

**A CROSS-GENERATIONAL STUDY OF THE PERCEPTION
AND CONSTRUCTION OF SOUTH AFRICANS OF INDIAN
DESCENT AS FOREIGNERS BY FELLOW CITIZENS**

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DECLARATION

I, Kathryn Pillay, declare that the research reported on in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my own original research. Where data, ideas and quotations have been used that are not my own they have been duly acknowledged as being sourced from other persons. No part of this work has been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Kathryn Pillay (Candidate)

For Alexa

May you dream bigger dreams and reach higher heights, always remembering that “ ... God, who by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of - infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes” (Ephesians 3:20). This thesis is a testament to that wonderful promise.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined how the perceptions of South Africans of Indian descent as foreign, by fellow South African citizens, have changed or the extent to which they have remained the same from the time of the first arrival of indentured labourers from India in 1860 to the present. In so doing the study also revealed how those classified as ‘Indian’ in South Africa have constructed their identities in relation to, and because of, differing social, political and economic contexts. In order to achieve the aims of this research, the study was periodised based on the key political transitions over the last 150 years. As a result, the constructions and perceptions of ‘Indians’ by others were explored from the period of indenture under colonialism (1860-1910), through to the formation of Union (1910-1948), into apartheid (1948-1994) and ultimately through to democracy (1994-present). The data collection methods included documentary sources, oral histories, and semi-structured interviews. The main documentary sources collected included articles from *The Mercury* and *Ilanga* newspapers, spanning 150 years but taken from the key periods as discussed above. In addition it was deemed equally important to conduct in-depth interviews with South African families of Indian descent. The trajectories of five such families, and of the individuals within these family units, were explored, covering the period from the arrival of the first immigrant from India to South Africa, to the present day.

The findings reveal that the perceptions of ‘Indians’ as foreign have endured more than it has altered in the psyche of fellow South Africans through each of the political dispensations and because the dominant racial discourse has persisted throughout the various periods albeit through varying mechanisms and diverse narratives justifying it at different times. Although democracy brought with it hope for a more inclusive South Africa with the African National Congress-dominated parliament adopting a constitution based on shared citizenship, the basis of the policies that followed however represent the antithesis of inclusion by entrenching existing notions of difference through the perpetuation of ‘race’ categories that were previously reproduced and legitimised by the repealed apartheid-era Population Registration Act. Blatant xenophobic discourse against South Africans of Indian descent are indeed still apparent, with the latest expressions centering around notions of autochthony which imply that ‘Indians’ are not indigenes of South Africa and hence should have no claim to its resources.

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- Chapter One -

Introduction

“They don’t deserve to be South African”

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how the perceptions of South Africans of Indian descent as foreign, by fellow South African citizens, have changed or the extent to which they have remained the same from the time of the first arrival of indentured labourers from India in 1860, to the present. It further examines how these perceptions, from the ‘outside’, have contributed to the identity construction of ‘Indians’,¹ historically and in contemporary South African society and, notwithstanding agency, the influence of these perceptions on the way in which South Africans of Indian descent have constructed their identities in relation to, and because of, differing social, political and economic contexts. In so doing the study also reveals how notions of ‘belonging’ and more especially *who* belongs to the ‘nation’ have altered throughout the course of the past 150 years.

1.2 Background to the Study

It has been argued that social science research should be emancipatory, that is by confronting and eliminating human oppression, and establishing an environment “in which people can live flourishing lives” (Wright, 2006:94). Taking this into consideration, I began reflecting on the relevance of my research topic in contemporary South Africa, and found myself in

¹ The word ‘Indian’ is placed within inverted commas to denote the category assigned to people of Indian descent in South Africa, which was legitimised by the former apartheid government. This classification was based on physical external appearance and the initial unproblematic combination of group arrival and hence bureaucratic labeling (Erasmus, 2007). However this category is still employed in contemporary South Africa as it is regarded as an ‘official’ racial category by the state. The inverted commas signify in the first instance that the category ‘Indian’ is not accepted as a biologically meaningful category but nevertheless as a very real social construct. Secondly it is used in this dissertation, without quotation marks, to create a distinction between South Africans of Indian descent and Indian nationals from India.

somewhat of a quandary. As a social scientist, and idealist, intent on having an impact on society with my research, I questioned whether my study was both socially and politically relevant, as well as topical in a so-called democratic society committed to non-racialism.

It was at this point of reflection, however, when the calls of “‘Hamba khaya! Hamba khaya uye eBombay’ (Go home! Go to Bombay!)” (Ngwane, 2009), quickly wrenched me out of my ethical quagmire, and into the reality that apartheid era tactics of divide and rule still form part of the political machinery in contemporary South African society. These calls for ‘Indians’ to go ‘home’, was sounded out at a public meeting that was held on 10 July 2009, by the eThekweni Municipality to address the concerns of traders and other interested parties regarding the closure of the Early Morning Market in Durban. What was most apparent, according to Ngwane (2009), were the divisive methods used by government officials, led by the mayor, to achieve the goals of the municipality. These methods included pitting ‘black’ African traders against their ‘Indian’ counterparts and stirring racial dissention. Such techniques of garnering co-operation through the perpetuation of racial silos and ethnic enclaves are reminiscent of apartheid machinations, and steer clear of the ‘non-racial’ ideals advocated by the government.

Although the Freedom Charter (1955) maintains that “South Africa belongs to all those who live in it” and that the Constitution (1996) repeats this formulation, it is increasingly evident in a post-apartheid democratic society that this is not the case. The ways in which practices of ‘othering’ are reproduced in society are disturbing given the country’s commitment to inclusivity and to ‘non-racialism’, and although South African society is also presently experiencing an era of transformation with new realities and possibilities, it could be argued that apartheid has been replaced by xenophobia as one of the new forms of social unrest, not only through direct conflict but also indirect exclusion. The negative sentiment expressed toward foreigners and those perceived as ‘not belonging’ at a time when non-racialism and non-discrimination arguably inform new discourses and policies, indeed poses a conundrum.

Gellner (1995:9) argues that the ways in which the manifestation of xenophobia can become “politically dangerous and humanly catastrophic” are extremely diverse. Indeed in South Africa, it is not just xenophobia demonstrated as a “dislike or fear of foreigners” McDonald and Jacobs (2005:5), but the resulting violent manifestation of resentment of those not ‘us’

that is on the increase since 1994. This violent action is one reason why South Africa stands apart from other countries such as those in contemporary Europe, who experience xenophobia in different forms. For example Wakolbinger (1995:10) points out that the attitudes of Austrians toward foreigners can be regarded as “ ... ambivalent and highly dependent on situational conditions, especially economic ones.” She provides evidence by arguing that xenophobia in Austria is as a result of three contributing factors: discrimination against foreigners/foreign workers through legislation; ‘anti-foreign attitudes’ of certain segments of the population; and through right-wing fanaticism (Wakolbinger, 1995:14).² It should also be noted that although the violent attacks against foreign African migrants in South Africa in 2008³ were widely reported, such acts of brutality toward foreigners have been occurring for a long period of time in the country’s history, but have been severely under reported, and in many cases, unreported altogether (see Hassim et al (eds), 2008).⁴

Although the main targets of xenophobic violence in South Africa appear to be foreign nationals, many South African citizens, who are viewed as ‘foreign’ under certain circumstances, are also victimised. In fact, one third of those killed in the xenophobic violence in 2008 were South African citizens (Hassim et al (eds), 2008; Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2008). Several Pedi and Shangaan people were ordered by Zulu-speaking antagonists to “go back to Limpopo” (Mail and Guardian Online Reporters and SAPA, 2008). A 25 year old man arrested for public violence in Ramaphosa on the East Rand was reported to have said to the media that, “We will burn the Shangaans if they don't

² Although the right-wing fanaticism involves aggressive behaviour toward foreigners, the nature of the crimes are different to the violent attacks, and brutal murders such as the ones that occurred in May 2008 in South Africa. Additionally, in Austria xenophobia seems almost ‘state sanctioned’ and political parties base their electioneering on ‘ridding’ society of foreigners. In South Africa, although the government has condemned xenophobic violence, it has for years seemingly ignored the problem and so through this lack of action to enforce remedial measures, it could be argued that the state is complicit in the behaviour of its citizens toward foreigners.

³ In May 2008 violent outbreaks, targeted at mainly foreigners from other countries in Africa, swept through South Africa’s urban cities. These foreigners were at the time living in relatively poor localities. The nature of the violence included attacks and rape of women and children, violent criminal assault of individuals and houses and small business being demolished and looted. By the end of May the death toll as a result of this violence, stood at 62. In addition, tens of thousands of people were displaced (Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative, 2009).

