

Invisible Wounds: A heuristic exploration of unintentional racial microaggressions and their relationship to unconscious racialisation.

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Abstract

Unintentional racial microaggressions towards indigenous and minority peoples while injurious to recipients, are often not recognised by the perpetrator, and when challenged, are commonly met with defensiveness. The difference in racial realities exposed in these encounters can lead to breakdowns in recognition, and polarizing dynamics which perpetuate racial division. They also represent missed opportunities for greater understanding.

In this dissertation, I use a vignette of events that occurred during a training course in psychotherapy as an entry point into considering the question, “what meaning may be made regarding unconscious racialisation from making, encountering and challenging unintentional racial microaggressions as a person of mixed ‘race’ in Aotearoa New Zealand”.

Through my subjective consideration of the intrapsychic, interpersonal and societal aspects of this phenomenon through heuristic inquiry, I contribute to the therapist’s consideration of the mutual influence of unconscious racialisation on the therapeutic encounter. I explore the interplay of subjectivities within the racialised transference-countertransference matrix, and consider how reparational ‘I and thou’ engagement can be facilitated when unintentional racial microaggressions occur.

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Malik McCann (Candidate).

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I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Cy, and my children Arlo, Meisha, and Remi. Thank you for your patience, belief, and never ending support. You mean the world to me and I love you dearly.

To my sister Roisin, who is with me always.

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Chapter One- Introduction to racial microaggressions and a vignette

In 2007, Sue and colleagues popularised the term 'racial microaggressions', in the landmark paper "Racial microaggressions in everyday life: and their implications for clinical practice".

Racial microaggressions can be defined as the identifiable outcomes of racism, whether conscious or unconscious, and are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of colour (Sue et al., 2007. p. 273).

Sue and colleagues (2007) proposed a taxonomy to distinguish the overt and covert forms of racism which exist in contemporary society (McCann, 2019). Three sub-categories further delineated minority and indigenous peoples experience of this phenomena.

Micro-assaults; referring to an explicit verbal or non-verbal racial attack which is intentionally meant to hurt the intended victim. Micro-insults; characterised by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity. Microinvalidations; characterised by communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of colour (Sue et al., 2007. p. 274).

In societies with a history of colonialism and oppression of indigenous and minority peoples, subsequent generations are prone to inherit the racial bias of their forebears (Sue, 2005). These biases can exist unconsciously alongside individuals conscious beliefs in equality and social justice (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Sue, 2005). Unconscious beliefs can manifest as comments or behaviours in the form of unintentional racial microaggressions which convey denigrating messaging to minorities. Subtle microaggressions are damaging because they are insidious and covert, and often leave the recipient questioning themselves (Fleischer, 2017; Sue, 2008).

The invisibility of unintentional expressions of bias indicate the normalisation of negative constructs of 'race' (Sue, 2010). While perpetrators are often not aware they have made an unintentional racial microaggression, the cumulative damage of such messaging can have major psychological consequences for recipients including anxiety, paranoia, depression, a sense of worthlessness, loss of drive, intrusive cognitions and false positives (Holder et al., 2015).

What follows is a vignette of my experience of encountering and challenging what I perceived to be an unintentional racial microaggression during my psychotherapy training, which brought this issue to the fore in my life in an immediate way.

To Make

A statement was made in relation to a discussion about the potential impact of using robots in rest homes and occurred in an ethics class. A fellow student spoke of the need to be careful about perpetuating racism towards Brown people, noting that a recent study had found that people saw brown robots, like Brown people, as “more shit”.

This statement was made with the intent of protecting against perpetuating racism towards Brown people, yet the way it was said without consideration of its impact on ‘Brown people’ felt jarring. None of the other students (both Brown and Pākehā) or the tutor appeared to have registered anything amiss which seemed to indicate it was a common perception. Being a phenotypically brown woman of mixed heritage in a Pākehā dominant society, my difference was a normalised constant, but in this moment my racial and cultural difference, world view, and life experience were felt intensely.

To encounter

My reaction to the initial encounter was an intense autonomic nervous system response; I felt an emotional flooding of hurt, anger, and confusingly, shame. I did not resonate with this generalisation, and as a ‘Brown person’ I felt deeply offended. I asked, “What people?”, and they responded that the study referred to an average representation of the population.

In this moment as a ‘Brown person’, I felt hyper-visible while my emotional response felt invisible. It felt like the statement was spoken about me and how the people in the room ‘see’ me, yet they weren’t aware of this. It exposed something inside myself that was crushingly painful.

Journal entry 6th April, 2020.

Taffel (2020) highlights the way microaggressions are in fact anything but micro, and can represent the totality of an individual’s experiences of negative racial messaging. The impact of racial microaggressions derives from this cumulative effect over a lifetime (Solorzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2007). The power of racial microaggressions lies in the perpetuation of denigrating messaging and behaviour towards minorities, which further normalise these beliefs in perpetrator’s and recipients alike (Sue, 2005).

Recipients often describe a vague feeling that they have been attacked, disrespected, or that something about the interaction is not right (Franklin, 2004; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). Because microaggressions are often invisible to perpetrators who are likely to react defensively when challenged, recipients often feel put in a bind and feel pressure to stay silent (Sue, 2007).

This vignette illustrates a dilemma commonly identified in the dynamics of racial microaggressions, in the clash of racial realities (Sue, 2008a). Where the majority of white people do not view themselves as racist or capable of racist behaviour, minorities can perceive them to be racially insensitive and prejudiced (Sue, 2008a). Research confirms the widespread existence of unconscious racism in well-intentioned White people (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). Therefore, they state, the assessment of whether a racist act has occurred is most accurately identified by the marginalised (Jones, 1997; Keltner & Robinson, 1996).

It felt as though my colour was not seen in this interaction. Colour blindness is a common form of microinvalidation which denies the experiential reality of people of colour (Helms, 1992; Neville et al., 2000; Sue, 2007). Colour blindness negates difference, and is a common justification for perpetrators to claim that they have not acted with prejudice (Neville et al., 2000). 'We are all the same' communicates the message that the differing racial and cultural experiences of marginalised minorities are invalid (Neville et al., 2000).

To Challenge

I tried to make light of this interaction to myself, but later it hit me and I cried. I thought of my children hearing the statement in a class one day and this was painful to consider. I wondered whether this was a commonly accepted fact and puzzled at the intensity of my response while others seemed unaffected.

I knew that the statements were unintentional, yet they had turned my world upside down. I was angry and hurt but I also felt shame, and I realised if I didn't speak to this statement it would be reinforced in my own psyche. It felt important not to appease the shame by staying silent.

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Naming my feelings to the group felt like a necessary first step to challenging this shame in myself. I also sought to clarify this statement and to heal the invisible rupture I felt towards people with whom I had a personal relationship.

Not responding to a microaggression has the potential to result in psychological harm (Sue, 2007). "It may mean a denial of one's experiential reality, dealing with a loss of integrity, or experiencing pent-up anger and frustration likely to take psychological and physical tolls" (Sue, 2007. p. 279).

I felt fearful of sharing my response and was anxious that I would lose the courage to do so in person. I initiated a dialogue in our private group chat. My intention wasn't to shame or alienate but to share my experience in that moment as a Brown person; the hurt, the realisation that it had spoken to a fear that lived inside me, and the sense of collusion I would feel if I didn't

honour my experience by sharing it. I was hopeful that it could be the beginning of a mutually vulnerable conversation.

Excerpts of my messages follow.

Speaking as one Brown person in the room, the statement made in class yesterday hurt.

I know I can't speak for all 'brown people' but I'm sharing this with you in the hope that you can gain some understanding from a perspective other than your own. They were not just objective observations to me, but spoke about me and the way 'people see' me in everyday life.

I want to give voice to what usually stays unspoken and of course this course encourages us to do just that.

Malik McCann, personal communication via private group message. 2018.

My initial approach was conciliatory and tentative. I shared how damaging this statement had felt. I expressed anger towards the ambiguity of the study and to the racism that existed in society. This unconscious compromise formation perhaps felt safer than a direct challenge to the speaker or group, a middle ground of naming my anger and hurt without bringing it between us.

There were a few responses which acknowledged my experience, and expressed regret that recognizing the ambiguity of the study was left to myself as the minority. In a way the study became the convenient common enemy, the container of racism. The experience of sharing my thoughts and experience initially felt validating and healing of the rupture that I had felt in relation to my peers.

I sought out the study which stated that "people have similar automatic biases towards darker coloured robots as they do toward people with darker skin colour" (Bartneck et al., 2018, p. 1). Automatic bias is unconsciously held, and can sit alongside conscious beliefs in equality, a condition that potentially relates to us all (Fiske, 2021). Studies on unconscious racial bias provide evidence that we are all prone regardless of what colour we are, partly because of our psychological make up as humans to separate each other into 'us' and 'them', but also as the result of cultural socialisation into societies where racialized norms are part of the fabric of our social lives (Fiske, 2021).

The initial reception of understanding I had received in the group messages gave me the courage to state that we had villainized the study, and that it actually referred to automatic (unconscious) bias, and that none of us were necessarily immune, myself included. An excerpt of my communication follows.

As much as I'd like to focus my frustration on 'those people' or on a shitty experiment, I know we need to bring it back to us because if the results

of the study are a representation of an average population, it's talking about us.

Malik McCann, personal communication via private group message, 2018.

No-one replied to this message. I posit that perhaps this was a response to my bringing the issue of racism and a different racial reality into the 'here and now' between us. In the next class our regular tutor, who had been away the week before, asked what she had missed. Upon hearing about the interactions and my communication via group chat, the tutor asked if we'd like space to speak more about it. There was a tense energy in the room, a few people shook their heads to indicate they didn't want to speak and the discomfort of the group felt palpable. I was given an opportunity to speak, and I did. I tried to approach the topic from an honest, non-defensive stance of 'this is what happened for me', to share my affective response, the questions it raised and my discovery that the study actually referred to unconscious bias.

I experienced the energy in the room as deeply uncomfortable. A small number of the fourteen people in the class responded. The responses felt defensive, those who were previously supportive online were silent or dismissive in their comments and I perceived an overwhelming discomfort and guardedness in the group. A common sentiment was that nobody related personally to the study and didn't believe themselves to be racist, but the statement itself although conveyed harshly, was stating fact. I asked the speaker how they felt about what I'd shared. They responded that our private social media chat was an inappropriate forum to share my views, that they were simply relaying the results of a study and the only thing they regretted was using the term 'shit', but had done so to convey how reprehensible racism was. My perception of the emotion in this response was cold hostility. I, in turn, felt confused and deeply 'othered', aware that my reality and hurt had been dismissed and the fact that the study referred to unconscious bias had been avoided. In other circumstances where the issue wasn't regarding 'race', I consider it would be easy to say 'I'm sorry you felt that way, that wasn't my intention', or to voice the discomfort of considering this topic in relation to the self. What was happening in this interaction that 'I and thou' relating was no longer possible?

I felt shocked by the responses of the group, which I perceived to be further (and more defensive) unintentional racial microaggressions which held an undercurrent of hostility. This felt familiar to other experiences where racial aggression was cloaked in righteousness, formality and civility, a dynamic I have always struggled to know how to respond to.

The discussion was ended by the tutor who I sensed was empathetic to my experience but seemed unable to use the opportunity to facilitate further discussion. I felt that I had become

the container of the group's discomfort around issues of race, that I had broken an unspoken rule in communicating a different perspective. Feeling hurt, angry and very alone, I walked out.

Perpetrators often perceive there to be minimal harm from racial microaggressions (Sue, 2007). "When individuals are confronted with their micro-aggressive acts the perpetrator usually believes that the victim has overreacted and is being overly sensitive and/or petty. After all, even if it was an innocent racial blunder, microaggressions are believed to have minimal negative impact" (Sue, 2007. p. 279). Research supports the detrimental impact of covert forms of racism (Chakraborty & McKenzie, 2002; Clark., et al, 1999). "This contemporary form of racism is more problematic, damaging, and injurious to persons of colour than overt racist acts" (Sue, 2003, p. 48).

As I reflected on what had occurred, I saw a similarity with this situation and the experience of minorities in greater society when challenging racism or highlighting injustice, where various defenses are used to invalidate and dismiss minority world views and experience.

This felt important, and I decided to share this reflection with the group, regardless of how what I said was going to be received. I'd found a strength in myself and felt liberated from the need to belong to the group if it was conditional on silence or submission. I shared that wanting to address racism towards Brown people but not wanting to acknowledge the voice of a Brown person felt hypocritical. I reiterated that the statement had been made in such an extreme way, misrepresenting that it referred to unconscious racial bias and that not personally relating to the study was a misnomer, as unconscious racial bias was by nature not available to conscious thought. I wondered if the comment would have been made in a room full of Brown people and reflected that I believed the marginalisation of minorities in greater society was being enacted in the group. There was no further response from my peers and after awkward silence, the tutor stated that this was an important issue and the class continued.

Responding with anger or challenging unintentional racial microaggressions (perhaps a healthy reaction) is likely to result in negative consequences for recipients (Sue, 2007). The interactions were never spoken of again even as we later covered the topics of racism and group dynamics in the class. Sue (2007) highlights the catch twenty-two of responding to microaggressions, the 'damned if you do and damned if you don't dilemma. If I hadn't spoken up I intuit this would have reinforced my internal sense of 'less than' and voicelessness. But there was also a cost to speaking out, in the loss of trust, safety and belonging I felt towards the group.

Initial ponderings

These interactions had opened a wound I didn't realise I had and the intensity of my feelings told me they were not just about this moment. As I began to question why this statement had affected me so intensely, I wondered if a split-off part of myself had feared that this was how I was seen or, even more alarmingly, how a part of me saw myself and had worked hard to counter-identify with this disavowed belief. If this was the case, this vulnerability sat alongside a strong and conscious sense of identification and pride in myself as a Brown woman. Did this split play a part in my social anxiety about being seen as wrong or different? If I harboured these beliefs about myself, did they manifest in my perceptions and behaviour towards other people of colour?

I feel confident that, as a group, we generally held conscious egalitarian values and were fortunate to have the space to consider racial dynamics and socio-cultural context within our training. Because of this I had hoped this was a space where we could have these challenging conversations about 'race'.

Unintentional racial microaggressions are difficult to challenge. Part of the nature of this phenomena is that interracial conversations about racism can bring deep anxiety, defensiveness, fear, guilt, shame and aggression for all parties, often resulting in rupturing impasses (Sue, 2005; Taffel, 2020). This interaction illustrates how painful unintentional racial microaggressions can be for the recipient, and how being challenged on them can be painfully confronting for the offender. This can lead to breakdowns in recognition, and expose divisive, polarizing racial realities and paranoid schizoid dynamics.

How was I contributing to the group interaction in ways of which I was unaware? I feel that mutual projection was happening, but what part was mine, what part was theirs? What meaning can be made of this rupture when considered through a relational lens? How does the societal context in which we live influence these interactions?

Chapter Two - Framing the question

Introduction

In this dissertation I use heuristic methodology and self-search inquiry to consider the question “what meaning may be made regarding unconscious racialisation from making, encountering and challenging unintentional racial microaggressions as a person of mixed ‘race’ in Aotearoa New Zealand”. In this chapter I frame the question, defining terms and conditions, and place it in the context of my own life, in the discipline of psychodynamic psychotherapy and in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Why this question?

I was becoming conscious of a rather disturbing internal phenomenon in the early years of psychotherapy training. Rather than sharing my thoughts and perspectives freely, I noticed myself filtering my responses to what I considered an unhealthy extent. Cognitively I knew that my perspective was as valid as anyone else’s and that different perspectives could co-exist. Yet I had a sense of holding back for fear of being ‘wrong’, as if there was a ‘right’ perspective I was measuring against. This censoring and hypervigilant self-consciousness was attached to a fear of being exposed as ‘other’, and came with feelings of shame. I understood these dynamics as a form of ‘false self’, an adaptation to my early childhood experience.

Through the experiences described in the vignette I recognised there was another intersecting layer to this internal dynamic. Although I know this experience of self-censoring is not uncommon, for myself it included an internal split involving a censoring of my ‘Brown’ self. This anxiety occurred more in group situations and involved an internal negotiation between what I thought and felt, and what I deemed acceptable to share. I wondered if, along with parental objects, I had internalised a societal object that required me to be a certain way to be ‘acceptable’. Was my ‘false self’ racialised to maintain a sense of belonging and acceptance in society? (Winnicott, 1960; Long, 2011) Did my ‘Brown’ self hold a subordinate position, accommodating to the western perspective? (Brandchaft, 2007).

The experience in the vignette brought this internal dynamic to light, gave me insight into how it may have formed through relational experience, and was perpetuated by the dynamics of racism in wider society. This experience opened a door to a consideration of this phenomena and was to be the motivation for the topic of this dissertation.

Defining the question and terms

Racism

Racism is anything—thought, feeling or action—that uses the notion of race as an activating or organising principle. Or to put it another way, racism is the manufacture and use of the notion of race (Dalal, 2002. p. 258).

It is a categorization which exaggerates the similarity of 'us' and the difference of 'them' which can exist outside of our conscious awareness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It is “a complex system rooted in unequal power relations by 'race', ethnicity and culture that involves shared social cognition (prejudice), as well as social practices (discrimination), at both the macro level of social structures and the micro level of specific interaction and communicative events” (van Dijk, 1993 p. 47). Racism is woven into the foundation of our society and is intimately tied to an asymmetry in power, control and privilege (Dalal, 2002).

'Race'

My classmates comment about 'Brown people' referred to 'race'. Genetic studies have refuted the existence of bio-genetically distinct 'races' (Dalal, 2002; Morgan, 2002). Noting that genetic differences are about 1.5% and occur within, as much as between 'races' (Begley, 2008). Rather ideas of 'race' are conceptualised as social constructs which reflect specific attitudes and beliefs imposed on different populations (Takezawa, 2020). Certain ideas of racial ranking developed around the beginning of European exploration and colonisation in the 16th century (Hopkinson, 2020). These pseudo-scientific constructs formed a colonising ideology which put Europeans at the top end of a biologically based racial hierarchy (Hopkinson, 2020). Although 'race' is an imagined construct, it has profound significance and influences whether we will survive birth, our level of education, how much money we'll earn, and how long we can expect to live (DiAngelo, 2018). This ideology or “racial worldview” has allowed for “an unequal distribution of political and economic power” (Lovchik, 2018. p. 3). While 'race' is socially constructed, it is an enduring and complex social dynamic whose real life impact must be acknowledged and considered (DiAngelo, 2018). I use 'race' in apostrophes in this dissertation to acknowledge the socially constructed nature of this category. I also capitalise racial groupings- Black, White and Brown, to emphasise the meanings, symbols and associations that have become attached to these constructs, highlighting the depth to which they have seeped implicitly into social consciousness.

Ethnicity and ethnocentrism

Closely associated with 'race' is ethnicity, which relates to *self-identified* cultural affiliations, membership and a sense of identity with a group sharing common history, cultural traits and language (Bryce, 2020). In multicultural societies like Aotearoa, prescribed assumptions of ethnicity are often rigid, and don't take into consideration the complexities, evolution and fusion of shifting self-identified or mixed ethnic affiliations (Bryce, 2020).

Specific to Aotearoa and many other western colonised nations is Eurocentrism, a world-view that implicitly and explicitly normalises European history, systems, values and achievements as the superior norm, thereby justifying European domination (Ruddick, 2009). It is a binary perspective which juxtaposes a "white progressive civilised European identity" against a Black/ Brown/ indigenous "underdeveloped, uncivilised, barbaric 'Other' in the colonies" (Ruddick, 2009. p217). The term 'new racism' or 'cultural racism' coined originally by Martin Barker (1981) has been used to describe the shift from assumptions of superiority regarding perceived biological differences based on 'race', to prejudice and discrimination based on cultural differences between ethnic or racial groups (Barker, 1981; Hopkinson, 2020). Beliefs in racial and cultural difference are interlinked, resulting in discriminatory practices such as exploitation and domination (Barker, 1981). This elevation of one (socially constructed) group of people over others, is the foundation of oppression (Sue, 2010).

Unintentional racial microaggressions

The term racial microaggression was first coined in 1978 by Chester Pierce and colleagues "to denote subtle, often automatic, verbal and non-verbal communications which are racially based put downs" (p. 66). Other terms have been proposed to describe (less conscious or unconscious) contemporary iterations of racism. Aversive racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986), symbolic racism (Kinder & Sears, 1971), modern racism (McConahay, 1986), and implicit or unconscious bias (Banaji & Greenwald, 1995).

