Connected on a heart level

–An anthropological discussion about interracial relationships in post-apartheid South Africa

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Abstract

Throughout history South Africa has been dominated by a white race group and during the era of apartheid racial segregation was encouraged as well as an idea of racial order was established through institutionalised racism. Marriage across racial borders was prohibited according to the Mixed Marriages Act. The end of apartheid and the transition to democracy in 1994 meant a radical political change within the country, but the issue of race became a question of social and economic inequality. In this essay I study the approaches and experiences of interracial couples in the post-apartheid society, and interracial couples impact on the South African society. I am particularly interested in the South Africans idea of social order today and whereas racial thinking is still present in the post-apartheid society. I use qualitative content analysis to discuss ideas of order in relation to race and my material consist in audio files from interviews with interracial couples, as well as literature, books and articles. In my analysis I discuss cultural and social norms, fear of race pollution, prejudice and racial stereotypes as well as thoughts about unity and humanness. Racial thinking is still present in the South African society although the development of relationships across racial borders has increased since the end of apartheid. The interracial couples in my study notice a certain uncomfortableness among the people in their surroundings, some more than others, because people are still getting used to the thought of interracial couples. Although racist beliefs and power relations are still implied by the surroundings the couples appear to feel increasingly at home in South Africa, even though they live in an in-between world, in a New South Africa.

Key words: race, post-apartheid, interracial relationships, racial thinking, racial order, South Africa, power relations, New South Africa, mixed marriage

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1. INTRODUCTION

The end of apartheid in 1994 and the birth of a democratic nation was a major change from previous years, which had been characterised by structural racism and the domination of a white minority. In this essay, I will focus on the post-apartheid society which often is referred to as the New South Africa. While races, viewed as a popular, political and academic term in the context of America is based on the slavery; how white and "negro" servants were treated differently (Fenton 2003:26), the concept of race in South Africa comes from the racial categorisation during apartheid. Race is defined as a classificatory system, justified through contemporary and historic racism and inequalities, by Steve Fenton (2003:38). Harold Wolpe argues that a process of social definition, which is based on biological terms, constitute race groups in South Africa. These groups are social, and he claims that 'race' only is referring to social categorisations (Wolpe 1988:3). During apartheid, racism was embedded in law and practised through social institutions. The political rule at the time helped to secure the racial relations between black and white in definitions of race, profoundly different from each other and related hierarchically; the white race superior to the black (Fenton 2003:27). Since then, mixed marriages have been legalized but race still appears to be viewed as a 'social reality', expressed in Alexander's terms (2006: 2,11f).

Research question and aim of study

According to the ideas of race which were established during apartheid, a social order was maintained through racial segregation. In this thesis I aim to find out what it is like to be living as an interracial couple in post-apartheid South Africa. My research questions are: *How are intimate relationships across racial borders approached in post-apartheid South Africa? What problems and possibilities comes with the emergence of interracial couples?* By studying interracial relationships in the New South Africa, I want to contribute to a deeper understanding of race relations in the contemporary South African society. Through an anthropological perspective I will study moral and social orders, as well as self- and group identity, which are all important aspects to my research questions. I will focus on how order is imagined in the South African society and how distinctions between race groups and different identities are expressed.

Material and research method

Since I do not have the opportunity to go out and do fieldwork in person in South Africa, the internet have been of major help and I have found my main empirical material online. It consists of interview material which was created in a multimedia project called "I See You

with my Heart" by Miora Rajaonary, an independent documentary photographer, who comes from Madagascar, but is currently located in Johannesburg, South Africa. In 2015 she started documenting interracial couples in the Gauteng province in South Africa, which resulted in nine intimate portraits that were exhibited the following year (OkayAfrica 2016). I will use eight of the interviews, which all are about five minutes long and they express a various amount of information. The individuals involved are of different races, cultures and come from different social conditions and backgrounds, there are white South Africans, black South Africans, white Afrikaans, South Africans of Indian descent as well as people from outside of South Africa; Zimbabwe, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), France, England and the Caribbean. While some come from privileged backgrounds, others come from poor backgrounds and there are also those who express that they come from conservative backgrounds. What they have in common is that they all are partners in interracial relationships who have settled in South Africa, which is why they are part of the project and relevant for my study. The interracial couples discuss their own perspectives on their relationships as well as the approach from others; family, friends and the public, in the contemporary South Africa. In my study this material will function as an alternative to the traditional fieldwork, which is a common technique to access the field and collect empirical material within anthropology. I will relate this empirical material to examples from the literature where other researches about race relations in post-apartheid South Africa have been conducted.

I have already started the discussion of race with help of Steve Fenton and Wolpe. To understand race as a concept in the context of post-apartheid South Africa I must develop a greater understanding of the history as well as the contemporary circumstances in South Africa today. Since my focus is the era after apartheid, I must look closer into the transition to the New South Africa which constitute a new socio-historical context, as well as I will use literature discussing social relations in relation to this transition. This is relevant to create a greater context, to which I will relate the empirical material. I will also use a few online articles. This part of the material will be illustrative, and the previously mentioned literature will be used mainly to explain the greater context and the background, to develop a greater understanding of the social thought, physical conditions as well as the changing political context in the South African society.

For the study I use qualitative method since I aim to gain a deeper understanding of race as a social construction, how people create meaning and the importance of the context. This

method works to empower individuals, show various perspectives in the meanings they hold of the issue as well as minimizing the power relations between the participants in the study and the researcher. Through conducting qualitative research, one can develop a deeper understanding of the context in which the issue is recognised, and it is also possible to capture the complexity of the problem (Creswell & Poth 2017:44ff). Departing from this context of my study I analyse my material by using qualitative content analysis. According to this methodological approach I go through my material, where I classify multiple words into a few content categories. I have been using categories such as norms, culture, power relations, racial imaginations, national identity and humanism. It is a method of analysis which can be used for example to compare media, different channels for communication, to describe trends in communication or to describe cultural patterns of groups, institutions or societies (Weber 1990:9,12), which makes it suitable for my study of interracial relationships in post-apartheid South Africa.