⁴ For example, migrants living in the mine hostels from various parts of South and southern Africa prior to and during apartheid, were not recognised as South Africans, they were there for work and would have to eventually return ‘home’. Xenophobia in the form of violent conflict directed toward these migrants were explained in terms of primordialism, implying that hostilities between African ‘ethnic’ or ‘tribal’ groups in southern Africa have existed since the beginning of time. This notion of the conflict, between groups of workers on the mines, was reflected in various newspaper reports and was implied in the use of the term ‘faction fighting’.

go back... We will fight for this country. We will keep on going, they can't stop us" (Mail and Guardian Online Reporters and SAPA, 2008).⁵

This reveals the possibility that intolerance toward nearby foreigners (such as Zimbabweans and Mozambicans), which results in violence and exclusion, can easily further develop into hatred and violence toward all 'others',⁶ and the definition of what the 'other' is can easily turn into racist, religious and ethnically differentiated 'othering' with potentially fascist outcomes.⁷

1.3 Framing the Study

According to the 2013 mid-year population estimates, the 'Indian/Asian' 'population group' is estimated at 1.3 million which is 2.5 percent of the total South African population (Statistics South Africa, 2013). The Province of KwaZulu-Natal is home to 74 percent of South Africa's total 'Indian' population, or 825,000 people, with Durban's 'Indian' population being equivalent to 80 percent of this (Statistics South Africa, 2006).⁸ Although the majority of 'Indians' did come to South Africa to work as indentured labourers in Natal, a "second stream of migrants" (Mesthrie, 1997:100) followed after under the colony's ordinary immigration laws. Although they were mainly Muslim and Hindu traders predominantly from

⁵ Shangaan migrants first settled in the South African Lowveld from as early as 1864, arriving from Portuguese East Africa (now known as Mozambique). Although initially alliances were formed between the migrants and the Basotho headman and chiefs, tensions arose when 'Native Reserves' were demarcated by the government to house 'ethnic tribes' (Niehaus, 2002:557). This is not the first time then that Shangaans have been victims of xenophobia in South Africa (see Niehaus, 2002). There are also numerous newspaper articles that document earlier attacks on Shangaans. In 1984 and 1989, under apartheid, Sotho leaders argued that all Shangaans were in fact 'refugees' and they should 'return to Maputo' (Polzer, 2004:7). In May 2008, violent attacks were indiscriminately directed to both Mozambican migrants who had settled in South Africa in recent years, and South African 'Shangaans' who were viewed as being ethnically 'foreign'.

⁶ As opposed to many authors who define xenophobia or refer to it as a fear of 'strangers' or 'foreigners' Gellner (1995:6) describes xenophobia as "... hostility to the Other ..." implying that the characteristics attributed to 'others' could be more than just the nationality/citizenship of an individual or group. See also Appadurai (2006) and Yuval-Davis (2011).

⁷ After recounting statistics of the number of South Africans that were killed in the xenophobic violence in May 2008, Duncan Breen, spokesperson for the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (Cormsa), argued that "... anyone 'undesirable' may be attacked ..." in future and urged the South African Human Rights Commission to launch an investigation into the attacks (Mail and Guardian Online Reporters, 2008).

⁸ This is an indication of massive urbanisation of this sub-group. The process of urbanisation is important to understand identity amongst 'Indians' in South Africa due to the fact that urbanisation in this context occurred under the Group Areas Act of 1950 (The purpose of this act was to divide urban areas into racially segregated spaces resulting in only one 'race' inhabiting a particular area, thus creating a physical separation between 'races'). This therefore introduced the dynamics of proximity, which is crucial as identity construction would have been different if 'Indians' resided in smaller locales or culturally mixed locales.

the Gujarat area, there were some Christian Indians, including teachers, interpreters, catechists and traders who also migrated to southern Africa (Mesthrie, 1997:100). This second wave of migrants were referred to as 'passenger Indians' as they paid for their own journey to South Africa.

Just over half of the Indian labourers that traveled aboard the *Truro* (the first ship to transport indentured labourers from India to Natal in 1860), stayed on in South Africa after they had served out their indenture, while the rest boarded the *Red Riding Hood*, which was the first ship to carry repatriated Indians back to India in 1871 (Motwani et al, 1993). The Indian repatriates aboard this ship carried with them stories of misery, as they complained of beatings and unfair treatment by their 'colonial masters'. This resulted in the tightening of immigration control laws by the British Government of India (Ebr.-Vally, 2001). The colonial authorities in Natal, and thereafter the South African government (after 1910), frequently used the threat of repatriation as a form of intimidation, and to create insecurity amongst the indentured labourers, as they were reminded of their constant impermanence in the country.⁹

The arrival of these indentured labourers signaled a new era of racialisation in southern Africa. Until the beginning of the 20th century in South Africa all people that were not considered to be 'European' or 'black' were regarded as 'coloured' (Christopher, 2002 and 2009; Erasmus, 2007; Maré, 2011). By as late as 1950, the National Party (NP) was still hopeful that the 'Indians' would return to India, and so they were still classified as 'coloureds' for the purposes of population enumeration.¹⁰ At that stage the NP together with its supporters attempted actively to demonstrate why 'Indians' could not be integrated into South Africa or become South African citizens (Ebr.-Vally, 2001).

According to Klotz (1997), the debates on inclusion in the country focused on 'Indians' as consensus on the exclusion of 'black' people was already reached.¹¹ Unlike the Australian

⁹ Bauman (2011:42) argues that power is "institutionalized" through the creation of insecurity, uncertainty and fear. He refers to this process as the "manipulation of insecurity", stating further that "Uncertainty, insecurity's principal cause, is by far the most decisive tool of power – indeed, its very substance ... whoever is cast on the receiving end of uncertainty ... is disabled and disarmed in their efforts to resist and fight back against discrimination" (Bauman, 2011:42).

¹⁰ According to Christopher (2002:405), the classification 'coloured' was a broad umbrella category which included "Indian, Chinese, Cape Malay and Griqua sub groups in addition to the basic Cape Coloured group".

¹¹ One of the policies of apartheid, developed in the 1930s and 1940s and implemented in 1948 by the National Party government of South Africa, was to create 'homelands' for 'black' people (see also footnote five of this

government which granted full citizenship rights to Indians in 1918,¹² the South African government continued with anti-‘Indian’ legislation, dating back from 1885. For example the Union Nationality and Flags Act, No. 40 of 1927 denied ‘Indians’ the right to become citizens by naturalisation (Maasdorp and Pillay, 1977; Davenport, 1991). Other restrictions included the prohibition of ‘Indians’ in the Orange Free State from engaging in agriculture, trading or ownership of property. They were also not allowed to travel freely between provinces until 1975. In addition the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act No. 28 of 1946, also referred to as the “Ghetto Act”, was devised to restrict ‘Indian’ property ownership in ‘white’ areas in Natal¹³ (Maasdorp and Pillay, 1977; Davenport, 1991).

There were plans designed to persuade ‘Indians’ to willfully return to India and taxes were levied against indentured labourers who refused to do so. In addition expensive repatriation strategies were implemented by the Department of the Interior to tempt ‘Indians’ to go back to India. The NP together with those who opposed immigration also argued that ‘Indians’ would not be able to integrate culturally; an example of this was the deliberations around whether or not non-Christian marriages could be considered legal.¹⁴ Anxiety grew around the descendants of ‘Indian’ migrants, who by law could not be deported and who had even fewer reasons to return to India (Klotz, 1997).

‘Indians’ only became a permanent population, in the eyes of the governing authorities, in 1961 when these many plans to ‘repatriate’ them had failed. This was not due to any kindness on the part of the South African government, but was done so that the Indian government would no longer interfere in South African affairs, especially regarding the treatment of ‘Indians’.¹⁵ Indeed, for a period of almost 100 years after the arrival of the first indentured labourers, the impermanent status of Indians and people of Indian descent continued.

chapter and footnote 27 in Chapter Two) and thereby exclude them politically, economically and socially from mainstream South African society.

¹² Indians first arrived in Australia in the 19th century as convicts sent by the British Colonial government in India. Others were taken to work for British subjects who had been residing in India. Between 1860 and 1901 more Indians arrived to work as agricultural labourers, hawkers, domestic help and merchants amongst other occupations. By 1901, however, the ‘White Australia Policy’ was introduced which curtailed migration from India (Yarwood, 1964).

¹³ A more detailed discussion of the discriminatory pieces of legislation that affected Indian migrants and their descendants will be provided in the empirical chapters that follow.

¹⁴ It should be noted that non-Christian marriages were also a concern for the colonial and the Union governments as well, from as early as the 1900s (see Sheik 2005 and 2012). The legitimacy of non-Christian marriages will be discussed further in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

¹⁵ India was the first country to impose sanctions on South Africa. This was first done to publicly express their disapproval with the discriminatory laws against Indians in South Africa. It was later extended to show support

1.3.1 The ‘Diaspora’

James (2010) argues that all South Africans should be considered ‘settlers’, regardless of their skin colour, stating further that,

The Khoi/San moved from East Africa and, up until 2 000 years ago, people living in southern Africa were brown. Africa's black people are originally from the Niger/ Congo region. (James, cited in Johns, 2007:5)

In addition, the Nguni, Dutch, Malay, French, German, and British are not indigenous to South and southern Africa. James points out that, “No one group can lay claim to South Africa. Everyone is a settler, and we will show how people came here in waves of migration” (James, cited in Johns, 2007:5). Adding support to this argument, Giliomee and Mbenga (eds) (2007:viii), state that “*everyone* [emphasis added] in South Africa is descended from a migrant”.

