (L.223-225).

The issue of being sensitised is expressed by Asha where she uses the word “clean” although she does not use the word racism or how one becomes “clean” of racism. “You are never clean of it, but to be aware as, like, a measure to
make sure that you stay within the boundaries.” (L.8-9). On whether one needs further training she said, “Yes, it depends. As I say, the young ones are very often very clean of it, it is the older ones that need more cleaning out and being very much aware” (L.129-130). She later adds “So I do think it is very important that from time to time we talk about this and sort of get a brush up on things and say ‘this is not necessary’ (L.201-202) adding: “So sometimes you will really need to talk about this to make sure that you, like supervision, to clean out again and say where am I? I have built up some carbon here; I need to get rid of it” (L.206-208).

The acknowledgment of the need for supervision to deal with the accumulation of ‘carbon’ was seen as the place for her to talk about issues related to race and racism.

3.7.1 SPACES FOR DIALOGUE
The importance of having the space to talk and dialogue is a theme that comes through the interviews. When asked what should happen to create that space where we can talk about the issues, Alk said:

So I am personally quite in favour of having quite a militant approach to psychology and saying that really we need to shake it up. And I am not saying white blame; I’m not saying blame white people. But I think we have to be shaken out of our … we fall far enough into our comfort zone that we keep our heads below the radar. We are not sticking it out and getting it shot off. But we need to investigate it deeper (L.467-471).

While this statement could be viewed as a critical approach to psychology, Alk does not indicate how issues could be investigated deeper.

When asked whether educational psychologists know how to deal with issues of racism, Elliot made the following comment:

I wouldn’t know how to deal with it. But I wouldn’t mind knowing how to go into a school and saying to the teachers, you all have to treat children the same. Because surely if you are thinking that, you are not treating that child the same. So as much as you are in a school saying, “oh no, I teach
all the children I treat them the same”, I don’t think so. Maybe it’s just my view. But I really don’t think if you are passing comments about children about, you know, black children and Indian and coloured children, then surely you going to treat the white kids differently (L.271-281).

The confusions and contradictions around race are apparent in this comment. Elliot’s views are based on her construction of race – the colour-blind view. She wants to know how to say to the teachers that everyone is the same and should be treated the same. The hopelessness of working with teachers is clear in her final words about running workshops with teachers, “you may as well watch paint dry, they are so … they don’t want to change”.

In response to the question about whether educational psychologists have a role to play in challenging and dismantling racism in schools, Elliot said:

Yes, especially if you are based in a school. Because a lot of focus on ed psych is to do preventative … so just like you are doing a bullying workshop, or HIV or drugs or what have you, I think you should do cultural workshops and diversity workshops and tolerance workshops where you teach people to be more tolerant ... Yes.(L.327-333).

Again, this comment is framed in terms of cultural workshops, diversity and tolerance, never mentioning race – thereby again silencing the issue of race, the ‘elephant in the room’. This was a view also expressed by Linda: “I wouldn’t mind. I think it would be nice to go to a workshop or an interactive session or whatever that is run by a South African and particularly black South African psychologists or psychiatrists” (L.212-214). She continues to say that she is very open minded, but “I do feel I need to be better equipped to be able to deal with the more traditional, not say problems, but more traditional kind of issues that arise. I definitely do think it would be nice to have more training in that, less westernised” (L.226-229). When further probed about training not only in cultural issues, but in dealing specifically with issues of racism, Linda had the following to say:
So to me, dealing with issues of racism is not really different from dealing with issues of other types of prejudice. So I would handle it in the same way as I would handle, let’s say when a child becomes pregnant and the others know and they are talking about the kid and judging her. Or like I said if someone is homosexual or any type of prejudice … So to me racism is in the same category as all that judgement and bias and prejudice (L.239-245).

Racism is seen here as the same as any other type of prejudice, but as Sarah Nuttal (2017) argues in her article in The Huffington Post regarding the racism incident at St John’s College where a teacher was found guilty of making racist remarks to learners - while schools will often have policies related to bullying or pregnancy, policies around racism are often not developed, as was the case with St John’s College. So while there were procedures in place to report a bullying incident, there was no such thing in place to report racial incidences. As a result of this, racial incidents are not reported.

When Elliot was asked if she could do this work and if so, would she need further training, she said:

More like techniques to get people to understand the differences, because it is easy for us to stand there and say, you know, this is what’s important, but, how do you get people to really change their minds. I don’t know, I don’t know if I could do that. I could maybe get awareness of you know, from a feeling point of view, and put your shoe on the other foot point of view, but I’m not sure, I don’t think I would have enough confidence, to put it bluntly (L.337-343).

As the interview progressed, her views shifted and when asked if she had any insights or further questions related to this interview, she said “It’s very interesting, you are quite brave. You are because people don’t like to talk about racism, they really don’t.” (L.477-478). And then: “What surprises me though, I don’t think people really want to talk about it, but people are happy to make comments and they think that other people in their, like if you at a dinner party
and somebody passes a racist comment, that they think they ok to do it. And that is very disturbing, to me that is extremely disturbing” (L.501-504).

Elliot points clearly to the issue of how easy it is to make racist comments and talk about race in a way that is hurtful, but how difficult it is to interrogate our racism as white people and to grapple with the issues so as to make changes. This view is explored by Bailey (2015) when she argues that as white people our fear of facing the unbearable feelings of race is at the root of our inability to engage with issues of race and racism.

Colin added that he believed that an educational psychologist could play a role in the diversity and transformation process, but it was not something addressed in his university studies:

I think things like cultural diversity and that sort of thing was addressed, but more sort of in the one on one therapy space. There were discussions around cultural variants and that sort of thing. But dealing with racism, no, not directly. And I suppose also if you asking about white ed psychs, there is the issue of how to help white people. I mean there is one thing to address racism, but also to help white people who themselves might be racist and not be aware of that. And all, you know, that playing sort of victim, not playing victim, but feel victimised. And disempowered and probably somehow affecting their well-being (L319-323).