A few years back I was working as a volunteer in the townships of South Africa. I did not think about it so much at the time but I, as a white person, came from a country in the West to work with a less fortunate black part of the population. During my time in South Africa I also interacted with white South Africans as well as white foreign families who had settled in Cape Town, and my experience is that the more expensive neighbourhoods were dominated by white residents, with advanced alarm systems and gates. I also met a white South African man, who repeatedly expressed racist views. In short, I have as a foreigner experienced post-apartheid South Africa and my experiences might affect my interpretations of my material in this thesis. I am aware of this and I try to be as objective as possible in my research.

Theoretical framework

Racial thinking and the belief in a racial hierarchy constitute important theoretical frameworks for my study. In the late 19th and early 20th century, a whole science of a global racial hierarchy came to depend on the concept of race. This racial hierarchy was a system which classified the racial divisions of humankind into races defined by physical characteristics and there was a belief that one's temperament and ability was dependent on one's race. The racial thinking meant that humankind could be divided into races defined by physical characteristics but also that there is a hierarchal order in which the white race is considered superior to all the others (Fenton 2003:18ff).

The racial segregation starting with the Cape settlement and the European domination in the beginning of the 20th century, as well as the oppression of the black part of the South African

population with the purpose to protect the white minority during apartheid was justified in laws based on race, which helped to legitimise racial thinking and a system of racial hierarchy. These concepts will therefore constitute an important theoretical part of my study in the approach of interracial couples in post-apartheid South Africa and I will relate these ideas to Mary Douglas theory on order and disorder.

My main theoretical framework is anthropological and consist of Mary Douglas' theory on purity and pollution within primitive religions or cultures. She argues that ideas of purity and pollution are based on symbolic systems whose reflection on dirt includes reflection on the relation between order and disorder (1980 [1966]:5). The society is subject to external pressures, and what is not part of it could be against it. Dirt is, according to Douglas, disorder and eliminating it is a positive attempt to organise the environment (Douglas 1980 [1966]:2,4). I will apply this theory on the South African society, where I interpret the racial order as a symbolic system. The racial borders were during apartheid an order in the South African society that would be considered primordial; the crossing of racial borders was taboo, interracial marriages were prohibited in law (Mixed Marriages Act) and order was maintained through racial segregation.

According to Douglas, dirt is a by-product of a system, which means it is dependent on the context; what is clean in one context might be dirty in another (Douglas 1980 [1966]:9,35). Therefore, I wonder, and I aim to find out in this study how interracial relationships, that were prohibited during apartheid because they were not according to the order, are viewed in the new political context of post-apartheid. I aim to study social and racial borders to develop a deeper understanding of their meanings among South Africans today, more specifically how transgressions of these borders are viewed in post-apartheid South Africa. I find this theory interesting since the South Africa I aim to study is a society which has been through significant changes regarding order and boundaries. The political order looks completely different today and interracial relationships are no longer prohibited, but I am interested in whether the transition to the New South Africa has been successful and how it has affected the social order. What happened to the South African society when the political conditions changed? By studying interracial relationships, I focus on the individuals within a social order, this to find out how South Africans feel about interracial relationships in post-apartheid South Africa.

Douglas argues that dirt only exists in the eye of the beholder and that there is no such thing as absolute dirt (1980 [1966]:2). This implies that the individual perspective is of great

significance for how one views order and disorder, and therefore, there are various perceptions which might come in conflict with each other. In this thesis, I am particularly interested in whereas race is still a part of people's mentality in the New South Africa and how this affects interracial relationships.

Since identity is a central concept in the discussion of race and social order, this is also something which will be discussed. Thomas Hylland Eriksen argue that the context is important for one's identification, which takes place at the borders which separate the individual from its surroundings. Identity is created in the tension, in the battle between the free will and one's obligations (Hylland Eriksen 2004:125). This is an interesting theoretical framework for studying identity in the New South Africa, where the political context is another than during apartheid, one has other freedoms today since the abolishment of laws which kept the historically different defined races separated and prohibited interaction between them.

Disposition

In the next chapter I will explain the background and history of race relations and interracial relationships in South Africa. Then I will begin my analysis, where the first chapter focuses on how cultural norms and family values are expressed in terms of order and disorder. In the second chapter I discuss prejudice and racial stereotypes, and explain how these affect interracial couples in post-apartheid South Africa. The third chapter of my analysis, is about unity and the newfound freedom that is expressed among interracial couples, along with their visions for the future. Lastly, I will present the conclusions of my analysis and come back to my research question and the focus of this thesis.

2. THE HISTORY OF RACE AND INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Due to the European settlement and colonisation of the country, South Africa has become a diverse society dominated by Europeans. A white fear developed during the early years of the Cape settlement and anti-miscegenation was the public opinion among the civil society. Ideas about white supremacy grew, along with a desire to control other races, and the public support for anti-miscegenation increased (Sherman & Steyn 2009:55,59,61). During the early twentieth century people talked about the compulsory raping of white women by black men, an act of insurrection which reversed the established racial hierarchy, later referred to as "the black peril" (Cornwell 1996:442). The Afrikaans men were in this narrative, asserted the role of being their women's protectors, defending their honour from African infiltration (Sherman & Steyn 2009:61). With the colonisation of the country, private matters became political and the possibilities for intimate relationships between people of different races were regulated and controlled through social customs and legislation. The first legislation, the Immorality Act (No. 5 of 1927), prohibited illicit relations between Europeans and natives, applying only to pure stocks. This was primarily a symbolic act which functioned as a comfort for the white anxiety, since in a Eurocentric order of racial hierarchy, sexual interaction across racial lines was considered a threat (Sherman & Steyn 2009:55f,63).