Contrary to the above arguments, however, ‘Indians’ in South Africa are the only ‘group’ who have been referred to as a diaspora, and who have had diasporic status claimed for them by the Indian government.¹⁶ There are no British, European or even African diasporas for that matter, in South Africa. This implies then that ‘Indians’ are still viewed as ‘belonging’ to another ‘homeland’ and having a national ‘origin’ other than that of South Africa.¹⁷

It is important then to examine the othering of South Africans of Indian descent as foreign and the questions of ‘belonging’ as this can be viewed as being inextricably connected to notions of ‘us’ and ‘them’, of inclusivity and exclusivity, entitlement and ineligibility, and of

for all the “oppressed people” in South Africa (Reddy, 1995). In addition to this, in 1946 Indian officials made representation to the United Nations about the racist practices in South Africa generally and the treatment of ‘Indians’ in particular. The political context of South Africa at that point in time seemed to mirror what was happening in India where freedom from oppressive rule was being fought for (Collins and Lapierre, 1997).

¹⁶Chamber’s Twentieth Century Dictionary (Geddie (ed), 1962:289) defines a diaspora as ‘dispersion’, in reference to the dispersed Jews after their captivity in Babylon. Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary (2009) refers to a diaspora as “the movement, migration or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland”, and Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1) (2009) defines it as “Any group that has been dispersed outside its traditional homeland”. This implies that ‘Indians’ are regarded as ‘settlers’ in South Africa (with particular reference to James (2010) statements mentioned above), whereas all other citizens can claim South Africa as their ‘home’. In many instances ‘settler’ status has been allocated to ‘whites’, although with no ‘home country’ to which to return. However, ‘Indians’ in contrast to this, form a ‘population group’ who became settlers in the country of their ‘white’ internal colonisers. This ‘colonialism of a special type’, re-inforced the perception of Indian indentured labourers, Indian immigrants and South Africans of Indian descent, as foreign and as having no legitimate rights to the country.

¹⁷ South Africans of Indian origin may very well view themselves in a similar manner – as having an ancestral ‘homeland’ and therefore this is one of the areas that this research aims to explore.

the existence of ‘citizens’ and ‘foreigners/outsideers’¹⁸ and the implications of this in a so-called non-racial society.

1.4 Research Questions

In an attempt to locate ‘Indians’ within a society still very much divided along racial lines, and plagued by the remnants of apartheid rule, the following overarching question serves as the basis for this study and informs the investigation:

How have the perceptions of ‘Indians’ as foreigners, by fellow South African citizens, changed or fundamentally remained the same since the first arrival of indentured labourers from India in 1860, and what impact has it had on the identity formation of these South African citizens?

In an attempt to resolve this question, answers will be sought to the following key questions:

- 1) What factors, apart from their own active participation (proactive or reactive), contributed to the particular ways in which the ethnic and national identities of ‘Indians’ were formed; i.e. how did the other significant social and political role players such as the media, politicians and legislation, contribute to the shaping of ‘Indian’ identity, and in turn the perceptions of ‘Indians’ in South Africa by other South Africans?
- 2) Colonialism, as well as the apartheid classificatory system entrenched notions of the (internal) ‘other’. How did this translate into the ‘othering’ of ‘Indians’, and to the perceptions of ‘Indians’ as the ‘foreign other’ in South Africa? How has this perception of ‘Indians’ evolved over the years? In other words, how have historical discourses and events fed into contemporary perceptions of ‘Indians’, and how have these discourses influenced how those classified as ‘Indian’ in South Africa, construct their identities?

¹⁸ Duncan Breen argues that the government needs to make certain that “... political mobilization does not result in repeated attacks on foreigners or other ‘outsiders’ [emphasis added]” (Mail and Guardian Online Reporters, 2008), implying that hostilities will not only be directed toward ‘non-citizens’ but anyone considered as the ‘other’. In addition, Chipkin (2007:10) makes a distinction between a ‘citizen’ and an ‘authentic national subject’ implying that a citizen may not necessarily be included in the nation-building discourse.

- 3) To what extent are the social images of ‘Indians’, held by other social groups, different from the self-perceptions of those so classified?

Observing and analysing the construction of ‘Indian’ identity and societal perceptions over time, i.e. from the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, provides a valuable synopsis of the changes and continuities in the construction and perceptions held of ‘Indians’ in South Africa, and also the types of social structures and ideologies that serve to underpin these constructs.

1.5 Structure of the Dissertation

By drawing on the relevant literature, the purpose of Chapter Two is to situate the research in relation to existing studies and debates on the identity construction and perceptions of ‘Indian’ people in South Africa. Notions of community and belonging are also examined and discussed in this chapter. In addition, Chapter Two provides an analysis of the relevant theoretical foundations that inform this study. The theoretical framework draws on literature from the fields of social constructionism and identity, which is essential to making sense of how South Africans of Indian descent have constructed their identities historically and in contemporary society; the identity shifts experienced; and the influence of societal perceptions of ‘Indian’ people on the process of identity formation.

While Chapter Two provides an analysis of the theoretical framework that underpins this thesis and guides the research, the purpose of Chapter Three, is to demonstrate the influence of the theoretical and philosophical assumptions, and the research aim, in the choice of research design, methods and analysis employed in this study. This chapter further demonstrates the value and relevance of historical and cross-generational research as well as oral histories in researching South Africans in contemporary society. Additionally it makes a case for the importance, in this particular study, of periodising findings and analysing data contextually. Taking into account the history of South African society, the most useful method of periodising was to consider the major political events that have occurred over the last century and half. In this regard, the periods were distinguished as follows: 1860-1910 (Colonialism); 1910-1948 (Union of South Africa);¹⁹ 1948-1994 (Apartheid); and 1994-

¹⁹ Although the Union continued until 1961, the year 1948 signalled the start of the new political dispensation of apartheid which forms the basis of the next time period under review.

present (Democracy). The empirical chapters that follow, i.e. Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven provide an examination and empirical analysis of each of these political periods.

Chapter Four demonstrates how significant social and political role players such as the media, politicians and legislation, contributed to the shaping of 'Indian' identity and in turn the perceptions of 'Indians' in South Africa for the period 1860-1910. In addition it examines how those who first arrived from the Indian subcontinent and their descendants viewed themselves in relation to these perceptions and constructions. The forms of 'othering' of these initial immigrants and their descendants within this period, as well as how notions of foreignness pervaded the discourse around 'Indians' are also presented and discussed. I argue in this chapter, that a category of people that did not exist before was created when the first group of indentured Indians arrived on the shores of Natal

Chapter Five examines the next 38 years from 1910 to 1948 and argues firstly that during this period the label 'Indian' became solidified as a 'racial' classification through political, social and legislative discourse. I contend further that the construction of this category suited the political purposes of the Union government in their attempts to provide a solution to the 'Indian Question', by ridding the country of an undifferentiated, uniform group of people.

The political course of apartheid from 1948 to 1994 is explored in Chapter Six. This chapter examines the ways in which the South African state, between 1948 and 1994, set limits to the identity choices of 'Indians' through state policies and legislation which institutionalised racial discrimination through systematic and deliberate efforts to segregate the 'population groups' which it had created. Empirical evidence is provided to show how tension between 'race groups' was fostered to prevent joint struggle against the regime, and how categorising administratively became even more fundamental to the regimes political plans. In addition, this chapter contends that the notion of 'Indians' as the foreign other pervaded social discourse even after they were accepted as a permanent part of the population in South Africa in 1961.

The democratic era, 1994 onwards, is examined in Chapter Seven. I argue in this chapter that the continuation of 'race' classification by the democratic government, reminiscent of the political eras prior to democracy, perpetuates racialisation and 'race' thinking. I demonstrate this argument by examining how 'Indians' are homogenised and labeled as a separate and

distinct group, and in addition how they are perceived as ‘a people’ or ‘community’ with fixed and essentialised identities and ultimately ‘belonging’ to another country, to which they could *easily* ‘return’.

Chapter Eight provides the conclusion of the thesis by summarising the findings and arguments that inform this study. In addition it offers a discussion of the destructive nature of the nativist discourse which is at the core of questions around citizenship and belonging in South Africa presently. Drawing on the findings of this research the chapter concludes by providing suggestions for social change based on notions of a *common humanity* that coalesces with the principles on which the Constitution (1996) is founded.

- Chapter Two -

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

“Community, Identity, and Belonging”

2.1 Introduction

An analysis of South African ‘Indian’ identity, by its very nature, demands an engagement with the way in which authors have formulated and expressed notions of ‘community’ in relation to South Africans of Indian descent. By drawing on the relevant literature in this regard, the purpose of this chapter is to situate the research presented here in relation to existing studies and debates on the identity construction of ‘Indians’ in South Africa, and specifically with regard to the concept of an ‘Indian community’ and the formation thereof. The three elements in the title of this chapter, i.e. community, identity, and belonging, shape the selection of secondary sources I have utilised.²⁰ It is necessary to go through this particular process of examining the literature as authors have addressed the themes that I want to explore in this research and this needs to be acknowledged as in some instances they have added valuable support for the arguments I will make later on in this thesis, or raised questions or alternative points of view to consider. In addition, this chapter outlines the theoretical premises on which the research is based, by discussing the theoretical and conceptual arguments. This theoretical and conceptual context, which is constructed around debates and dialogue in the spheres of social constructionism, and identity formation, will be explicated by using the research framework postulated by Layder (1993).

