'We were not part of apartheid': rationalisations used by four white pre-service teachers to make sense of race and their own racial identities

Adré le Roux
School of Education Studies, University of the Free State, South Africa
lerouxad@ufs.ac.za

Despite fundamental reforms to South African education, large performance gaps still prevail between former black schools and former white schools. Nineteen years into a democracy and education in post-apartheid South Africa still retains a strong racial dimension between poorer communities and more affluent communities. Differential access to power and privilege in post-apartheid South Africa is the logical consequence of a racialised society, and the latter constitutes the context in which pre-service students have to make sense of their racialised subjectivities that ultimately affect their decisions and active agency to bringing about a less polarised society. In this paper, Bonilla-Silva's *structural theory of racism* is used as a theoretical lens to unpack the rationalisations used by four white pre-service teachers to make sense of race and their own racial identities. By claiming that they were not part of apartheid, the participants use various rationalisations to provide them with information to maintain a belief in white innocence in racism and to disengage them from structural racism.

Keywords: Bonilla-Silva; race; racial identity; structural theory of racism; teacher education; white pre-service teachers

Introduction
Since the transition to a democracy, the South African government has made immense efforts to move away from apartheid education. Framed within the context of a new progressive constitution (1996), fundamental reforms to the administration, curriculum, governance and funding of education followed (Department of Education, 2009; Motala & Dieltiens, 2010). However, despite educational reforms, there seems to be little evidence of post-apartheid education narrowing the great divide between the prospects of children from poorer communities and those from affluent communities (cf. Department of Basic Education, 2010, Executive Summary). One could agree with Soudien (2007) that the apartheid legacy continues to be determinative in the degree to which rich and white learners perform better than poor and black learners. However, one needs to acknowledge how this bimodality in performance is the outcome of current low quality education which is, by implication and by evidence, unable to convert its material advantage (relative to other poorer African countries) into cognitive skills and learning achievements (Spaull, 2012). Instead of providing a way out of poverty, the persistence of large performance gaps between former black schools and former white schools underscores an education system that "generally produces outcomes that reinforce current patterns of poverty and privilege" (Van den Berg, Burger, Burger, De

Vos, Du Rand, Gustafsson, Moses, Shepherd, Spaull, Taylor, Van Broekhuizen & Von Fintel, 2011:3). Despite numerous attempts at intervention by the government, the current education system continues to feed into the continuation of race-based social inequality in South Africa. In this regard, McKinney (2007:216) notes that continuing race-based social inequality largely precludes South Africans to "'exit race' or even from being able to think about 'race' differently". As such, race not only continues to play a significant role in how South Africans use it as an identity marker, but racial categorising remains a common basis of self and other-identification in social interaction in South Africa (Collier, 2005).

Education has a significant role to play in transforming individual lives and social structures, and teacher educators should be concerned with teachers' role in perpetuating raced-based social inequality. In South Africa, pre-service teachers find themselves in a society deeply marked by a racialised past and although they might strive to make a different present and a new future, they will eventually choose, amongst others, racialised subjectivities that will inform their becoming and being one kind of teacher rather than another (Walker, 2005). In this regard, it can be assumed that the way in which pre-service teachers make sense of race and their own racial identities will ultimately affect their decisions and active agency to either engage in classroom pedagogies to combat exclusion and marginalisation (Francis & Hemson, 2007), or to contribute, often unconsciously, to the perpetuation of racial inequality. Within the context of teacher education and in the light of our education system perpetuating the inequalities of a racialised past, but also driven by the hope that teachers can made a difference, the theorising of pre-service teachers' understanding of race and racial identity becomes necessary.

The aim of this article is to explore the rationalisations used by four white pre-service teachers to make sense of race and their own racial identities in post-apartheid South Africa, and to consider implications for teacher education. Although it is accepted that all pre-service teachers' decisions to engage in classroom pedagogies to combat marginalisation will be influenced by their racial identities, the decision to work with white pre-service teachers is not directed at essentialising whiteness. Nor is it aimed at challenging and unsettling whiteness, or at making white racial hegemony visible in post-apartheid South Africa. Rather, this decision resonates Picower's (2009) (cf. also Solomon, Portelli, Daniel & Campbell's, 2005) argument that unexamined whiteness can contribute to white teachers maintaining and enacting dominant racial ideologies. An understanding of how white pre-service teachers make sense of race and their own racial identities is subsequently important if teacher educators ultimately want their student teachers to contribute to bringing about a less polarised South African society.