Interracial relationships during apartheid

In the campaign of the Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party (GNP), translated as the Purified National Party, before the upcoming elections in 1948, miscegenation was a key issue. Narratives like the black peril were used to justify the need of harsh policies in this issue as it set fear in the white society. During the election, the GNP gained popular support and elaborated apartheid; an aggressive policy of segregation, designed to preserve and protect the white race. They talked particularly about white purity and mixed marriages were accordingly considered a fundamental threat to this idea of racial order; viewed as "a social parasite which required extermination" (Sherman & Steyn 2009:61,64). On top of the political agenda of the GNP was to systematically eliminate the possibility of equal-status contact. They changed their name to the Nationalist Party (NP) and in 1949 they proposed the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Bill, which Dr TE Dönges, minister of the interior, argued was not racist since it applied equally to both races. The proposal went through and became a part of the law; a first step towards systematic segregation according to the apartheid program (Sherman & Steyn 2009:64f). Later there was an addition to this law making it impossible for mixed couples to

live normally (Foster 1991) and the Immorality Act (No. 21 of 1950) declared all relations between whites and non-whites illicit, which now also included the coloureds. The purpose was to preserve the purity of the white blood (Kuper 1954). Shortly thereafter, the Population Registration Act (No. 30 of 1950) and the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950) were introduced, dividing urban areas racially as well as the Population Registration Act even broke up homes (Sherman & Steyn 2009:65f).

The rule of law was strictly enforced, and interracial relationships were heavily restrained in South Africa during three decades. Many suffered lack of privacy while they also became victims to humiliation and degradation, by the police who raided homes in the early morning just to check the identity documents of the people sleeping together in the house. It did not take much for suspicious thoughts to arise, interracial partners could be driving in the same car. They could be forced to pay penalties or get jail sentences. Furthermore, interracial partners risked rejection from family and friends because of their engagement in intimate interracial relations (Sherman & Steyn 2009:66).

In 1985 the prohibition of the Mixed Marriages Act, together with section 16 of the Immorality Act were repealed. Social problems were expected as consequence, and preservation of group identity and community was encouraged (*Associated Press* 16 April 1985). Although interracial relationships were decriminalised, the partners within these relationships were not allowed to live together according to the Group Areas and Separate Amenities Acts (Sherman & Steyn 2009:67), meaning that interracial couples were still partly controlled and not allowed to live like other couples.

The issue of race after apartheid

When Nelson Mandela became president in 1994, the emphasis within South Africa was, starting in a society with significant political differences, to build a "new nation" (Worden 2011:156). In the election of 1994, majority of South Africans appeared to have been voting on racial grounds and even though the relation of power between the political parties qualified for wide representation in the government, the undeniable divisions between the voters told a story about deep divisions within the South African society. The collapse of apartheid in the late 20th century was considered a major success. Fundamental freedoms such as sexual orientation, gender and racial equality was secured in the Bill of Rights (1994) but regardless of the progress, social and economic problems were still profound (Worden 2011: 131,152,155). After the transition to democracy, the dominant public argument about race within the country consisted in an economic issue. The end of apartheid gave hope to the

black part of the population who expected a rise in living standard, because they had been suffering from the previous regime's racialised economic exclusion. They turned out to be disappointed when the economic inequalities became worse and South Africa came to be one of the countries with the highest inequality in the world, according to South Africa's Gini coefficient, from 1993 to 2008 it had only gotten worse (Posel 2014:20).

The sense of form or order which was established in the society during apartheid has contributed to unequal power relations among South Africans. The wealth of the country remains unequally distributed, in the hands of the white citizens (Posel 2014:39). Apartheid is in *Re-imagining the Social in South Africa – Critique, theory and post-apartheid society* (2009) referred to as "colonialism of a special type" (Pillay & Lalu 2009: 255,276). Although the country is said to have been 'decolonised' and the state deracialised in 1994 the search for democracy had only begun (Vale et al. & Pillay 2009:2,243). Throughout the history the character of South Africa has been disproportionately white, which means that the knowledge production sphere along with the society must be racially redressed to be able to properly transform the society (Pillay 2009:235-238).

Since the end of the Cold War, race has become the "wrong" with the apartheid rule and its existence can be denied today by hiding behind a normative claim of non-racialism (Pillay 2009:260). The idea was to present an opposition to segregation, inequality, racial categorisation and discrimination with the purpose to actively work with an aim to dismantle both institutional and legalised racism (Lefko-Everett 2014:121). It was initiated as a response to the need of 'unity in diversity', expressed by Lalo Chiba, former ANC Member of Parliament, and was intended to be a statement for human rights and equality, stressing the universality of humanity as well as individuals as autonomous and unique rather than representative of a category (Anciano & Alubu Selemani 2014:145ff). In the South African constitution of 1996 non-racialism was one of the founding values, representative for a vision of the country's future (Lefko-Everett 2014:121). Arthur Chaskalson, former Justice of the constitutional Court, argue that it is impossible to discuss a non-racial society, without acknowledging the differences coming from history (Anciano & Alubu Selemani 2014:147).

3. FEAR OF RACE POLLUTION

In this chapter I study the approach of interracial relationships in the post-apartheid society of South Africa, how the transgression of racial borders is viewed by the people in the surroundings and how this is expressed among family and friends of the individuals engaged in the relationships. This will be done through tracking cultural norms and family values, which tell something about ideas of order and disorder.