2.2 The Formation of a ‘Community’

...if ever there was proof that “Indians” in South Africa are not a homogenous bunch, look at the reactions to the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Indian indentured labourers. (Naidoo, 2010)

²⁰ In respect of ‘belonging’, I will later on in this chapter introduce the term citizenship as well which will be discussed in greater detail in the latter part of the thesis.

The year 2010 was marked by a deliberate campaign to commemorate the arrival of Indians in South Africa 150 years ago. The articles and advertorials depicted within the local and national press in response to this campaign highlighted and confirmed the tensions inherent within this so called ‘community’ regarding the various ways in which individuals ‘within’ chose to identify themselves (Vahed and Desai, 2010; Naidoo, 2010).²¹ In writing about the commemoration Vahed and Desai (2010:1) stated,

The process is already contested with heavily charged debates over who should drive the commemoration and to what ends, given the religious, ethnic, regional, linguistic, and class diversity of the approximately 1.2 million Indian South Africans. What is it that should be remembered, celebrated, and commemorated? If commemoration is to reflect a collective memory, how is this to be stitched together? Can it and should it be a single narrative? How will this honouring of the past avoid ghettoisation? And what does this (ethnic/racial) commemoration mean in a country whose constitution is committed to non-racialism? How should the act of “remembering” tell of the country of origin? These debates are a valuable lens through which to grasp the story of Indian South Africans in the post-apartheid moment and the vexed issues of identity and belonging.

Contrary to the statements quoted above, however, the literature reveals in many instances that ‘Indians’ are considered to be a homogenous entity with little or no attention paid to dissimilarities that exist in this so called community (Vahed, 1997:1). Ebr.-Vally (2001:99) reveals that historians and sociologists, in their explanations of ‘Indianness’ did not situate their research and writings in the broader socio-political context of the country.²²

²¹ It is interesting to note that the leadership and make-up of the ‘official’ organising committee responsible for planning the events around this ‘celebration’ were South Africans of Indian descent. In addition disagreements arose concerning representation on the committee in terms of, most importantly, religion (Subramoney, 2010a:3). For example, Dorasamy (2010:1) reported that “Christian Indian Leaders are upset about the lack of representation on committees formed to streamline events to mark the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Indians in South Africa.” Following from this then, several ‘sub-organisations’ produced their own activities to ensure that particular sectors of the community were not excluded from the marking of this event. These included The Global Network of Christian Indian Leaders (GONCIL); The South African Hindu Maha Sabha; the South African Muslim Network and the Natal Tamil Vedic society to name a few (Subramoney, 2010b:10). This is also not the first time that a debate such as this has occurred. In his memoirs, Ronnie Govender (2008), a popular Durban author and playwright, discusses the clashes over the name of the organisation that would commemorate the arrival of Indians in South Africa. His stance was to not include the word ‘Indian’ in the name of the organisation, for various reasons including the fact that ‘Indians’ are in fact South Africans in the first instance. This was met however with much opposition with people recommending names such as the “Indian Settler” organisation. Govender (2008:12) opposed this proposal stating that, “Indians were not ‘Settlers’. They had been brought to the country as indentured labourers, another of those classic euphemisms which sought to sanitise the more appropriate word, ‘slave’. Successive generations had come to regard the country as their home. They were home to stay, to make a living ...” Amidst these tensions over ‘naming’ he then resigned as chairman of the organisation.

²² She argues further that authors, whether writing about the social and economic ills faced by Indians in the

2.2.1 Political Motivations and Processes from ‘Within’

One argument for the formation of a community is that a clear distinction existed between the Indians, from the time of the earliest Indian migrants, and that of the ‘white’ settlers and ‘African’ people, and that the arrival of the Indians proved problematic for the ‘whites’ who were at the time pursuing a course of action towards the oppression of the ‘African’ people (Bhana, 1997a:3; Zegeye and Ahluwalia, 2002:395). Most of the literature points to discriminatory legislation during and after colonialism, as well as, most notably, apartheid later on as contributing factors to the construction of an ‘Indian’ community. The construction of a separate ‘Indian’ identity was seen to be an essential component of the apartheid state’s strategy of divide and rule and both in literature and in the media the notion of a homogenous ethnic group was fostered.

Zegeye and Ahluwalia (2002:394) and MacDonald (2006:3) point out that an ‘Indian’ identity, as with all other ‘races’, emerged then in response to ‘white’ racism and ultimately political experiences. The apartheid government, by giving rights of citizenship to one group and denying it to others created communities of the various ‘race’ groups. The ‘white’ and specifically Afrikaners through governing the country were able to assert their status as South Africans, whereas Indians were largely categorised as “‘others’ or ‘out-groups’” and were thus never viewed as South Africans (Zegeye and Ahluwalia, 2002:395).

So although Indians were divided in terms of class, caste, language and religion, they were nevertheless all “legislatively defined or described themselves as part of the ‘Indian Community’” and as a discrete racial category (Padayachee, 1999:393; see also Naidoo 1985:129 and Vahed 2002:79). Bhana (1997a:5) posits that as a result of being consistently indiscriminately grouped together, Indians progressively viewed themselves as a uniform unit who were compelled to respond accordingly. Vahed (2001:125) writes that even though a multitude of identities that were founded on language, class, religion, and customs existed together within the category ‘Indian,’ these fundamentally different individuals were drawn

colony [see Polak (1909); Aiyar (1925); Joshi (1942); Calpin (1949)] or about the ‘menace’ of the new inhabitants of Natal [see Wetherell (1946); Cronje (1946)], treat the Indian population as a homogenous entity and disregard divisions such as class, religion and language. It should be noted that in more recent years historians have taken a more critical approach in their research and writing, as opposed to the literature published pre-1970.

together and as a result a common 'Indian' identity surfaced in response to various political and economic exclusions.

Singh and Vawda (1988:2) too argue that not only was the category 'Indian community' a creation of the state but was also a tool used by 'Indian' politicians for challenging the status quo. For example the political strategies of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), which was established in 1894, included considering the oppressed as fragmented according to 'race' and thus appealed to the sentiments of 'Indians' as *one* of the oppressed ethnic groups (Singh and Vawda, 1988; Rastogi, 2008; Bhana, 1997a). The NIC then were responsible for creating an awareness of, preserving, and upholding the notion of 'Indianness' (Bhana, 1997b). According to Bhana (1997b:100),

The Natal Indian Congress (NIC) sought to weld together the diverse cultural and religious immigrants from the Indian subcontinent into a single, coherent, and secular organization. In the process of the NIC's creation, 'Indianness' came into being and subsequently became firmly embedded in South Africa's politics. In the early years of the NIC's existence, 'Indianness', in its restricted sense, was central to the organization's efforts to win rights for the immigrants. Examples of these include documents, pamphlets, advertorials and the like which appealed to this politically manufactured category.

For instance a document of the NIC indicated that "it had welded all classes of Indians into a coherent whole" Singh and Vawda (1988:5). This sentiment portrayed the 'community' then as homogenous with a common political agenda. So in spite of the NIC's arguments that its political goals emanated out of the given historical and socio-political context it nevertheless appeared to lend credence to apartheid notions of ethnic enculturation (Singh and Vawda, 1988).

The NIC also maintained that the well-being of the 'community' was at stake, as opposed to that of individual workers. For instance, the following statement appeared in *Flash*, the newsletter of the NIC, in 1946 (cited in Naidoo, 1998), which displays one of the many ways that 'Indianness' was aroused during the resistance campaign:

It is for us as true sons and daughters of Mother India to follow in their footsteps and vindicate the honour of our community and our motherland. As a true Indian, you must become a passive resistance volunteer in order to protect the honour and dignity of our people.

Singh and Vawda (1988:11) cite another example, which appeared some 37 years after the above publication, and served as an advertorial for the NIC and Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC):

1. Let us protect *our future* now!
2. Ever since we were brought to this country we have faced many problems. Our grandparents worked under harsh conditions on the sugar plantations and mines...
3. Our achievements in improving *our communities* were destroyed by the group Areas Act...
4. Under the banner of Congress we have fought against these problems. Our fight has been for a peaceful just society in which *all people* can live in harmony...
5. Now the government is forcing a new constitution upon us. This new apartheid creation is going to destroy *our future* in this country.
6. We urge the community to reject the constitution offered to us. Our history and tradition has been a proud one in *demanding equality for all*.

Singh and Vawda (1988:11) point out that although the first point is open to interpretation as to whom the ‘us’ and ‘our’ refers to, however the second point clarifies this when attention is called to labouring on the ‘sugar plantations and mines’. It becomes evident then that the advert is specifically targeting ‘Indians’. They maintain therefore that the discourse of the NIC, perpetuated ethnic categories and divisions by dealing with national agendas through the narrow lens of “community politics and ethnic mobilisation” (Singh and Vawda, 1988:12).