Theoretical framework
In this article, Bonilla-Silva's (1996; 1999) *structural theory of racism* is used as a lens to explore the way in which four pre-service teachers make sense of race and their own

racial identity. At the core of Bonilla-Silva's (1996) theory lies the assumption that a society becomes racialised when differential economic, political, social and psychological rewards are allocated to groups along racial lines (Applebaum, 2007). Although racial lines are socially constructed, the set of social relations and practices based on racial distinction designates the racial structure of society. Because of this structure, a racial ideology emerges as the organisational map that guides the actions of racial actors in society. Bonilla-Silva (1996:469) uses racism to describe the racial ideology of a racialised social system. Racism is subsequently not seen as a free-floating and baseless ideology excluded from the structure of the social system. Rather, the structural theory of racism is premised on the notion that racism should be studied from the viewpoint of the racialisation of society. Racial contestation is one of the outcomes of a society in which people are placed in racial categories and where social relations between races are informed by some form of hierarchy. Bonilla-Silva (1996) notes that in a racialised society races develop dissimilar objective interests that are rooted in a racial group's capacity to push for its racial interests in relation to other races. Within this context, racism is not seen as a phenomenon operating at the individual level, but is regarded as a systemic condition that structures institutions and relationships (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). However, although Bonilla-Silva's (1996) assumption holds water for the apartheid era when the racialisation of the South African society was a de jure arrangement, within the context of this paper, I work with the assumption that the racialised allocation of resources in post-apartheid South Africa is no longer a de jure arrangement. Rather, it reflects the legacy of a past when society was constructed along racial lines.

The decision to use the structural theory of racism as a theoretical framework is primarily informed by the assumption that, despite changing meanings of race in post-apartheid South Africa, race is still an organising principle of social relationships. Given the permanent notion of racism, including its ability to adapt to socio-cultural changes by simply altering its expression (Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Bonilla-Silva, 1999), it is difficult to consider the possibility of the inception of a democratic government leading to the complete elimination of the South African society's racial structure. When coupling the historical struggle of racial contestation with the capacity of agent populations (a concept drawn from Tatum, 1997) to preserve some type of racial privilege, a race-free society does not seem to be among the available alternatives in South Africa. To be more precise, it is virtually impossible to live in post-apartheid South Africa and not to be exposed to a racialised system of power driven by self-interested control over economic, political, social and cultural structures to systematise and ensure an unequal distribution of privilege, resources and power. McKinney (2007) argues that the current use of apartheid racial categorisation to fulfil goals of redress and equity, contributes to the continuation of 'race'-based social inequality and to 'race' still being the most significant factor in post-apartheid identities. As such, I work with the assumption that the way in which pre-service teachers make sense of

race and their own racial identities will also be informed by a permanent notion of racism. However, I do not accept that racism should go unchallenged. Therefore, this article is informed by another assumption, i.e. that the positive development of pre-service teachers' own racial identities. through teacher education, can have an impact on their willingness to challenge the economic, social and political conditions effectively in their future schools, inevitably affecting their learners' world of learning and living.

In addition to Bonilla-Silva's (1996) theory contributing to an understanding of the social and systemic nature of racism, it also informs the conceptualisation of the structured nature of white privilege. As with other racial categories, whiteness is also regarded as "a social construct that can be invented, lived, analysed, modified and discarded" (Kincheloe, 1999:164). Although whiteness can be operationalised in many ways, Picower (2009) argues that the valuation of white skin colour grants invisible, unearned and not consciously acknowledged privileges to whites. In a similar manner as racism, racial privilege contributes to social inequality through the multiple inter-relatedness of the micro- and macro-levels of post-apartheid South Africa. Whilst we strive for equity, racial diversity and social justice in post-apartheid South Africa, current educational outcomes reflect a perpetuation and reinforcement of the inequalities of our apartheid legacy (Van den Berg et al., 2011; cf. also De Wet, Brazelle, Heyns, Masitsa, Niemann, Niemann & Van Staden, 2001).