The individuals sense of form is imagined in relation to surrounding formlessness and everyone has a consciousness of social structure, which they according to Douglas, strive to act according to (1980 [1966]:100). Only where there is a system and an idea of order, there can be dirt, what is viewed as a matter out of place. It is a matter of an interpreted threat to the order and elimination is therefore an effort to organise the environment and Douglas says that to maintain order, conventions must be respected (Douglas 1980 [1966]:2,7). Pollution ideas are significant in the social world since these beliefs in disorder reinforce social pressure, where people try to influence others' behaviour. These danger-beliefs work symbolic in deciding which contacts are dangerous and should be avoided (Douglas 1980 [1966]:3). According to Douglas' idea of caste pollution, sexual intercourse with someone of a different caste is in this system sufficient for punishment. The symbolic system is in this case based on the image of the body and sexuality is important to preserve the purity of the caste because one's place within he hierarchy of purity is transmitted biologically, and the main function of the symbolic system is the organisation of a social hierarchy (Douglas 1980 [1966]:125). This means that through expressions of danger-beliefs, an idea of order and disorder, is expressed.

According to Tove Phillips, culture is of great significance for the development of one's identity; one understands where one belongs as well as one adopts certain values. It can work unifying within the cultural group where one shares values and beliefs with others but meanwhile, a border is drawn towards other cultural groups. The shared norms and values give the members of the cultural group a certain social control over fellow members since they constitute a framework in which the individual members are expected to act within (Phillips 2014:45). This confirms Anthony Giddens theory about the duality of structure, where he argues that social structure can only be understood as the framework for agency, as well as it is the result of human agency. Likewise, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman (1967) argue that one is born into a social structure, which is later reproduced by one's choices and the way one acts (Hylland Eriksen 2010:91). In the following section I will discuss how ideas

of identity and belonging to a race group reinforce a certain social pressure on the individuals engaged in interracial relationships in the New South Africa.

Fozia, who was part of Catherine Besteman's research in *Transforming Cape Town* (2008), is a white South African woman who comes from a privileged background and when she married Ibrahim, a man classified as coloured during apartheid, she rejected her Afrikaans background. Her mother reacted negatively but after some time she visited them in Bo-Kaap, where Fozia had moved in with Ibrahim, although she made sure that her friends did not find out about it (Besteman 2008:140). Fozia argues that white South Africans are scared today because they encounter a reality where they are no longer isolated. They grew up in another world than the one they live in today, they did not have to struggle growing up as privileged, and she believes that because of this she experiences an anger among them; because with the end of apartheid they lost something (Besteman 2008:142). She also describes how she was careful bringing Ibrahim home to her family because they expressed racist views. For her, moving in with Ibrahim in Bo-Kaap meant leaving a racist environment and she says that she felt relieved doing so. Although her friends were aware of being politically correct, she knew they talked about her behind her back and she also describes how she lost friends when she engaged in a relationship with Ibrahim (Besteman 2008:140f).

Lali and Siwze are a couple from Rajaonary's project who express a similar experience. Lali comes from what she describes as a partly conservative background, she grew up in a good area in Pretoria and she explains that her family had everything, compared to Siwze who comes from a disadvantaged background in Soweto. She explains that she was not familiar with interracial dating since it was not accepted in Afrikaans culture and therefore it had not been something that had been suggested. Siwze explains that Lali's friends would not let him close enough to get to know him and like Fozia, the couple describe how their social world became narrower when they started dating. Lali's parents had preferences in who she dated, and it was not easy to bring home a black guy. Neither the older Afrikaans people in the area seemed comfortable and she suspects that they felt scared having more than one black person in the complex (Interview 1). She describes an experience like Fozia's, the people in her closest surroundings attempt to live according to Afrikaans culture, and they seem worried when she does not respect the cultural norms. Lali's mother was upset when she sent her daughter a message saying that she would never accept the path she had chosen (Interview 1). Siwze compares being in an interracial relationship to being gay, he says that people talk about gay people and he wonders why people cannot just let him live the life he wants to live

(Interview 1). This comparison explains what a deep impact the reactions from the surroundings has on the individuals involved as well as how they feel about themselves. Siwze seems frustrated since it is hard for him to ignore the disapproval expressed in societal reactions.

The negative reactions from others seem to be caused by a fear of racial pollution but it also seems to be a question of respect. Johannes is another white Afrikaans, who was married to a white woman at the time that he first met Margaret. She is from Zimbabwe and Johannes explains that they tried to avoid it because they knew it was wrong. He was not allowed to like anyone else, even less someone who was "un-white" (Interview 2). The surroundings told them it would be wrong and Johannes mother did not speak to him for three years and his brother still does not. Johannes says that it is because of how they were indoctrinated in the past, it is because of apartheid (Interview 2), they did not choose but had been forced to think in terms of race which had established beliefs in racial order. Likewise, Andre who is Afrikaans, coming from a small town, expresses how it probably was a disaster to his parents to find out he was dating Natlie, a woman of Indian decent. He says that they almost were "brainwashed" growing up, and he implies that their perception of interracial relationships was in line with the community (Interview 3).

According to the racial order, certain danger-beliefs of mixing work to maintain the social order and those who do not live according to the cultural norms are exposed to danger. The idea of avoiding pollution exists together with an idea of white purity, which should be protected to keep the order intact. I argue, that this is the reason that individuals who engage in interracial relationships and who come from conservative backgrounds are viewed as not respecting the social conventions, neither are they acting according to the cultural norms. Even if it is possible to engage in relationships across racial borders, race is still a 'social reality' and beliefs in race pollution are implied in the social pressure. Racial thinking is still important in family values as well as for social norms, which means that interracial couples can be difficult to accept because family and friends have other expectations and values.

Different ideas of order

Douglas argues that the idea of dirt is relative (1980 [1966]:35), which I think is important to discuss in relation to the transformation of the South African society after apartheid.

In the article *E-race-ing the line: South African relationships yesterday and today* (2009), Rebecca Sherman and Melissa Steyn argue that structural and cultural aspects have

importance for intergroup relationships and that these are dependent on the time and place. Therefore, the context is significant for the societal reactions of interracial couples. The structural and cultural forces that have become the most important when studying interracial relationships are family values, social norms, racial stigma as well as progressive ideas and the New South Africa is described to constitute a different socio-historical context which is unique for interracial relationships (Sherman & Steyn 2009:69,79).