They add further that,

The text creates the idea that Indians inhabit some form of vacuum from which they can make a choice for either of these options ... This manner of representation reinforces the idea that Indians as a ‘community’ have something specific or different to be fearful about, that they are threatened in ways that other people are not. (Singh and Vawda, 1988:13)

In analysing the political tactics and activities of the NIC Bhana (1997a:22) refers to this instance of political conduct as “sojourner politics” in that the leaders of the NIC did not regard South Africa as their home, as most had been born in India, and still regarded their birthplace as their ‘motherland’. Bhana (1997a) suggests that this then may provide a rationale for their inability to identify with the other oppressed groups in South Africa. Some years earlier, Singh and Vawda (1988:14) made a similar point that the view of the NIC was that Indians were a complete and independent unit in and of itself, and that other such

insulated communities existed, was evident in their communiqués to the public. They argue that in addition broad statements made by NIC politicians and activists, such as the ones below, indicated their conception of Indians as a homogenous, culturally unified group rather than a politically and socially constructed category:

That there are Indians, Coloureds, Africans and Whites [national groups] in our country is a self evident and undeniable reality. It is a reality precisely because each of those national groups has its own heritage, culture, language, customs and traditions. (Zac Yacoob cited in Singh and Vawda, 1988:14)

We have the potential to become the only authentic political body representing the Indian community ... We have gauged from our fieldwork that generally the community looks to us as the guardians of the people. We have been around for a long time – 90 years – and intend remaining in the forefront of Indian politics. (Pravin Gordhan cited in Singh and Vawda, 1988:14)

Vahed (2001:112) maintains that by encouraging ‘race’ and culture to be a part of the sensibilities of people, the chasms between the different racial groupings were further widened. He argues that these instances together with the states measures of separation cemented the idea of ‘racial’ communities and counteracted any attempts for people to organise at the level of class. As Ginwala (1977:5) notes, during the height of apartheid, the demands for exclusion and isolation were from forces external to the ‘Indian’ group and penalties were issued for non-compliance to the restrictive, discriminatory laws.

2.2.2 Isolation and Exclusiveness

The arguments provided by the various writers discussed above, explain the formation of the ‘Indian’ community as emanating from external pressures, thus forcing isolation and exclusivity, and resulting ultimately in acceptance of the ‘community’ from ‘within’. Vahed (2001:111) states that the purpose of such divisive pieces of legislation, such as the Group Areas Act of 1950,²³ at its very core was an attempt completely to sever or at the very least diminish interaction between ‘Indians’, ‘Africans’ and ‘whites’ and “ ... reinforced in children the idea that they belonged to a specific race, by virtue of the absence of others.” As

²³ The Group Areas Act of 1950 put paid to any possibility that different ‘races’ could inhabit the same space. In addition it demolished existing communities where people of different ‘races’ lived together. The state in turn erected new townships designated for specific ‘race’ groups only. It is often regarded as one of the pieces of legislation which did the greatest amount of damage as the results of the Act are still evident long after the abolition of apartheid (Padayachee, 1999). The Group Areas Act and the consequences thereof will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six of the thesis.

will be illustrated below, the literature reveals that the ‘Indian’ community then took responsibility for the already established ‘Indianness’ created by the state, by engaging in various communal activities and expressing themselves in a collective fashion, which then, as the authors argue, maintained the idea of a single, homogenous community.

2.2.2.1 Amenities and Facilities

The state, in addition to creating geographic racial silos, also failed to make provision for basic amenities and facilities in the residential areas it created for ‘Indian’ occupation. Jagarnath (2009) argues that a single building would serve a multitude of functions such as serving as a classroom by day, and then be converted into a community hall for meetings, or a temple where religious practices were conducted, and thereafter into a movie theatre where films could be shown.

In terms of recreational/sporting facilities, Desai et al (2002:98) provide the following table, prepared by the City Estates Manager in 1936, which illustrates the lack of sporting facilities in so called ‘Indian’ areas:

<i>Area</i>	<i>Indian Population</i>	<i>Facilities</i>
Greenwood Park	8 054	None
Sydenham	14 123	None
Mayville	14 821	Reserved 15 acres – not developed
Umhlatuzana	3 212	Reserved 7 acres – not developed
South Coast Junction	17 324	None

Table 2.1: Sporting Facilities in ‘Indian’ areas – 1936 (Desai et al, 2002:98)

So even though ‘Indians’ paid the obligatory rates and taxes, sporting amenities were non-existent in the residential areas in which ‘Indians’ resided (Govender, 2010). This lack of provision of facilities meant that ‘Indians’, of all classes had to join together to finance these projects. In addition, the construction of schools to educate ‘Indian’ children was done not only by wealthy traders. Individuals who worked for very little wages would assign a portion of their earnings toward educating the children (Vahed, 2001:110). Examples were illustrated in newspaper reports printed during the 150 year celebrations in 2010. For instance, the following appeared in the *Tribune Herald*:

In 1938, a group of self-motivated members of the market-gardening community of the then Chatsworth, Zeekoe Vlei, Cavendish, Witteklip and surrounding areas realised the value of vernacular education and culture and... largely through self-help labour ... built a hall in 1940 for Tamil, Telegu and Hindi classes. By the mid-1940s ... a large number of children of school-going age needed English education [as a result] ... a new block of five classrooms, a staff room and an office [were built]. The Bayview School opened in 1948.²⁴

Gwala (2010:7) adds that Hajee Malukmohammed Lappa Sultan had a “... deep desire to see that all Indian people were educated”, and as a result he formed the ML Sultan Charitable and Educational Fund. Contributions from this fund assisted in building the ML Sultan College in 1949, which was regarded as the first higher education institution for ‘Indians’. Vahed (2001) argues that this co-operation then across class lines in building much needed facilities and amenities, strengthened notions of a racial community.

2.2.2.2 Sport

Another factor that contributed to racial exclusivity was that of segregated sport. In his foreword to Desai et al’s *Blacks in Whites: A Century of Cricket Struggles in KwaZulu-Natal* Naidoo (2002, ix) states that, “Cricket, like much of South African society, has a history of racial compartmentalization ... This division between Black and White cricket reflected the broader divisions in South African society”.

Desai et al (2002:5) probe “race, class and ethnic” constructions through the lens of cricket and argue that,

In South Africa, as in many other colonial and ex-colonial contexts, cricket perpetuated and created race identities at local and national levels. Sport was not a medium of cross-racial contact. It could not be in circumstances where the colonial census tagged Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites as ‘races’ and defined racial political identities through the force of law.

The type of sport an individual could engage in then was determined by their racial classification (Naidoo, 2008:61). Posel (2001:61) adds that there was also in existence an irrational connection between ‘race’ and sport in apartheid South Africa stating, “The Cape Times revealed that according to methods reported in Johannesburg as being used by the

²⁴ *Tribune Herald*, ‘Future Vision Saw Farm Kids Educated’, 18 April 2010

Race Classification Board to determine whether a man was native or Coloured: a soccer player is a native, a rugby player is a Coloured”.

‘Indians’ then in order to provide for their own recreation had to work within the confines of their racial category to achieve their sporting goals. For instance Govender (2010:33) points to the fact that,

...for [Indian] footballers to prove themselves, there had to be soccer grounds and organised leagues ... KwaZulu-Natal had people like the articulate, handlebar-moustached SL Singh, Sooboo Rajah, Charles Pillay, Bobby Naidoo and in the Transvaal the Rev BLE Sigamoney and Bob Pavadai set up district football associations. They laid the ground for the introduction of provincial associations and eventually the South African Indian Football Association.

The idea of ‘Indianness’ then was furthered through common participation of ‘Indians’ in various sporting activities.²⁵

The Currie’s Fountain Stadium however was pointed out by many writers as a key feature around which a non-racial identity evolved. For Meer (2007:17) the stadium was the core of ‘non-European’ sports whereas Kingsmead stadium was for ‘whites’ only. Although soccer was predominantly played at ‘Currie’s’, it also served as a venue for ““cricket, athletics, golf, motorcycle and car track racing, tennis, boxing, karate, wrestling, music festivals and cultural events. It became a major site for protest and resistance”” (Rosenberg cited in Naran, 2010:2).

Mayet (2007:22) in recalling his memories of the stadium adds,

I once went with some friends to a soccer game at Kingsmead Stadium, and when I got home, my father ‘kakked me out’ for allowing myself to be herded into a tiny section of the stadium, reserved for us people of colour, amongst other indignities! I was told in no uncertain terms that ‘Currie’s’ was ‘ours’, and that I could go there anytime I wanted, and sit anywhere too!

‘Black’ people then were not part of the ‘official’ players and were at times not even desired as spectators (Desai et al, 2002:5). Sport was used as tool to divide people on “ethnic grounds” and,

²⁵ As was the argument during the 2010 World Cup hosted in South Africa, i.e. that it would ‘create the nation’ by fostering a shared celebration in this sporting arena.

Certain laws were passed by government which, without imposing an explicit ban, effectively rendered playing of non-racial sport an offence legally. The Group Areas Act ... banned black spectators from social and sporting events unless a permit allowing racial mixing had been granted. Stadia designed for the White Community wishing to accommodate Black people were compelled to construct separate gates, toilet facilities and partitions to keep fans of different racial groups apart. (Khoapa, 2007:25)

Desai et al (2002:6) note that a newspaper of the day, the *Sporting Star*, proposed in May 1912 that a specific “enclosure should be set aside for respectable and decent Asians” at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg.