This dissertation looks specifically at unintentional racial microaggressions. These are microinsults and microinvalidations which "tend to be expressed unconsciously by the perpetrator, yet communicate a hidden demeaning message to the person of colour" (Sue et al., 2008. p. 329). I conceptualise unintentional microaggressions as observable outcomes of unconscious racialisation. I use the term unintentional in this dissertation to indicate that they are used without conscious intent but with a caveat that they serve an unconscious purpose of maintaining a racially hierarchical status quo which benefits the dominant group.

A psychodynamic lens

I use a psychodynamic lens in this study for its focus on intrapsychic processes and the unconscious, to consider what unintentional racial microaggressions, the observable manifestations of unconscious beliefs can reveal about unconscious racialisation. I use psychodynamic and psychoanalytic interchangeably in this research.

Intrapsychic mechanisms of racism

Psychoanalysis often uses Kleinian object relations theory (Klein, 1928; 1952) to explain the intrapsychic mechanisms of racism (Altman, 2000; Balbus, 2004; Cafilisch, 2020; Dalal, 2002; Fanon, 1982; Kovel, 1995; Rustin, 1991). Klein's conceptualisation of the paranoid schizoid position, the relationship between love and hate, between guilt and rage, and the emphasis on shifting self-states captures some key aspects of racialised dynamics (Rasmussen, 2013; Stephens, 2020).

Using Kleinian object relations theory, one side of the dyad of racism uses the projective mechanism of splitting of good and bad across the 'us-them' divide of 'race', which places what is projected at a safe distance from the subject (Fanon, 1986). Projective identification is understood to involve normal infantile mental states or, in the adult, psychotic states of mind, which explains the force of racist thinking (Davids, 2006). Rustin asserts that race is an empty construct, making it an ideal container for projecting unwanted aspects of the self (2001).

The problem of racism and discrimination largely comes from a defensive process of disavowing one's unwanted parts, one's unwanted impulses and insecurities, locating them in the other person and then hating that other person in order to protect one's self (Hart, 2017. p. 13).

Being of infantile or psychotic intensity, these projections are highly resistant to rationality or reason and the return of projected content threatens annihilation and must be avoided at all costs (Rustin, 1991). This projection of the disavowed implies that the object of racism is strongly compelled to contain it through projective identification (Davids 2006).

On the other side of the dualistic relationship of racism, introjection or internalisation is the mechanism by which what is projected comes to reside in the self. This introjection results in the splitting of the self in the face of the projective gaze of the other (Fanon, 1952; Stephens, 2020). Du Bois described this "peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" which is felt intra-physically by the marginalised on whom the disavowed is projected (1903. p. 2). Davids (2006) asserts that the internalised racist is a normal developmental achievement, yet I question this perspective.

A socio-genesis of unconscious racism

I am drawn to the arguments of theorists such as Altman (2000) and Dalal (2001) who see 'race' as a social construct and racism as having socio-genesis. Altman suggests the concept of 'race' emerged from dichotomized thinking along the poles of rationality/ irrationality inherent in enlightenment philosophy (2000). Rationalizing 'race' (and other dualistic social categorising like gender and sexuality) in physical terms conceals their domineering intent by making these categories innocently appear to mirror nature (Altman, 2000). Foucault (1980) argues that every social dichotomy establishes a hierarchy. This hierarchy puts one category on top of the other for the purpose of domination and control, which is "the philosophical basis and justification for European colonialism" (Altman, 1995. p. 138). Yet according to Layton (2020) "subordinate group identities are never fully determined by the power of dominant groups" (p. 193) and the identities that minorities fashion for themselves can be healthier than the psyches of those who conform to "split cultural ideals of whiteness" (p. 193).

How social constructs of race impact the psyche.

The sociologist Norbert Elias (1969) extended Foulkes (1964) conceptualisation of the influence of families and communities on the psyche, to include the influence of society as a whole (Dalal, 2002). Elias illustrated, through his studies on the evolution of manners in European society, how social distinctions were a way to differentiate the 'haves' from the 'must not haves' and how it was the powerful who defined what was perceived to be 'good' and 'bad' (1969). Over time, norms defined and enforced explicitly by the upper echelons of power are internalised in the psyche and become automatised internally as the imprint of society on the inner self, which then governs the individual's behaviour internally (Dalal, 2002). These mechanisms of exclusion and subjugation become invisible amongst day to day life (Elias, 1969).

The process of racialisation

Dalal applies Elias' (1969) conceptualisation to the understanding of 'race' and colour, exploring how language and constructs of 'race' set by those in power to maintain power, also become imprinted and automatised in the self (Dalal, 2002). Davids summarises Dalal's formulation that "manifestations of racism that appear to have an internal origin...actually reflect powerful processes of racialisation, external in origin, that have been deposited deep inside us" (2003. p. 168). Dalal (2002) states that through socio-developmental processes, all psyches are inevitably racialized and colour coded. This suggests that on some level we are always perceiving (whether conscious or not), ourselves and others as racialised objects. If 'race' is a social construct, and the power asymmetry created by racism is both the outcome and motivation for this construct, racialisation then is the process by which we come to

internalise the imprint of racial self and 'other'. I am interested in the way unconscious racialised object relations and external racial dynamics interact.

The fact that we inhabit a racialized and color-coded world means that, through the psychosocial developmental process, each of us, of necessity, imbibes a version of that world order, such that our psyches, too, become color coded and racialized. And then, in turn, we continue to reproduce and sustain the processes of racialization, despite our efforts not to do so (Dalal, 2006. p.157).

I began this dissertation initially intending to explore unconscious racial bias, yet as I deepened into this process I found that this term did not adequately capture the breadth of the phenomenon I was exploring. I chose to use unconscious racialisation as it implies a process which is ingested from outside and internalised by *all* individuals in society, including the unconscious racialised matrix of self in relation to 'other'. The use of the term racialisation is becoming more prevalent in psychoanalytic literature (Dalal, 2002 & 2006; Layton, 2006 & 2020; Goedert, 2020; Stephens, 2020). My focus is unconscious racialisation, that which is beyond conscious awareness.

The social unconscious

How are racial constructs formed in the colonial era still alive in a 'post-colonial' society and how do they exist alongside conscious egalitarian beliefs?

To make sense of this I consider the 'social unconscious', a concept with its origins in group analysis, which examines the interrelations between intrapsychic and social realities, and how these manifest in the group (Geyer, 2017). The phenomena of a social unconscious first proposed by Fromm (1962) and developed further by Foulkes (1964) became an important concept in group therapy. Foulkes (1964) deduced that members of a group co-construct a shared unconscious or 'matrix' which involves not only the individual unconscious, but processes which occur through and between members in the intersubjective space (Weinberg, 2016). The theorisation of the social unconscious suggests that groups share hidden myths and motives which guide behaviour, as well as shared defenses (Hopper & Weinberg, 2016). These processes drive social groups in the same way that unconscious forces drive individual's out of their awareness. The idea of the social unconscious helps to explain the relative uniformity of the collective perception of racial identities. The social unconscious is a concept which has gained more attention in recent years (Geyer, 2017).

Brown (2001) proposed four ways the social unconscious manifests;

1. Assumptions – what is taken for granted and 'natural' in society.
2. Disavowals – disowning knowledge or responsibility for things that are unwelcome.
3. Social defenses – what is defended against by projection,

denial, repression or avoidance. 4. Structural oppression – control of power and information by competing interests in society (cited in Weinberg, 2018. p. 311).

Other considerations in regards to the social unconscious include the influence that power has in both subjective experience and interpersonal interactions, which direct the flow of communication within and between social systems in disparate ways (Dalal, 2001). Hopper (1996) suggests “a link between trauma and the social unconscious through a psychic process of ‘equivalence’” (p. 13) in which social systems unconsciously recreate unresolved historic societal trauma and equate it with the current situation using projection, introjection and repetition compulsion (cited in Geyer, 2017). These re-enactments condense past and present events in paranoid-schizoid ways, limiting possibilities for repair (Weinberg, 2007). Layton uses the term “Normative unconscious processes to refer to that aspect of the unconscious that pulls to repeat patterns that uphold the very social norms that cause psychic distress in the first place ...these are the oppressive psychological consequences of living in a culture in which many norms serve the dominant ideology” (2006. p. 242).

The unconscious racialisation I explore in this dissertation includes the intrapsychic mechanisms employed in racial dynamics, and also expands on them. Considering the intrapsychic alone, without placing it in the context of the social, risks simplifying these dynamics solely as natural by-products of human cognition. The concept of the social unconscious helps to shed light on why racialisation is so pervasive, persistent and transgenerational, and can exist alongside consciously egalitarian beliefs. It allows for a broader consideration of societal norms, societal racialisation (including racial positioning) and transgenerational transmission of racialisation, and the way these dynamics imprint unconsciously in the psyche.

Context

Placing this study in time and place

I use both the Māori and English names of Aotearoa and New Zealand to acknowledge our commitment to bi-cultural partnership under the terms of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. However, I will use Aotearoa for the remainder of this dissertation to privilege Aotearoa’s indigenous people, whose right to partnership and self-governance has not always been acknowledged. Although many non- European minorities experience racism in Aotearoa, I focus specifically on the experience of Māori and Pasifika, as the impact of historical and ongoing racism towards these groups can be clearly linked to discrepancies in treatment and disparities in well-being outcomes. Research by Te Atawhai o te Ao, Independent Māori Institute for Environment and Health (Ellis, 2021), indicated that 93 % of Māori experience racism every day. Furthermore,

recent Human Rights commission research found that 50% or more of Māori, Pasifika, Chinese and Asian respondents have experienced racism since the start of the COVID 19 epidemic (Human Rights Commission, 2021). Although I could not source research on what percentage of people in Aotearoa would consider themselves to hold racist beliefs, I suggest that there would be a high discrepancy between this percentage and the experiences of racism by minorities, illustrating the widespread nature of unconscious racism in Aotearoa.

As tau iwi (non-Māori) I feel it must be acknowledged that all citizens of Aotearoa by invitation of the Crown, including Pasifika, have been accommodated at a cost to Māori wellbeing. Although I explore both Māori and Pasifika together in this dissertation, I do not want to minimise the exploitation that Māori have experienced. I speak instead to the commonalities of our marginalisation.

Malik McCann, Journal entry. 20th February, 2021.

This also highlights the challenge Pasifika and other marginalised minorities hold in Aotearoa's politically bicultural society, in sitting between Pākehā and Māori as another marginalised 'other'. Non-indigenous minorities "whose needs also claim visibility, find themselves competing with the (indigenous) 'have nots', but without the status of the indigenous group and without clearly demarcated policy or processes to support their needs" (Salpitikora, 2015. p. 74). This can generate conflicting feelings of identification with Māori and invisibility in relation to Māori.

As a politically bi-cultural society with a colonial heritage, and a multicultural population, Aotearoa has had a gradual cultural and political shift since the 1970's, and racist norms which were once commonplace, are now increasingly considered to be unacceptable. However experiences of racism remain, as illustrated by countless anecdotal testimonies from indigenous Māori, Pasifika and other more recently immigrated minority peoples of colour (Broughton, 2019; Cormack, Stanley & Harris, 2020; Gerritson, 2020; Meredith, 2020; Muru-Lanning; 2020; Nielson, 2020; Palmer, 2020; Pickering- martin, 2020; Tuuta, 2020; Walters, 2021).

Current statistics on nearly all indicators of wellbeing reveal disparities and poorer outcomes for Māori and Pasifika (Ministry of Treasury, 2019). It has been established that unconscious racial bias contributes to inequity in Aotearoa through systemic, institutional and interpersonal engagement, despite concerted efforts to address these inequalities (Walsh & Grey, 2019).

As to the current international context in which I write this dissertation, COVID-19 has changed life as we know it. In this atmosphere, social inequities including racial injustice have come to the fore. In the U. S. the murder of George Floyd by police officers was captured by video footage from bystanders (Forliti & Karowski, 2020). This event appeared to be a tipping point for minorities around racial injustice, and led to the "Black Lives Matter" movement regarding

ongoing racism and disparity in the U.S. and in the wider world, including Aotearoa. In 2020, with the uncertainty and existential fear of survival and security in the COVID environment, modern manifestations of racism towards marginalised minorities have increased and at the same time they are increasingly challenged, leading to a volatile environment around racial issues.

Placing myself in this study

I am a forty-three year old female, born and raised in Aotearoa. I identify as a mixed heritage Aotearoa New Zealander. The first generation born in Aotearoa on my Father's Irish side, and the second generation on my Mother's Niuean, Samoan, Chinese side, I am phenotypically brown. I can claim to be 'NZ European' on a census, yet there is no option to claim a 'NZ Samoan, Niuean or Chinese' identity. This subtly positions Pākehā as belonging, and non-indigenous minorities as 'other', a racial microaggression which illustrates the 'hiding in plain sight' nature of normative unconscious processes. I was raised by my Mother and Nana until I was fourteen and then by my father through my teenage years, so have had a split cultural experience which has afforded me a unique position of being both a participant and observer of my two family cultures. Issues of culture and 'race' were peripheral through most of my life, and it is through the knowledge and experience gained through the study of psychodynamic psychotherapy that I recognise consciously, the impact these have had, both in my sense of myself in the world and in my self-identity.

My husband is of first generation New Zealand European descent and we have three children. My role as a mother is another lens I bring to this work: my children are a mix of shades between fair, blond and blue eyed to dark brown, dark haired and brown eyed. I have a vested interest in addressing the unconscious racism that still exists in our society today as I would like to think that all my children will get the same opportunities and treatment, and in our current climate I fear that this will not be the case. I feel passionately that addressing our unconscious racism as a society is necessary in order to pass on a more equitable legacy to our future generations.

Aim and scope

Through this research I explore the intrapsychic layers that operate unconsciously in the experience of unintentional racial microaggressions. I am interested in how we can access and change unconscious racialisation through exploring what we discover in the space between racial realities which becomes visible during racial microaggression encounters. I question whether deeper understanding can be fostered inter-psychically (through, with and by) "the joint functioning and reciprocal influences of two (or more) minds" (Bolognini, 2004. p. 337). The theory and research on racial microaggressions provides an observable foundation

and a language for my exploration. I build on this knowledge using a psychodynamic lens to explore subjectively, the deeper processes of unconscious racialisation. I could not source unintentional racial microaggression research specific to psychodynamic psychotherapy in Aotearoa, a context in which I suggest it is clearly relevant. I contribute a study of this experience in Aotearoa, via heuristic exploration. The scope of this research includes a subjective exploration of the intrapsychic processes of unconscious racialisation in both recipient and perpetrator, and the underlying dynamics which occur intersubjectively. I contextualise this with a historical overview and exploration of racial engagement in Aotearoa.

Overview of chapters

In chapter one, I introduce racial microaggression research and consider this in relation to the vignette which was the inspiration for this research. In chapter three, I explore the methodology with which I undertake this exploration, I outline the method and the phases of a heuristic self-study and my experience of this journey. The fourth chapter contains a literature view on racial microaggression research. The following two chapters are part of my immersion process; chapter five is a subjective microanalysis of the dynamics in the vignette through a psychodynamic perspective; chapter six explores Aotearoa's historical and contemporary societal context. Chapter seven summarises my findings- the illuminations, explication and creative synthesis of my heuristic self-search. Finally, chapter eight includes the discussion of findings and implications for the field of psychotherapy

Chapter Three- Methodology and method

Heuristic methodology and method

Heuristic self-search inquiry is my chosen methodology and method for this research, in which I journey into this previously unexplored territory inside myself. The following poem reflects my sense of self-discovery and liberation through this experience, of bringing something painful into the light so it could be understood, grieved, and processed. In this chapter, I explore the theoretical underpinnings of this method, outline the paradigm within which it sits, explain why I chose this methodology and how it resonates with my worldview, my topic, and the discipline of psychotherapy.

My voice
She felt them.
Those words,
the feelings a key
to a door that has never been opened,
to a secret universe
where She hides.

Her voice,
a whisper.
Where silence is safety
she wants Her voice,
it's time.

She opens the door
the 'I who feels'
and finds Herself
in a lonely sanctuary, or was it a prison

inside herself.
The journey
a final frontier,

A pioneer
For her own liberation.

My voice.
Malik McCann
7th July, 2020.

Heuristic research was first elucidated by Moustakas (1990). It is a qualitative phenomenological research methodology and method, which aims to discover meaning in significant human experience (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). It is a process of exploration which emphasises the interiority of experience (Sela-Smith, 2002). Douglass & Moustakas describe it as “a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life through internal pathways of the self” (1985, p. 39).

In the heuristic process the researcher's "attention is focused *inward* on feeling responses of the researcher to the outward situation" (Sela-Smith, 2002. p. 59). Moustakas describes it as a deeply personal investigation involving "self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery" (1990, p. 11). It is a process which values "imagination, intuition, self-reflection and the tacit dimension in the search for knowledge" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985. p.39). Unlike other phenomenological studies, heuristic research requires that the experience is undergone by the researcher in a vital way (Moustakas, 1990). New understanding gained through the heuristic process can result in self-transformation (Moustakas, 1990).

This research is motivated by my lived experience which aligns with the heuristic research approach (Moustakas, 1990). Undertaking this internal exploration on the heuristic path which has been walked by others feels reassuringly holding on a journey into the unknown depths of myself. It is a methodology which allows space to explore what may come from the inward journey, as opposed "to discovering the truth of a hypothesis" through objective observation as quantitative methodology entails (Grant & Giddings, 2002, p. 14).

Interpretive paradigm

Heuristic methodology is situated within the interpretive paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The central aim of which is to seek understanding of subjective human experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Interpretivism assumes ontologically that reality is constructed in our minds, and that there are multiple realities (Edirisingha, 2012), which are relative and perception based (Hirschman, 1986). Perceptions of reality are understood to be both time and context specific (Edirisingha, 2012).

Epistemologically, interpretivism assumes that people construct knowledge both subjectively and intersubjectively (McCann, 2019), rather than determining it objectively through sensory observation as positivism suggests (Carson, et al., 2001). It posits that there are multiple truths which are discovered through thought (Grant & Giddings, 2002). It is socially and culturally influenced with a focus on people's 'life world', (McGregor & Murnane, 2010). Qualitative methods are generally used in interpretive research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The structure of interpretive research is flexible, receptive, and open to new knowledge rather than narrowly focused on hypothesised cause and effect relationships (Edirisingha, 2012).

Resonating

Having a spacious framework which guides me into the meaning of my experience, feels validating of my experience which is sometimes questioned in my position as a mixed 'race' minority in a western dominant society. This valuing of experience feels holding in moments where I find myself consumed by self-doubt in this process.

I appreciate that it incorporates subjective experience into research that has previously been dominated by a positivist philosophy (Sela-Smith, 2002). I believe it is important to capture the intangible elements of the experience, and that a focus only on what can be observed misses so much of what is vital to our understanding of our own humanity. For this particular topic, it feels vital that I capture the essence of my subjectivity within the context of society and relational engagement, in order to elucidate the pervasive themes which lie beneath the shadowy territory of unconscious racialisation.

Heuristic research honours “knowledge that is embedded and integrated within the self through understanding of the self in relation to, and in the context of the dynamic whole” (Moustakas, 1990. p27). It includes transparency, and the values and world view of the researcher, rather than defining and bracketing them as phenomenology requires (Sultan, 2019). As a woman of mixed heritage, born and raised in Aotearoa, my values, world view, and the context of my life are inherently interwoven with the meaning I make of my experience of unintentional racial microaggressions and their connection to unconscious racialisation. The explicit inclusion of these factors feels necessary to capture the essence and meaning I make of my experience which is also subjective, intangible and context specific.

Sela-Smith (2002) describes the cyclical nature of feeling responses to external experience, which create meaning that in turn influences our being in the world and organises our culture, worldview, and paradigms of reality. This is pertinent in the study of unintentional racial microaggressions as a doorway into unconscious racialisation, because of the interactive nature between societal, interpersonal and intrapsychic realms of experience. It also speaks to the value of learning about the macrocosm by going deeply into the microcosm and vice versa. It suggests that what is discovered in the deepest and most intimate details of one person’s experience may contribute to understanding of the phenomena as a whole.

Heuristic methodology is research primarily of introspection, with the intention to gain insight into ourselves much like the journey of psychotherapy (O’Hara, 1986). It is also relational and contextual, and inherently honours the interacting relationship between self and the environment. Sela-Smith speaks of the interiority of our experience as the ‘final frontier’ which has the potential to bring expanded understanding (Sela-Smith, 2002. p54). It asks us to ‘travel inward’ as we ask our clients to ‘travel inward’ in order to form new and reorganising insight, which can lead to transformation. I believe we must look towards our own unconscious racialisation, if we are to address racism in a meaningful way.