These thoughts make clear the issue of being trained in cultural awareness, but not being trained to deal with racism. As the recent racism issue at St John’s College made clear, there is an unwillingness to tackle the issues as they are so emotional and open to conflict, but by not being dealt with, they erupt and become big issues.

He added that educational psychologists had a role in addressing racism, “because we work systemically and we are focused on community wellness. And community psychology” (L.333-335). In answer to the question of whether he thought fellow educational psychologists had awareness and willingness to address racism, his comment was “I would say there would be willingness. I
think it would often be considered unnecessary” (L.339). This comment suggests that people do not see that race and racism are issues that need to be addressed. Again, this could be linked to the unbearable feelings that need to be faced in order to be able to look at the issues.

Based on the constructions of race and racism as outlined earlier, one can begin to see how the colour-blind construction of race silences the discourse around race and makes race invisible which leads to the opinion that it is unnecessary to deal with. Combined with this is that when one sees race as cultural, the training that is seen to be needed is cultural training and knowing more about the culture and traditions of clients and their families. The two participants Alk and Colin who were more aware of racial issues and had been processing issues of being white, were the participants who felt that educational psychologists should play a role in addressing racism.

What is important to highlight in this study was the opportunity the interview process gave participants to interrogate how they thought about race and racism. Taylor expressed how she does not know or understand everything, adding “I think my way of training myself is building relationships with people who are different to me, I find that I learn so much from and I appreciate people way more if I build relationships with them instead of reading about them because I think literature itself is not enough to understand people. So that’s the way I try to educate myself” (L.137-143).

The fears of what could come up when dealing with issues of racism were expressed by Asha when she said, “yes we do workshops but we can’t go in and do a workshop on racism. How on earth do I go in and say it’s in the best interests of the children in the school if I do a workshop on racism. You might blow the whole thing out of the water, it is too big, it’s too big”. She explains what she means by it being too big, saying that when you open up the topic of racism, “If it is big and you can’t contain it very very closely, in a very trusted environment, it will have more damage than good” (Asha, L.261-263).

Asha expressed that healing should happen in the broader society, not in schools, but possibly in faith-based groups “Because we need to heal society
and then it can filter back to the rest. But to go in and have a workshop on racism with a group of teachers, I can now tell you, we will be in the media the very next day” (L.272-274). This fear of issues coming into the media, being blown out of proportion and not understood in its context appears to be a major issue for Asha and a reason why not to run workshops on racism in schools.

When asked who should do this work, Asha expressed that she believes it is a totally specialised training. “I don't think for me it is in the field of educational psychology. I do think you would need a doctorate or something like that and I do think, you have to be very clean yourself otherwise you will just create more damage (L.282-284). By 'clean', she is referring to being free of racism oneself.

While Asha felt dealing with racism was not within the scope of an educational psychologist and was a specialised field, Linda emphasised that she did not think racists could change, but that she could possibly help people become more tolerant. In her view, “If a person had to come in and they were very racist, I would hope to be able to have a session where we could discuss why they are racist and we could discuss what the issues are, so the difference between black and white and whatever it may be and try to get them to be more open minded. But I don't know if you can ever change (L.253-257).

She continued to say that she could tell the person not to be racist and to be more open minded, but she grappled with the idea of how to 'un-teach' racism. When asked if she would like to know how to 'un-teach' racism or prejudice, her response was: “I would love to if there is such a way to, I would love to” (L.269). Whereas Linda initially felt that one cannot change a racist, through this interview process she came to an insight that if there was a way to 'un-teach' racism, she would love to learn it.

Taylor’s view on whether working with issues of racism was an important role for educational psychologists to play was that there was the need for safe spaces to express one’s feelings, in a way that the interview had allowed her to do. It became clear through the interview that Taylor was able to find clarity in her thinking through having the space to explore her thoughts and feelings, exclaiming that this interview space had had a big impact on her:
I mean when do we get the opportunity to just have conversations like this, without feeling judged, without feeling someone is going to be offended somewhere? Which happens...so I think that’s a start, creating an environment for people to feel safe, to talk about their feelings and then it doesn’t matter because you are not judged and I feel that’s why I am talking so much to you, because it is a non-judgemental environment and situation that’s created and its intentional type of thing. It doesn’t just happen where people feel comfortable to talk about their inner very deep feelings and even to be able to say, ‘you know what this makes me angry, this makes me feel judged’ and I don’t have confidence to talk about this because in society it’s not allowed. So I think it’s the starting point definitely (L.239-251).

With regard to talking about racism in safe spaces Taylor continued to say that she was very keen to do this, “I think I have a silent cry for this openness that I don’t experience at the moment. It is very hush, subdued topic, not allowed to talk about this. (L.335).

The process of talking and exploring feelings and thoughts about race and racism as Taylor did in this interview was an important aspect of this research. She was able to express herself without inhibition, possibly because she felt safe with me. Her words clearly show the importance of having safe spaces to talk.

It is freeing. It’s actually very liberating cos as I spoke now, a lot of things that came out that I would question, where did this come from now, I never speak about things like this and also things that I thought, you know, um... like when you asked me about how now, what’s the way forward and so on, I am positive about it, I don’t feel negative about this. My feelings are not of anger or anything, it’s more like I am actually encouraged and motivated to um... to get to know people (L.422-431).

Taylor had expressed her metaphor of racism as being an octopus with its tentacles entangling her. She ends the interview feeling liberated and motivated, having used the opportunity of the interview to express herself,
knowing that the space was free of judgement and criticism. In so doing, she points to the important work that needs to be done to free ourselves from, as Jonathan Jansen (2009) calls, the ‘knowledge that is in our blood’.

3.8 Conclusion

There are three conclusions that can be made from this study of the narratives of white educational psychologists related to race and racism.

Firstly, the participants in this study define and talk about race and racism from the perspective of not seeing race, seeing race as cultural or as race being biological/genetic. The ‘not seeing race’ and seeing race as cultural can be called a colour-blind view of race. The participants understanding of race and racism were not in terms of power dynamics and the institutional nature of racism.