Research strategy
Whilst this article aims to unpack the rationalisations used by four white pre-service teachers to make sense of race and their own racial identities, the intention is not to generalise their rationalisations to all white pre-service teachers.

The participants
The participants in this qualitative study are four white Afrikaans-speaking women in their final year of studying for a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree. As part of a bigger project on *Identity, Agency and Social Justice*, eight pre-service teachers were randomly identified from a purposive selection of students who are white, female and in their final year of study. After conducting in-depth interviews with all eight participants during which they were encouraged to communicate their understanding of how they understand their roles as agents of change, four students volunteered to continue with their participation in English. The switch from Afrikaans to English was to accommodate, at the time, a co-researcher who did not understand Afrikaans. Although all four participants were twenty-one years old, they carried with them diverse backgrounds and experiences. As the daughter of a missionary father, Julie grew up on a missionary station, learnt an indigenous language at an early age to communicate with her young black friends and completed her school career at a predominantly white Afrikaans-medium school. Susan's parents are both teachers who taught at black township schools before they left South Africa to teach abroad. She also completed her

school career at a predominantly white Afrikaans-medium school. Lynn grew up in a single-parent household and got to understand at a young age the hardship of a mother who had to struggle to make ends meet. Like Julie and Susan, Lynn also completed her school career at a predominantly white Afrikaans-medium school. Rita grew up on a farm and completed her school career at a girls-only English-medium school with a diverse racial composition.

Initially, working with four participants only was a concern. Mertens (2010:332) argues that a decision regarding the number of participants in qualitative research is made on "the basis of having identified the salient issues and finding that the themes and examples are repeating instead of extending". The number of participants is subsequently related to length of time in the field. In this regard, Morse (2000) advises the consideration of the principle whereby the quality of the data and the number of interviews per participant determines the amount of usable data. Thus, the greater the amount of useable data obtained, the fewer the number of participants. As salient issues relating to race and racial identity emerged from the initial eight in-depth interviews, the decision was made to continue with the four voluntary participants, but to spend more time with them. In order to obtain rich data, the initial in-depth interviews were followed by a focus group interview and an additional in-depth interview with each participant.

Working with racial categories is a sensitive and contentious issue. Mertens (2010) cautions that when such categorisations are used along with an assumed homogeneity of conditions, the complexity of people's experiences and social locations is avoided. Whilst a conscious attempt was made during the data analysis to remain sensitive towards within-group commonality and difference, reference to racial categories such as white and black is not intended to lend credibility to popular cultural stereotypes. In rejection of race as a fixed biological category and informed by the notion of race and whiteness as social constructs, these categories are used in this article to establish how the four participants make sense of race and their own racial identities. In addition, as a white female teacher educator, it was also important for me to constantly reflect on how my own thinking about and the use of these racial categorisations may influence the analysis of the data.

The decision to work with women was informed by the fact that the majority of students enrolled for teacher education at the particular institution where this research was undertaken, are women. However, framed within the context of this article and given the focus on race and racial identity, it could be argued that working with women acknowledges the notion that the racial structuration of subjects is also fragmented along, *inter alia*, gender lines (Bonilla-Silva, 1996). Because racial actors are also gendered, it is subsequently assumed that the way in which these four woman pre-service teachers make sense of race and their own racial identities is, by implication, also gendered.

Data collection and data analysis

To enable a more nuanced analysis of how the participants make sense of race and their own racial identities, the use of more than one method of data collection was regarded as most appropriate. As data were collected from individual in-depth interviews, a single focus-group interview and in-depth follow-up interviews, it was possible to triangulate the information collected for consistency across the various data sources (cf. Mertens, 2010).

During the initial stage of this study, in-depth interviews of 40 minutes were conducted with the participants. During these interviews, the participants answered pre-determined questions regarding their experiences of teacher identity in general, whilst further probing assisted in the development of an understanding of their subjective experiences as pre-service teachers (Kelly, 2006; Mertens, 2010). However, since these interviews only provided a mere glimpse into the participants' subjective experience of race and racial identity, a focus-group interview of one and a half hour was conducted. One of the characteristics of a focus-group interview is that it typically comprises a group of people who share a similar type of experience (Kelly, 2006). As the participants in this study are all pre-service teachers in their final year of study, the focus-group interview was the ideal opportunity to create the space for the development of a more in-depth understanding of their inter-subjective experiences and sense making of race and racial identity in post-apartheid South Africa. The use of open-ended questions encouraged a conversational dialogue and assisted the participants in creating meaning among themselves (Mertens, 2010). Furthermore, the focus-group interviews provided an understanding of the ways in which the four white pre-service teachers shared and did not share common experiences (cf. Kelly, 2006). By retaining an awareness of commonality and difference, general patterns were identified and used to build a descriptive framework for theorising about the participants' inter-subjective experiences of race and racial identity.