Fozia says that the relationship she has with her brothers improved significantly when she and Ibrahim were living abroad. In the global context her brothers were very loving towards her family and she argues, that they acted differently than in South Africa (Besteman 2008:142).

The significance of the South African context for the approach of interracial couples is also expressed by Linda in Rajaonary's project. She has a West-Indian background and was first generation British in East London. Her partner, Matthew, also comes from London but moved to South Africa when he was a child. For Linda it was a "culture shock" (Interview 9), and they agree that it is more obvious to her than it is to Matthew, the way they are approached as an interracial couple. She explains that in South Africa, people turn their heads and they have been met with attitude at the supermarket (Interview 9).

Warren and Pamela constitute another couple from Rajaonary's project, who faced significantly different reactions from their parents, who come from different backgrounds. Pamela is half-Zimbabwean, half-Zambian, she moved to South Africa in 2005 and has two sisters who are married to white men. Her relationship with Warren was never an issue and I argue, that it has to do with the South Africa that her family moved into, that they were never directly affected by apartheid. Warren's father never expressed that race was the issue, but he implied that he had expected more from his son (Interview 8).

Racial thinking is still lingering among South Africans, but it also shows how one's background is significant for the approach of interracial relationships. I argue that it is a matter of how familiar one is with the idea of mixing. Lali explains that her mother did come around after some time, instead of seeing Siwze as just a black guy, she came to see him as someone who could take pictures and make jokes (Interview 1). Suddenly it was not all about the colour of the skin.

It becomes apparent that some have more restrictions than others when it comes to interracial relationships, this is dependent on one's idea of order, which I have showed is a matter of what one has experienced in the past. Whereas the racial thinking is making its presence felt

through negative reactions to interracial couples, there are others who are more acceptive. I argue, that this is dependent on one's idea of order, in which structural and cultural forces play an important role. Although negative reactions, like disappointment and anger, are expressed as widely experienced among the interracial couples, it is not something that every interracial couple have experienced. I argue, that it is a matter of the cultural context as well as the surrounding's idea of social order.

4. HOW DO YOU TAKE PREJUDICE OUT OF THE HUMAN HEART?

Ali Rattansi argues that self-segregation can result in profound cultural divides caused by the lack of interaction between the groups, which in turn contribute to a fear and ignorance of other race groups (2011:70). Likewise, Kate Lefko-Everett explains how the idea of belonging to a race group also leads to racial stereotypes (2014:132). In this chapter I will explain why prejudice, racial stereotypes and power relations between race groups, play an important role for the interracial couples' experiences.

Lefko-Everett noted that South Africans often express views on other race groups, and respondents in her research implied that they look at colour because it is the way they have been socialised; they were never taught they were South Africans, but what colour their skin had and what skin colour another had. For example, that one is coloured and that the other one is white (Lefko-Everett 2014:132f).

Prejudice is a question of belief, what one has been taught and views as real because one has been told to believe so. It is a question of status, as well as it is an issue of racial imaginations about other race groups, which can make the acceptance of interracial couples difficult. Natlie's mother was sceptical to including Andre in the family because she thought that he would be old-school Afrikaans (Interview 3). This means that she had certain ideas about him because of his race, and therefore she reacted negatively. Meanwhile. Lali's mother thought that bringing Siwze, a black Zulu guy from the township to their home would get them arrested (Interview 1).

Another couple who have experienced prejudice from their surroundings are Anne and Nick. She is from France and he is from DRC and when they walked hand in hand outside of Johannesburg, guys walked up to Anne to ask if she was okay (Interview 6). This implies that there is a risk she would not be fine in the company of a black man. According to the idea of racial hierarchy, Anne as white race should be protected from black people, and therefore Nick is viewed as an intruder who according to racial thinking should be kept at a distance to maintain the order.

The idea of racial hierarchy is articulated in racial imaginations. As showed above, racial stereotypes and racism are still present in post-apartheid South Africa, and prejudice has become a major issue for interracial relationships today. The racial imaginations do affect how interracial couples are approached and whether they are accepted by others or not. In the

next section I will focus on the power relations between the race groups and how they affect interracial couples, focusing on the white race.

The power of whiteness

The surroundings are important for one's identification, since it is where the individual is connected to its surrounding environment that identity is shaped (Hylland Eriksen 2004:125). According to Marxism, uneven power relations in a society makes the ideological imaginations of the world of the dominant group seem natural, because they have a better opportunity to promote their ideology in an effective way (Hylland Eriksen 2010:173).

Besteman explains how one as white in post-apartheid South Africa has three choices; either one can isolate oneself, live protected and wait for things to fall apart, or embrace an alternative identity and lifestyle or commit to the future of the country while also acknowledging the historical significance of race (2008:144f). Fanie du Toit of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation on the other hand, talks about how it within the South African context is a decision one makes, to be white. Although, she also argues that it is a reality which is unavoidable because of the context and the perception of others (Besteman 2008:143).

Lisa, who is a teacher in post-apartheid South Africa, implies in Besteman's research that the whiteness is still powerful and to develop a relationship across old boundaries she feels that she must first be forgiven for her white privilege. According to her, one must always be aware of one's whiteness because it is an issue of creating a bond of trust across old boundaries (Besteman 2008:144f). The idea of race can be problematic for the development of trust across racial borders which can be significant for interracial couples' experience in post-apartheid South Africa. When Ibrahim married Fozia he heard people from his community who accused him, saying that "he's forgetting the struggle- sleeping with the enemy" (Besteman 2008:141). The historical significance of race within the South African context becomes evident in this comment, since they are referring to a time when the white people used to oppress the black part of the population.