The second main finding was that the lens through which the participants viewed race and racism has an impact in their therapeutic practices. If race and racism is not understood within the context of power relations and the institutional nature of racism and only through the lenses described above, issues will not be seen or dealt with appropriately. For example, if one has a colour-blind view of race and believe that everyone is the same and one does not see race, any issues that have racial ramifications will not be seen or dealt with as such. The silencing of race and making it invisible leads to the tensions around race not being dealt with which in turn lead to bigger problems in time, as was seen with the various school issues discussed in this research paper.

Thirdly, there was a diversity of thoughts related to the question of further support and training needed. Based on the lens of seeing race in terms of it being cultural, some participants felt there was a need for further training and support in terms of understanding cultural issues, such as gaining a deeper understanding of ancestors and children who have been called to be sangoma’s. The findings of how the participants constructed race and racism, revealed that there was not an awareness of what they did not know, so it appeared difficult for some participants to say what was needed. There was
however consensus that support was needed. It became clear through the interview process that there was a need for the safety to explore these issues without being judged or criticised and through this, new thinking was possible. Furthermore, being educational psychologists and working within a systemic view, it was seen by some participants that this was an important role for educational psychologists to fulfil. What is coming out of the findings is that as professionals they do not have the awareness or knowledge on how to deal with situations and issues related to race and racism.

In my final chapter, the recommendations coming out of this study will be explored in more detail. The main argument so far has been that white educational psychologists have a colour-blind view in their practice and that this is a stumbling block to comprehensively dealing with issues of race and racism and to help young people face the difficulties that may arise in their identity and relationships with others.
Chapter four: Summary, Recommendations and Limitations

3.9 INTRODUCTION
In this final chapter in the journey of exploring the narratives of white educational psychologists, the findings of the research will be summarised with conclusions based on these findings. The limitations of this research will be identified before exploring its strengths and the contribution it represents. Recommendations for future research will be highlighted. Finally, personal reflections on this study will conclude this chapter.

3.10 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS
The aim of this research was to explore the narratives of white educational psychologists in relation to race and racism. I hoped that the results would provide insights into how they view race and racism and how this influences their therapeutic work. Furthermore, I hoped that the findings would give insights into what further training and support educational psychologists would need in order to develop a practice aimed at eliminating racism. Using a narrative approach and in answer to the research questions, the data collection and analysis revealed the following findings and conclusions in response to the questions posed:

3.10.1 HOW DO WHITE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS DEFINE AND VIEW RACE AND RACISM?
The literature reviewed identified the complexity of defining and talking about race and racism, especially in the context of the South African history of colonialism and Apartheid. ‘Whiteness’ studies explored how a colour-blind view of race is the new form of racism and how feelings of discomfort for white people result in them avoiding talking about race and thereby silencing discussion on racism and making it invisible. The findings of this research confirm this view, with some participants in the study having a colour-blind view of race or seeing race as cultural or genetic. A common response was to distance themselves from acknowledging the need to explore issues of race or racism or understand the impact that these issues have on their own or their clients’ lives.
3.10.2 How does racism influence the way white educational psychologists work?

The literature review explored aspects of critical psychology and its importance within the context of South Africa in terms of transformation. The participants in this study shared stories of how race and racism was dealt with in their practices. What became clear was that the colour-blind view on race had an influence on the way they worked with clients. The tendency was for issues of race and racism to be silenced and made invisible, thereby stunting the possibility of processing racial conflicts in a transformative and healing way. For critical psychology, transformation requires that people need to understand how their identities have been constructed by race and how that construction has led to injustice in society. An educational psychologist would need to help clients negotiate the difficulties of these constructions and the realities of racism by acknowledging the way their own race has advantaged them.

3.10.3 What support and further training is needed by white educational psychologists to be able to deal with and challenge race and racism in their practice?

The findings show that the lens through which participants view race and racism influences what support and further training they believe they need. Those participants who viewed race as cultural felt there was a need for further training and support on understanding the traditions and cultural practices of their clients. For example, they felt the need for further knowledge on beliefs around ancestors in order for them to be able to provide psychological assistance to children who have been called to be sangomas.

There was a general view among the participants that support was needed, but at the same time there was no clarity on precisely what the content or form of that support should be. Because of the blindness to race and racism, they could not articulate what support they needed.

The interview process revealed that there was a need to create safe spaces to explore these issues where participants would not be judged or criticised. Through such open and honest exploration, new thinking became possible. The findings suggest that as professionals they do not have the awareness or
knowledge on how to deal with situations and issues related to race and racism. This is important to consider and find ways of addressing.

Furthermore, as educational psychologists and working within a systemic view, some participants noted that they needed to provide such safe spaces for their clients as well and that this was an important role for educational psychologists to fulfil.

3.11 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings summarised above, the following recommendations are proposed for training and support of white educational psychologists:

3.11.1 **KNOWLEDGE AND ANALYTIC TOOLS**

It is recommended that educational psychologists undergo training in relation to race and racism during their studies as well as after completion of their studies in terms of Continual Professional Development. Training could include learning about Critical Race Theory (CRT) and critical race psychology. The work and programmes developed by Melissa Steyn (2010) in Critical Literacy Diversity (CLD - as outlined in Chapter 2) are recommended as one way of giving white educational psychologists the theory and knowledge of the systemic nature of racism in South Africa. Such a programme would include the analytic tools of defining oppression and understanding how systems of oppression (race, gender, class, sexuality etc) intersect. Furthermore, CLD encourages the understanding of how social identities, including whiteness, are learned. Having a vocabulary about diversity can facilitate discussions on race and racism which could lead to deeper awareness in building an antiracism practice. By engaging with issues of transformation, educational psychologists will gain deeper insights into the issues clients bring into the therapeutic space.