To deepen the understanding of the participants' sense making, the focus-group interview was followed by a 60-minute in-depth interview with each participant. By means of open-ended questions, they were encouraged to probe, communicate and provide further insight into their own understanding of race and racial identity in post-apartheid South Africa. The responses of the individual participants were analysed and transformed into a logical and manageable structure in order to learn as much as possible about how each set of data responds to an understanding of each participant's subjective experience. In addition to a with-in case analysis, a cross-case analysis (cf. Merriam, 1998) helped to strengthen this understanding and enabled the triangulation of the participants' subjective experiences with their inter-subjective experiences. Whilst the analysis of the data sets helped to refine and develop a theoretical understanding of how the participants make sense of race and their own racial identities, the triangulation of the data from the different data sources enhanced the external validity of the findings (Merriam, 1998).

Informed consent was sought and obtained from the participants, all interviews were digitally recorded with their permission and, to protect their identity, all names used in this article are pseudonyms.

Findings and discussion

This article is premised on the notion that although race is a malleable and historically bound social categorisation, South Africa's racialised history is not absolved by post-apartheid discourses of equity and redress. Instead, underneath discourses of *inter alia* non-racism and non-sexism, social, political and ideological practice continues to produce differential status between racialised social groups (Van den Berg et al., 2011; cf. Bonilla-Silva, 1999). Framed within the assumption that a racialised South African society remains, the findings in this article are organised around the rationalisations the four participants use to make sense of race and their own racial identities.

We are no longer privileged

All four participants strongly claim that they were not part of apartheid:

Rita: I myself didn't grow up in an apartheid era or anything, I don't know about these things.

It could indeed be argued that this is a legitimate claim, as the participants did not grow up in an era in which white people held an overtly dominant political position. However, by claiming that they were not part of apartheid, they distance themselves from South Africa's history of racialisation and subsequently position themselves outside and independent from this racialised past:

Lynn: What favours me, is that I was not oppressed by apartheid...I feel I was not part of it, so I am not going to exercise it.

Consequently, their claim not only enables them to demarcate issues of structural racism and oppression to a pre-democratic South Africa, but they also regard examples of present-day inequalities as remnants of apartheid; remnants of *other people's past*. Their recall of incidences of racism they have observed are seen as occurrences at individual level; rather than the outcome of a society in which societal institutions are structured along racial lines (cf. Bonilla-Silva, 1999). By using their claim as a distancing strategy, the participants have difficulty in interrogating *effectively* how past injustices impact on present circumstances. Rather, as a distancing strategy, their claim leads to the adoption of a blinder that serves as an effective form of resistance to engage in how the larger historical context permeates *ongoing relations* of social domination and economic inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa. By distancing themselves from a racialised past, the contemporary expression of structural racism is not recognised.

Drawing on Bonilla-Silva's (1999) structural theory of racism, it is argued that a contemporary understanding of race and racial identities cannot be separated from South Africa's historical process of racialisation. Thus, by using their claim as a distancing strategy, the participants also set the parameters within which to make sense

of race and their own racial identities independent from a racialised past. Although all four participants acknowledge that as white people they were to a certain extent privileged by apartheid, this acknowledgement comes with a justification and introduces a disclaimer:

> Julie: Yes, I am white…which opened a few doors for me…*but* I grew up very poor…you worked for what you wanted. I feel most people of my age and younger have more or less the same opportunities.