Psychodynamic training hones this muscle of self-reflection and indwelling which is imperative in heuristic methodology. It asks the researcher to “follow the feelings” (Sela-Smith, 2002. p.

61) in the same way that we guide clients to follow their feelings, to value the wealth of self-knowledge that they tap into, bringing what is unconscious into the light of conscious knowing.

Heuristic processes

“What meaning may be made regarding unconscious racialisation from making, encountering and challenging unintentional racial microaggressions as a person of mixed race in Aotearoa New Zealand?”. To answer this question heuristically asks that emphasis is placed on my own internal frame of reference, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition and indwelling (Moustakas, 1990).

Sela-Smith (2002) further clarified this method, and extrapolated that psychological research incorporates the internal subjective experience of the *I-who-feels* (p. 59). “Feeling” provides the door, and heuristic inquiry provides the key to the territory of the upper left quadrant of the “I who feels” (Sela-Smith, 2002; Wilber, 1995). Sela-Smith (2002) speculates that it is not the thinking-observing self, but rather the *I-who-feels* who is experiencing the feeling that provides access to the aspects of the tacit dimension of nonverbal thought. The ‘I who feels’ refers to the upper left quadrant of Wilber’s (1995) four quadrants of knowledge.

Figure 1.

Wilber’s four quadrants of knowledge (1995).

Reproduced from Sela-Smith, 2002.

<p>Interior- The ‘I’ intentional subjective <i>Thoughts, emotions, memories, states of mind, perceptions and immediate sensations</i></p>	<p>Exterior- ‘You’ (it) behavioural objective <i>Material body (including brain) anything you can see or touch in time and space</i></p>
<p>Interior- “We’ intersubjective cultural <i>Shared values, meanings, language, relationships and cultural background</i></p>	<p>Exterior- ‘Them’ (it) inter-objective social <i>Systems, networks, technology, government and the natural environment</i></p>

Note: I observed and dialogued with these quadrants in my own exploration; the collective ‘we’ and ‘them’, the objective ‘you’, returning to the ‘I who feels’, my subjective internal response to these perspectives.

Wilber’s (1995) integral philosophy (cited in Forman, 2010. p. 3) captures the essence of intersubjectivity that I found valuable to hold in mind, holding both the ‘reality’ of my own perception while leaving space for other ‘realities’ alongside it.

- What is real and important depends on one's perspective.
- Everyone is at least partially right about what they argue is real and important.
- By bringing together these partial perspectives, we can construct a more complete and useful set of truths.

Heuristic processes always relate back to the internal frame of reference. "Whether knowledge derived is attained through tacit, intuitive, or observed phenomena—whether the knowledge is deepened and extended... through indwelling, focusing, self-searching, or dialogue with others—its medium or base is the internal frame of reference" (Moustakas, 1990. p. 27).

Self-dialogue is the vehicle to be able to discover the constituents and qualities that make up an experience (Moustakas, 1990). One's own self-discoveries, awareness, and understanding are the initial steps of the process (Moustakas, 1990). In immersion I began a dialogue with this phenomenon, considering and reflecting between its observable manifestations and my own experience, "to engage in a rhythmic flow with it—back and forth, again and again" (Moustakas, 1990. p.16) from whole to part, from concept to experience, from thoughts to feelings, from societal to individual and back again, to understand the problem more fully through the power of direct experience. "In self-dialogue, one faces oneself and must be honest with oneself and one's experience relevant to the question or problem" (Moustakas, 1990. p. 23).

Tacit knowledge is deeply embedded in the self and not normally available to conscious awareness (Moustakas, 1990; Polanyi, 1969). Sela-Smith states "The tacit dimension of personal knowledge is that internal place where experience, feeling, and meaning join together to form both a picture of the world and a way to navigate that world" (2002. p. 59). It is a continually growing multileveled structural foundation on which all other knowledge stands (Sela-Smith, 2002). This deep dimension of knowledge is under construction each time a new experience is introduced (Sela-Smith, 2002). An ongoing process occurs by which "if what is 'out there' doesn't match 'in here', new evaluations, thoughts, feelings and behaviours must be formed to make new wholes" (Stern, 1985, p. 260). I believe this process was necessary to transform my own incorrect tacit knowledge regarding unconscious racialisation.

Intuition refers to "an internal capacity to make inferences and arrive at a knowledge of underlying structures or dynamics" (Moustakas, 1990. p.24). Through intuition a bridge is formed between the implicit knowledge inherent in the tacit and the explicit knowledge which is observable and describable (Moustakas, 1990). "Intuition makes immediate knowledge possible without the intervening steps of logic and reasoning" (Moustakas, 1990. p.24). Surrendering to one's inner wisdom is required to achieve integration, unity and wholeness (Moustakas, 1990).

“Indwelling refers to the heuristic process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of the nature or meaning of a quality or theme of human experience” (Moustakas, 1990. p.25). Every possible nuance, texture, fact and meaning is drawn from dwelling inside the peripheral and central factors of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). “It follows clues wherever they appear; dwells inside them and expands their meanings and associations until a fundamental insight is achieved” (Moustakas, 1990. p.26). Unwavering attention to the researcher’s experience is required to foster understanding of its qualities and to find holistic creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990).

These processes align well with the self-reflexivity fostered in psychodynamic psychotherapy training. They feel essential to make meaning of the experience of making, encountering, and challenging unintentional racial microaggressions which are observable but whose meaning is interpreted subjectively through each individual's internal frame of reference. This framework allows me to explore the dynamics of unconscious racialisation which is abstract and not suitable for purely positivistic interpretation.

Parameters

As this is a self-study, the findings of my experience will not represent that of all Pasifika and Māori people. I am aware of the danger of absolutes and arbitrary categorizing of racial, ethnic, and cultural experiences as being clearly defined and separate. I generalise Māori, Pasifika and Pākehā identities for practicalities sake in this dissertation while acknowledging that these groups are not homogenous. While there are commonalities which are valuable to identify within ‘races’, ethnicities and cultures, there are always differences within and similarities between these identities. Being a heuristic study, the literature view and theories I choose to frame my experience are not exhaustive; rather they represent that which I was personally most drawn to.

Limits

Being a heuristic self-search inquiry, I offer my own subjective experience, perception and interpretation of events and dynamics including my perception of others who do not have a voice in this dissertation. A consideration of my perception of ‘the ‘other’ felt essential in coming to understand my own process and to make meaning of what occurred intersubjectively in these moments. With the guidance of qualitative and quantitative research on this topic and various theoretical conceptualisations I suggest underlying dynamics of those who are a counterpoint to my position in these interactions, but emphasise that this is only my interpretation. I use group supervision and feedback from others of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds as recommended by Rose and Loewenthal (2006), to assist in alerting me to my blind spots. Because of the nature of this topic, I imagine I will still inevitably have them.

Phases

In this chapter, I describe the method of heuristic self-search inquiry, its phases, and my experience of each phase. The framework for heuristic inquiry outlined by Moustakas (1990) follows six phases. Initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990).

The researcher must remain internally focused and dwell within the feelings of the tacit dimension, allowing the six phases to unfold naturally by surrendering to the feeling state of the subjective "I." (Sela- Smith, 2002, p. 63).

Initial engagement

"The task of the initial engagement is to discover an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important social meanings and personal, compelling implications" (Moustakas, 1990. p. 27). My engagement with this topic began with a profound experience, which opened up an only vaguely known place inside myself which I felt a deep desire to understand. Moustakas (1990) speaks of the personal question, rooted in tacit knowledge, creating a sense of unease that the researcher seeks to resolve, which also has a potentially broader significance. This phenomenon of unconscious racialisation is difficult to grasp at its depths from an empirical perspective. It holds great significance as it is part of the invisible framework of society and thus the social unconscious, and therefore cannot easily be addressed. It is a phenomenon which insidiously leaves the imprint of society in the psyche, which is maintained through social discourse over generations. Formulating something which is usually unspoken has been challenging. Discovering the language of racial microaggressions, I found a foundation, an observable starting place. Adding unconscious racialisation to my question satisfied the depths to which I wished to go in this exploration. I hoped to use the observable manifestations of unintentional racism to explore the intrapsychic processes and outcomes of unconscious racialisation. I included making, encountering, challenging unintentional racial microaggressions intentionally, as a way to remain open to the reality that I may at times be a perpetrator as well as a victim in this phenomenon. An intersubjective focus on the dynamics of this issue, highlights its' relational and cyclical nature in that what gets unconsciously ingested is likely to be unconsciously egested in some form.

Immersion

Loewenthal and Winter (2006) describes immersion into the topic in question to the point where it permeates every aspect of day to day life. My immersion involved journaling to capture my own process and my responses to social discourse, research, current affairs, social media threads, and other depictions of racial microaggressions in Aotearoa. I was alarmed at how

prevalent racial ruptures were, and was unsure if this was due to current social issues and/ or I was becoming more attuned to what was always there. During immersion, I was drawn to explore the interpersonal aspects of my personal experience in the vignette, to put words to my sense of the underlying interpersonal dynamics, and to place my experience in context by exploring the historical and societal environment of Aotearoa. These explorations were unavoidably a subjective interpretation, and I was concerned I was diverging from the purely inward focused heuristic inquiry. Yet as I went deeper into the process, I felt that the splitting of psyche and society were reflective of the dynamics of this phenomenon. I found the external exploration crucial in making meaning of my own unconscious racialisation.

Resistance

At times my immersion into the relational and societal aspects of this question became a distraction, which reflected the resistance that Sela-Smith described to feeling unbearable pain which can lead us to “shift the research from the self’s experience of the experience, to focusing on the idea of the experience” (Sela-Smith, 2002. p. 52). She counselled overcoming this ambivalence by recognising and acknowledging one’s own resistance.

If I can find the external enemy I can engage, challenge and sometimes attack but what it protects me from is recognising that there are two battlefields, and the other resides in myself.

Journal entry. 3rd September, 2020.

At times, (as I perceived both society and the group to do), I used racism ‘out there’ as a convenient container to rally against, rather than attending to the discomfort of addressing aspects of my own racialisation. Fighting it ‘out there’ was perhaps an unconscious reprieve from confronting self-examination. As my journey progressed, I began to understand resistance as a vital aspect of this phenomenon. Even in the process of looking outward, I was learning about aspects of my own psyche, which I was not yet fully able to grasp.

Incubation

I am not in immersion or illumination right now but in a crushing state of inertia and stress. Incubation?

Journal entry. 6th June, 2020.

Incubation often happened of its own accord when I reached saturation, a place I would often reach not by choice, but out of necessity. It also happened outside of any scheduling I had planned, a protective mechanism which kicked in when my feeling, thinking self was spent. Incubation necessitates retreating from the intense, concentrated focus on the question (Moustakas, 1990). Detaching from conscious contemplation to allow a resting phase facilitates a space where tacit knowing and intuition can surface (Moustakas, 1990). The space to clarify and understand on levels outside of immediate awareness “results in discoveries that

do not occur through deliberate mental operations and directed effort” (Moustakas, 1990. p. 29). Incubation, particularly moments of freedom from the grip of intense deliberation often led to illumination.

Illumination

Illumination involves facilitating a receptive state of mind without conscious striving or concentration, a space for synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). It felt magical to experience the way tacit knowing and intuition created these moments of illumination that came when I was absorbed in a task where conscious thought felt suspended. In the shower, while walking, swimming in the ocean, when driving; these were the seemingly inconsequential moments when new insights would rise from the unconscious. Illumination came in fragments, which can be summarised in five themes- 1. Internalised racial self-states and their relationship to the ‘I who feels’; 2. Awakening to the power of unconscious racialisation and its’ influence on my psyche; 3. The impact of essentialist racial constructs; 4. Opening to my own disavowed. 5. Healing experiences of an interracial intersubjective third. These are discussed in chapter seven.

Explication

Explication is “to fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand its various layers of meaning” (Moustakas, 1990. p31). I utilise focusing, indwelling, and self-searching, allowing meanings which were unique and distinctive to my experience and which depended on my internal frame of reference. This phase oriented my own experience within the wider context of society and interpersonal engagement. A zooming in, then out, then in again from my inner world, to the outer world and back.

I feel like Neo in the Matrix, woken from an illusion. Much like the Matrix, I believe society and the social unconscious to constitute a powerful force which creates an invisible web that suspends us in a system much greater than ourselves, but is also sustained by us as individuals. Like a child adapts unconsciously to their early environment in ways they are unaware, I believe I too have adapted unconsciously to hold (hierarchical) racialised positions which exist in society and echo in my psyche.

Journal entry. 3rd June, 2021.

This journal entry captures my sense of explication as a growing critical consciousness, “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Friere, 1994. p. 17). Watts and colleagues (1999, p. 255) described critical consciousness as an “antidote to oppression” due to its ability to provide people with the awareness, motivation, and agency to recognize and address societal inequities. I see this awareness as also necessary to recognise and address the imprint of

racialisation (both oppression, oppressed and oppressor) on my inner self which involved painful confrontation of my own disavowed racialisation, a recognition trauma on both sides of this binary equation.

Creative synthesis

There is something transpersonal about what emerges that seems to take on a life of its own. It is an amazing time of synchronicity, harmony, connection and integration. (Sela- Smith, 2002, p. 69).

Creative synthesis occurs when the components, core themes and learnings about the question can be synthesised and communicated. Moustakas (1990) notes that these phases do not follow a linear progression and may occur and be revisited many times. I identify key learnings through creative expression, which translated into transformation in my tacit knowledge and self-transformation.

I am finding freedom from the exhaustion of feeling I have to conform, to prove I am something else. This dissertation is shaking off the shackles of an invisible imprisonment in a world of measuring myself between two ideals, the western perspective and the essentialist notions of being Pasifika and finding myself coming up short. A freeing of the desire to have to prove myself to be enough. To realise that 'wrong' or 'right' are arbitrary. I am more complex than any binary constructs which exist outside of myself. I am acceptable to me.

Journal entry. 4th June, 2021.

From my internal frame of reference, the narrative of my life experience, I gain a sense of how my particular iteration of racialisation was formed. This also illuminated how it was previously unconscious; it was woven into the fabric of family and my society and hidden in plain sight, as I imagine it is for all of us, regardless of 'race' in Aotearoa.

Critique of the heuristic process

Limits

I found the freedom within this process terrifying at times. The permission I had within this method to follow my intuition, hunches, and curiosity led to an expansive exploration of context, environment, and the in-between; an overwhelming deluge of stimuli to metabolise. At times, trusting the process was a challenge, and my level of self-doubt was overwhelming, particularly in my internal experience of viewing this phenomenon from shifting and varying paranoid schizoid racialised self-states.

I find it challenging to hold the vulnerability that my findings are my truth in this moment as opposed to The Truth. The vulnerability I feel in my self-disclosure in this research, and the part of myself which projects invalidation within this topic, are deeply uncomfortable to sit with. An ethical consideration in the heuristic process alongside the challenge of self-exposure is of

being true to my experience while protecting the identity of others. Affective distancing, the protective comfort of concrete 'knowing' and the safety of framing individual experience anonymously within some research methods are comforts which aren't afforded in this process.

Strengths

The strengths of this process represent the flip side to the limits already defined. The spaciousness of the heuristic process was liberating. As a person who lives historically by many 'should's', I found this framework 'holding enough' while feeling free to forge my own path within it. Observing and journaling my experience through periods of self-doubt and fragmentation as part of the Heuristic process were crucial in coming to understand them as manifestations of this phenomenon. I was also assured that feeling lost was a common aspect of the heuristic journey, which helped me maintain trust in the process. The knowledge that this dissertation speaks to my truth or 'a' truth, helped me to be wary of concrete thinking which is an integral challenge in this phenomenon which tends towards binary and concrete thinking. There is a freedom from external judgements of 'right' and 'wrong' in knowing that my conceptualisation primarily needs to feel valid to myself.

Another strength in the heuristic method is the consideration of intersubjectivity and the macro (society and the interpersonal) in relation to the micro. This felt essential in this exploration which feels so clearly about the interplay of society, the interpersonal, and the self. "It is now broadly accepted that central issues concerning self-consciousness should not be studied by taking into account the individual alone, but also by exploring the role of intersubjectivity and interaction with the social environment" (Crone & Huemer, 2018. p.2).

Chapter Four- Literature view

The impact of racial micro-aggressive experiences reside in the body, and are often inaccessible to words (Schmidt, 2018). The feelings that arose from my experience as illustrated in the vignette in chapter one felt deeply embodied, yet putting words to the experience took time. In this literature view I explore research on the experience of racial microaggressions for a variety of minority peoples in everyday life, within academic and training settings, in the workplace and finally, in the therapeutic environment.

There are twelve research papers included in this chapter. Research was sourced from psychotherapy and psychology databases- PEP, Psych-articles and Psych-info. Initially the search terms “racial microaggressions” and “qualitative research” were used, with the addition of “psychotherap*”, “therap* alliance” and “counselling” to source research specific to the clinical setting. The research is predominantly qualitative, sourced from psychoanalysis and associated disciplines of psychology, social work and counselling.

Microaggression research

Minorities experience of everyday racial microaggressions

Everyday experiences of racial microaggressions by varying minority groups have been elucidated through research. This includes Asian Americans (Sue, et al., 2007b), Filipino Americans (Nadal et al., 2012), Black Americans (Sue et al., 2008a), and university students of Indigenous Canadian descent (Canel-Çınarbaşı & Yohani, 2019; Clark, et al., 2014). Racial microaggressions were experienced by all minority groups studied, with both global themes and others which appeared ‘race’ specific. For Black Americans, themes included denial of individual racism, assumption of criminality, inferiority and lower intellect and colour-blindness (Sue et al., 2008a). For Asian Americans themes included being an alien in one’s own land, perpetually foreign even when second or third generation, denial of their racial reality, invalidation of ‘racial’ difference, pathologizing of cultural values and communication styles, second class citizenship, and invisibility (Sue, et al., 2007b). For indigenous Canadians overt expressions of racism were commonly experienced, including discrimination and racial segregation (Canel-Çınarbaşı & Yohani, 2019). Covert racial microaggressions including assumption of inferiority and criminality, invalidation, denial of personal racism and the myth of meritocracy were also reported, aligning with other minority experiences (Canel-Çınarbaşı & Yohani, 2019). These studies gave voice to the experience of racial microaggressions by minorities in The United States, Canada and The United Kingdom.

These everyday microaggressions form a picture of specific racial constructs which have in common, the positioning of a discrete inferior

racial 'other'. There is an unspoken juxta positioning within these assumptions for those on the opposite side of this binary, which infer belonging, entitlement, superiority, trustworthiness, validation, visibility, and a 'right' way. To me this captures the intrapsychic privilege of Pākeha and the intrapsychic disadvantage of minorities which can play out unconsciously in microaggression dynamics. I have experienced many of the microaggressions discussed, as a 'Brown' person in Aotearoa committed by individuals who believe they are not racist. As a person of mixed heritage, have I internalised both positions?

Journal entry, 4th April, 2021.

Reaction to racial microaggressions

Sue and colleagues (2008b) explored the psychological processes of Black American participants regarding their perception and interpretation of racial microaggressions. Unintentional micro-aggressive incidents were categorised as verbal (such as assumptions based on stereotypes), non-verbal (for example a shopkeeper placing change on the counter rather than into a customer's outstretched hand), and environmental (for example people of colour in predominantly entry level positions or middle management, while executives are predominantly White). Psychological responses of recipients involved the difficulty of deciding whether the incident was intentional or not and following this, deciding whether or how to respond (Sue et al., 2008b). Paranoia was identified as a common response to regular experiences of racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2008b). Common strategies to manage the affective disturbance of these experiences included sanity checks with other of the same 'race' and self-validation, "it's not me, it's their white unconsciousness" (Sue et al, 2008b, p. 332). Another common factor identified was resistance to confronting the racial microaggression for fear of hurting the offender, a form of rescuing (Sue et al, 2008b). The interpretation by participants of these experiences included "you are intellectually inferior", "you do not belong" and "you are all the same" (Sue et al, 2008b. p. 333). The psychological effects of racial microaggressions included feelings of invisibility (not being noticed or acknowledged); forced compliance; a sense of powerlessness to question subtle acts of discrimination for fear of being labelled hypersensitive or angry and the necessity of presenting an accommodating false self (Sue et al, 2008b. p. 334).