3.11.2 **EXPLORING PERSONAL STORIES**

A key aspect of critical theory is the importance of giving voice to the voiceless and through this to become empowered. I argue for the necessity of white people to begin to explore their stories in healing spaces. This would be in spaces specifically designed for this purpose with the aim of healing from the
damage caused by racism. As white people, our minds have been damaged by racism and in order to reclaim our capacity to think intelligently about these issues, we need to explore our own stories. Taylor in this research was able to express how the interview process helped her to unravel some of the confusions in her own mind. I believe this is a process that all white people need to explore, not only educational psychologists.

3.11.3 SAFE SPACES FOR DIALOGUE
A third recommendation once the above two are in place would be for safe spaces of dialogue to be developed where white educational psychologists learn to listen to their black colleagues about their stories of racism. This would mean learning to listen with openness and without interruption.

3.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
The conclusions in this study are based on the literature review and interviews with six white educational psychologists. One cannot generalise to the larger population and thus a key limitation of this study is the small sample size and that it was confined to white educational psychologists. This study was specific to the narratives of white educational psychologists due to my interest in how they were thinking about and dealing with race and racism. This was based on the assumption that white people are less attuned to dealing with these issues and I was exploring how they were dealing with these issues. In this study I was not making a comparison between black and white views. It would however be important in future to have a broader study which included all the voices within the field of educational psychology in South Africa.

A second limitation of this study is that I was an ‘insider’ (also a white educational psychologist) as the researcher and this could have limited what participants shared with me. This, combined with the fact that I only had one interview with each participant and the sensitivity of the topic, could have made participants feel cautious and wary of sharing their thinking. I may not have got a true reflection of what they understand about the issues – nobody wants to
come across as racist or saying the wrong thing, so there were possibilities that people said what they thought I may want to hear.

A further limitation of this study was that I was unable to get as much information from the participants as I had hoped to and as outlined in the methodology section of Chapter 1. I had asked participants to write down their reflections after the interview and send them to me. I had also planned to have a focus group with the participants following the interview. I had one response from a participant outlining that this was too much to ask from her and she agreed only to do the interview. This response was taken into account and I decided not to pressurise people and ask for more than the interview. Participants did express interest in reading the research.

### 3.13 Strengths and Contributions of the Study

This study has been an initial endeavour to understand how white educational psychologists are talking about and dealing with issues of race and racism. It has provided important insights, especially in terms of how issues of race are generally silenced amongst white people, and due to the silencing of the issues, the manner in which educational psychologists appear to be uncomfortable in talking about and dealing with race and racism.

Although this study cannot be generalised to all white educational psychologists, it has yielded interesting findings. It has made what I believe is an important contribution to exploring the ‘elephant in the room’ and breaking the silence around discussing issues of race and racism. As Elliot said to me, “you are quite brave. You are because people don’t like to talk about racism, they really don’t” (L.478).

This research has also identified a need for further and more in-depth research into this field. Making sense of these issues is complex and complicated, and based on our long history of colonialism and apartheid, there is so much still to explore and understand.
An important factor coming out of this research is the critical necessity for white educational psychologists to interrogate their whiteness and privilege, as well as the ways they have learned about race and racism. The unlearning process is important as well as the need to process and deal with feelings of guilt, shame, fear, powerlessness and anger. It is important that one challenges the notion that Sisonke Msimang put forward that white people say ‘I can’t remember’ and the black person’s response is, ‘I can’t forget’ (Msimang, 2017). It would be liberating to be at the point in our society where white people remember so that black people can forget.

### 3.14 Issues for Further Investigation

Future research should include the narratives of all educational psychologists so as to provide the perspectives of all South Africans on how they view and experience race and racism. This would give a more holistic view of the challenges that all people experience, and not just white people.

Based on what was not achieved in this study, I would recommend that focus groups are held to explore the issues further. I would argue for these to be groups of white participants as well as groups representing all racial groups. I believe it is important for white people to meet in a white group to fully explore these issues, although this is controversial due to it being seen as perpetuating racial stereotypes of the past. If we are working towards building a non-racial society, there are things that need to be explored, both separately and together.

### 3.15 Reflections

Thinking about, researching and writing this research paper has been one of the most challenging tasks I have undertaken - not just in terms of the writing process, but in terms of the content. Taylor’s metaphor of talking about race and racism – “it is like an octopus; it has many ways of showing itself” – resonated with me. It often felt like the tentacles of an octopus were wound around my head, strangling me and stopping me from thinking clearly. Many times I felt like I was wading through a gooey mess of confusion in my mind. At other times just thinking about the topic made me feel confused. Reflective
activities have been a major part of being able to deal with the confusions in my own mind; perplexities that I realised have come from my formative years of growing up under Apartheid. A key insight for me has been that there was very little possibility of me growing up without being and feeling confused and terrified about race … and that there is so much personal work I need to do to reclaim my ability to think clearly about these issues.

In the process of researching and writing this paper it has been of key importance that I have had peer listening partners who have the skills of listening to me and have not been bewildered when I show them my feelings. It was through the process of being able to tell my early stories of growing up under Apartheid and the lies I was told, the powerlessness I felt to change things and the confusions I had in my mind about the irrationality of the system I was surrounded by, that I was able to slowly reclaim some of my ability to think more clearly about the issues and summons the courage to continue doing this work. There are still many feelings, still many fears and confusions and the personal work will continue after the submission of this study. My motto, inspired by the words of Martin Luther King that no one is free until all of us are free, has been an encouraging one in doing this research.

3.16 CONCLUSION

This research inquiry started with the poem, ‘Harlem: A Dream Deferred’, by Langston Hughes. In the poem he asks what happens to a dream deferred. Does it fester, rot, become sugary sweet or explode? The impact of deferred dreams is in many ways what is being faced by South Africans. In the case of Pretoria Girls High School, in the case of St John’s College and in the case of Maritzburg College, racism is festering and exploding the post-Apartheid educational dream.

Crain Soudien, in his book, ‘Realising the dream: Unlearning the logic of race in the South African school’ (2012), poses the questions:

- How does one undertake the process of building a post-race society?
• How do we come up with a new discourse that allows us to build this project of South Africa towards a non-racial society?

• How do we unlearn the construct of ‘race’?