Byron, 23 years old coloured South African who is dating Nicole, a white girl, says in a research conducted by Sherman and Steyn that ideas of status and hierarchy affects interracial relationships in post-apartheid South Africa, although he expresses another experience than Ibrahim. He focuses on the increased possibilities to gain social status and to become a more respectable person by dating a white person. In the past it was a strategy for status mobility to

associate with whites and among coloured people it is still viewed as a good thing. For a coloured man to date a white woman in a conservative city is considered an accomplishment, according to Byron. He has noticed this in the way he is approached by others. People begin to assume he is not from South Africa and treat him with more respect (Sherman & Steyn 2009:70f).

Even if the engagement in an interracial relationship can be experienced as a chance of upward mobility, or a successful assimilation within a white norm, there are those who refer to the past, implying the different positions within the racial hierarchy and social order. In a research conducted by Sherman and Steyn, Stacy, a black South African in her early twenties, describe how people would ask her in Zulu where her white person was, something that in the past would have referred to her master. She says that it does not make any sense to her why anyone would say that, and it is a way of seeing their relationship that she wants to get past (Sherman & Steyn 2009:76). Apart from this, those from other race groups who engage in relationships with white people can be looked down upon.

If you are hugging a white person or holding a white person's hand. They automatically assume that you wouldn't speak to black people (…) They assume that you think you are better than everyone else. Which is very sad (Stacy in Sherman & Steyn 2009:75).

Dating a white person can be viewed as a betrayal from the perspective of the own race group. Stacy and Thembisa, another black girl who took part in the research by Sherman and Steyn, describe what can be viewed as successful assimilations within the white norm. Thembisa grew up in a township dominated by black people but went to school in the suburbs where she met white people. She says that her friends were mixed but in her area, most children went to government schools and therefore she did not have much in common with them. In school, they formed their social world, she says (Sherman & Steyn 2009:72f). The appearance of interracial schools in South Africa allows for one to develop a social world across old racial borders, but outside of these schools, racial thinking is still present and racial difference implied. Thembisa explains that she is not comfortable holding hands in public because she is scared what others will think of her. She comes from a multicultural environment but in public it feels like others assume that she is turning her back to her culture. Mostly black people, she explains, stare at her, because she would be betraying them; she thinks it is a question of a generational transfer and black pride. Thembisa does not want to be viewed as a betrayer, but it bothers her that she cannot be close to the person she is sleeping with in public (Sherman & Steyn 2009:75).

Sizwe describes an experience quite similar, in how the uneven power relations between race groups affected the approach from his own race group, when they said that now that he was with a white girl he considers himself better than them (Interview 1).

The historical significance of race becomes evident in these examples. White people can still see black people as dangerous and white people are viewed as superior. The whiteness appears powerful and is associated with white privilege, which is why the whiteness can be significant for interracial relationships. Since the white people have been the dominant group in South Africa throughout the history, the racial hierarchy has come to be viewed as a natural order.

Interracial couples today express different experiences of how they have been affected by people's idea of whiteness. Whereas, there are those who imply the power relations between black and white people in a way that refers to an oppressed and an oppressor, there are others that have respect for people of other race groups who managed to date a white person, one of the superior and if this is the case, it is viewed as an accomplishment which becomes evident in how the coloured person for example is treated with more respect. For a coloured person, Byron says that it is viewed as a good thing, although Ibrahim experienced that he was betraying his race group when he married Fozia. This role of a betrayer is implied several times among the interracial couples, one is "sleeping with the enemy". This betrayal seems to be more profound when it is a black person, like Thembisa, who engages in a relationship with a white person, something which implies how different positioned they are within the racial hierarchy. The local human knowledge is important to take into consideration, since the racial order is also about honour and respect towards the own race group in post-apartheid South Africa. When one is viewed as a betrayer, one can be socially excluded from the own race group. The individuals involved express that there is a question of misunderstanding. They are accused for behaving selfish, that they are making it better for themselves, rejecting their racial identity, they are forgetting the roots, the struggle and they also disrespect the own race group. In a post-apartheid society, it becomes a conflict between personal freedom and social pressure coming from group belonging, which Thembisa expresses as a limitation in her life.

5. CHALLENGING THE RACIAL ORDER

In this final chapter I will discuss the possibilities of unity among South Africans, the freedom to interact across racial borders in the New South Africa as well as the interracial couples' vision of the future, this in terms of South Africa as a nation and values of humanism.

Transformation is a key word in South African public discourse, encouraging changing attitudes, leaving segregation and racism in the past while embracing acceptance and integration (Sherman & Steyn 2009:77). The issue of race also leads to an issue of humanities since there is a challenge to think about this concept beyond de-racialisation (Pillay 2009:263). There is a lack of tolerance and acceptance between race groups and there is a lack of respect between fellow South Africans (Lefko-Everett 2014:129f). Benedict Anderson refers to the nation as an imagined community, in which the members are not personally connected but nevertheless, they are part of the same community (1983:21). They are all South Africans, regardless of race, but for the nation to exist, nationalism is required (Hylland Eriksen 2010:305). According to this idea, the change lies in the hands of the citizens, they are the ones who need to act for the society to change.

Racism is still an issue in which the government needs to act and to "move beyond race" or "not see color" seem to be excuses for whites not to engage in discussions about contemporary racism. Here it becomes evident why the term non-racialism becomes problematic. In the Mail and Guardian newspaper, the (white) South African writer and filmmaker Gillian Schutte, refers to 'colorblind racism', according to him a new phenomenon that denies and ignores the racism that black and coloured people still experience in South Africa today (Los Angeles Times 2015).

There are those who suffer more than others from the approach from others in post-apartheid South Africa. There are also those who become more aware of racism which also contributes to one becoming a more well-rounded South African. Thembisa's partner, Christopher, says that racism has become a more personal thing for him since he started dating a black woman, which has made him more aware of it. Through interaction with Xhosa men, he has come to be more comfortable with the differences among South Africans and he says that he feels more at home in South Africa because of this (Sherman & Steyn 2009:78).