Constantine and colleagues (2008), explored the experience and impact of racial microaggressions in academia by people of colour who worked in counselling/ counselling psychology. Themes included inadequate mentoring; identifying which intersecting social constructs the discrimination was based on (for example gender, 'race' or class); alternating feelings of invisibility and hypervisibility; credentials being questioned by colleagues and students (Constantine et al., 2008). Participants described a sense of needing to work harder to be recognised as legitimate scholars (Constantine et al., 2008). Strategies described to cope with racial microaggressions included confronting the perpetrator/s; distancing from

colleagues and acquiescence to the reality of racism in the academic environment (Constantine, 2008).

Aside from challenging microaggressions (which often comes at a cost), the strategies outlined by minorities to manage their responses involve a great deal of psychological effort and self-management, while the behavioural implications and overall impact on those in the dominant position seem minimal. I feel deep sadness as I consider the psychological effects of experiencing microaggressions- the powerlessness, paranoia, sense of invisibility, fear of being labelled angry or over-sensitive and acceptance that 'this is just how it is' which resonate with my own internal experience. I also consider the intersectionality of 'race', class and gender constructs representing layers of discrimination which are difficult to distinguish at times. I feel so frustrated by this dynamic which seems designed to silence minorities and maintain comfort for the perpetrator, reinforcing an asymmetrical status quo.

Journal entry. 4th April, 2021.

Racial microaggressions within counselling and psychology training

An interracial study of post-graduate counselling students in the United Kingdom explored how issues of 'race' were implicit within their training and supervision regarding clinical work (McKenzie-Mavinga, 2005). Themes for students of colour included "finding a voice" and "recognition trauma", while the discomfort of talking about racism, processing guilt and defensive reactions were identified as central themes for White participants (McKenzie-Mavinga, 2005).

This process of exploring racial issues was what I was hoping to initiate in sharing my experience. I imagine how valuable it would have been to experience the difficulty of 'race talk' within our training, and to build tolerance and recognition of how unconscious racism/ racialisation manifests in ourselves, before experiencing these dynamics in the clinical environment.

This dissertation is my own process of 'finding a voice' and 'recognition trauma'. I feel myself emerging from what feels like racial dissociation. I am more attuned to recognising damaging racialising experiences, which I imagine I previously managed out of conscious awareness, and to feel their impact on my psyche. I also resonate with the guilt and discomfort of facing my own racism and its impact on others, a grieving process on both sides of the equation.

Journal entry. 5th April, 2021.

Constantine & Sue (2007) conducted qualitative research on the experience of Black supervisees in cross-racial dyads. Microaggression themes included stereotypic assumptions made by supervisors regarding clients and supervisees of colour; invalidation of racial and cultural issues; supervisors focusing primarily on clinical weakness and reluctance to provide authentic performance feedback for fear of offending the supervisor. Racial microaggressions were identified as "detrimental to supervisees, the supervisory relationship, and, indirectly, to

clients of colour” (p. 142). It was noted that unconscious racism could manifest in the supervision process by supervisors even after cultural competence training (Constantine & Sue, 2007).

My own supervision experiences have varied. When racial and cultural differences were acknowledged and able to be spoken about, this contributed to a sense of mutual respect, recognition and safety. I found it valuable to be able to consider unconscious racialised positions and realities between the supervisor, myself and clients and how these might interact with each other in the context of greater society. I felt both supported and challenged in my clinical work.

These contrast with interracial supervision experiences where I've felt silenced regarding racial dynamics. In one experience during training I shared with a clinical supervisor that I was feeling increasingly unseen in the supervision relationship and was finding it difficult to hold my own mind alongside theirs. I acknowledged that my internal dynamics (my racialisation) were part of the picture and that I thought this was related to the inherent power asymmetry and different lived experiences between us as a Pākeha male supervisor and a 'Brown' female supervisee. I perceived the supervisor to respond defensively, asserting adamantly that this feeling was due solely to my projection, and maybe it was. Yet his conviction without self-reflection felt telling and familiar. I felt increasingly unsafe and wary in the supervision space and wanting to be transparent and respectful, I spoke with my supervisor directly, requesting a more suitable fit. This request was ignored and I was later failed on the learning outcome of 'using supervision for self-reflection of client work'. Although accurate in this situation, I found this ironic. As I perceived it, his defensiveness, resistance to reflect or dialogue on racial issues inevitably resulted in my lack of trust and safety in the supervision relationship. In this experience I felt silenced and stuck, with no clear institutional guidelines through which to navigate this issue.

Journal entry. 7th April, 2021.

Racial microaggressions in the clinical setting

Recent studies have centred on racial microaggressions in the clinical setting, exploring how they are experienced, addressed or not addressed, their impact on the clinical relationship and on micro-interventions by which microaggressions may be addressed to navigate ruptures.

Constantine (2007) conducted a mixed method study which explored African American clients' experience of racial microaggressions by therapists in interracial counselling. The study found a correlation between unaddressed racial microaggressions and perceived lower therapeutic alliance, counsellor competence and satisfaction with the overall therapeutic relationship (Constantine, 2007 cited). The study concluded that racial microaggressions left unaddressed, may result in ruptures to the therapeutic alliance and can contribute to early termination of therapy by minority clients (Constantine, 2007). Qualitative focus groups exploring racial microaggression themes in the clinical encounter were also undertaken. Emergent themes echoed the everyday racial microaggressions identified by Sue and colleagues (2005), with

the addition of themes related specifically to the therapy environment (Constantine, 2007). Themes included denial of personal racism, colour-blindness, over-identification, minimising of cultural issues, accused hypersensitivity around racial issues, assumption of stereotypes, culturally insensitive treatment recommendations, sub-optimal behaviours accepted because of racial membership, idealisation and dysfunctional helping or patronising (Constantine, 2007). Clients noted that attempting to address the racial microaggression often resulted in further misunderstanding and was potentially more injurious than the initial microaggression (Constantine, 2007).

Miranda (2013) conducted a qualitative, semi-structured interview study exploring the experience of racial microaggressions in cross racial therapy by second generation Asian and Latina women. This study found that the therapeutic relationship mirrored participants everyday cross racial interactions (Miranda, 2013). Navigating racial microaggression encounters which involved managing and repairing the therapeutic relationship were identified as key tasks by participants (Miranda, 2013). Repeated incidents of racial microaggressions when challenged by the client, were frequently reported to be minimised or invalidated by the therapist (Miranda, 2013). These incidents were often followed by the clients early termination (Miranda, 2013). Some participants reported handling racial microaggressions by compartmentalising issues of 'race' to protect themselves from additional micro-aggressive injury (Miranda, 2013). Navigating multiple identities (American, and Latino or Asian) were identified as a supplementary difficulty faced by participants (Miranda, 2013).

Chang and Berk (2009) determined that racial microaggressions were a common experience in therapy. When microaggression ruptures were raised, acknowledged, and processed together they were reported to form a stronger therapeutic alliance (Chang & Berk, 2009). However, therapist responses to conversations about racial and cultural difference using the strategies of colour-blindness and undermining or invalidating the client's experience tended to create further ruptures, often resulting in early client termination (Chang & Berk, 2009).

Lee and colleagues (2018) used critical discourse analysis to examine the dialogue of cross racial dyads, exploring how clients and therapists strengthened or resisted contested values, norms, and power using discursive tactics in therapy conversation. Examining therapy transcripts where racial and culturally relevant conversation occurred in a cross-racial dyad, all seven microaggressions proposed by Sue and colleagues (2007) were identified (Lee et al., 2018). Lee and colleagues (2018) concluded that in cross-racial therapy, racial microaggression ruptures are unavoidable. They recommended the study of these moments as being beneficial towards increasing therapists inter-cultural reflexivity (Lee et al., 2018).

Santos and Dallos (2012) conducted a qualitative study in the United Kingdom exploring the experience of cross racial dyads. This study had value as it looked at the cross-racial experience from both the client and therapist's perspectives, although it did not explore racial microaggressions specifically. Themes identified for White therapists in the thematic analysis included wariness about speaking directly to 'race' for fear of offending the client, and hypervigilance about political correctness (Santos & Dallos, 2012). Negative aspects of working with Black clients were tempered by positive identifications towards the client group. Clients (who identified as English, of African- Caribbean descent), stated that to make use of their therapy experience, they followed an implicit rule of not speaking about racial issues in therapy (Santos & Dallos, 2012). Minority clients were conscious of the power differential at play in the therapy relationship which mirrored this phenomenon in their wider world (McCann, 2019). Santos and Dallos (2012) recommended that therapists be more active in bringing the topic of race into the therapeutic space in order to take full account of the clients whole identity. This research highlights the difficulty of talking about 'race' in cross racial dyads but also how cultural competence includes the ability of therapists to do so (Santos & Dallos, 2012 cited in McCann, 2019).

In my experience, having a therapist who was open to talking about 'race' and racism, and to acknowledging our different racialised positions in this dynamic so that what happened between us could be explored was deeply beneficial and healing. Statements I experienced as unintentional racial microaggressions felt safe to raise, and were able to be worked through in relationship. The dynamics of racialisation were acknowledged as being mutually alive in the room, and not a pathology that existed solely in myself. This facilitated a safety in which I could consider my own conscious and unconscious racialisation and develop critical consciousness of its presence in the external world.

This research highlights the anxiety and resulting avoidance that therapists can feel in speaking to racial issues in interracial engagement. When racism (which is unconscious racialisation) is revealed or perceived through unintentional racial microaggressions and the client challenges this, it is often responded to with denial. This protects the therapist from acknowledging or recognising their own racialisation at great cost to the client and the therapy relationship.

As the research highlights, this seems to be a common racial enactment. Without acceptance of the likelihood of their own unconscious racial bias and racialisation as therapists (as an inevitable response to a racist society), they will not be able to use the opportunities that arise in these moments as an avenue into the clients exploration of their own unconscious racialisation.

Journal entry. 10th April, 2021.

Ethical considerations regarding racial microaggressions research

An ethical consideration mentioned in racial microaggression research is the dilemma of defining between (homogenised) categories of 'race' and ethnicity, which are highly

ambiguous. Researchers tended to navigate around this difficulty by declaring the use of these terms interchangeably and stating that participants in the studies self-identified their racial or ethnic category.

Another ethical consideration is the impact that partaking in these studies may have for those participants in professional academic settings as students and employees in terms of both the psychological cost and professional repercussions. It may be beneficial to factor this into the research design.

Critics of racial microaggression theory

Lilienfeld (2017) critiqued the conceptual basis for microaggressions as well as the scientific rigor of academic scholarship on the concept. His arguments included concern for ambiguity; asserting that 'aggression' implies a conscious intent where these transgressions are unintentional, creating a paradox which encourages aggression in recipients. He also suggested that calling out microaggressions created a victim culture in minorities, encouraging hyper-vigilance and racial tension. Lilienfeld (2017) framed microaggressions as cognitive distortions in which individuals assumed "without attempts at verification—that others were reacting negatively to them" (p. 147).

Williams (2020) systematically deconstructs Lilienfeld's argument, highlighting that it omits the fact that microaggressions are caused by racial bias and prejudice into which individuals are socially conditioned. Williams refers to social-dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 2012), which suggests that socially constructed group based inequalities are fortified through intergroup behaviours (microaggressions), including behavioural asymmetry and individual prejudice (Sidanius & Pratto, 2012). Behaviours which are justified by socially constructed legitimizing cultural myths, and perpetuate fabricated stereotypes that reinforce and perpetuate inequality (Sidanius, Pratto, & Devereux, 1992).

While making an important point that cognitive distortions can occur, Lilienfeld seems unaware of the mutuality of distortions that occur on the other side of this dyad, or to the societal context in which these are formed (assumably as a result of unconscious racialisation and racialised object relations). This illustrates unconscious racialisation which pathologizes and invalidates minority perceptions while the similar cognitive processes which occur in the psyches of the privileged are conveniently omitted.

Aotearoa based racial microaggression research

Mayeda, Ofamo'oni and Dutton (2014) interviewed 90 high achieving Māori and Pacific university students on their experiences with every-day colonialism and racism in Aotearoa. The study identified interpersonal microaggressions and institutional Eurocentric norms as

detrimental to Māori and Pacific students' feelings of inclusion and achievement in University settings. Common racial microaggressions identified were the expression of surprise at Māori and Pacific academic success, and invalidation of students who accessed training through equity programmes. Intervening protective factors included integration of Māori and Pacific learning practices, positive ethnic identity and support from university and family role models (Mayeda et al, 2014; Walters & Simoni, 2002). Microinvalidations were not included in this research.

Aotearoa based research on how to work with internalised racism in the client.

Emma Ellis's (2015) work on how internalised racism in minority clients is identified and treated by Pākehā psychotherapists feels complementary to this research, as it includes the interplay between the unconscious racism of minority clients and Pākehā therapists in the clinical encounter. Ellis interviewed four Pākehā therapists, identifying themes seen as beneficial to the therapeutic process of addressing internalised racism. These included "recognising and naming the client's acceptance and identification with negative cultural and racial stereotypes and representations (and linking this with wider social racism); the understanding of clients' dis-identification from their racial or cultural heritage; the therapist's explicitness about racial differences as an intervention; and connection to culture as a therapeutic aim" (Ellis, 2015. p. 88). Therapists recognised that racial microaggressions contributed to ruptures which led to premature termination of therapy by minority clients, but found it difficult to identify their role in these dynamics (Ellis, 2015).

This literature view illustrates that microaggressions occur interracially in many contexts including the therapeutic setting, and contribute to ruptures in relating and early termination in therapy. This dynamic is an interplay of subjectivities and as Ellis (2015) highlights, those of the dominant race often find it difficult to identify exactly how their unconscious racial bias manifests, suggesting this as an area for further research.

Chapter Five- Findings. The Interpersonal

In this chapter, I share a micro-analysis of my perception of the unconscious racial dynamics in the vignette. This analysis is unavoidably influenced by my own selfobject and object relations. Others perceptions of these interactions would undoubtedly differ. Yet considered intersubjectively, an interplay between my internal world, and the self-object and object relations of the group occurred which I felt drawn to explore. I make blanket observations of 'the group' but acknowledge that there were many differing subjectivities in the room.

Interracial dynamics

I posit these interactions reflect the interplay of dynamics that commonly occur in moments of interracial conflict. Ellis (2018) states that, "for members of the dominant culture, racism becomes embedded as automatic attitudes and behaviours towards minorities, despite the conscious holding of liberal and non-racist beliefs and values" (p. 99). Yet paradoxically, not being seen as tolerant of different 'races' and cultures can provoke anxiety and fear of being labelled racist which can lead to a "silencing of inner responses and a state of bewilderment, confusion and paralysis" (Dalal, 2012. p. 6). Where for minorities, racist representations of culture and race become identified with or distanced from, perpetuating inferiority, low self-esteem, hypervigilance and shame (Ellis, 2018. p. 99). These descriptions capture my perception of the dynamics alive in these interactions.

I was confronted with my own disavowed racialisation in response to the initial comments which I experienced as unintentional racial microaggressions. These interactions brought alive a sense of double consciousness; of seeing myself as a 'Brown person' through the eyes of the group who had ironically not recognised me as the 'Brown people' initially spoken of. In speaking up, I was perhaps attempting to disempower a negative internalised view of myself which was activated by the interactions as well as drawing attention to the assumptions made by the group.

I suggest that highlighting assumptions (people see Brown people as "more shit") and disavowals (but not us), and sharing the impact of the interactions on myself in the moment, also brought a sense of White double consciousness alive in the group, (a view of themselves through my racial reality). I perceived this to trigger defensiveness and discomfort. For Whites, honest discussions about 'race' are "impeded by fears of appearing racist, of realizing their racism, of acknowledging White privilege" (Sue, 2015. p. 663). However resistance towards authentically engaging means self-reflection doesn't occur, and unconscious beliefs are acted out without being directly addressed (Sue et al., 2013).

This dynamic feels infuriating, confusing and crazy-making. Dalal (2002) speaks of the double bind of these experiences, one prong of which is racism, the other, denial of racism. As the minority in the experience, my options felt limited. I suggest that the unconscious racialisation of both myself and others in the group were palpable in these interactions. In my opinion this moment was a moment of potential which was missed.

Racial re-enactments

Drawing attention to a different racial reality can destabilise group cohesion, activating unconscious defenses to avoid unbearable feelings (Hopper, 2003; Fanon, 1986; Layton, 2006). Acknowledging difference threatens a fantasy of wholeness and sameness (Layton, 2006). I suggest that this challenge initiated a re-enactment, a hierarchically racialised trauma present in Aotearoa's social unconscious, in Hopper's terms 'an equivalence'. Hopper states that the social unconscious is revealed when traumatized societies display in-cohesion, containing different presentations of aggression, and protection against aggression, where "members of a group purge themselves of unacceptable and dangerous feelings, ideas, attributes and qualities by projecting them into particular people and sub-groups, who are then peripheralized, marginalized, shunned and even banished" (Hopper, 2003. p. 337). This is achieved with attitudes of indifference, hostility and withdrawal in response to "threats to identity and to the boundaries of the self, narcissistic injury, affronts to self-esteem, confusion and failed dependency" (Hopper, 2003. p. 336). This response resonates with my experience. I felt scapegoated by what felt like the group's unconscious decision to protect a self-idealised non-racist identity at the cost of acknowledging my racial reality and affective response.

Persecutory anxiety

The defensive responses to my challenge could be interpreted as a shift into the paranoid-schizoid position, where non-racist idealisations of self were challenged and the group were defending against a binary view of themselves as all-bad (Caflich, 2020; Klein, 1946). Where fearing exposure of something "bad" in the self, the other is experienced as "fundamentally threatening, simply for witnessing and holding a mirror to our internal process" (Rankine & Loffreda, 2016 cited in Caflich, 2020. p. 589). In the paranoid-schizoid position, guilt is experienced not as a feeling from within, inspiring concern and repair, but as a threat or injury from without, which is defended against (Caflich, 2020). Persecutory guilt can lead to breakdowns in thinking, self-reflection and dialogue. (Caflich, 2020; Davids, 2011; DiAngelo, 2018; Esprey, 2017).

This can give rise to projection of our guilt and aggression onto others in an attempt to protect ourselves from persecutory anxiety, leading to a confusion between subject and object in which the harmed other, and the

fact of their suffering, comes to be experienced as a threat to the idealized self (Caflich, 2020. p. 584).

I too was perhaps defending against persecutory anxiety from exposure to my own disavowed. My conscious process initially was not 'they are bad and I am good'. It was the sense that something of my own had come alive in response to something that was missed by the group. By sharing my subjective experience I was asking for space for more than one racial reality in the room. I didn't feel like I was attacking in my communications but I felt they were received as an attack. When the response to my challenge felt defensive and aggressive, I intuit I shifted to the paranoid schizoid position myself, and also became defensive. I was infuriated and began to respond to the group as a 'bad' White object in response to feeling perceived as a 'bad' Brown object.

The idea that good people can't be racist

This series of interactions seemed to be driven by a resistance to recognising racism in the self. Morgan notes the basic assumption that "we are all inherently decent, and that evil and hatred belong to others" (Morgan, 2008. p. 41). She asserts that in order to rid ourselves of the uncomfortable notion that we aren't inherently decent, we must find others to whom the badness belongs. Extreme racists then become the convenient container to which our racist self is projected (Morgan, 2008). There are painful costs to allowing an exploration of racism in ourselves. It can raise uncomfortable feelings including shame, guilt, envy, denial, defiance, fear, of saying something unforgivable and of exposing internal badness (Morgan, 2008). Lousada suggests that genuinely addressing racism means "being able to live in the presence of our own positive and destructive (negative) thoughts and instincts..(this) is the only basis on which the commitment to change can survive without recourse to fundamentalism" (Lousada, 1997. p. 41).

Racialised positioning in the social unconscious (unconscious racialisation)

We unconsciously ascribe certain fantasies to ourselves and others based on racialized groupings and then act accordingly (Goedert, 2020). In these interactions I felt a sense of double consciousness, an internal observation of myself as a Brown object, which held a subordinate position in relation to a White object. From this place I viewed my subjective experience as invalid, over sensitive and misguided. What fortified my sense of validity was the fact that in this situation I was speaking of my experience in the moment as a Brown person, an issue in which, I rationalised, I was qualified to speak.

In challenging the group, I experienced them as claiming a superior position. This felt communicated as prioritising their affects, perspective and racial reality over mine. Projection of my internal racialised object world was undoubtedly part of the picture, but I posit that this

met with the group's projected racialised object relations. I intuit these interactions hooked into pre-existing unconscious racialised inferior and superior positions (alive in the social unconscious) which were brought alive between us and enacted in the 'here and now'. Dominance and oppression are hierarchical positions that cannot exist without the other. These positions can be utilised unconsciously in moments of conflict by the dominant, to restore and maintain supremacy and the disavowal of supremacy (Di Angelo, 2018).