For Soudien it “requires the active engagement of the self to be working at the level of the structural and the personal” (2012, p.242). This means within ourselves and in the ways our systems are organised, in society, in education and in educational psychology. Educational psychologists, having the training in dealing with emotional and sensitive issues, are well placed and have a moral obligation to deal with issues of race and racism.

We may not have been part of what was wrong in the past, of colonialism or of Apartheid, but we have the responsibility to ourselves and to future generations to begin right now to free our minds from the confusions installed in us. We have the responsibility to develop awareness so as to take actions on both the structural and the personal level in order to realise our dream.
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APPENDIX A – ETHICS CLEARANCE

ETHICS CLEARANCE

Dear T Abramowitz

Ethical Clearance Number: 2017-017

Exploring the elephant in the room: The narratives of white educational psychologists

Ethical clearance for this study is granted subject to the following conditions:

- If there are major revisions to the research proposal based on recommendations from the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted.
- If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, it remains the duty of the student to submit a new application.
- It remains the student’s responsibility to ensure that all ethical forms and documents related to the research are kept in a safe and secure facility and are available on demand.
- Please quote the reference number above in all future communications and documents.

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee has decided to

☑ Grant ethical clearance for the proposed research.
☐ Provisionally grant ethical clearance for the proposed research
☐ Recommend revision and resubmission of the ethical clearance documents

Sincerely,

Prof Geoffrey Lautenbach
Chair: FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
15 May 2017
The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s has/has been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.

The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.

Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.

Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.

Items 6, 7 and 8 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.

It is the researcher/s responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.

The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.

The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.

On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one hard cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.

The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of further research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.

Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Ms Faith Tshebela
CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 29/03/2017

Making education a societal priority

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APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORMS

SECTION A. Declaration

Ethics Clearance Application – Faculty of Education

1. Tessa Lee Abramovitz (The researcher) hereby confirms that:
   1. The information provided in this ethics clearance application to undertake research with human participants is accurate to the best of my knowledge;
   2. I understand the principles of conducting ethical research;
   3. I will endeavor to conduct all the research in an ethical manner as prescribed by Faculty and University rules; and
   4. I will inform the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee (REC) of any substantive changes to the project that might impact on the ethical clearance of the project.
   5. This project has not been submitted to another REC or Review Board for review.

Signature - Researcher / Student
24 October 2017

Please select one:

☐ This student research project (up to Masters level) and associated ethics application have both been approved by the relevant Department of the Faculty of Education for submission to the REC.

☐ This student research project (PhD) and associated ethics application have both been approved by the relevant Doctoral Committee for submission to the REC.

☐ This staff research project and associated ethics application have both been approved by the relevant Department of the Faculty of Education for submission to the REC.

☐ This student group research project and associated ethics application have both been approved by the relevant Department of the Faculty of Education for submission to the REC. This application covers the broad ethical issues pertaining to the group project.

☐ This external research project proposal and associated ethics application have both been submitted to the Faculty of Education REC for approval.

☐ This UJICE project and associated ethics application has been approved by the UJICE Management for submission to the relevant committees of the Faculty of Education.

Signature - Supervisor / Staff Researcher / External Researcher
24 October 2017

Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee, University of Johannesburg, Updated February 2016
Please report any instance of unethical research practice to greeth@uj.ac.za or 011 550 3016
SECTION B: Brief Summary for Reviewers

Research Design

Please supply the relevant information.

1. Data Collection Types
   - ☐ Qualitative
   - ☐ Quantitative
   - ☐ Mixed Methods

2. Research Methodologies/Approaches
   - ☐ Biographical
   - ☐ Phenomenological
   - ☐ Grounded Theory
   - ☐ Ethnographical
   - ☐ Case Study
   - ☐ Design Experiment
   - ☐ Action Research
   - ☐ Survey or other quantitative strategy (please provide details below)
   - ☐ Other (please provide details)
   - ☐ Narrative Inquiry

3. Research Instruments/Methods
   - ☐ Document analyses
   - ☐ Questionnaires
   - ☐ Surveys
   - ☐ Individual interviews
   - ☐ Group interviews
   - ☐ Observations
   - ☐ Other (please provide details)
   - ☐ Reflective journals

4. Sampling
   - ☐ Random
   - ☐ Targeted
   - ☐ Purposeful
   - ☐ Snowballing
   - ☐ Other (please provide details)

5. Sample size
   - ☐ < 11
   - ☐ 11-50
   - ☐ > 50
   - ☐ Other (please provide details)

6. Age of participants
   - ☐ < 14
   - ☐ 14-17
   - ☐ >= 18

Please provide the name and designation of an adult who will protect the rights of the child who has neither parents nor a guardian, or who is younger than 18 years of age.
SECTION C: Information for participants on ethical procedures
(to be used as part of the informed consent process)

Faculty of Education - Research Project Information
Exploring the elephant in the room: The narratives of white educational psychologists

Background to the study including the nature of the research
I, Tessa Abramovitz, am doing research on the narratives of white educational psychologists pertaining to race and racism. Research is the process whereby we collect information about something so that we can understand it better and gain knowledge. With this knowledge we can then do things differently and improve our conditions.

In this study I want to find out how white educational psychologists talk about and deal with issues related to race and racism in their practice. I would like to invite you to participate in this research study.

My concern is that 23 years after the dawn of democracy, racism is prevalent in South African society and yet it is still a subject that is fraught with confusion and misunderstandings. Racism continues to be a threat and a barrier to social cohesion while also being a contributing factor to inequalities in education. Educational psychologists play an important part in schools (and in the lives of children) in dealing with racism. They are well placed to deal with issues pertaining to race and racism: they can help people in healing from the damage of racism and be part of a movement to oppose and dismantle racism.

Intention of the project
Research associated with this project attempts to:
The purpose of this research is to listen to and explore the narratives of white educational psychologists related to race and racism. The aim is to build an understanding on how issues of race and racism are talked about and dealt with. Furthermore, it is to make recommendations for future interventions that can support educational psychologists in tackling these issues in their practice.