Camilla and Jerome are another couple from Rajaonary's project, he is a half-Zimbabwean, half-Irish, whereas she is a white South African from Johannesburg. They have a son together and when he grows up, Jerome will consciously work for him to know his identity, for their

son to be confident being mixed race, born and raised in South Africa which also is his home (Interview 7). Both Christopher and Jerome argue that it is important that the society develops so that an increased number of South Africans can feel at home there. This way the possibilities of unity can become greater.

Another of the couples, Flippie and Ketso, express, like Camilla and Jerome, how interracial couples are more widely seen today (Interview 5,7), but Flippie and Ketso also say that great parts of the community stick to their reservations, not only for themselves but for others (Interview 5), whereas Camilla point out the significance of the local context. People have come to be more open-minded, but the rural parts of the country are different from Johannesburg or Cape Town; the big cities are what Camilla calls it "a bit in a bubble" (Interview 7). Warren also describes the cities as metropolitan areas, more multicultural and developed than the rural parts of the country. He implies that the multicultural environment makes it easier for him to not care what other people might think of their relationship (Interview 8).

According to Margaret, there are still not many mixed groups, or mingling across racial lines in South Africa, but people do engage in interracial relationships. She says it is getting better, but that they are not quite there because people are still scared to mix (Interview 2). There is still a fear on an emotional level and the sight of interracial couples is a direct challenge to the community, says Linda and she wonders why people are still scared of transgressions of racial borders. She argues that it is time for a profound development of the South African society and plays with the thought that if everybody lost their skin, everyone would have to get to know each other on a heart level (Interview 9).

While the racial order is reproduced, the South Africans do not unite without difficulties, because of the idea of power relations between race groups. The lack of respect between them is a problem, they see race groups instead of South Africans which is a consequence of the establishment of racial thinking in the South African society. The youth who inherit other cultural norms and go to interracial schools seem to have other possibilities than older generations who were directly affected by apartheid. I argue, that it is a matter of how one identifies oneself and that it is more common to identify with the national identity, as South African, today than during apartheid. There are new circumstances that allow one to identify as something else than a person of a certain race group and those engaged in interracial relationships show how they are overcoming the idea of racial borders and for example,

identify as South Africans since they interact with people from other race groups, regardless of the differences.

When one talks about the national identity, the external borders defining the nation become stronger than the internal divisions caused by race within the South African society and because of this the national identity is particularly meaningful for those engaged in interracial relationships as well as for interracial families in post-apartheid South Africa. The imagined transgression of racial borders that interracial relationships require is not given the same attention, since the racial divisions are over-shadowed by the idea of a nation and national borders. In a new context which stresses the external borders the transgressions which would constitute a threat and on which the idea of racial pollution relies, are no longer feared. The idea of the South African nation can therefore be viewed as something which could potentially work unifying among the racially divided South Africans. The idea of the South African nation is important for every interracial couple within the borders of South Africa since the challenge in the context is to leave a well-established racial order behind. However, this does not mean that race must be eliminated from the South African context, but that people from different race groups are tolerant and acceptive of race differences.

The search for freedom
In the following section, the last part of my analysis, I will discuss how interracial couples talk about their lives today and a potential future for interracial couples, while they appear to distance themselves from the idea of racial order.

Absolute dirt does not exist, but it is only dirt in the eye of the beholder. According to Douglas, pollution is a certain type of danger that is less likely to occur if the lines of the system are not clearly defined (1980 [1966]: 2,113). In the post-apartheid society, the racial borders are not as distinct as they used to be during apartheid.

Tova Höjdestrand, discusses, in her study of homelessness in St. Petersburg, what it means to be human, which I want to relate to the situation of interracial couples. Humanness is by Höjdestrand related to Turner's theory of anti-structure (1974), where one is considered human by being born and thereafter constitute a part of the universe. Höjdestrand refers to this state of anti-structure as *fellow humanness* (2009:10f). By introducing this idea, I want to stress the unity and sense of belonging among those who do not fit into the racial order.

Fozia considers herself to be part of the New South Africa, she does not feel the need to belong to a group because she feels confident in the way she has choose to live. Since she

married Ibrahim, she says that she feels African, rather than white. She describes it as living in an in-between world and she loves the diversity there (Besteman 2008:142). They are not part of the social structure but nevertheless, she expresses a belonging to a group, even if it is not a race group. It becomes apparent how the individuals who engage in interracial relationships see humans instead of races. This is also something which shows in Sherman and Steyn's research.

I was quite aware of it until I kissed her, and then it was just like, ok cool, let's go. I think until you're in it, because of the stigma, because of the awareness of difference, you feel like something is going to be different until you do it and you realise, lips are lips, they kiss (Christopher in Sherman & Steyn 2009:76).

Christopher is referring to when he first met Thembisa, how he was significantly more aware of race then, compared to now (Sherman & Steyn 2009:76). The kissing and the meeting of lips, I argue, is a great metaphor for how imaginations of difference are forgotten once one is brave enough to cross the racial borders which are part of the idea of racial order. It is about a realisation that they are both human beings, even if they might look different, have different skin colours, they are still the same. When the eyes are closed, I argue, that we can talk about a colour-blindness since the racial imaginations are based on physical characteristics. The reason for the stigma is what they have been taught, what they have been told to believe, therefore, ideas of racial difference make themselves reminded, until they are proved wrong, when one takes the leap of faith to experience for oneself. It seems like it is often a stage of uncomfortableness or ignorance, until somehow, the ice breaks and one begin to feel more comfortable.

The tensions are described as something that one must overcome to get a realisation of the commonalities instead of being cautious because of ideas of racial difference. I argue, that they begin to see the person behind the skin colour. Nicole expresses that she and Byron are not colours, but that they are people, "he's Byron and I'm Nicole" (Nicole in Sherman & Steyn 2009:73). Somehow, this appear to be something rather new in the South African context.