The foregrounding of the notion that it is all about hard work resonates a sense of entitlement – as hard work equals what you deserve, the perception is created that it is not about privilege; rather, it is about making good use of your opportunities. Whilst the introduction of *but* as a disclaimer feeds into the submergence of white privilege in a notion of equal opportunities, or at least access to equal opportunities for all, white people are no longer privileged. Working with the assumption that *if we can, so can they*, the impression is created that all black South Africans have to do, is to pick themselves up by their bootstraps and simply make use of the opportunities on offer. By implication, the participants promote a colour-blind approach whereby rewards of hard work should be based on merit. Whilst the faith in meritocracy is primarily based on the assumption that opportunities are equal, the use of abstract principles like meritocracy, fairness and equality to criticise affirmative action as reverse discrimination helps white people to appear "not racist" (Bonilla-Silva, 2003:79). However, since the participants assume that failure or success of an individual or a group is linked to individual effort and agency, they have difficulty in recognising how their understanding of race and their own racial identities is informed by a history of white privilege and white complicity in structural racism in post-apartheid South Africa.

Although the invisibility of whiteness and white ignorance are known theses in the theorising of whiteness (Applebaum, 2010; Solomon et al., 2005), it is rather the habitual nature of white privilege that is absolved by the participants' claim that they were not part of apartheid. By disengaging themselves from the need to recognise themselves as constituted by habits of white privilege, the participants do not see themselves as continuing products of white privilege who benefit from it, who are implicated in it, and who enact injustices in many habitual and subtle ways (Vice, 2010).

> Susan: I have never in my life thought I am more privileged than another one. NEVER!

In making sense of their racial identity, white privilege does not carry any currency in post-apartheid South Africa for the participants. The consequences of constructing racial identity in the 'absence' of white privilege are manifold, as it maintains a white innocence in racism, whilst simultaneously absolving the implication of white people's complicity in structural racism.

Racism? – we are now the victims

In addition to the suspension of both white privilege and structural racism with the

dismantling of apartheid, and whilst seeing racism as a remnant of a past historical racial situation, the participants claim that South African schools have been making progress on race relations:

> Lynn: Although the stigmas and stereotypes are decreasing, they [blacks] have that thing that…'We were disadvantaged by white people'. It is still being carried on from parents to children: 'White people are not so good, white people have not treated us so well'. However, this is no longer the case.

Whilst the claim that South Africa and particularly South African schools have been making progress on race relations to a certain extent dismisses the importance of the existence of racism (cf. Picower, 2009:206), attention should be drawn to the way in which the intergenerational transmission of knowledge from parents to their "post-apartheid" children is deferred to the *racial other*. Claiming that the (mistaken) beliefs of black people mirror those of their parents, Lynn fails to interrogate the possibility of her own beliefs being informed by those people who "upheld, supported and benefited from white domination in the decades before they were born" (Jansen, 2008:5), but also by those who *continue* to think 'white' when state power is overly committed to breaking down racial privilege (Steyn, 2007; Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007). Framed within the claim of having no direct experience of apartheid, unchallenged indirect knowledge also feeds into the conceptualisation of race and racial identity in the absence of any recognition of white privilege and white complicity to racism.

Working with the assumption that structural racism ended with the dismantling of apartheid, incidences of racism are regarded as individual and singular. It was fairly easy for the participants to recall incidences where they have witnessed blatant discrimination against black people. However, by understanding racism as overt behaviour, the participants limit their ability to interrogate "obvious vices like indifference or callousness, cowardice or dishonesty, the failure of imagination and empathy, or just plain laziness" (Vice, 2010:327) to maintain white privilege. By dismissing their own privilege, the participants are not able to see how the structuration of the South African society feeds into the de-privileging of other social groups. Rather, they ground their claim that they were not part of apartheid in the argument that advancement should be based on hard work; thus on individual ability. Claiming that they did not have anything to do with apartheid, they draw on a discourse of victimisation and label affirmative action as a form of reversed discrimination:

> Rita: At this stage, mainly whites are being disadvantaged because of affirmative action...under a certain age everybody gained equality. We all had the same education; we didn't go through the years of apartheid. Blacks are being advantaged because their parents went through a bad system …and THAT is inequality.