Who is the aggressor?

I found the dynamic of doer and done to, proposed by Benjamin, where a mutual breakdown in recognition occurs, helpful to consider in this situation (2004). These interactions represented a complementary impasse where it seemed each person felt done to, and not like an agent in a co-created reality (Benjamin, 2004). Benjamin notes that in these dynamics, conflict cannot be processed, observed, or mediated and there is instead an unresolved opposition based on each party's use of splitting (Benjamin, 2004). Complementary relations reflect a symmetry wherein both parties experience the impossibility of acknowledging the other's reality without abandoning one's own (Hoffman 2002). Complementarity is an ongoing struggle for superiority, dominance, and self-regard always at the expense of the other (Shaw, 2018). Benjamin (2004) speaks of a kill or be killed power struggle, where there seem to be only two choices, either submission or resistance.

In the doer/done-to mode, being the one who is actively hurtful feels involuntary, a position of helplessness. In any true sense of the word, our sense of self as subject is eviscerated when we are with our "victim," who is also experienced as a victimizing object. An important relational idea for resolving impasses is that "the recovery of subjectivity requires the recognition of our own participation (Benjamin, 2004. p. 11).

This sense of being experienced as a 'victimizing object' after challenging the groups assumptions resonates. I suggest that what occurred was a breakdown in mutual recognition where neither party was seeing a subjective other.

Unconscious associations

I was curious about why such a denigrating term as 'shit' was used. In psychoanalytic thought, this spoken error could be considered a parapraxis or a Freudian slip, defined as unintentional errors regarded as revealing unconscious feelings (Freud. 1901).

In 1966, James Hamilton proposed the psychoanalytically based 'anal theory of racism' describing the "anal components of white hostility towards Negroes" a theory which influenced analytic thought at the time (Stoute, 2017). Kovel recalls a supervisor interpreting black people in his client's dream as representing her faeces (2000). He recognised the idea was grossly reductive, subjectivistic and deeply offensive but it illustrated how, for White people, racism is

not simply behavioural but through symbolic association becomes part of the fabric of the 'social unconscious' (Kovel, 2000).

The fact is that in racism, a whole category of human beings was being regarded and treated as excrement—their history and culture taken from them, their individuality and indeed their very souls denied. From this standpoint, it might be said that racism was inserted into the social unconscious and, like a virus, would replicate itself and take varying forms in the mental life of people (Kovel, 2000. p. 583).

Kovel's intention was to acknowledge external reality non-reductively, and to connect this with an understanding of the psyche. Kovel challenged the popular belief that racism could be engineered away simply through addressing racist behaviour (2000). He suggested that racism had been inserted into the social unconscious taking various forms in the individual psyche (Kovel, 2000, Altman, 2000). He argued that addressing behaviours alone would not expunge racism from the social psyche, but entailed engagement in an ongoing process of recognizing the racist thought as it appears in the mind (Kovel, 2000). I acknowledge the history and resulting dynamics between black and white in the United States is comparatively more extreme and polarised than the situation between Pākeha, Māori and Pasifika in Aotearoa. Yet I find Kovel's conceptualisations valuable to reflect upon in relation to unconscious racialisation and its relationship to the social unconscious

This analysis captures my perception of the normative unconscious processes- denials, disavowals and assumptions- which underlie the conflict in interracial encounters.

Defenses

Gas lighting

The invalidation of my racial reality felt like a form of gaslighting, where a person or group sows seeds of doubt in the recipient, making them question their own memory, perception, or judgement (Dorpat, 1996). Using denial, misdirection, contradiction and disinformation, gaslighting involves attempts to destabilize the recipient and delegitimize their beliefs (Dorpat, 1996). Gaslighting or invalidation is a common response to challenges regarding unintentional racial microaggressions, and represents a second micro-aggressive act (Williams, 2020) which compounds the damage from the initial transgression (Rini, 2018). No matter how sensitively recipients approach offenders, they are typically met with further aggression or heightened emotional responses (Minikel-Lacoque, 2013). Invalidation in the moment compounds the cumulative invalidation of racial realities that minorities face in wider society (Williams, 2020).

Racism lives 'out there'

The initial statement was made as 'people see' while the study referred to unconscious bias. The reframing of the study to address explicit overt racism allowed it to be considered as an extreme position which could be condemned, while the term 'people' was used - yet no-one in the group related personally to the statement. I believe that nobody did personally relate, yet I suggest it illustrated a disjunctive cognition. Using generalized symmetrical identity constructs that 'people' are racist towards 'Brown people' (and therefore Brown robots), while assuming an asymmetrical caveat that the individuals in the group were exempt. If the statement referred to an average representation of the population but not us, who exactly was it referring to? This feels reflective of Matte-Blanco's (1988) asymmetrical and symmetrical bi-logic, the abstraction and manipulation of similarity and difference relating to the formation of group identities (cited from Dalal, 2002). I posit this sophisticated form of splitting is a common element of modern racism (Cafilisch, 2020; Dalal, 2002; Davies, 2011). I suggest that much of the damaging racism in contemporary society is committed by individuals who acknowledge society's racism but deny their own.

If we said that racism is "out there," in racist society, and not "in here," in our very psyches, we would be splitting off and denying an important "bad object" experience between us (Altman, 2000. p. 597).

Minorities distance from racism too.

There were a number of other phenotypically brown people in the class, a few of whom shared with me outside of the group that they felt similarly when their self-identified groups were targeted, where evidently 'Brown' was interpreted as Māori and Pasifika. Another voiced that their support for the issue I raised but didn't feel confident to speak to the group.

The reality is that there is risk to challenging racial microaggressions. Recipients learn that should they challenge behaviours, they may be responded to with anger, defensiveness and denial (DiAngelo, 2012; Sue et al., 2007). Challenging those in positions of power is particularly risky, as the offense caused by the challenge can lead those in the dominant position to abuse their power in retaliation. Williams (2020) notes there is often strong social pressure to endure these encounters without recourse. I can't profess to know the internal process of my fellow minority students but for much of my own life I've stayed silent in these moments, unsure, and fearful of challenging assumptions, stereotypes or subtle put downs. I understand the social pressure to remain silent is a normative unconscious process, an unspoken rule conveyed implicitly to minorities (Sue, 2013).

Denial of 'not knowing'.

I felt the group defended against their 'not knowing' in relation to the original statements. Rather than acknowledging 'I did not realise that what was said could be hurtful to someone of a different racial reality', the responses communicated that my perception was invalid. This defence against acknowledging 'not knowing' seems to be a common element of conflictual inter-racial engagement (Hart, 2017). Morgan (2008) reflects the difficulty of those who are accustomed to being in a position of power or knowledge, to acknowledging their 'not knowing' in regards to the issue of 'race'. The person of minority 'race' is likely to be far more knowing regarding issues of 'race' and racism (Morgan, 2008). For learning to take place, the person in the position of power needs to become conscious that, in this matter, they do not know (Morgan, 2008). To sustain a place of knowing for those in power, their unconscious incompetence must be projected back into the other (Morgan, 2008). As a result I suggest 'internal racist organisations' (Davids, 2011) remain unchallenged and racialised positions are reinforced.

Resistance to recognising the minority voice

What was driving the resistance to hearing my voice as a Brown person? Morgan (2008) describes the well laid system of assumptions and pattern of uncritical thought of colonial white western culture in regards to racism, which she asserts needs to be aggressively broken through to 'challenge the squatting rights of our internal colonizer' in the unconscious. Morgan quotes Hogget (1992. p. 29) who states that uncritical thought is not simply passive but will "actively cling to certain beliefs... where it will reject and refuse any view that may contradict it". This resonates with my experience in this interaction, which I experienced as a wilful ignorance, a refusal to hear or acknowledge my perspective (Sue, 2015).

Confusing paternal benevolence with allyship

In the initial statement, there was an implicit positioning of the speaker as a rescuer or protector, 'Brown' people as the victim and racist people 'out there' as the perpetrators. In these interactions I felt repositioned as the persecutor, and became aware of the triangular dynamic of rescuer, perpetrator and victim alive in racialised interactions (Altman, 2000; Benjamin, 2020).

Granted, it came from a place of wanting to protect but it also placed the speaker in a position of power which implied protection over a helpless 'other'. Challenging someone who has positioned themselves as the rescuer is difficult when placed in the position of victim. The difference between paternalistic protection and allyship were illustrated by the refusal to acknowledge my perspective when it differed from their own. I believe this phenomena is familiar to the colonial narrative. Under the conscious narrative of protection, when we rescue

'the other' there is a risk of unconsciously undermining them, reinforcing power relations as we require the other to be in a victim state as a counterpoint to our rescuer state (Straker, 2018). There is a sense of 'we know what is best for you' or 'we can help you with what we believe you aren't capable of doing yourselves'. I believe this attitude of paternalizing benevolence differs from that of an ally, in that it seems to involve speaking for, as opposed to listening to, the minority voice.

Through this analysis I formed a subjective picture of the interplay of unconscious racialisation and the disavowed in both minorities and the dominant group, the 'norms' which maintain racial oppression in the social unconscious, and how they can interact relationally. This analysis felt like a coming into focus of what Layton terms 'normative unconscious processes' (2006).

Chapter Six – Findings. Wider society

So long as we police our psychoanalytic frame in such a way that family memory remains distinct from collective memory, from the Big History, we will not be able to adequately deal with the soul wounds of class inequities and classed racism (Layton, 2019. p115).

The socio-cultural-political environment.

During immersion, I felt drawn to place these interactions in their larger context; to understand the relationship between colonisation, racism and disparity within Aotearoa's historical socio-cultural-political context in which they have manifested, and their relationship to unconscious racialisation. I explore our colonial history and societal developments in 'race' relations. The issues we currently face in regards to racism as a society are explored.

Examining colonialism in Aotearoa through the lens of Fanon's theory

According to Fanon (1952), colonialism constructs its own discourse and perpetuates itself through creating a powerful divide between the coloniser and the colonised (Dalal, 2006).

Fanon saw colonialism as an ideology with both a conscious and a social unconscious (Dalal, 2002). The conscious mythology of colonialism regards itself as a civilising project of humanizing the primitive native, masking its true intentions which are exploitative and economic (Fanon, 1952). One of these conscious mechanisms is the day-to-day repetition of myths or stereotypic assumptions about 'the other' achieved through social discourse (Fanon, 1952). The second is the appropriation of history in which the coloniser casts himself as the civilising founder of a land of primitive natives, for whom his presence is beneficial (Fanon, 1952). This implies a form of suspended reality where exploitation is performed under the narrative of benevolence.

This discourse creates a binary equation between 'us' and 'them'. A world of absolutes- good and bad, coloniser and colonised. Fanon posits that this becomes part of the belief system of those it denigrates and is repeated and perpetuated by them too (1952). The colonised has internalised the colonial gaze, causing an internal fragmentation, a splitting of the self (Dalal, 2002; Fanon, 1952).

In the colonial situation, the black person has to look in the white man's eyes to give himself substance, to find himself, but instead of himself he finds the white man's perception of himself, in effect he is torn asunder and becomes an object to himself (Fanon, 1952 cited in Dalal, 2002, p. 97).

Overview

How racism and Eurocentrism manifested in colonial Aotearoa

Europeans had a long history of conquest and colonisation before the British arrived in Aotearoa in 1769 (Waswo, 1996). Racist and Eurocentric beliefs were well established in the British Empire, which was far reaching and had developed a complicated discourse through which to justify colonisation (Waswo, 1996). Namely that of a duty to spread Christianity and civilisation to heathen and savage peoples (Waswo, 1996). Although 'race' relations in Aotearoa started out with trade and diplomacy, it evolved into unjust treatment towards Māori when resources and power weren't able to be acquired through diplomatic means (Barnes & McCreanor, 2019 ; McCreanor, 1997).

In Aotearoa, both prejudice towards Māori and Eurocentric ideology became normalised and institutionalized in law (Barnes & McCreanor, 2019). Māori endured escalating prejudicial treatment, cultural oppression and marginalisation which escalated after the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840, despite the reo version specifying kawanatanga (governorship) of Māori to be retained by Māori (Taonui, 2012; Houkamau, Stronge & Sibley, 2017). This commitment to protection and self-governorship was largely dismissed for over a century (Taonui, 2012 & Houkamau, Stronge & Sibley, 2017). Efforts to protect Māori sovereignty and land were attempted through rebellion, protest, war, diplomacy, activism and appeals to the Queen (King, 2003). Assimilation of Māori into colonial culture was employed through policy (Phillips, 2021). Systemic discrimination towards Māori include legislation such as The New Zealand Settlements Act (1863) and the Tohunga Suppression Act (1907). In total it has been established that colonisation dispossessed Māori of 95% of their land and resources (Mutu, 2019).

Racist beliefs became normalised in the general population (McCreanor, 1999), and became what Fanon termed myths, which became self-perpetuating. McCreanor (1999) notes in his historical overview of Māori/ Pākehā relations, split constructs of 'good Māori', "those who fit successfully or unobtrusively into Pākehā society" (p.42) and 'bad Māori', "those who protest, agitate or fail in Pākehā society" (p.42). This allowed discursive flexibility to label selectively, depending on compliance (McCreanor, 1999), which I imagine exerted psychic pressure on Māori to assimilate.

Denigrating stereotypes labelled Māori as lazy, slovenly, violent, uncivilised and inefficient by the news media (Belich, 2011). The active dismantling of Māori culture, confiscation of land, negative profiling and second class citizenship under the guise of 'progress' resulted in widespread displacement, economic disadvantage, psychological trauma and transgenerational consequences for Māori in Aotearoa's colonised society (Mutu, 2019).

Pasifika peoples had varying experience of colonisation and European intervention, and an introduction to Christianity in their own homelands, exposing them to assumptions of a binary racial, ethnic, and spiritual hierarchy which favoured the western view before their arrival in Aotearoa. In the 1950's and 1960's when Aotearoa was expanding the manufacturing sector, access to immigration was opened up to Pacific people as demand for cheap labour increased, resulting in an influx of Pasifika to Aotearoa (Phillips, 2005). However in the 1970's, when economic conditions deteriorated, scapegoating and stigmatising of Pasifika peoples as a drain on the economy was touted by politicians and reinforced through the media (Loto, 2006). Populist opinion regarded Pacific Islanders as taking the jobs of New Zealanders and they were blamed for the deterioration of inner-city suburbs, and for law and order problems (Spoonley, 2011). Many with short-term work visas were subjected to the invasive 'dawn raids' by the police from 1974 to 1980, despite European migrants more frequently working on expired visas (Pearson, 2021). Pasifika were objectified as the scapegoat for Aotearoa society's ills (Loto et al., 2006).

A 2006 study on the portrayal of Pasifika in Aotearoa print media revealed that they were predominantly portrayed as "unmotivated, unhealthy, and criminal others who are overly dependent on Palagi (European) support" (Loto et al., 2006. p.100). This portrayal echoes the stereotypes that were developed towards Pasifika during the 1970's, illustrating that these myths remain nearly four decades on. Although Pasifika have been marginalised in Aotearoa for a much shorter period of time, the outcomes in general wellbeing are staggeringly similar to that of Maori and I posit that Pasifika were positioned in a similar vein to Maori as a homogenized, inferior 'other'.

Dalal (2002) concludes that denigrated images of the 'Other' are conveyed through "language and societal structures and their images and associations will remain deeply embedded in the psyche of those born into those systems" (Woodard & O'Connor, 2020. P.100). Inherent in the complex history of colonial Aotearoa are the deeply entrenched normalisation of negative stereotypes of firstly Māori and later Pasifika culture, ethnicity and 'race', and a privileging of the Eurocentric worldview. Therefore these images and their binary implications were embedded (and normalised) in the psyches of both Pākehā and minorities in Aotearoa, as unconscious racialisation, and have resulted in very real disparities in economic distribution and overall well-being.

Racial justice movement of the 1970's

Through the 1970's, activism regarding racial injustice increased in Aotearoa as it did around the world. Key movements included the Tākaparawhā (Bastion Point) protest, the 1975 Māori land march, and the formation of anti-racism groups such as Ngā tamatoa, and the Polynesian Panthers who worked together to fight racial injustice (Consedine, 2011). In 1973, the

Auckland Committee on Racism and Discrimination (ACORD) was formed to research and expose institutional racism in the education, health, social welfare and justice systems (Consedine, 2011). The Waitangi tribunal (1975) was formed to define the true terms of Te Tiriti. In 1987, the government adopted a policy of bi-culturalism and a commitment to honouring treaty principles which meant addressing the inequalities that existed between Māori and Pākehā (Houkamau, Stronge & Sibley, 2017). This era raised wider awareness of racial justice and marked a shift in critical consciousness (Cornell, Fleras & Spoonley, 2001). Overtly racist sentiments which were once commonplace were increasingly seen as unacceptable, and racism began to evolve in its manifestations to subtler forms (Cornell, Fleras & Spoonley, 2001; Houkamu et al., 2017).

Developments

It has been recognised that a growing cultural renaissance since the activism of the 1970's has increased pride and connection to culture, and a stronger voice for the rights and needs of both Māori and the Pasifika diaspora in Aotearoa (van Meijl, 2020; Mackley-Crump, 2015). It appears that Māori and Pacific people are finding their voices and at the same time society is increasingly opening up space for those voices to be heard. Alongside this has been a growing appreciation for the value of collectivist worldviews, particularly that of Māori in Aotearoa (Grimes, McCullough & McKay, 2015).

Over the ensuing years Aotearoa's collective understanding of the phenomenon of racism is evolving, and it's outcomes increasingly recognised. Racism and discrimination have been increasingly acknowledged as a contributing factor to ongoing inequality (Came, 2012; Marriot & Sim, 2014; New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2013). There are progressive efforts to address the impact of racism on health and mental health of Māori and Pasifika (Harris et al., 2018; Talamaivao, et al., 2020). Aotearoa has comprehensive laws, policies, and practices in place to prevent racism and discrimination (Houkamau et al., 2017). Initiatives to address disparities for Māori and Pasifika such as affirmative action and equity schemes to develop a more diverse work-force were introduced (Curtis et al., 2015). There is growing recognition towards the necessity for including Māori and Pasifika in developing strategies, frameworks and processes regarding how to best work with their communities (Laking, 2012). The Crown's treaty claims settlement policy has given iwi (tribes) an avenue of investigation for illegally claimed lands (Mutu, 2019).

In 2021 developments towards racial equity continue. There is more Māori and Pasifika representation in the ruling party, more reo used in mainstream media (Triponel, 2021). New Zealand (Aotearoa) history and the impact of colonisation on Māori is to be taught in schools from 2022 (Gerritson, 2021). A new Māori Health authority and Pacific health strategy to be led by Māori and Pasifika has recently been announced (Tukuitonga, 2021). In 2021 an official

apology was made to Pasifika people regarding the Dawn Raids (Gabel & Nielson, 2021). Ardern went on to acknowledge that "to this day, Pacific communities face prejudices and stereotypes established during, and perpetuated by, the Dawn Raids period" (Tokalau, 2021).

Yet marginalisation & discrimination continues

In spite of these important developments and a focus on racial equity, disparities remain (Marriot & Sim, 2014; Ministry of Treasury, 2019). Dalal (2002) noted that racism can be revealed through statistical evidence and analysis. Statistically, the disparities between Pākehā, Māori and Pasifika are stark and infer a level of discrimination and resulting inequality which lies in contrast to the picture of progress. In 2019, Māori and Pasifika still ranked lower in most measures of wellbeing relative to the rest of the population (Ministry of Treasury, 2019). These include lower incomes, education, health, home ownership, poorer housing and shorter life spans, as well as a widening wealth gap comparatively to Pākehā (Ministry of Treasury, 2019; McKenzie, 2020). Furthermore, Māori are still grossly overrepresented in suicide statistics and incarceration rates (Ministry of Treasury, 2019). Racial marginalisation has resulted in a societal structure with an implicit class system where Pākehā are skewed toward the upper ruling class based on wealth and ownership, while Māori and Pasifika are skewed toward the lower end, making up just under half of those living below the poverty line (McKenzie, 2020). It seems unconscious racialisation and the impacts of racism are intrinsically linked to these disparities.