Procedures involved in the research
I will be conducting this research with between 6-10 white educational psychologists working in schools, the district office and in private practice in Gauteng. Interviews will be done at a place of your convenience such as your respective schools, district office or private practice. The interview will be conducted by me with mostly open ended and probing questions where you will be able to elaborate and express yourself on this topic. The data will be captured through written notes and the use of a dictaphone which I will be able to refer to at a later stage if needs be when formulating the dominant themes. I will ask you to sign a consent form. By signing this form you agree to be part of this research and you agree to me writing up my findings. The consent form will include a form where you give permission to be recorded using a voice recorder. In the research, your name and the identity of your practice, school or district where you work will be confidential. The research will involve one interview of approximately one hour with a possible follow up interview if clarification is needed. You will be invited to be part of a focus group if you have the time. This small group will be a way for participants to share their insights in how they deal with issues of race and racism. On completion of the research, I will share my findings with you and give you an opportunity to give further input to what I have written and to give assurance that I have captured your views honestly and correctly. You will again at this point be given the opportunity to consent to me using your views in the research findings.

Potential Risks
It is unlikely that there will be any harm or discomfort associated with your participation in this study; you should however be aware that there are some risks when taking part in this study. Talking about race and racism can be a sensitive topic and could bring up feelings. While you might feel uncomfortable, anxious or stressful, there are minimal risks involved in participating in this study.

Potential Benefit
Through your involvement in this research project you could gain benefits by having a safe space to talk about issues related to race and racism. These could include gaining insights into any challenges you may face.
SECTION C: Information for participants on ethical procedures

(to be used as part of the informed consent process)

gaining a perspective on your own thinking and learning from others in the focus group. A further benefit from this research project could be the insights gained and recommendations made for further training and support for educational psychologists in understanding and dealing with issues of race and racism.

Informed consent
We recognize that participants are not capable of consent unless “informed”. We have, therefore, disclosed the nature of the research, the aims, the duration, the risks and benefits, the nature of interventions throughout the study, compensations where appropriate, researcher details, and details of the ethical review process. Where appropriate, communities, employers, departments and other instances are also part of the informed consent process.

Confidentiality
Every effort will be made to protect (guarantee) your confidentiality and privacy. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. In addition, all data collected will be anonymous and only the researchers will have access to the data that will be securely stored for no longer than 2 years after publication of research reports, or papers. Thereafter, all collected data will be destroyed. You must, however, be aware that there is always the risk of group or cohort identification in research reports, but your personal identity will always remain confidential. You must also be aware that if information you have provided is requested by legal authorities I may be required to comply.

Participation and Withdrawal
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent to participate in the project at any time during the project. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. Your decision whether or not to be part of the study will not affect your continuing access to any services that might be part of this study.

Future Interest and Feedback
You may contact me (see below) at any time during or after the study for additional information, or if you have questions related to the findings of the study. You may indicate your need to see the findings of the research in the attached consent form.

Tessa Abramovitz
Cell: +27 (0) 72 1992 170
tessalee@netactive.co.za

Supervisor:
Dr Helen Dunbar-Krige
Tel: +27 (0) 115592673 helenk@uj.ac.za
Co-Supervisor:
Dr Anthony Brown
abrown@uj.ac.za

28 October 2017
SECTION D: Signatures required for consent/assent
(for all participants, parents, guardians and other stakeholders)

Informed Consent/Assent Form

Project Title:
Exploring the elephant in the room: Narratives of white educational psychologists

Investigator:
Tessa Abramovitz

Date:
28 October 2017

Please mark the appropriate checkboxes. I hereby:

☐ Agree to be involved in the above research project as a participant.
☐ Agree to be involved in the above research project as an observer to protect the rights of:
  ☐ Children younger than 18 years of age;
  ☐ Children younger than 18 years of age that might be vulnerable*; and/or
  ☐ Children younger than 18 years of age who are part of a child-headed family.
☐ Agree that my child, __________________ may participate in the above research project.
☐ Agree that my staff may be involved in the above research project as participants.

☐ I have read the research information sheet pertaining to this research project (or had it explained to me) and I understand the nature of the research and my role in it. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study. I understand that my personal details (and any identifying data) will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that I may withdraw my consent and participation in this study at any time with no penalty.

☐ Please allow me to review the report prior to publication. I supply my details below for this purpose:
☐ Please allow me to review the report after publication. I supply my details below for this purpose:
☐ I would like to retain a copy of this signed document as proof of the contractual agreement between myself and the researcher

Name: ________________________________
Phone or Cell number: ________________________________
e-mail address: ________________________________

Signature: ________________________________

If applicable:
☐ I willingly provide my consent/assent for using audio recording of my/the participant’s contributions.
☐ I willingly provide my consent/assent for using video recording of my/the participant’s contributions.
☐ I willingly provide my consent/assent for the use of photographs in this study.

Signature (and date): ________________________________

Signature of person taking the consent (and date): ________________________________

* Vulnerable participant: refer to individuals susceptible to exploitation or at risk of being exposed to harm (physical, mental, psychological, emotional and/or spiritual).

Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee, University of Johannesburg, Updated February 2016
Please report any instance of unethical research practice to geoethics@uj.ac.za or 011 559 3016
APPENDIX D: EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

From: Tessa Abramovitz [mailto:tessalee@netactive.co.za]
Sent: Tuesday, June 13, 2017 1:52 PM
To: XXX
Subject: Masters dissertation research

Dear XXXX,

I hope this email finds you well. Dr Helen Dunbar-Krige recommended I contact you as a possible person to interview for my masters research.

I am currently completing my Masters in Educational Psychology at UJ. As part of my research dissertation I am collecting data through interviews. I would really appreciate if you would be one of my participants.

My research topic is "The narratives of white educational psychologists pertaining to race and racism". In this study I want to find out and understand how white educational psychologists talk about, experience and are dealing with issues related to race and racism in their practice. Furthermore, it is to make recommendations for future interventions that can support educational psychologists in dealing with these issues in their practice.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and all data shared with me will remain strictly confidential. An interview of approximately one hour would be needed, with a possible follow up if I have more questions. If participants have the time, it would be great to have a focus group, but this will evolve as I do the study.