The data that I gathered from the interviews I conducted well illustrate this point. For example, one of the participants that were interviewed for this research, Abdul who was 78 years old at the time of the interview, discussed his involvement in sport during the apartheid years and states:

Abdul: Then you know I was involved ... very heavily in sport. I got involved in table tennis. I was the secretary of the Natal Union from 1950 when I was 22 years old. I was involved in table tennis for 40 years. Then I was a secretary of the national body for six years in the 60s. In 1964 there was the IOC ... The International Olympic Committee commissioned to investigate sport in South Africa because of apartheid. And table tennis was the only world affiliated sport as far as non-whites were concerned. Every other sport the whites had it covered. You see they can't take two bodies from one country. Somehow or the other, we got our foot in before them so the IOC commission came to interview us. And because of our evidence and a few others obviously, South Africa got kicked out of the Olympic movement for 20 years. Then I was secretary of the cricket union for six, seven years in Durban.

KP: And what was that like being involved in sport in a country where ... [interrupted by interviewee]

Abdul: Well you know there was a body called the South African Council of Sport. Now all the other national bodies were affiliated to them. I together with two or three of my colleagues use to go to their meetings. Now the slogan of the South African Council of Sport was ‘no normal sport in an abnormal society’ ... there was a very powerful guy there called Hassen Howa. He couldn't care less if they arrested him or not. As far as he was concerned this is wrong [slams hand on the desk] we are not going to do this. For so many years we played racial sport, the Indians used to play their own soccer the blacks use to play their own soccer, they even had coloured guys separate, you know what I mean? In 1980, 81 between those two years, my big guy [oldest son] was going to Gandhi Desai, there was a Gandhi Desai school by the way ... next door was Orient [Islamic School] and behind Orient was Sastri [High School] right? That is still there. My son went to Sastri and my one son went to Gandhi Desai. At that stage my daughter was in primary school. That was

the first time the NIC called for a schools boycott and my two sons were on boycott and I was on the parents committee of Sastri. They had a meeting of all the parent committees and I went and met Krog. Krog was the director of education ... and we had to go and meet him and he asked me “Why are your children on boycott”. So we had our reason and we gave our reason. So he tells me “My grandson does not go on boycott”. I thought why should he go on boycott? We don’t have a playing field and he’s got swimming pools ...

According to Dhillon (1999:54), the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) that Abdul refers to above, in fact began to regard itself as “the sports wing of the liberation struggle”. Segregated sport then, made it inevitable that ‘races’ would not cross or mix even during sporting activities, and the fact that sporting associations as well as civic ones were formed along racial lines made it difficult to promote the growth of non-racial affiliations (Vahed, 2001). Sport then, plays and played, into creating and maintaining group identities, and allowed only for a particular version of society to develop.²⁶

2.2.2.3 Social/Religious Activities/Drama/Arts

In addition to exclusionary sports ‘Indian’ people also had to provide their own social and cultural activities such as performing their own plays, singing songs, re-enacting religious stories and the like, which further created a sense of a racial community (Vahed, 2001:109). A significant factor that contributed to the development of a so called ‘Indian identity’ as well as thoughts of India was that of Indian film (Jagarnath, 2009:200). Initially silent films were imported and would be screened on building walls and “ ... the entire community of people would gather and pay their money to see the moving pictures” (Jaggarnath 2009:201).

In addition the religious festival of *Muhurram* was also significant in shaping, what Vahed (2002:77) refers to as, a “pan-Indian ‘Indianness’ within a white and African colonial society”. He argues that even though the origins of this festival lay in mourning the death of a

²⁶ There were attempts however to challenge racialised sport under apartheid. The Aurora cricket club, established in Pietermaritzburg in 1973, is one such example of non-racial sport. Aurora had 12 ‘white’ and, six ‘Indian’ and ‘coloured’ cricketers. The club however, only lasted three seasons and stated that their exit from cricket was as a result of non-commitment to non-racial cricket by the Maritzburg Cricket Union (MCU). Although it has also been argued that certain ‘white’ players in the club were willing to challenge the racist status quo, they nevertheless desired to retain the benefits of playing within the boundaries of ‘white’ controlled cricket. There were others however such as Mike Hickson and Chris Nicholson who chose to challenge the system together with ‘black’ cricketers and without the privileges of ‘white’ clubhouses (Desai et al, 2002:284). There was a tension then that existed from particular segments of society that revealed an acknowledgement that people shared common interests across ‘race’ rather than the idea of insular ‘racial communities’. A wider notion of community was thus demonstrated in those cases.

Muslim martyr both Hindus and Muslims participated, blending both Muslim and Hindu customs thus making it a “pan-Indian festival” and he argues that this then contributed to an important aspect of forging an ‘Indian community’, beyond the otherwise religious separation. By participating as a collective Vahed (2002:92) argues that this festival contributed to a “fraternal feeling and ‘Indianness’” stating further,

Muharram provided an opportunity for developing and expressing a self-conscious local community identity, in the first instance, but also signalled the participation of Indians in a broader collective. Muharram strengthened links between the individual and ‘community’, and was important in constituting a diverse collection of people into a collectivity, while also excluding others, whites and Africans ...

Common experiences under the discriminatory regimes during and after colonialism and of apartheid then, fostered a sense of ‘Indianness’ as is reflected in these writings around notions of ‘Indian’ community. There was no external pressure to conform to a single South African identity and so, creating residential pockets of ‘Indian’ groups encouraged ‘Indians’ to construct an insular identity through shared participation in sports, religious activities, and other social and cultural processes.

2.2.3 Fixed Identity

Following from what has been presented above, it could be argued then that this shared oppression reinforced the impression of a fixed ‘Indian’ identity, not only from the ‘outside’ but also by those who define themselves as belonging to this group. There is a propensity then to consider racial classifications as essential, as something that cannot be changed and that is stable over time. As Posel (2001:51) makes clear “... decades of racial reasoning, the idea that South African society comprises four distinct races – Whites, Coloureds, Indian and Africans – has become a habit of thought and experience, a facet of popular common sense still widely in evidence.”

For example, Narain (2007:316) a university student writing about her identity as a young ‘Indian’ woman on campus and at home, depicts the image of a “proper Indian woman”, as one who can cook, clean, and take care of her family. This stereotype of the ‘Indian’ woman has been perpetuated throughout history and as a result has subsequently been passed on to

other South Africans who have attempted to create an image of the 'Indian' woman. Although Narain (2007:317) does insist that her academic pursuits are encouraged, it seems that her role as a woman or more especially an 'Indian' woman in society would not be complete if she was not trained to be a good housekeeper, and she states further that, "Being an Indian woman is not all about being house trained", implying that 'house training' is an essential part of being an 'Indian' woman.

Narain (2007:318) also argues that for a young person to air their view in an 'Indian home' is tantamount to being 'untraditional' and 'disrespectful'. In stating this she assumes that all 'Indian' families subscribe to the same rules for living. Narain (2007:317) further fixes the 'Indian' identity by making reference to an 'Indian religion'. The 'Indian religion' that Narain refers to is her own belief in Hinduism.

2.2.3.1 A Different 'Picture'

Even though 'Indianness' appears fixed from both the outside and the inside and although the state, under apartheid, provided 'official' images of 'Indians' in South Africa and perpetuated stereotypes of a homogenous unit, in his coffee table book *The Indian in DRUM*, Naidoo (2008:9) attempts to show other images of 'Indians' that were published in *DRUM* magazine in the 1950s which he argues " ... reveals insightful instances of the 'Indian', outside of the official gaze and outside other 'racial' perspectives." He presents then photographs which he believes exhibit more complex and diverse imagery than the stereotypical versions presented by the state and from those who consider themselves to be 'within' the 'group'. An example of this would be the depiction of 'Indian' women as politicians, swimsuit models, ballroom champions, beauty queens, stuntwomen, photographers and doctors as opposed to the conservative, docile and traditionally attired as perpetuated in hegemonic discourse. According to Rajab (1999:32), " ... the widely prevalent image of the Indian woman as being passive and traditionally subservient supported the general non-acknowledgement of her valuable contribution". Naidoo (2008:24) argues that in contrast to these images of Indianness, "The pages of *DRUM* in the 1950s painted a picture of a cosmopolitan society – from politics to romance, from gangs to football teams, boxing gymnasiums and jazz clubs."

2.3 Summary

Although the scholarship on ‘Indian community’ reveals how Indian im/migrants and South Africans of Indian descent were homogenised by elements ‘outside’ the group and also from ‘within’, it does not appear to engage with the complexities of identity construction. Apart from Singh and Vawda (1988) who question how the ‘community identity’ created by the NIC discourse will be unravelled in the future non-racial dispensation, other authors writing on this subject provide evidence for the formation of the community but do not examine the implications of this in a post-apartheid South Africa. The narrative of ‘Indian’ identity in such writing ignores the idea of agency and that people create the world in which they live, in relation to the situations that they find themselves located in. It disregards the identity formation process as not only on going and dynamic but also as being influenced by existing institutions and social structures. In addition there is an empirical gap in the scholarship regarding critical historical and contemporary insight into the construction and perception of South Africans of Indian descent as the *foreign other*, and the implications of this in a contemporary society established on the principle of ‘non-racialism’.