Recent research has provided more evidence of the ways racism is still impacting on the lived experience of Māori and Pasifika. Among these findings, and despite concerted efforts made over many decades to address disparity in these areas, expectations of Māori and Pasifika academic achievement are lower, and levels of expulsion are higher (McDonald, 2018; Mayeda et al., 2014); Māori and Pasifika experts on government health advisory boards were "frequently ignored, debated, contested or perceived as unworthy or invalid" (Came et al., 2019), they are still less likely to receive accurate, effective treatment in health settings by medical specialists (Talamaivao et al., 2020; Cormack et al., 2017); are often paid less for the same roles and experience (Te Kawa Mataaho, 2020), are resented for gaining access to tertiary education through equity schemes (Mayeda et al., 2014) are still likely to be given heavier sentences than Pākehā for the same offenses (Morrison, 2009; Ashton & O'Connell, 2018); and experience more racial discrimination which is associated with poorer self-rated health, poorer mental health, and greater life dissatisfaction (Cormack, Stanley and Harris 2018).

A psychodynamic lens

Disillusionment

The current situation as outlined in this overview, paints an ambivalent picture. There is a dissonance between progress, and the continuing (and in some cases increasing) disparity and experiences of discrimination (racial microaggressions) reported by minority people, (although this may positively indicate increased recognition by minorities of subtle racism which were previously normalised). There are clearly genuine attempts to address and acknowledge racism on all levels from the systemic to the interpersonal through what is consciously recognised. I suggest this progress is undermined by what remains unconscious and out of awareness and that unconscious racialisation in both minority and dominant psyches contributes to this discordance.

I felt disillusioned when looking at the macro of this phenomenon, a sense of both disappointment and validation that my own experience wasn't an anomaly. It was uncomfortable to face into the shadows, to hold them alongside the narrative of racial progress. Lynne Layton (2019) advocates for an ethic of disillusionment in order to recognise and disrupt normative unconscious processes, which keep racial oppression in place.

Disillusionment, the undoing of disavowal, is a painful process. It first entails a willingness to become conscious of historical trauma (Salberg & Grand, 2016), a process that renders visible the ways this trauma, alive in intersectional ghosts, haunts all of our institutions...including the theories and practices of psychoanalysis....The alternative is disavowal, turning a blind eye to painful truths; this lies at the heart of perversion, repetition, and the inability to learn from experience (Layton, 2019. p. 110).

Facing illusions

Steiner (2018) adds to this exploration by using the story of Oedipus to speak to the role guilt plays in the psychic retreat of idealised illusion in response to trauma. Disillusion comes as an awakening via a new event which reveals the disavowed trauma, where its impact can no longer be denied (Steiner, 2018). Unintentional racial microaggression encounters and challenges could be considered an awakening event, and have the potential to be an entry point for both the recipient and offender to awaken to the disavowed of their relative positions and affects.

Steiner's (2018) thoughts on the working through of disillusionment seem relevant to the topic of racism. He asserts that working through first shame and then guilt, which is experienced by both offender and recipient, is essential in reaching the depressive position; but caveats that the guilt must be bearable and that responsibility must be taken without denying the guilt of others (Steiner, 2018). Without this, a return to denial, idealisation, and omnipotence are inevitable. Steiner (2018) notes the importance of guilt being neither minimised or

exaggerated, but recognised as appropriate to the truth of what happened. When faced into, it often turns out to be less severe than one's unconscious phantasies imply (Steiner, 2018). Persecution lessens as guilt gives rise to remorse and the wish to make reparation (Steiner, 2018). With the case of Oedipus, he must be protected from guilt for the original trauma, but guilt might emerge over the way he turned a blind eye, or suppressed hatred that led to a violent reaction (Steiner, 2018). Steiner gives some direction about how this can be worked through in a therapy relationship.

The analyst has not only to help the patient accept his guilt, but also help him to attribute guilt where it is appropriate, and this may require that the patient is free to hold the analyst responsible for his errors and enactments. True reparation does not then recreate ideal objects, but accepts real ones and strengthens the capacity to discriminate between them (Steiner, 2018. p. 565).

This implies that both client and therapist must be willing to acknowledge their own illusions and guilt regarding unconscious racist beliefs, behaviours, and norms.

White privilege, white fragility and white defensiveness.

Despite the fact that many Pākehā see themselves as non-racist, and actively advocate for racial justice, unintentional racial microaggressions still occur, presumably regarding beliefs and behaviours which are still unconscious. When these transgressions are challenged, Pākehā are confronted with assumptions, norms and privileges of which they were previously unaware. The spoken word performance in the link below, speaks to the invisible privilege of being Pākehā in Aotearoa, a confronting narrative which speaks to the depths of what may be disavowed and defended against.

[Norie, S.\(2013\). *Invisible privilege: Spoken Word. South Auckland poet's collective.*](#)

The term 'White fragility' has been coined to describe the feelings of attack and sensitivity that Pākehā can feel in response to challenges, a defensive response which often seems out of proportion to the transgression. I perceive further un/intentional microaggressions in response to challenges as manifestations of 'White defensiveness'. Resistance to acknowledging the microaggression may unconsciously reflect shame and guilt for the greater trauma of colonisation, along with fear, hostility, and resentment for what might have to be given up in order to achieve true racial equity.

Today, these black men are looking at us, and our gaze comes back to our own eyes (Jean-Paul Sartre, 1964–1965, p. 13).

With this statement, Sartre was describing the interpersonal impact of people of colour on White subjectivities in the context of decolonization (Stephens, 2020). The “shock of being

seen” as a White subject prompting a form of White double-consciousness, a confronting experience which holds up a mirror to what has been disavowed (Stephens, 2020). This may foster persecutory guilt, which can feel unbearable and annihilating “when reparation is felt to be impossible” (Caflich, 2020. p. 578). If able to be tolerated, I believe double consciousness (for both Pākeha and minorities) is also how we might come to know our own unconscious racialisation.

When we stop relating to racism as something abstract and outside ourselves, and begin to reclaim some of our own projections, another possibly irreparable fact emerges: namely, that the history and present-day realities of racism are inscribed in our own minds, permeating and shaping our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and relationships, at times outside our conscious awareness, or at the edges of this awareness (Davids, 2011. p. 132).

Defending internal racist organisations

Common defences against racial guilt or “Internal racist organizations” (Davids, 2011. p.13) are denial, over-identification, and manic reparation (Caflich, 2020).

Denial of historical context and current inequities is the subtext in the resentment expressed for the ‘allowances’ being made to marginalised minorities in addressing resulting disparities. This is captured in statements like ‘Māori and Pasifika are now the most privileged in society’ (Bassett, 2021). Contradictory to egalitarian values, there is perhaps a (less conscious) resistance to giving up the privileges that come with racial inequity, an inner conflict which might increase persecutory guilt and defenses against recognising these feelings (Caflich, 2020; Di-Angelo, 2018; Davids, 2011). Stephens (2020) formulates this as ‘white resistance’, “an inescapable feeling of resentment at needing to submit to a new global, decolonial, racial reality” (p.211). Judith Collins, former National Party leader, exemplifies this defensiveness in which she responds to calls for diverse representation in her caucus, as an attack “Is there something wrong with me being White?” (Collins, 2020). To me, comments like this are a form of microaggression which express persecutory anxiety by framing minorities as the oppressor. “To the privileged, equality feels like oppression” (Nicholas, 2017. p.9) captures my sense of this racial defensiveness.

Over-identification and splitting are also employed to keep the racist at a distance (Caflich, 2020). I suggest that, in our attempts to avoid guilt, we use more sophisticated splitting, acknowledging that racism exists, ‘out there’ and ‘back then’ while the internal racist that lives ‘in here’ stays hidden. I consider that perhaps my classmates were unconsciously over-identifying with the minority perspective in their initial statements and responses in the vignette. Over-identifying with the minority position, unconsciously bypasses our own affective and self-reflective reckoning with this phenomenon. Di-Angelo (2018) describes another form

of over-identification in 'White progressives'. Because their intentions are good they think they have already arrived and have nothing more to learn. Their defensiveness and certitude make it difficult to explain how they uphold and perpetrate racism (DiAngelo, 2018).

The current equality movement also holds an element of the manic reparation spoken of by Melanie Klein (1940), in the rush to repair in order to avoid disavowed feelings of guilt and anxiety (Dalal, 2012). "Reparative guilt can often become focused more on self than other; inspiring ways of thinking and acting that ...have less to do with repair than with protecting ourselves from a sense of persecution by others, and by our own thoughts and feelings" (Caflich, 2020. p. 582). Manic reparation involves a fantasy of omnipotence and erasure (Caflich, 2020; Klein, 1935, 1940; Mitchell, 2000). A desire "to repair the object in such a way that guilt and loss are never experienced" (Segal, 1973, p. 95). Caflich describes this as a narcissistic goal of restoring our idealised 'goodness' (Caflich, 2020).

To get to the reparative guilt of the depressive position we must begin to synthesise destructive impulses and feelings of both love and hate from both sides of this polarity towards each other as integrated objects (Klein, 1940; Balbus, 2004). Functioning from the depressive state of mind, Caflich suggests that reparative guilt can instead serve as a compass, guiding us to take responsibility within the limitations of our 'ordinariness' (2020).

It will necessitate acknowledgement of our own aggression and destructiveness, without collapsing into a view of ourselves as irredeemably harmful or broken; and in respect and concern for those we have harmed, maintaining an awareness of their separateness, rather than identifying with their suffering in an appropriative or masochistic way (Caflich, 2020. p. 582).

It is when both love and hate can be felt together that feelings of guilt and anxiety for the harm we have caused will be experienced, in order to make true reparation (Klein, 1940; Balbus, 2004).

Chapter Seven- Findings. The intrapsychic.

In this chapter, I summarise the findings of my heuristic self-search inquiry outlining five key themes of illumination- 1. Cycling self-states; 2. Unconscious racialisation; 3. Essentialist racial constructs; 4; Confronting my own disavowed; 5. The intersubjective racial third.

This uncovering and meaning making is an evolving process. What I offer in this work is a moment in time on this journey of meaning making.

Cycling self-states

The 'I who feel's.

I had ambivalent and fluctuating internal responses to the encounters in the vignette, and found myself cycling through them repeatedly in relation to this phenomenon. My first response came from a self-state I identify as the 'I who feels', my authentic unfiltered response to the casual normalisation of injustice and oppression that the initial statement represented to me.

The words were a shock. My body registered them as an attack which invoked a visceral response, my breathing, my muscles, everything on edge, ready to fight, to protest. I felt an outrage which frightened me and underneath that a deep hurt, like a new cut into an old wound.

Journal entry. 8th March, 2020.

I came back to these feelings many times over the course of this dissertation journey. These painful affects which were denied, repressed or otherwise disavowed, belonging not only to this moment but to the enormity of this issue and the helplessness I sometimes feel within it. I also came to know another self-state, an inner voice which arose almost immediately.

The divided self- the minority experience

I felt fearful and doubted the validity of my response. This dialogic voice fostered self-doubt, it questioned the legitimacy of my feelings, whether I was being irrational, unreasonable, over-sensitive. It invoked a silencing shame. It also brought hyper-awareness to the uncomfortable feelings I might have evoked in others, and fear of retribution for being too confrontational, too oppositional. It rationalised away my anger and hurt, compelling me to hide my feelings, dissociate them or present them in a more palatable way, to question their validity all together. This voice was subjugating, invalidating and minimising.

Journal entry. 8th March, 2020.

This self-state, has been an intermittent invalidating voice of my feeling responses to this issue. This inner judgement is perhaps akin to double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903), the colonial gaze (Fanon, 1952), and internalised racism (Davids, 2011); which are related conceptualisations of the phenomenon of a divided self, a splitting of the self in response to the internal imprint of the external environment. Alleyne's (2007) description of 'The Internal Oppressor', added to my understanding of this experience, "where minorities' struggles are not just concerned with everyday racial external impingements and racial oppression, but also

with psychic impingements from an internal adversary” which lies dormant, and awakens in contact with an external oppressive situation that is real, perceived or a mixture of both (2004. p. 269).

I found a central challenge in this experience was the difficulty in determining what was due to my own projection and what was related to the behaviour of the group. I felt what I now understand as my ‘internal oppressor’ (an invalidating White object) come alive in response to the initial statements. Voicing my experience at all represented a victory over this oppressor. In doing so I was also challenging the unconscious assumptions of the group. In sharing my perspective I was perhaps hoping that my fear of invalidation was unfounded, however the groups responses felt like confirmation that my sense of invalidation wasn’t solely internal. I posit that these interactions represented an iteration of the kind of relational engagements that created and reinforced the ‘internal oppressor’ in the first place, and that there was a more complex interplay of racial subjectivities occurring than my internal process alone.

The divided self- the dominant position

I had an uncomfortable sensation today of inhabiting the dominant position in an initial session with a minority client. I felt this as a sense that I was being experienced as superior, and was missing something important. I felt like I had become the one making unintentional racial microaggressions, judgements, and assumptions.

Journal entry. 23rd June, 2021.

In this transference/ countertransference dynamic I experienced myself holding a superior position. I felt the rupture as a slow affective disconnect. It was subtle and unspoken but I felt it growing between us and observed my behaviour changing defensively in response to it. I had asked if my client was interested in applying for a counselling subsidy as she was on a sickness benefit (as I would do with any client in that situation). Perhaps this was the catalyst for the shift. Did it feel as if I was implying that she couldn’t afford the cost of therapy? Was I denying difference, making assumptions or over-identifying because we were both Pasifika? I had a sense she was experiencing me as *fia palagi* (trying to be White). This is a self-consciousness that I sometimes hold as mixed Pasifika/ Palagi (White) heritage with a westernised upbringing. I can’t help being westernised, but I am aware that in many ways I am. Were we both defending against or projecting internal judgement? I recognised her affective withdrawal as familiar to moments when I felt positioned as ‘less than’ but felt trapped in this enactment. I considered how I might approach this next time we met but she never returned. I have thought much about this encounter, what it triggered in us both and how I might navigate it differently. How did the interplay of our unconscious racialisation come alive in this interaction?

It took over a year of focus on this topic to recognise this sense of holding the dominant position in my subjective experience. This speaks to the difficulty of identifying my own internal Whiteness and privilege, perhaps because it is rendered invisible against the baseline of western society.

The power of ideology is such that the 'whiteness' as organizing principle is unconscious. In other words the white ensign at the centre is invisible, and it is only the black ensign at the margins that is able to be seen. Thus those at the centre feel themselves to be innocent, unfairly assaulted from without. (Dalal 1998, p. 206).

Double consciousness and multiple self-states

These illuminations suggest that my unconscious racialisation is multi-dimensional, dynamic, intersubjective, context specific and relative to the position of 'the other'. Importantly these previously dissociated self-states came into conscious awareness through experiences of seeing myself through the eyes of a perceived racial 'other'. For myself the internal oppressor more easily activated and ego-dystonic.

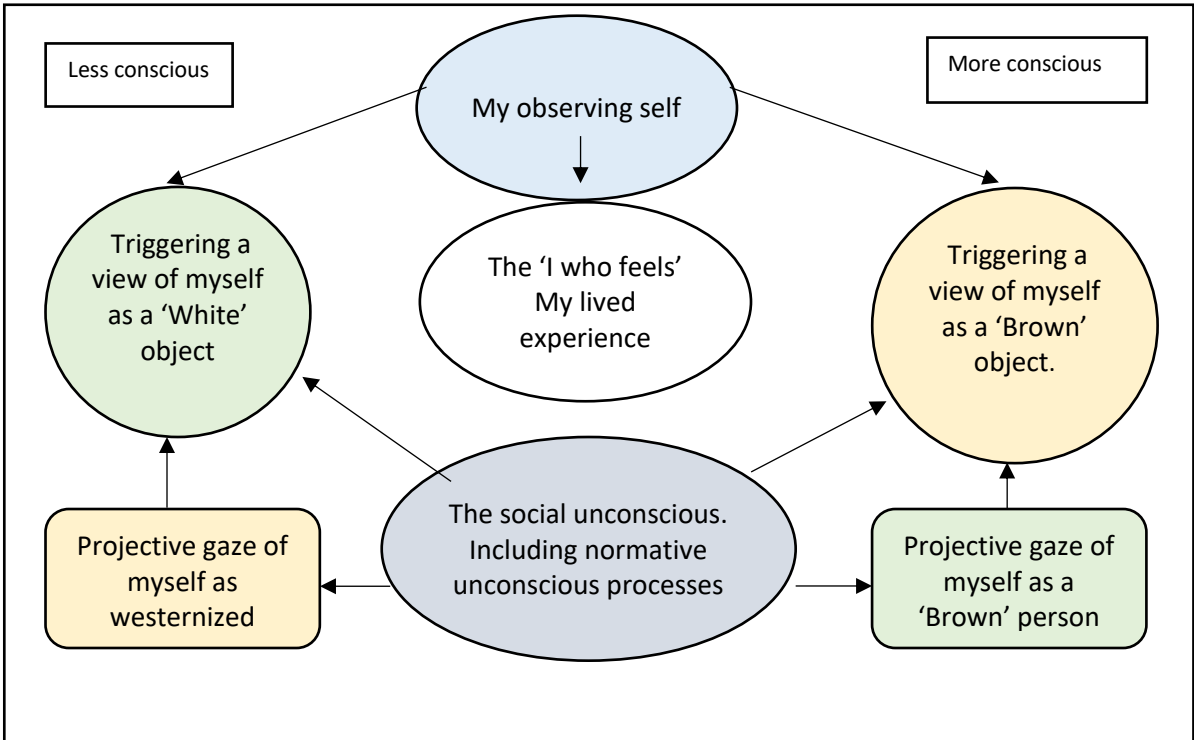
Standing in the spaces

I relate this sense of double consciousness which views myself through both a Pākehā and Pasifika lens to Bromberg's 'multiplicity of selves' (1996), where experiences of double consciousness brought awareness to dissociated self-states. "We transition between these self-states unconsciously (with the use of healthy dissociation) to produce an overall experience of 'I-ness', maintaining a sense of integrity of the self" (Bromberg, 1996. p. 516). Bromberg suggests that "there are always self-states enacting their experience, because they are not symbolized cognitively as "me" in the here-and-now of a given moment" (1996. p. 525). I believe these racialised self-states can represent not only how I am 'seen' by the 'other' but also how I am viewed by parts of myself.

I found myself cycling between these self-states with increasing awareness through this dissertation journey, while my ability to stand in the spaces and observe them ego-dystonically has increased (Bromberg, 1996).

Figure 2.

Dissociated racialised self-states and their relationship to the 'I who feels'.



Note: this figure summarises my observation of these dissociated racialised inferior/ superior self-states triggered by a projective gaze, and their relationship to the social unconscious.

Unconscious racialisation

Immersion in the heuristic process heightened my awareness of the undercurrents of the social unconscious which sustain disparity and power asymmetry. I apply this to an exploration of my own unconscious racialisation.

According to Neblett and colleagues (2008), racialisation occurs through transgenerational transmission of 'race', culture and positioning communicated by parents. Psychoanalytic theorists such as Dalal (2002), Erikson (1958), and Fanon (1987) explored how ingestion of social material occurs through the nurturing process. I intuit this involves racial positioning and implicit relational adaptations which may include responses to the trauma of cultural oppression and/ or cultural privilege which are dissociated from the experiences which formed them.

I am proud of my Pasifika identity, yet I understand my upbringing to be a mix of Western and Pacific culture. I wasn't raised immersed in the language or traditions of our culture. Despite this, (and in comparison to my Father's culture), what I understand to be Pasifika values

(collectivism, humility, duty, and family first) were inherent. Although my Nana was fluent in Niuean and Samoan, she mostly spoke to us in English and dismissed our attempts to learn more of our language, culture and of her life in the islands where she had her first five children. It was unspoken and subtle but she enforced a firm separation between us and our Pasifika culture. The unspoken messaging was to focus on looking forward not backwards. I asked my Mother about this and from her perspective, my grandparents were too busy raising twelve children and many grandchildren to put energy into anything except putting food on the table. There are complexities behind my grandparents' decision (whether conscious or not) to assimilate to Western culture that I can only surmise. As early immigrants to Aotearoa in the mid 1940's I imagine the societal pressure to conform may not have felt like a conscious choice at all (Versey, 2019). By the 1980's there was a strong Pacific community in Ponsonby and my high school was predominantly Pasifika. I became self-conscious of my difference in comparison to my friends who were fully fluent and whose life was steeped in Island tradition in a way that mine wasn't. It is my generation, the grandchildren who feel the loss of our heritage and seek to reconnect.

I recognise modelled ways of being in my family which are perhaps influenced by unconscious racialisation but may also be culturally influenced- a subtle hypervigilance, a relentless work ethic, the expectation of impeccable behaviour, a guardedness and formality outside our own family and rigid rules around not accepting charity. I sense that these were partly unconscious adaptations to counter-identify with negative racial constructs. This anecdotal account of a conversation between Fanon and Sartre spoke to me as capturing something of this internal experience.