Should you have any further questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me. It would be wonderful to hear your thoughts and experiences.

Kind regards

Tessa
Tessa Abramovitz
072 1992 170
Educational Psychology Student
HPCSA registration number: PSS 0137316
APPENDIX E: EMAIL ASKING FOR PSEUDONYM

From: Tessa Abramovitz [mailto:tessalee@netactive.co.za]
Sent: Monday, August 28, 2017 12:46 PM
To: XXX

Subject: pseudonym for research

Hi XXXXX,

I hope you are well. I am busy writing up my research findings and in the process have done research into the use of pseudonyms. As I told you when I started the research, I would keep your name and identity anonymous and confidential.

In my writing, I started off by referring to you as Participant A, but this did not seem correct. So I chose a pseudonym for you. This too feels disrespectful towards you as it is a name I have chosen. Would you be willing to choose your own pseudonym that I can use when writing up my research? If so, please send me a name I can use!

Many thanks,

Tessa

Tessa Abramovitz
072 1992 170
Educational Psychology Student
HPCSA registration number: PSS 0137316
APPENDIX F: SAMPLE OF SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Thank you for agreeing to this interview which forms part of my dissertation research into the narratives of white educational psychologists pertaining to race and racism.

As this is a narrative inquiry, the interview questions may need to change depending on the story being told. As the interviewer, I will be the “listener” and the following questions will be a guide to obtaining insights into the narrative of white educational psychologists pertaining to race and racism:

Background information: Your age. Who are your clients? Where is your workplace?

2. When did you first become aware that people were treated differently because of their skin colour? What happened? How did you respond? How did the adults around you respond?
3. What do you understand by the terms race and racism?
4. How do you view issues of race and racism in your work as an educational psychologist?
5. Are you able to deal with issues of racism in your work? If so how, if not, what is the challenge?
6. What support and further training do you need as an educational psychologists to be able to deal with and challenge race and racism in your work practice?
APPENDIX G: COPY OF SELF-REFLECTIONS

Reflections on MA dissertation

Writing the dissertation and after a break, it feels like such an effort to get back to exploring the issues and writing about racism. It feels hopeless to me that things will ever change, feels like I don’t understand the issues, it is too complex, I am on the wrong track and I will make a mistake.

31st May 2017

Triggers after interview one: I felt pleased about the interview and better able to understand my fellow white educational psychologists. Listening to their stories help me to better understand them, at the same time I feel frustrated that the level of awareness about the issues is so limited. I wonder how 23 years after democracy people can say they don’t see colour, they only see people and that they do not see any racism. Speaking to black people, the racism is everywhere and I will daily hear things about how they experience racism – in a lecture hall after a black masters student stands up to ask a question, a white educational psychology student comments to her colleague, “one would never think she was a masters student”. This is overheard by a black lecturer, whose comment is the masters student is not speaking in her first language and people express themselves differently when asking questions.

14th July

Feeling overwhelmed by the stories of racism and what to do with them, how to write up the thesis. On reflection, I remember being young and feeling overwhelmed by the irrationality and confusion of racism that surrounded me. How does a young mind make sense of it all? It does not make sense. The person I loved and was close to was treated in a certain way, lived and ate separately from my family, was not allowed to go to the same places as me, needed a pass to move around, was a second-class citizen, could not sit on the same bench as me in the park. How does a young mind make sense of this? There is no adult who can explain it or do something to stop it – yes it was wrong, but if it was wrong why did they not stop it? I
was left feeling overwhelmed and in turn powerless. Trying to figure it out, trying to keep the relationships and the connections and the love – and yet it was so hard for this young mind. And now I set many years later, faced with the stories and trying to figure out how to write this dissertation, and I feel overwhelmed, I can’t think, I don’t know what to do, I am all alone, I will get attacked or criticised, I am wrong. It is a hard place to be sitting in when having to produce a document.

Like a participant said, racism is like an octopus – it is dangerous and has eight legs and it can entangle you and pull you down. Writing this dissertation has felt like that – being entangled in the arms of the octopus and being pulled down into the sea. At other times it has felt like being stuck in mud or treacle and can’t get my mind clear enough to think. It must have felt like this as a young person – having a sharp mind, aware and trusting and loving – and then growing up in Pretoria and being faced by separate development, whites only signs, separate buses, yellow police vans picking up innocent people who did not have their passes on them. And I looked on, young, female and powerless to do anything. That must have been hopeless and no wonder I continually feel overwhelmed as I try and figure out and make sense of the data, my findings, the literature review.

And where is the hope? In the safe spaces created to dialogue, to connect and to reflect. Glimmers of hope when a participant says she feels hopeful after being interviewed, that the safe space created in the interview has given her hope to unentangle herself from the octopus legs. So perhaps that is the way to get out of this entanglement and confusion – to keep dialoguing and reflecting and remembering the sharp mind I had as a young person that wanted answers and knew the truth. To unsilence the voices, to bring the voices into dialogue in safe spaces, to connect and to remember, race and racism are social constructs, the legs of an octopus that entangles our minds.

15th July

“You can’t know what you were made to feel confused about” D.S
We were born into a system of Apartheid and grew up feeling confused about what was happening. How can one know what to do about it today, or even know how to identify the issues if we are so filled with confusion?

Our role is to declutter our minds, gain knowledge, listen, but also heal from the damage done to us by the racism that we were surrounded with and grew up with. The systemic racism, the culture of racism, the things we observed, heard, learned and did. The first step is to break the silence, (un) silence racism.

15th July

It appears that when people have a chance to talk about race and racism without being judged or criticised, where there is a safe space to talk, clarity is gained and the confusion slowly peels off.

My own confusions in doing this study and writing it up – I will get judged and criticised and will get into trouble (the police will come after me and I will be thrown in jail!!) Feelings of being on my own, there is no adult around to help me make sense of the confusions in my mind of the injustice I perceive. The stupidity of racism. It does not make sense. As a young person, it did not make sense, it was stupid and inhuman and illogical, and I was forced to go along with it. As a young person I was powerless in the adult world.