Further to this, in South Africa the category ‘Indian’ was both racialised and ethnicised. In other words it was used as a racial category but also denoted people from a different geographic location with different traditions, customs and religions. The state perpetuated the idea of ethnic groups and used it to further divide people and justify policies such as the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Bantustan strategy.²⁷ For example in South Africa, people were born into a context of racial categorisation and separation. In addition to this the state actively encouraged people to regard themselves in even more minuscule ways such as, as Xhosa, Zulu, Venda etc. The idea was to create and perpetuate difference between ‘race’ groups and the further sub-divided ethnic/language groups. According to Edwards (1992:6) “Central to these models was the belief in the intrinsic relationship between the physical, biological nature of man and his cultural, moral and intellectual nature. Thus culture was seen as being biologically determined”. Although the idea of ‘race’ as determined by biology has been undermined it has been replaced by an equally debatable idea of ‘culture’, where ‘race’

²⁷ Bantustans, or Homelands, as they were also commonly referred to, were the specific areas that were demarcated by the apartheid state as part of their grand plan to house ethnic groups. It was anticipated that attempts for political participation within these homelands would occur thus creating even further ethnic fractures in the South African landscape and lending credence to the National Party’s false propaganda of South Africa being made up of diverse ‘ethnic nations’ [See also Maré and Hamilton, 1987].

is considered to be cultural formations (MacDonald, 2006:1) and is unacknowledged in the current literature. The claims of culture and ‘race’ and the conflation of the two, as in the case of ‘Indians’ are problematic in that it essentialises and fixes identity, suggesting then that cultural attributes are determined by physical ones, and that racial groups are culturally distinct (Erasmus, 2008:172; Bass et al, 2012).

My argument is that varying structural conditions and different types of contact between peoples not only shape the perceptions people hold of each other, but also the ways in which people construct their social identities relative to this. I posit that ideas of the other that are constructed are dependent on the prevailing ideological and societal conditions at the time. As (Layder, 1981:13) points out,

Human beings do not simply react to the pushes and pulls of their social environment like puppets; rather, because they are endowed with consciousness and certain cognitive skills they are able to interpret their world and act in terms of the meanings it holds for them.

The theoretical approach central to the research and the analytical argument employed, is therefore based on social constructionist perspectives on identity, to which I will now turn the discussion.

2.4 Social Constructionism

Identity formation is understood here as being socially constructed within very material and historical contexts. Individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and within the environment in which they live (Schutz, 1970:8). Identity is viewed by constructionists as an “interactional accomplishment ... continually renegotiated via linguistic exchange and social performance” (Cerulo, 1997:387). In addition, perceptions and attitudes are constructed on the basis of meanings which are contingent on time and differing social situations. The social construction of these perceptions need to be contextualised in specific historical and contemporary circumstances and must be understood within the broader societal dynamics which shape and influence these realities.²⁸

²⁸ Although ‘identity’ is considered a social construct, the individual however is not regarded as a passive recipient but is instead an active agent in the construction and re-construction of his or her identity. In addition

Social constructionism emphasises the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society, and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Blumer, 1969; Turner, 1991; Burr, 1995; Cerulo, 1997; Derry, 1999). According to Berger and Luckmann (1967), individuals in society develop, over time, 'mental representations' of each other, and this influences the ways in which these individuals interact with each other and with other people in the social world. Social reality then is produced and sustained through social interaction. As Hall (1992b:276) reminds us, identity is formed in the interaction between the individual and society.

Clarke and Cochrane (1998:40) argue that employing a social constructionist approach allows for an investigation into and analysis of " ... the way in which a social order – its habits, institutions, characteristics ways of thinking and acting – is both socially produced and appears as the natural and proper way of behaving". Constructionists then are concerned with the "agents of socialisation" such as the family, educational institutions, the state and popular culture and the media and the ways in which they interact to form the identity of the individual (Cerulo, 1997:387). For example, Balibar and Wallerstein (1991 cited in Cerulo (1997:389)), who examine racial identity together with nation and class, provide a deep analysis of not only "imposed racialization" but also of "self racialization".

Constructionist approaches then have also shaped a variety of sociological theories, which will be drawn upon to support the analytical claims of this thesis, and will be discussed later on this chapter. In addition, this study draws on the work of Layder (1993) to provide a framework for the research. Layder (1993:8) argues that the various layers of social reality, or macro and micro phenomena, are interconnected and by looking at society in this way allows the researcher to be considerate of the varying structures, and arrangement of events that are embedded in social processes and contribute to social change. In addition it also allows the researcher to consider the connections between the macro and micro levels and not ignore one in favour of the other when doing research. As Siebers notes (2004:78),

people may also not be conscious that they are constructing their identity in relation to differing contexts. Alexander (2007:93) argues that " ... even though they are constructed, social identities seem to have a primordial validity for most individuals, precisely because they are not aware of the historical, social and political ways in which their identities have been constructed".

Identity is increasingly understood in terms of dynamic and fluid processes of construction and (trans)formation, in which intention and instruction, reflexivity and domination, sense and performance, individuality and social embeddedness converge and clash.

This goes far beyond the rather simplistic way in which we focus in our teaching, on family and education as *the* (and nearly exclusive) institutions of socialisation. It is far more complex than that as I illustrate through Layder's (1993) framework. In explaining the composition of the macro and micro structures in understanding social reality Layder (1993:8) points out that it is comprised of: the "self", that is biographical experience and social involvements; "situated activity" which refers to the dynamics of face to face interaction; "setting" which is the immediate environment of social activity such as schools, family, and work; "context" which constitutes the macro social forms, e.g. class and gender; and finally "history" which he regards as a feature of social life that enters into all other elements discussed above. He argues further that there are no "clear empirical boundaries" between these different elements (Layder, 1993:9). Figure 2.1 below is the research map containing these elements as postulated by Layder (1993:72):

Research element	Research focus
CONTEXT	<i>Macro social organization</i> Values, traditions, forms of social and economic organization and power relations. For example, legally sanctioned forms of ownership, control and distribution; interlocking directorships, state intervention. As they are implicated in the sector below.
SETTING	<i>Intermediate social organization</i> Work: Industrial, military and state bureaucracies; labour markets; hospitals; social work agencies, domestic labour; penal and mental institutions. Non-work: Social organization of leisure activities, sports and social clubs; religious and spiritual organizations.
SITUATED ACTIVITY	<i>Social activity</i> Face-to-face activity involving symbolic communication by skilled, intentional participants implicated in the above contexts and settings. Focus on emergent meanings, understandings and definitions of the situation as these affect and are affected by contexts and settings (above) and subjective dispositions of individuals (below).
SELF	<i>Self-identity and individual's social experience</i> As these are influenced by the above sectors and as they interact with the unique psychobiography of the individual. Focus on the life-career.

Figure 2.1 Research Map (Layder, 1993:72)

Layder (1993) argues that the various components of social activity have to be perceived as functioning both horizontally and vertically, in other words, social processes should be viewed as extending across time and space, vertically as per Figure 2.1. In addition, the interconnected nature of the elements aids the researcher in understanding the way in which social behaviour, activity and processes are shaped by the various macro and micro structures of society at particular stages along the continuum of experience in which societal events occur, in other words horizontally as Figure 2.1 reveals. This is essential to understanding how the different micro and macro processes meld to create a particular experience, as Layder (1993:10-11) states,

... the micro processes of everyday life ... can only be understood properly when seen in conjunction with more macro features ... Since social activity is a continuous process we have to understand the way in which it unfolds over time ... if we look at a person's life history we will see that they are influenced by a number of contexts, settings and situations as represented, for example,

by changes in job, getting married, having children, getting divorced, becoming ill ... emigrating, retiring and so on. So, as the person continues through the course of their lives, he or she is influenced by a succession of context, settings, situations and identity shifts.

In this regard then choosing a time-scale for this research was deemed important, as was getting individuals in the present to reflect on both the past and present.²⁹ As Rose (1996, 140-141) argues,

... (Individuals) live their lives in a constant movement across different practices that addresses them in different ways. Within these different practices, persons are addressed as different sorts of human being, presupposed to be different sorts of human being, acted upon as if they were different sorts of human being.

2.4.1 Applying Layder's Framework

In addition to explaining Layder's (1993) framework and its relevance to this study, I will also provide a discussion on what other social constructionist writers and theorists have independently written about the various elements contained in the research map provided by Layder in Figure 2.1 above.

2.4.1.1 Self

The first layer of social reality that needs to be taken into account is that of *self*, which refers to the way in which individuals respond to social conditions and situations. According to Layder (1993:74), "The notion of self points to an individual's sense of identity, personality and perception of the social world as these things are influenced by her or his social experience." Citing research undertaken by Goffman (1961), Layder argues that through everyday interactions individuals develop and maintain images of self. For the purposes of the research project reported on here it is important to examine as Layder (1993:80) outlines "What conceptions of self and identity are bound up with certain lines of activity over differing lengths of time? ... What meanings and perceptions are bound up with these

²⁹ The discussion of the time-scale chosen, the method of periodisation, and the importance of history in research, is explicated in significant detail in the next chapter.

activities ... Do these meanings and perceptions change over time? If they do what causes them to change”. These questions then provide the cornerstone of attempting to understand the identity formation, construction and perceptions of ‘Indians’ in South Africa.