In making sense of their own racial identity in post-apartheid South Africa, the participants perceive themselves as the victims of discrimination. As apartheid had

nothing to do with them, they do not regard affirmative action as a means to increase equality and social justice for black people in post-apartheid South Africa. Rather, there is little recognition of how the past injustices the majority of South Africans have faced have an impact on present circumstances. In addition, by drawing on the perception that access to opportunities is equal and fuelled by the notion that it is primarily all about hard work, they do not recognise that the same majority is currently hindered by unequal educational and socio-economic outcomes related to ongoing social and economic inequalities, and racial prejudice (Jackson, 2008). On the one hand, the argument that advancement should be based on individual ability or achievement denies and dismisses how racism continues to exist in the lives of the marginalised. On the other hand, this argument is primarily informed by a white, racially privileged position. Given a racialised society in which education generally produces outcomes that reinforce patterns of poverty and privilege (Van den Berg et al., 2011), the participants' anger (and they had difficulty in veiling the latter) about affirmative action as the unfair distribution of resources is in reality anger about the loss of privilege. The understanding of affirmative action as a practice that gives jobs to less qualified or unqualified people over presumably more qualified whites is tightly interwoven with white privilege and white entitlement:

Julie: I think affirmative action…it led to a situation where persons who are less fit to do the job, get the job because they are black, while somebody who is white and got the experience and has the qualification to do the job, doesn't get it. This led to a situation where you have a group of people in posts who do not know what they are doing.

The participants' commitment to the argument that affirmative action should not discriminate against white people who were not part of apartheid, supports their understanding of affirmative action as the unfair distribution of resources that presumably belong to them, as well as a reluctance to expand opportunities for black people. Commitment to the claim that they had nothing to do with apartheid, makes it difficult for the white participants to understand that "people can be compensated for being born into a class which has in fairly recent history been heavily burdened through no fault of its own and never significantly assisted in achieving greater equality" (Jackson, 2008:2).

We are not the problem

In her attempt to reflect on how it is to be white in South Africa, Samantha Vice (2010:326) argues that "[w]hites in South Africa ought to see themselves as a problem". This statement is premised on white South Africans recognising themselves as constituted by habits of white privilege. However, since the participants' sense making of their racial identity is strongly informed by the claim that they had nothing to do with apartheid, their white racial perception does not tally with Vice's (2010) version of a conscientised white South African. Rather, by distancing themselves from apartheid and any notion of ongoing structural racism, they remove themselves from any

critical interrogation of their role in contemporary reification and replication of in-justices. As such, they remain buttressed in the comfort of white innocence. Although the participants remain oblivious of white privilege and the currency it carries, the way in which they make sense of race and their own racial identities is centred on an acute awareness of *not being black*.

As stated and drawing on Bonilla-Silva's (1999) structural theory of racism, it is argued that the participants' understanding of race cannot be divorced from the country's historical process of racialisation. As historical 'projects', racialised groups are the result of "shared patterns of practice by group members over significant blocks of time and the structures that enable and constrain subsequent shared practices" (Boyd, 2004:15). Although the use of a distancing strategy disengages the participants from any notion of present-day racialisations, their own sense making of race and racial identity does not escape a subjectivity that is embedded in a historical practice whereby they are named *white* insofar as others are deemed *non-white*. In contrast to the standard account of the invisibility of whiteness in literature on whiteness, the participants' sense making of race is informed by the demographical fact that a white minority has indeed made whiteness visible in South Africa (Steyn, 2007). In this regard, Vice (2010) notes that it is impossible for anyone in South Africa not to be aware of his or her race. Whilst the participants take white privilege for granted and remain oblivious of the habits of white privilege, their attempt to make sense of race and their racial identities remain framed within the notion that *one is white rather than black*. The latter comes to the fore when they make use of negative other-presentation and by implication, of positive self-presentation; thus, when they refer to social groups that constitute a difference (Boyd, 2004):

> Susan: I think it is once again like during apartheid when they [the blacks] were used to the minimum…it is like: 'Ok we're Black, it is all we can do ...and nothing further for enrichment.' While white people is not like you get only what you need, we always look for more…they [black people] had to be satisfied with what was necessary [during apartheid] and I think it is still like that.

Making sense of race and racial identity in the absence of an effective interrogation of the influence of the past and the non-recognition of white privilege and its concomitant complicity to on-going structural racism, feed into the notion of the *other* being the problem. Not to recognise oneself as constituted by habits of white privilege, is not to see oneself as a problem:

> Rita: The black children see themselves as previously disadvantaged, although they had exactly the same…although they were in school with me … some of them see themselves as previously disadvantaged…I mean they were not part of apartheid.