I am no longer a child. I can think. I have good thoughts. And I can ask for help from people that support and encourage my thinking. And I need to keep reminding myself that this work is important. There are teachers and educational psychologists out there who are confused and cannot see or talk about, let alone deal with the issues. This impacts the children they are working with.

19th July

I feel more and more confused as I listen to the person speaking. I don’t see race – I only see culture, the discussion of racism is politically motivated. And then the emotions that start to come out from the participant – why are you doing this research only with educational psychologists, why not with all people? I wonder if she started to feel threatened by the questions.
The theme is one of confusion and contradictions. And then how can we think about the issues if we are confused, emotional, don’t see it, think it is politically motivated. This is not easy and I continue to have to find a way to contain what I hear and make sense of it within the limits of the dissertation.

**8 September 17**

I realise how racism has confused my young mind and left me as an adult, scared to take a stand, scared to speak up and make a noise. I understand that it is my responsibility to become aware, to keep reaching for awareness. It is my choice to feel confused, scared and powerless. I can also choose to heal from those feelings and reclaim my ability to think clearly, to have awareness and to say something. ‘My thinking is my writing and my writing is my thinking’.
Interview 4: Taylor

White Afrikaans, female, educational psychologist, student, born 1989 (28 years old)

T: Thank you for being willing to be part of this study. Firstly, some background information. Your age, when were you born?

D: I was born in 1989, I am now 28

T: So you were born before 1994?

D: Yes

T: The tail end of...

D: Ja

T: Can you tell me a little about your workplace?

D: At the moment I am working at a private school, a primary school. Um, we are very multicultural so we do have more or less, um I think way more black kids than white kids, we also have Indian kids. So yes, we are very diverse in our workplace.

T: So what percentage would you say are white children?

D: I would say about 5% is white children and I think at least 80% are black.

T: And in terms of the teachers?

D: The teachers are not that diverse though. We do have an Indian teacher on site, our cleaning staff are mostly black and most of the teachers are white Afrikaans speaking teachers.

T: And when you do counselling, who are your clients?

D: Mostly kids from school so I would say the percentages are more or less the same as what I teach. So the clients would be mostly black kids, but it doesn’t really matter, I have never noticed those kinds of differences really.

T: Who are your people, who would you identify yourself as in terms of culture, religion, race, and language?

D: So just to be clear on that, do you mean my own personal, what I identify with?

T: Yes, yes. Your background.
D: Ok, I came from a very Afrikaans speaking background. My parents are Afrikaans speaking, we are typically, I would say Boere, Afrikaans speaking people. Um... Although we don’t ... we allow English in the home, but we mostly speak Afrikaans and my friends group were mostly whites when I was growing up. It was only later in life that I started exploring other friends. So that is my background, very Christian. If you speak typically, when I say Christian and Afrikaans, I would say that we were very loving in our home and very allowing and open when it comes to diversity. I didn’t grow up as typically racist or very judgemental in that sense as you would see in the movies for example. (laughs)

T: And where did your family come from?
D: they come from Pretoria just as I do, we were all born and bred there.
T: And your great grandparents? Where did they come from?
D: They came from the Netherlands, way back. Way back when. My family that I know are not Netherlands, that’s way way back, so we were all Afrikaans speaking. I would say we came from Eastern Cape, Free State, North West, so not very far out.

T: So do you know much about your ancestors? Where they came from?
D: Not really. I think I know my grandparents. Before that we didn’t really explore before that. They all died before I was born.
T: And in terms of definitions, if one had to ask you what you understand by race and racism, how would you define race, what do you understand by the term?
D: Right, so just plainly what I understand as race it is defined by your, well I would say the colour of your skin. And I also think it goes deeper than that, I think it is also about how you are raised. Um, because I think a black child for example can be adopted by other colour parents and can grow up in their culture and race. So I think culture and race goes together a lot. And what I understand by racism is that it is a very deep underlying problem. I think it does exist, unfortunately, and I think it does impact everybody negatively. So if I can just say my first definition of racism would be that it is deeply wrong. And um...I think our definition in society differs from mine in the sense mine is straightforward. Anything that has to do with the colour of your skin, whether it’s positive or negative affects you, that is racism.

T: Could you explain a little more about what you mean?
D: What I mean by that is any consequences that you gain or that has a negative
impact on you in life. So for example, if I say by gaining I mean if you get a better job or a better position that is gaining and that is also not positive. But anything that you lose based on the colour of your skin is also racism. *So anything that’s judgement upon you based on your skin, that’s racism to me.*

T: So would you say any skin colour?

D: I think so, yes. I think in our country we do focus only on black and white, it is just my perception, I might be wrong. *But I think it influences all races, it goes way past*
Summary of interview with Taylor:
The importance of safe spaces to talk about racism without being judged and how good it feels to talk about racism which is hush hush at school
Didn’t grow up typically racist. We all have racism within us
Feeling that it is not ok to celebrate being white
Unfairness in how white people are now treated – reversal
Race card used unfairly
Words like racism and white privilege used when maybe it is not true
Issue of “they don’t know what they are saying”
Unawareness of racism and becoming aware, needing more knowledge
Race is skin colour and culture.
Things change through the interview – not typically racist, I was not aware, I need knowledge, we all have racism in us.
The importance of safe spaces and the need to ramble on to be able to come to some clarity of thought
APPENDIX I: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I, Libby Lloyd, a freelance editor and researcher, hereby confirm that I have conducted a language edit on the Mini Dissertation submitted by Tessa Lee Abramovitz in partial fulfillment of her Masters of Educational Psychology at the University of Johannesburg entitled ‘Exploring the elephant in the room: narratives of white educational psychologists’

Libby Lloyd

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Libby@theactive.co.za
Exploring the elephant in the room: Narratives of white educational psychologists

by TL ABRAMOVITZ

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Exploring the elephant in the room: Narratives of white educational psychologists