Andre, who is Afrikaans and comes from a Christian background does not consider himself to be conservative but instead he expresses that he sees people for who they are. By saying this he implies that conservatives do not see people for who they are, which takes the discussion back to prejudice and racial stereotypes. When Andre met Natlie, he did not know what to think of her because he had never really talked to an Indian before, but instead of judging her, Andre gave it a chance to get to know her and was as he describes it, "pleasantly surprised" (Interview 3).

Warren says that he is not bothered by other people today, in the city they go to places where people of all cultures go, and their friends are multicultural, just like them (Interview 8). Lali and Siwze express a similar mindset about their relationship, what can be interpreted as a carelessness. They will not care what others think or that their child will be mixed race. Lali explains that she believes that by being the way they are and living their lives like they do, they are changing something. She says that even if it is in a small way, they are changing something for the better and that it must develop, that it must eventually become okay, because there is no other way they will be able to progress (Interview 1). How will they ever unite if no one wants to start and show that it is possible to develop relationships across racial borders?

The end of the apartheid and the abolishment of laws such as the Mixed Marriages Act, have meant increased possibilities to engage with people of other races and new values have been able to develop. The changed political order, which constitute a new context from apartheid, has come to challenge the racial thinking and I argue, that although the borders that separate historically different defined race groups still exist in many aspects, they do not appear as distinct. This shows in the increased number of interracial couples. Although the South African society is still divided, and the small towns appear to be more conservative and focused on maintaining the racial order, the cities are developing faster and are described as multicultural, which means that it is more accepted to engage in interracial relationships in an urban environment.

I argue, that when South Africans begin to see humans instead of representatives of race groups, the physical differences lose importance. It is a matter of perspective and similarly to the idea of the nation, values of humanism downplay the racial differences and instead stress the commonalities, explaining how they are the same and why interracial relationships should not be problematic. Those who are engaged in interracial relationships already seem to have

embraced this new way of thinking and they can come across as more open-minded than other parts of the South African population. They embrace a *fellow humanness*, as well as they are more acceptive towards racial differences. When Fozia talks about an in-between world she implies that they as an interracial couple are not within the racial categories, and therefore, I argue that Fozia is a good example of the embodiment of the new freedom within South Africa. Even though she is marginalised in the racial order she is still happy, and embracing the New South Africa.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis I have analysed the experiences of interracial couples in post-apartheid South Africa to find out how they are viewed within the social world related to theories on order, pollution and race, as well as identity. My main interest has been to study the racial relations to see how ideas of order in terms of race segregation during apartheid affects the society today and how it is to live as an interracial couple in a society where transgressions of racial borders have been viewed as disorder, as well as they have been prohibited in law.

Mary Douglas argues that people have a consciousness of social order, which I have showed throughout the thesis that ideas of racial order and race pollution are still lingering in the society after apartheid. It is evident that the society is not yet used to interracial couples and people in their surroundings can get uncomfortable, because they experience a threat to their idea of order, which was defined in terms of racial segregation during apartheid. Disorder is what Douglas describes as a matter out of place and the experience of dirt is therefore dependent on a system in which the hierarchal order of race has been the dominant order within the social world of South Africa throughout the history.

There are still tensions between race groups in the New South Africa, in terms of the historical significance of race and the uneven power relations, where the white race is viewed as superior to all other races. This affects interracial couples in the post-apartheid society in the way they are approached by the people in their closest surroundings as well as by the public. After apartheid it has become a matter of protecting the race group, which is best done through associating only with people of the own race group. According to certain cultural norms, this is something that is expected from the members of the race group and if one chooses to engage in an interracial relationship one is risking social exclusion and rejection from family and friends. This can be expressed through disappointment, which has been showed in several examples. In the post-apartheid society, it has become a matter of honour and respect, to submit to one's race group and their culture.

Ideas of white superiority are still present and articulated. The dominant white race group, are the ones whose ideology has come to be interpreted as natural since they have the possibility to imprint it among the rest of the citizens in an effective way. This has led to the establishment of racist beliefs from which the interracial relationships are viewed as unequal and dangerous in the maintenance of social order.

The belonging to a race group has contributed to the reproduction of uneven power relations between race groups and racial segregation has caused profound divisions and ignorance about the other race groups, and ideas of racial hierarchy has established racial imaginations. There are those engaged in interracial couples who have become more aware of racism since they are now personally affected by it, which has caused them to identify more as South Africans than belonging to a race group. In the New South Africa, people are questioning the racial order, whereas others still believe and attempt to maintain it. Those who question the racial order, are those who are not scared in the post-apartheid society, because they do not see any danger in the transgressions of racial borders.

An awareness of variations within the race group is expressed and people express how they do not identify with the racial stereotypes they are assigned according to the racial order. In the new society, there is increased interest in personality, to see beyond the skin colour, and to not bother what others might think. Although interracial couples are aware of the social pressure promoting and encouraging racial order, a belief in the transformation process is something which gives them hope, that it will get better for them and eventually it will be more accepted to date interracially. It appears to be easier to live as an interracial couple in the cities, which are more multicultural and not as conservative as the rural areas, in the cities they are surrounded with other people who are multicultural just like them. They can be viewed as living in a state of anti-structure, what Höjdestrand refers to as *fellow humanness,* and it is implied by the interracial couples that they do not think about colour, but instead they see each other for who they are. While some experience the social pressure as difficult, and express how they are viewed as betrayers from the own race group for dating interracially, others are content to be living in the New South Africa and do not feel the need of belonging to a race group because they are all South Africans and the racial borders do not matter to them.

It shows that the South African society is still recovering from apartheid but also that progress is being made, as interracial couples are more widely seen, and they express an increasing comfortableness. I argue, that one's identification is important, which in turn is dependent on the surroundings. Changed surroundings also allow for new identities, such as South African rather than white. The field which has been analysed in this thesis, is one that is still in the process of transformation and it would be interesting to do a similar study in a decade, to see how the society has developed and recovered from apartheid then.

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