A member of a colonised people must be constantly aware of his position, his image. He is being threatened from all sides, impossible to forget for an instant the need to keep up one's defences. (Bhabha, H.K. cited in Fanon, 1963. p.ix).

I moved to Tauranga to live with my father at fourteen years old and became aware of my cultural self against the back drop of a very different way of being. This experience of double consciousness, of viewing myself through the eyes of Pākehā, who I felt assumed who I was without making efforts to know me beyond their pre-conceptions. I felt viewed as a Brown person, to measures of Pākehā culture in which I didn't feel accepted as different, but unconsciously judged as less than. In this home environment, which was predominantly Pākehā, I adapted to 'fit'. I relate my grandparents' assimilation to my experience of adapting to my father's culture, which felt like survival more than conscious choice. These experiences which I never verbalised but which were incredibly painful, perhaps contributed to the formation of a White invalidating object and an unconscious White object self-state.

I believe the study of unconscious racialisation focused solely on the family unit is remiss without a consideration of racial and cultural socialisation in the wider context of society. This is the broader experience of racialisation through which we are all indoctrinated. In retrospect, from childhood I was socialised into assumptions and myths about different 'races' both in and outside my own family which were so normalised as to be internalised as truths, without critical reflection.

This messaging was conveyed through avenues such as media, social media, education, social discourse and politics. I posit that minorities are racialised about themselves more consciously than Pākeha, and that positive protective experiences of racialisation can occur alongside the oppressive aspects.

Essentialist racial constructs

Layton (2006) asserts that identity categories can be used as a source of strength, but can also be regressive and restrictive (Layton, 2006). Internalised negative beliefs, which exist out of conscious awareness, form racist representations that become introjected and organised into a set of object relationships and form "bad-cultural objects" (Davids, 2011).

I counter-identify with these 'bad cultural objects', the denigrating stereotypes and assumptions of both parts of my racial identity, while being hyper-aware of these affects and traits in myself. This results in an internal vigilance in which I feel shame in response to recognising aspects of my own nature.

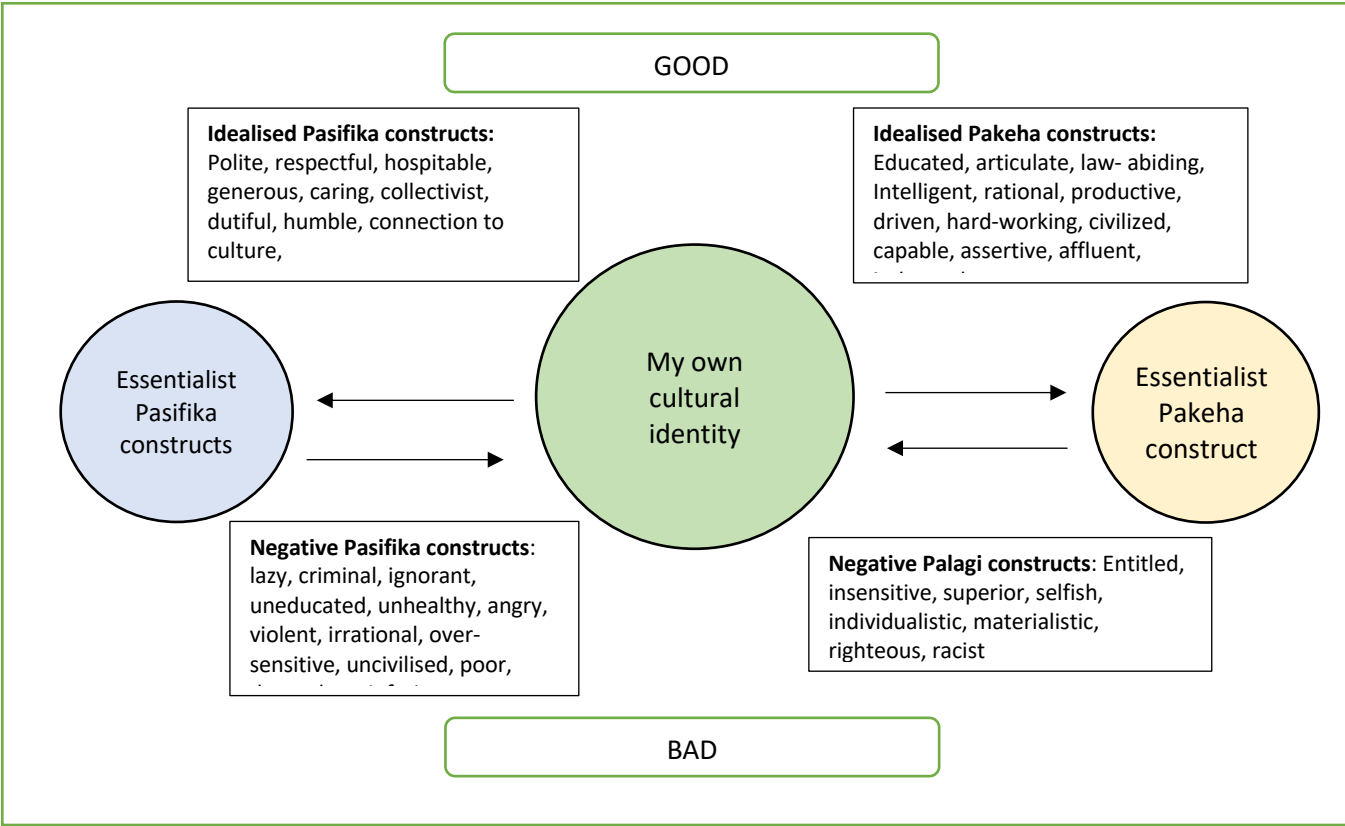
Journal entry 3rd May, 2021.

Layton defines the regressive force of racial/ cultural identity constructs as the normative unconscious processes that push to consolidate the "right" kind of identity (2006). Idealisation and denigration are both at play in societally constructed hierarchical identities, defining different aspects of self and 'other' to which we identify and counter-identify, and which we project (Layton, 2006).

It seems the cost of this adaptation is that identity is not choice driven, but a reaction to definitions. I believe both idealising and denigrating racial constructs create narrow and contradictory definitions of ascribed racial identity.

Figure 3

The impact of essentialists constructs on my own identity



Note: The figure reflects my perception of the stereotypes and assumptions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in Pasifika and Pākeha which may influence what I strive to be and what I disavow.

Narcissistic injury

I suggest the sense of narcissistic injury and responding defensiveness in the dynamic of racial microaggressions (which I believe occurs in both minorities and Pākeha), are a response to the sense of double consciousness experienced in moments of conflicting interracial engagement. The view of ourselves we ‘see’ through the other, might also include projections of the way a disavowed part of us sees ourselves, exposing or challenging the racialised traits with which we identify or counter-identify. In response to the sense that we have become the ‘bad’ cultural object, we may project these judgements as coming from ‘the other’ as a defence against the way a part of us sees ourselves. Because of the realities of racism, unconscious racialisation, power asymmetry and normative unconscious processes involved, I suggest Pākeha are more efficient at keeping these internal racist organisations out of consciousness.

Being afakase (mixed heritage)

I am Pasifika. My brownness is what is seen yet I feel a sense of illegitimacy towards claiming my Pasifika heritage, as if I'm not Pasifika enough. I am also Pākehā and this has implicitly influenced my way of seeing the world, yet I do not move through the world as Pākehā. I have a sense of belonging to neither and both of my racial identities. Between these two poles of identifying and counter-identifying, my own sense of self gets lost.

Journal entry January 16th, 2021.

These sentiments are reportedly a common experience of multi-racial people (Sue, 2010, Keddell, 2006). Perceptions of minority ethnicities or constructs of race are highly dichotomized and politicized in Aotearoa (Cornell, Fleras and Spoonley, 2001; Keddell, 2006). The pressure to exhibit an ethnicity 'authentically' is experienced both from society and from inside the ethnic group (Keddell, 2006). Those who don't fit these narratives can become marginalised as inauthentic, creating rigid boundaries to negotiate such as those who are of multiple ethnic ancestries (Keddell, 2006).

The term 'fia palagi' which infers 'trying to be White', is a derogatory term used towards those who are afakasi (half cast) or perceived to be overly assimilated to Western culture and therefore don't exhibit an 'authentic' Pasifika identity (Keddell, 2006). This term captures the internalised judgement (the sense of White double consciousness) I feel in being too Palagi (White).

It seems I have both a sense of double consciousness and White double consciousness, a view of my Pasifika self through Pākehā eyes, and a view of my Pākehā self, through Pasifika eyes. A dynamic that makes sense of a previously unconscious hyperawareness of myself in relation to both idealised and denigrating racial constructs.

The False Self

Alleyne (2007) observed that the 'internal oppressor' creates a false self. Winnicott described how a 'false self' or 'caretaker self' defence can develop in order to protect the 'true self' (1960). The 'false self' is turned outward, and is based on 'compliance, adapting and fitting in' to the expectations of the environment (Winnicott, 1965). I relate both conforming (identifying) or resisting (counter-identifying) to an ascribed cultural identity as a form of false self.

My false-self defenses crumbled in the face of the unintentional microaggressions which spoke to my own disavowed- the negative Pasifika constructs to which I counter-identified, while being clearly hyper-sensitive to. At this point in my journey I feel grateful for this experience. Without the destruction of my false self I would not have had the opportunity for the transformation that this experience facilitated. I intuit that my disavowed constitutes the negative stereotypes of both Pasifika and Pākehā as listed in diagram 3. These fears/ beliefs

belong to self-states that contradict my conscious sense of self, perhaps this is the self-idealised false self that Alleyne (2007) speaks of. In challenging the group I was also challenging the way my 'internal oppressor' sees myself and breaking its 'rules' of accommodation and silence. Over time, what I felt as a vague cognitive shadow has become more crystallised. Recognising these beliefs belonging to different self-states has allowed a process of acknowledging, accepting, grieving, and addressing these beliefs as being alive in my environment but also importantly residing in parts of myself.

Shaking off the shackles of a racialised False Self

My sense of racial and cultural identity has evolved over the course of this heuristic process. Identifying and counter-identifying with racial constructs has influenced what I accept in myself and what I disavow. When I step back from the experience and view it from a distance, these constructs split traits, affects and behaviours along binary lines creating an illusion (expectation) of perfection which is not based on the reality of human experience. Rather than colluding with this illusion of 'good' and 'bad', I feel able to acknowledge all my thoughts, feelings, traits, adaptations and experiences. Alongside my positive traits, I can at times be hurt, angry, irrational, lazy and ignorant. I can also at times be entitled, superior and express or act out unconsciously racist beliefs, and hold these alongside the 'good', addressing what I discover in myself, rather than falling into or denying a binary view of myself as all 'bad'. Essentially I can resist becoming a White object or a Brown object to myself.

My evolving sense of myself is as a third identity, which encompasses my cultures and my experience of being brown skinned and multi-ethnic, born and raised in the multi-cultural, politically bi-cultural context of Aotearoa. My identity therefore feels somewhat liberated from identifying and counter-identifying with ascribed criteria between racial essentialist constructs and is becoming something I can define on my own terms.

Narcissistic wounding

Alleyne suggests 'the internal oppressor' is the result of narcissistic wounding, which she asserts underlies a compensatory false self (Alleyne, 2007). This explains the depth of my affective response to the unintentional racial microaggressions which were experienced as a personal attack. Narcissistic wounds are characterised by idealisation, denigration and other schizoid dynamics, where exposure of a psychic wound feels annihilating to the self (Kohut, 1966). My narcissistic wounding came from an unintentional racial microaggression which voiced a belief that also lived hidden in a part of myself (my internal oppressor). 'Brown people are seen as less than'. This pathogenic belief still feels painful, but I can tolerate it. I have come to accept that it also exists in the social unconscious, where I suggest it contributes to racial disparities through discrimination towards minorities, but also through self-denigrating behaviours and beliefs minorities might hold toward themselves, through unconscious

racialisation. I find this heart breaking. If unconscious racialisation is the imprint of our external environment, it can exist in our psyche's in a similar way. Facing the truth that this belief has been internalised and exists in a part of myself, I can confront it, address it and heal it.

Looking at narcissistic wounding as it manifests in the minority psyche alone would constitute an example of normative unconscious processes which reinforce racial oppression. Layton (2009) suggests that narcissistic wounding is present on all sides of racialised enactments and results from attempts to defend against, or align with, societally constructed racial/ cultural identity norms. While I don't deny the sense of narcissistic wounding in my own experience, I perceived the group's response to indicate an essentially similar narcissistic wounding. Perhaps 'I am racist' is disavowed and defended against by Pākeha in the same way that 'I am inferior' was defended against in myself. The fear of recognising 'I am racist' might feel annihilating in a similar way to 'I am inferior'. I conceptualise the intrapsychic mechanisms of 'the group' as similar to my own in these interactions. Driven by fear, guilt, shame, and other disavowed affects that belonged to more than just this moment.

Acknowledging the disavowed.

I feel distraught, suffocating from the many current examples of how the minority perspective is positioned as subordinate, and the Eurocentric perspective is privileged. I feel infuriated that this is so unconscious that as it occurs, it is denied. I can't breathe.

Journal entry, 11th May, 2020.

When I look back on this journal entry, I recognise that although I was speaking to this dynamic in greater society, I was also speaking to my own 'internal oppressor'. Through sustained immersion I observed my internal oppression, my disavowal of the feelings involved in this phenomenon. I came to know the part of me that judged my grief as over-sensitivity or victimhood, and my anger as irrationality, the imprint of society on my psyche which manifested in denying these feelings as unacceptable or invalid.

Grief

I felt the dam break today, and felt my grief for the transgenerational impact of 'race', class, and social inequities which are often denied. The impact of colonisation and adaptations to the experience of disenfranchisement and acculturation and it's connection to current socio-economic disparities, a trauma which is often dissociated from its outcomes and adaptations. I consider that these unacknowledged advantages/ disadvantages are both external and internal.

I grieve the pain involved in reckoning with this reality, and the sense of powerlessness which tempts me to submit, rebel or simply withdraw. I grieve the effort it takes to fight for a seat at the table and that having a seat at the table doesn't guarantee being heard. I grieve the internal oppressor, the gaslighting I experience even as I write this, the false belief that to entertain my sadness is positioning myself as a victim. I grieve the racism I find in my own psyche.

Journal entry. January 14th, 2021.

Responding emotionally to racial injustice is often attributed to over-sensitivity, which is “a coded language, a gas-lighting of the micro-aggressive moment and its structural implications” (Taffel, 2020. p. 384). It’s an expression of White privilege which says “you don’t get to challenge me about the impact of my biases” (Taffel, 2020. p. 383). Denying my sadness not only colluded with normative unconscious processes, but suspended an important grieving process. It feels healing to grieve without shame.

Rage

I used to be ashamed of this rage in myself, now I want to use it. I am tired of trying not to be the angry Brown person. I am angry! How can I not be? I want to channel a healthy sense of entitlement. To give myself permission to feel my feelings, to fight for my own rights and to speak my truth. I feel I’ve been disarmed of the protective capacity of anger by the effort I make to disprove this stereotype of ‘the angry Brown person’. What does this counter-identification cost?

Journal entry. 8th September, 2020.

Taffel notes the impact of affectively charged moments of experiencing racial injustice and invalidation can re-emerge in flashes of deep anger and resentment (2020). Pathologizing these affects can lead to an endless second guessing of minorities affective realities in response to these moments, and reinforce these dynamics while denying they exist (Taffel, 2020). Taffel (2020) suggests that “although unnerving, the expression of enraged protest is better than the despair of silenced anger or dissociation” (p. 383). “Working psychoanalytically with cultural discrimination and trauma has the potential of reversing the colonizing process” (Hooks, 1995 cited in Guralnik, 2016. p. 654).

Shame and fear

Shame is what drives me to silence, to hide. I fear what will happen for stepping out of line.

Journal entry. 5th May, 2020.

I battled these feelings intermittently during this dissertation journey, in which I feel I am ‘stepping out of line’, I felt shame that I might be ‘wrong’ and fear that I will be villainized or pathologized. According to Woodard (2020), shame or whakamā is prone to develop in “hostile or infertile conditions where mana and self-image (are weakened), accompanied by corresponding experiences of powerlessness” (p102). Although whakamā has been explored in relation to Maori as a result of colonisation, my experience of this phenomenon as a woman of Pasifika/ Pākehā ethnicity, resonates with this research. There is relief in normalising the shame that comes with this phenomenon, in which I suspect I held shame for feeling shame, a self-perpetuating cycle. I realise that ‘stepping out of line’, not following the unwritten

protocols of racial engagement is the only way to shift the sense of powerlessness, both interpersonally and intra-psychically.

Assimilation, unconscious racism and privilege

I strongly identify with my Pasifika self, and it is how I am identified in the world, it is what is most conscious in me. Perhaps in this I too am prone to over-identify and sidestep acknowledgement of my own privilege as a person of mixed 'race'. I am also Pākehā, western society is the environment in which I was raised and western culture is also my culture. I also hold a western perspective and am socialised into normalised unconscious processes which are still probably beyond my awareness at the present time. As well as costs, there are many privileges I hold due to my mixed heritage.

This is by far the hardest part of my disavowed to connect with, and where I experience the most resistance. Bringing this into the light and understanding it more deeply as an understandable response to my societal and familial context has changed my relationship to these aspects of myself. In claiming and reframing the disavowed, I feel the power of society's gaze on my inner self lessening, and at the same time my own sense of self strengthening.

Experiencing an interracial intersubjective third

After reading my dissertation draft, an advisor challenged some aspects of the dissertation with which he held a different perspective. This was a vulnerable and courageous conversation; being an inter-racial dyad we spoke of the potential to enact the racialised dynamics in this dissertation because we were aware they were alive between us, whether conscious or not. We were able to consider and speak to our different perspectives and positions, shaped by our racial realities, societal positioning and life experience (as a Pākehā male and a Brown female), and how these impacted the lens through which we interpreted the world.

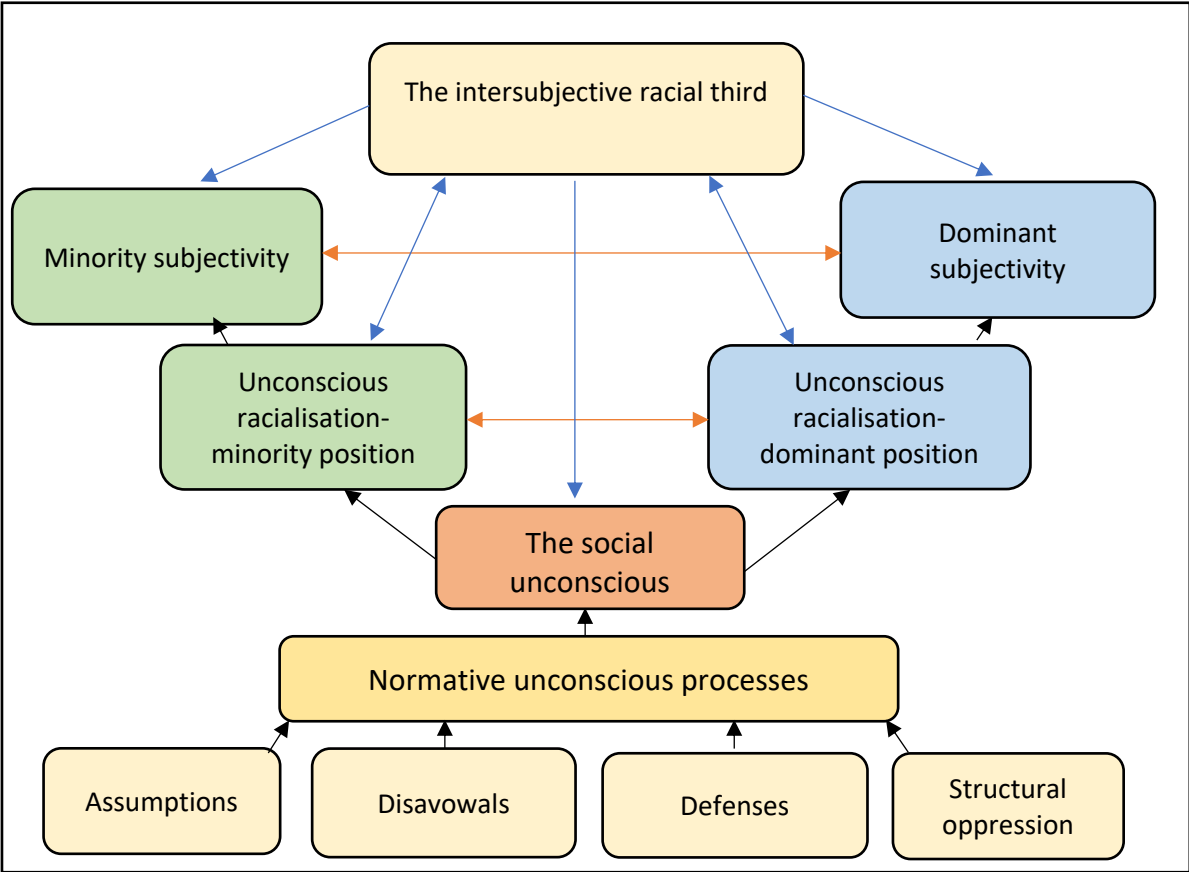
Awareness of dissociated racial self-states and willingness to hear the perspective of the other without losing our own, facilitated a feeling of safety where we could share the fragments of racialisation we found in society as reflected in ourselves, and grieve this painful reality together. I posit that awareness of our various self-states allowed us to be less defensive, to hear each other's perspectives without projecting into them, and feeling attacked by them. I perceived this as an emotionally vulnerable and open conversation where neither of us denied or submitted to the other (Benjamin 2004). Instead we held our different subjectivities alongside each other within the realities of our shared social context, creating an intersubjective racial third similar to Ogden's (2004) analytic third. Benjamin (2004) describes this recognition of mutual influence as 'surrender', "not to an idealized or projected version of either the accuser or the accused" (Benjamin, 2007, p 2). Rather a surrender to the possibility

of multiple selves and the multiple selves of the other, which facilitates vulnerable 'I and thou' relating (Stephens, 2020).