Considerations for teacher education

Although the aim of this article is not to generalise the four participants' rationali-

sations to make sense of race and their own racial identities to all white pre-service teachers, I do believe that the insights gained from this research can serve as an entry point to consider, in generalised terms, implications for teacher education.

Within the context of post-apartheid South Africa, and rightfully claiming that they were not part of apartheid, all pre-service teachers bring with them new histories when they enter teacher education programmes. However, the old apartheid ideology has been subdued, but not fully defeated; racism has adapted itself to post-apartheid changes, but still renders the South African society racialised. Although they were not part of apartheid, it can be accepted that many white pre-service teachers' prior knowledge of race and racism is often interspersed with experiences transmitted by people who still cling to the belief that whiteness *ought* to be the norm (Green et al., 2007; Jansen, 2008). By implication, some white pre-service teachers' racial identity construction could frequently be informed by inaccuracies and inequalities that are embedded in a racialised South Africa. As a consequence, many may one day enter the teaching profession with a hegemonic reinforcement of preconceived ideas about the racially other, including perceiving *the other* as the problem. When considering the extent to which the participants in this study render themselves vulnerable by feelings of victimisation, teacher education seems to be the ideal location for pre-service teachers to explore "their own personal attitudes and understandings of the way in which their racial ascription and social positioning inform their actual practices and interactions" (Solomon et al., 2005:149). It is assumed that when teacher education creates the space for pre-service teachers to begin to examine their racial biographies and bring to the surface their preconceptions about privilege and oppression, then they can start to rethink their own racial identities and then rewrite such identities to locate themselves as white pre-service teachers who can become agents of change.

The facilitation of pre-service students' engagement with their own racial identity should involve the development of an understanding of the extent to which their perceptions of themselves and those of others have been constructed by South Africa's historical process of racialisation. As whiteness cannot escape the materiality of its history, white pre-service teachers must be assisted to develop an understanding of how the social system uses social identities to assign dominance and subordinate status to individuals and groups in society (Hardiman & Jackson, 2007). When white pre-service teachers start to comprehend how their construction of race and their own racial identities are informed by a pervasive system that normalises unjust privileges and disadvantages, they can begin to recognise structural racism and work towards challenging oppressive systems, including their own complicity to educational practices that exclude and marginalise (Applebaum, 2007). Kincheloe (1999) notes that for pre-service teachers to start to re-articulate their racial identities, they first have to gain insights into the inner workings of racialisation and the etymology of racism. They thus have to become actively engaged in the rigorous tracking of there own identity construction process.

However, working with white pre-service teachers on issues of race and racism

is no easy task. Given South Africa's history of racialisation and racial contestations, strong emotional responses are frequently evoked when race-related content is included in teacher education programmes (Le Roux & Mdunge, 2012). This study has revealed that the four white pre-service teachers use the claim that they were not part of apartheid as a strategy to distance themselves from engaging in issues related to ongoing structural racism, including their own complicity to oppression. The challenge for teacher education is to design professional development programmes that will not only assist white pre-service teachers to recognise and move beyond the blinders they might adopt to resist engagement with structural racism, but at the same time, will give students of colour the opportunity to give voice to their own experiences of racism (Tatum, 1992). *All* pre-service teachers find themselves in a society deeply marked by a racialised past; *all* pre-service teachers' lives are marked "by race, by racialized subjectivities, and by a past of racial separateness" (Walker, 2005:53). In order for pre-service teachers to support the positive development of learners' racial identities in their future classrooms, they first have to understand their own racial identities. However, teacher educators often avoid engaging in racial dialogue for fear of generating classroom conflict. In the absence of racial dialogue, white pre-service teachers will indeed be deprived of the opportunity to re-articulate their racial identities towards an increasing awareness of how various forms of oppression are related to racism. Furthermore, the development of a willingness to work actively against racism will be impeded. In addition, black pre-services teachers will not be given the opportunity to voice their experiences of racism, nor will they be empowered along with their fellow white students to establish positive inter-group relations and become allies in the eradication of education inequalities. Thus, if teacher education wants to deliver teachers who are not only conversant with issues of diversity, but who will also actively work against differential access to power and privilege in post-apartheid South Africa, a professional development programme on diversity issues should, inter alia, be informed by an understanding of how white pre-service teachers make sense of race and their own racial identities.

Acknowledgement

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