Considering double consciousness from the perspective of intersubjectivity, Stephen's (2020) suggests that in racial engagements, "projective identifications and affective enactments around racial identities are seen as engaging simultaneously, next to, and alongside each other" (p. 216) . Double consciousness is an essential component of the psychodynamics of intersubjectivity (Bromberg, 2008). The combination of "the experience of one's relationship to one's internal, disavowed 'not me's', and the stimulation by a real, experience-near, interaction with a racial other" (Stephens, 2020. p. 219), which if able to be held in an interracial intersubjective third, facilitates deeper knowing of both the 'not me's' of the 'other' and ourselves.

Figure 4

The intersubjective racial third.



Note: Figure 4. illustrates the interracial intersubjective third; capturing what could be observed through interracial intersubjective relating. The black arrows represent the flow of societal influences on individual psyches. The blue arrows represent what can be observed from the position of the intersubjective analytic third. The orange arrows represent relationships between the minority and dominant position both conscious and unconscious. The spaces between and the double consciousness which comes alive through the projective gaze of the other is how we may come to better understand normative unconscious processes and dissociated/ disavowed aspects of ourselves.

How unintentional racial microaggressions contribute to and reflect unconscious racialisation

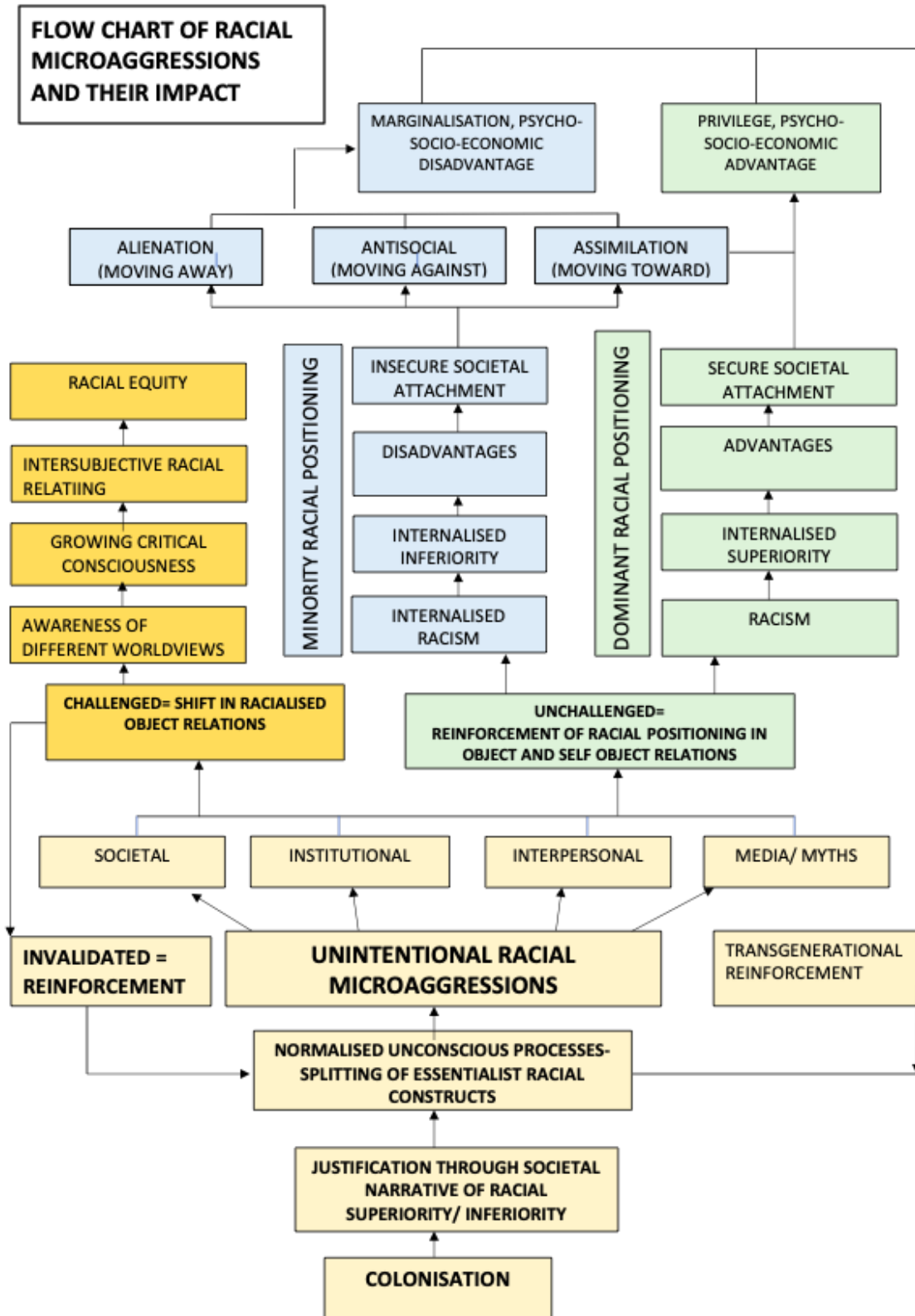
The encounter and challenge of unintentional racial microaggressions represent a moment of opportunity not only for mutual recognition but an opening for discovery and an intersubjective exploration of the interplay of racialisation in self and 'other'.

The flowchart below captures the role unintentional racial microaggressions play in the perpetuation of unconscious racialisation. I aim to depict a broad and generalised overview of this phenomenon. The processes in light yellow illustrate the relationship to historical context and resulting normative unconscious processes; the 'invisible norms' and assumptions which lead to unintentional racial microaggressions. Secondly, the light blue and green processes speak to the relationship between the external manifestations of unintentional racial microaggressions, and their internalisation as unconscious racialised positioning, representing the psychic privilege and disadvantage which result from an asymmetrical societal hierarchy. These result in further external and perpetuating manifestations of disparity. I suggest some iteration of this matrix is internalised into the psyche of all individuals, who orient to their relative racial position. I emphasise that these positions are dynamic and intersubjective, and depend on the specific context and the racial position of 'the other'. I highlight the cycle of transgenerational transmission of these positions/ constructs. Finally I draw particular attention to the benefits that can come from using the opportunity's offered in these moments of engagement with unintentional racial microaggressions both intra-psychically and societally (in bright yellow). If these moments of mutual double consciousness are able to be held and considered intersubjectively, they can lead to greater recognition.

Although the actual processes of unconscious racialisation into our object and self-object relations from the external environment are, in reality, much more complex, I believe it is helpful to hold this simplified flow of processes in mind.

Figure 5

Flow chart of unintentional racial microaggressions and their relationship to unconscious racialisation.



Chapter Eight- Discussion

Summary of findings

This exploration was made with the intention to make meaning of unconscious racialisation through the experience of making, encountering and challenging, unintentional racial microaggressions. It was framed within the context of Aotearoa and my lived experience as a woman of mixed racial heritage. A vignette of my experience formed the basis of this exploration. I sought to elucidate the interplay of unconscious racial dynamics and the dissonance between my perception and that of others (a clash of racial realities) regarding these interactions. I used psychodynamic theories and conceptualisations of racism from an object relations and interpersonal perspective, and a consideration of the influence of societal dynamics on the psyche to frame this exploration.

Immersion included a micro-analysis of the interpersonal dynamics involved in the vignette from my perspective as a recipient of racial microaggressions. This focused on the processes and defenses of racialised relating, disseminating my perception of the dynamics underlying these interactions. I suggested that micro-aggressive encounters invoked a sense of double consciousness in both recipient and aggressor. 'Equivalent' enactments of dissociated historical trauma and mutual racialised projections were brought to life in these moments, which contributed to the immensity of affect involved in these ruptures. I discussed the interplay between the disavowed and persecutory anxiety in this phenomenon and my perception of the unconscious socially sanctioned defenses which reflected entrenched racial power asymmetry which invalidate the minority perspective.

The second focus of immersion was the socio-cultural-politico context in Aotearoa. An exploration of colonialism and a historical overview of societal racialisation, the external circumstances which shape unconscious racialisation. I perceived a dissonance between the conscious narrative of egalitarianism and progress, and the reality of disparity and continued discrimination, highlighting the split between what is conscious and what remains unconscious. I suggested that increased social discourse regarding Whiteness is raising 'White double consciousness'. I explored how the defenses of denial, over-identification, and manic reparation are utilised to avoid the unbearable affect that this White double consciousness may evoke and how these defenses keep awareness of 'internal racist organisations' unconscious. Disillusion was identified as necessary in order to recognise the impact of racism in our environment on our own psyches.

In chapter seven I summarised the findings of my own intrapsychic exploration. This included the discovery of my own racialised self-states (exposed through experiences of double

consciousness) and their relationship to the 'I who feels'. I considered my distress in response to encountering unintentional racial microaggressions as narcissistic wounding, (and posited that narcissistic wounding is mutual in this phenomenon). I suggested this wounding occurred as a result of exposure to disavowed aspects of the self. The impact of discrete racial and cultural constructs, and the repressive nature of these constructs which influence what is disavowed, resulting in the formation of a 'false self' were explored. I share my awakening to my own disavowed unconscious racialisation, a form of recognition trauma, and a process of acknowledgement and grieving. Finally, I shared my healing experience of an intersubjective interracial third.

Relating to the literature view

The Literature view in chapter four explored current racial microaggression research. It identified racial microaggressions as a common experience for minority peoples. It explored racial microaggression themes and the ways they are interpreted by minorities. It spoke to the impact of this messaging as cumulative and detrimental to psychological well-being.

The decision making process involved for recipients in how to respond to microaggressions was outlined (Sue et al., 2008b). Research explored minority perceptions of the risks to challenging racial microaggressions within academia in counselling training and supervision experiences, which included further racial invalidation; and the consequences of not challenging, which included feelings of powerlessness, resignation and invisibility (Constantine et al., 2008; Hernandez et al., 2010).

Therapeutic relationships served as a microcosm of participants' experiences in cross racial interactions in their greater lives (Miranda, 2013). It was noted that racial microaggressions were a common experience in therapy (Chang and Berk, 2009; Lee et al., 2018). It wasn't the microaggressions themselves, but the way they were met when challenged that determined whether minority clients in cross racial dyads remained in therapy. It was noted that challenging microaggressions can lead to more ruptures, and that mutual recognition is often not attained (Chang & Berk, 2009; Owen et al., 2014)

When the microaggression was raised, acknowledged, and understood by both parties, ruptures could be repaired and the therapeutic alliance became stronger because of it (Chang & Berk, 2009). Not responding well to conversations about difference created further ruptures that often resulted in client termination of therapy (Chang & Berk, 2009). The difficulty of talking about race and the necessary training to be able to hold these conversations was identified (Santos & Dallos, 2012)

In Aotearoa based research, Māori and Pasifika tertiary students identified racial microaggressions as inherent in their training, and detailed protective factors which countered

these forces (Mayeda et al, 2014). Ellis (2016) considered how to work with clients' internalised racism and suggested an exploration of how therapists might be able to better recognise their own internal racism as an area for further research.

How my findings fit into previous research.

Reflecting my perspective of the underlying dynamics in these interactions and the societal environment in which they occurred, I was able to contextualise my own internal exploration. I compared experiences of rupture which resulted in racialised object to object relating, to the creation of an intersubjective interracial third which enabled observation and exploration of unconscious racialisation, enabling mutual vulnerability and recognition.

Explication- A broader conceptualisation.

Unintentional racial microaggressions are an instrument of indoctrination into racialised norms, as well as an expression and perpetuation of these norms, reinforcing unconscious racialisation. Racial microaggression ruptures are enactments which begin with the unconscious projection of denigrating constructs towards minorities as 'cultural objects'. This can evoke double consciousness in the recipient, who is then reacting not only to the external situation but to their own 'internal oppressor'. Challenges to these assumptions often evoke White double consciousness in the perpetrator, who in turn responds defensively to what is felt as an attack on the self-idealised non-racist self. Assumptions, behaviours or attitudes that the recipient is calling attention to with their challenges, are then not able to be considered.

The exposure of disavowed racialisation is commonly felt as narcissistic wounding. Mutual defensive and projective responses to this wounding lead to breakdowns in recognition and polarising paranoid-schizoid dynamics. This clash of racial realities can transform ordinarily empathic subject-to-subject relationships into hostile and polarised object-to-object relating. these re-enactments can result in the perpetuation and reinforcement of unconscious racialisation and hierarchical racialised positioning.

Unintentional racial microaggressions are inevitable, and can represent moments of opportunity for deeper recognition of differing racial realities, oppressive 'norms' and exploration of unconscious racialisation. Rather than a defensive response to challenges focused on who is right or wrong; a re-orientation towards 'what can I learn about myself and the other' and even 'can we feel the grief of our racialisation together', can create a different end to this story. Through the creation of an interracial intersubjective third, these ruptures can become moments of 'I and thou' relating. The mutual sense of double consciousness that can arise in both minority and dominant positions in this dynamic of unintentional racial microaggressions, if able to be held, then becomes valuable, facilitating a situation where both

recipient and offender can “sit (together) with sadness and a sense of mutual containment and recognition” (Swartz, 2020. p. 619).

I suggest the burden of responsibility to transform these moments lies with the person in the position of power. If those being challenged are willing to be open to the possibility of their ‘not knowing’, they have an opportunity to learn what they do not yet know. Rather than an irreparable rupture or splitting of good and bad, it is possible to navigate racial difference through surrender and acknowledgement of the inevitability of unconscious racialisation and wounding that lies in each of us as a response to a societal context in which unconscious racialisation is alive.

Relevance to discipline of psychotherapy

Unintentional racial microaggressions are a window into exploring unconscious racialisation in both minorities and the dominant ‘race’. With its focus on the unconscious, psychodynamic psychotherapy can help navigate this process.

Relevance to psychotherapy training

I suggest that a strong foundation in recognising and addressing unconscious racialisation in the self, begins through the training process (Sue, 2013). Experiencing, exploring, and building tolerance for the discomfort which arises in these moments of racial rupture may assist psychotherapists to identify their own unconscious racialisation, their disavowed, and their resistance (Sue, 2013).

This includes framing unintentional racial microaggressions as an inevitable result of belonging to a society where binary assumptions about ‘race’ and culture exist in the social unconscious, alongside conscious egalitarian values. Emphasis must be given to the fact that it is not the microaggression itself, but the navigation of rupture and repair in these moments which determines the ability to maintain relationships (Lee et al., 2018; Taffel, 2020; Sue, 2013; Caffisch, 2020).

The findings in this dissertation support further exploration of the influence of wider society on our internal framework of object relations. This includes not only a consideration of the social unconscious, but an explication of the normative unconscious processes which become the invisible norms by which power is maintained (Layton, 2019). Normalising the existence of unconscious racialisation would perhaps allay the sense of narcissistic wounding experienced by both recipient and perpetrator in these moments, reducing resistance to acknowledging unconscious racialisation when it comes alive in the self, and encourage self-reflexivity and willingness to explore these issues.

I suggest that tutors and supervisors do the work of self-reflection, to explore their own unconscious racialisation so they can facilitate discussions as allies, and speak to normative

unconscious processes and power asymmetries when they come alive in the classroom or experiential training setting (Sue, 2013; Morgan, 2008). Facilitated experience of an interracial intersubjective third in conversations around 'race' and culture, privilege and power, and unconscious racialisation which influences our perspectives and world views- provide an avenue by which we come to better know the racial/ cultural/ ethnic 'other' and ourselves. I recommend a formal process within institutions which allows trainees to address cultural issues (unconscious racialisation) that arise in cross-racial supervision relationships.

In the clinical encounter

The therapy relationship has the potential to provide a reparative experience of intersubjective racial engagement. It can facilitate exploration of unconscious racialisation on the psyche, acknowledge the reality of racism, and the different societal experiences and world views which racial positions entail. This requires the therapist to be open to the possibility of their own unconscious racialisation and 'not knowing'. The awareness of normative unconscious processes and the interplay of unconscious racialisation may facilitate the therapists ability to acknowledge unintentional racial microaggressions non-defensively when challenged in the clinical encounter. Whether a clients sense of injury originates from projection of the perpetrator or the recipient in the moment is (in my view), essentially irrelevant. Minorities iteration of 'the internal oppressor' has formed through membership in a social environment in which we are all a part. We are all implicated in this phenomenon whether we are conscious or not and regardless of best intentions. If the therapist can neither deny, or collapse into a view of themselves as 'bad', I believe these moments are the pathway to true reparation.

My personal exploration of unconscious racialisation will be of value in understanding how to work with this phenomenon in the clinical encounter. I found, in interracial relationships both therapy and supervision, the acknowledgement of racial difference and openness to explore the differing experiences and world views this entails was valuable. Explicitly acknowledging the social reality of racism and the inescapable fact that unconscious racialisation exists in the room between therapist and client helps build safety in the therapeutic environment (Dalal, 2002). Dalal (2002) suggests a model of moving from the outside in will build sufficient trust for the client to look at the internal aspects of this reality, ie. how they have internalised racialisation. With the creation of what I now understand as an interracial intersubjective third, I was able to explore my own unconscious racialisation in a way that didn't feel pathologizing or reinforcing of my internal oppressor. Understanding the regressive and damaging influence of these constructs while acknowledging the aspects which are protective and positive helped me take ownership of my identity. This in turn allowed the disavowed of both my minority and dominant self-states to be recognised, addressed and accepted for both good and bad (the depressive position).

Recommendations for further research

Further research into the experience of racial microaggressions and navigation of these moments for both minority clients and Pākehā therapists in the cross-racial clinical encounter would be valuable to contextualise this experience in the Aotearoa context. I believe this dissertation gives weight to further exploration of unconscious racialisation, the influence of society and normalised unconscious processes on the psyche. A consideration of the possibility of 'societal object relations' and societal attachment from dominant and minority positions would also be valuable. For minorities, who may feel less secure and safe in society, an exploration of insecure attachment, the strategies of avoidance (moving away), anxious ambivalent (conforming) and mixed (moving against) responses to societal authority, (which I allude to in the flow chart above) would be an interesting and I believe a currently pertinent area for further research.

Final thoughts

I had a dream early on in the dissertation process in which my class mates followed me home uninvited and sat in my lounge. I felt deeply exposed, powerless to protect myself and my family, and painfully self-conscious of their judgement. Aside from my initial interpretation of wanting to protect my children from the external forces of racism, I now intuit another meaning. My house is my psyche and my classmates represent the totality of the projective gazes I have internalised from my societal environment. I want to protect my children from my own unconscious racialisation and from my adaptations to it. Rather than compliance, silence and powerless toleration of this critical inner gaze, I feel capable of acknowledging these guests, understanding how they came to be there, and holding my sense of myself alongside their view of me. This sense of having agency, safety, and authenticity in my own psyche captures my sense of self-transformation in this process.

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