With regard to the concept of *self*, Siebers (2004:75) considers identity formation to be,

... the ways people constitute and position themselves in the world, how they render themselves and their relations with others meaningful, how they construct their narratives of self, enact their images of self, and perform their identifications in order to get things done ... A multitude of processes, conditions, constraining and enabling factors, and subjective experiences contribute to how individuals, groups, and communities envision, label and define themselves and others in specific historical, social and economic contexts.

Siebers (2004:78) argues further that people in constructing their identities contend not with a single identity but with multiple identities which include but are not limited to, gender, age, sex, ‘race’, class and ethnicity. This alludes to the multifariousness and the opposing forces within the actual lived reality of the individual and, therefore, “ ... s/he cannot be understood as being wholly embedded in one single group” (Siebers, 2004:76). In addition Hall (1992b:275) argues that identities should be viewed as multiple, complicated in its structure, relational, socially produced and situationally dependent. In this regard Erasmus (2001) and Reddy (2001) also reject the concept of pure identities, and argue that individuals are not wired biologically to be what they are. Through various social processes, in which they actively participate, such as the family, religion, educational institutions, media, peers, etc., individuals become who they are as social beings. In other words, they are agents in the formation of their own identity construction and reconstruction and although they are restricted by social norms and values and the subject positions available to them they are nevertheless able to express opposition to imposed identities, negotiate and manage and construct their identities within this context. Hall (1996a:4) argues further that “ ... identities are never unified and in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions ... ”

2.4.1.2 Situated Activity

The second element of Layder's framework is that of *situated activity* which is concerned with the "dynamics of interaction ... in which encounters between, several individuals tend to produce outcomes and properties that are a result of the interchange of communication between the whole group ... " as opposed to the individual's response to social experiences (Layder, 1993:80). Individuals involved in this group dynamic are in a continuous process of observing the way in which they act and control themselves in relation to the way others in the group behave (Giddens, 1984). This is done with the intention of accomplishing particular goals and is referred to as 'strategic activity'. Illustrating this issue well is a statement made by a participant in this study, Daniel, who, when discussing the dynamics in the police force, stated,

Daniel: They want you to be an Indian ... When you say no I am not an Indian, or I am a South African or something, they tend to think I don't know, in my mind, they tend to think that you are trying to like identify with their culture ... You must *be* an Indian and you must *know* you are an Indian ... That is what I experience ... Its starts to dawn upon me that when you make them know that you are Indian and they seem to prefer it that way, that hey you are an Indian and that is it ...

This account by Daniel is quite telling in that it reveals how behaviour by the participant is monitored in relation to others and changed to adapt to what the 'dominant' others 'prefer'. Situated activity then is an important element that requires examination with regard to how identity is constructed amongst South Africans of Indian descent, as individuals do not develop notions about who they are independently of society but rather constructions of themselves occur within "groups and other larger social units" (Siebers, 2004:88). In other words the roles individuals play become part of their identities, how they see themselves and how others see them and perceptions of self then become determined by this. Calhoun (1994:9) states "We know of no people without names, no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinctions between self and other ... are not made ... Self-knowledge – always a construction ... is never altogether separable from claims to be known in specific ways by others". Additionally, because identity is formed in a social context, it is also then developed through appraisal in that self-perception is reliant on the perception of others; in other words, how a person views him/herself is dependent in part on how others see him/her and although individuals possess an identity which is unique to them their identities are also

forged through interactions with other individuals in society (Giddens, 1991; Hall 1992b; Jenkins, 1996). Weeks (1991:88) argues that,

Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality. But it is also about your social relationships, your complex involvement with others.

Individuals are constrained in their behaviour by those around them and therefore do not merely represent themselves according to their own unrestricted will but in relation to the circumstances presented or else the individuals actions will be unsuccessful or be 'sanctioned' in some way (Shotter, 1989:144).

2.4.1.3 Social Setting

In this regard, Layder (1993:91) notes that the types or forms of interaction differ depending on the *social setting*: work, leisure, religious affiliation and the like (see Figure 2.1). It is crucial to my research concerns to understand what role these various settings had on the construction of 'Indian' identity, in terms of how the "habits, traditions and rules" or characteristics of these settings influence the behaviour, attitude and perceptions of South Africans of Indian descent in the formation of their identity. Dolby (2001:114) points out that identities are "... formed in constant conversation with the structures of the world". Identities can arise from institutions, but only become identities once they have been internalised by the individual (Castells, 1997). According to Blumer (1969:79) a significant characteristic of social interaction is that "human beings interpret or 'define' each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions." Put differently, the way in which individuals respond to one another is based on the meanings that are attached to the actions of others. As Schaefer and Lamm (1992:131) write "Reality is shaped by our perceptions, evaluations, and definitions".

2.4.1.4 Context

Similarly, the *context*, which is the fourth element of social reality as postulated by Layder (1993), which is often referred to as the macro-social formation, in this instance refers to the historical, political, economic and social context within which South Africans of Indian

descent have been located for 150 years, and their points of origin. It is important to examine how the nature of the politics of the day – including legislation linked to the body, place and economy – influenced identity construction and perceptions of South Africans of Indian descent. In addition it is important to examine the extent to which features of the broader macro context such as ‘race’, class, power, and politics encroach on the *setting*, and in turn how this affects *situated activity* and the construction of the individual identity or *self*. Examining the wider social context or macro structures are important as it may reveal how these social forms and structures influence work settings and the like. Siebers (2004:81) argues that,

By constructing narratives of self, persons deal with contexts in which institutions guide or even oblige them to act in a particular way. Of course, material circumstances and involvement in or exclusion from specific production and consumption flows and structures play an important role here, as do cultural orientations or discourses.

In addition, Alexander (2007:93) states, “The state, or more generally, the ruling classes, in any society have the paradigmatic prerogative of setting the template on which social identities, including racial identities are based”. Activities of the State then generate enormous consequences for the formation of “modern race relations” (Marx, 1998:267) and, as Essed (2005:227-228) adds, “ ... ‘race’ only gets meaning in terms of a particular language or national history”. Wolpe (1988:63), referring specifically to apartheid South Africa writes, “It is clear that race is inscribed in the institutional and organizational structures at every level of the political and economic system. Race is, thus, a crucial ingredient of the political and economic structure”.

In Johnston’s (1973:68) terms, “Identity is what you can say you are according to what they say you can be.” According to Johnston (1973), identities are not primarily formed out of personal self-reflections or produced through the contemplation of one’s own thoughts, desires and conduct, but are constructed within particular ideological frameworks created by the state. She argues further (1973:68),

When you filled out application blanks for schools or jobs you found out who you were or who you could be. You were male or female, single, married or divorced, protestant or catholic, old or young, white or black and anglo or jewish.

Individuals then do not have sole ownership of identities, but due to their constructed nature, are either inhibited or encouraged in relation to the dominant socio-political concerns of the day (Kitzinger, 1989:94). So, although individuals ‘create’ their identity they do so under conditions that are not of their choice. As has already been argued earlier, identities arise not from within an individual but from the social realm (Burr, 1995:53; Alcoff, 2003:3).

Hall (1986; 1996a:6) argues further that specific discourses, practices, processes and ideas are interconnected, or articulated at particular junctures and states that “ ... not only [is] the subject ... ‘hailed’, but that the subject invests in the position means that suturing has to be thought of as an *articulation*, rather than a one-sided process ... ”. Similarly to Hall, Hacking (1999:31) in his discussion on classification argues that “Ways of classifying human beings interact with the human beings who are classified”, and individuals ‘acquire’ the characteristics of the classification precisely because they are classified as such. He refers to his interaction between the classification and the people classified as ‘the looping effect’ (Hacking, 2007:286). He argues further,

We think of these kinds of people as given, as definite classes defined by definite properties. As we get to know more about these properties, we will be able to control, to help, to change, or to emulate them better. But it is not quite like that. They are moving targets because our investigations interact with the targets themselves, and change them. And since they are changed, they are not quite the same kind of people as before. The target has moved. That is the looping effect. (Hacking, 2007:293)

Identity construction gains its characteristics from the ‘dialectic’ between the ability of individuals to form a conscious awareness of themselves and their ability to negotiate within a pre-determined context (Siebers, 2004:99). Jacobs and Manzi (2000:36) argue that,

A constructionist epistemology purports that an individual’s experience is an active process of interpretation rather than a passive material apprehension of an external physical world. A major claim advanced by those adopting a social constructionist epistemology is that actors do not merely provide descriptions of events, but are themselves constitutive of wider policy discourses and conflicts.

Taking the above into consideration then, I focus in this research on the socio political contexts of colonialism, apartheid and democracy and their subsequent influence on the

construction of 'Indian' identity and way in which South Africans of Indian descent were perceived in relation to such macro processes.

2.4.1.5 History

The fifth element of *history*, that Layder (1993) calls for, is important as identities may shift and change depending on the various historical processes. According to Layder (1993:101) “... history represents the temporal dimension through which all other elements move.” The overarching research question that warrants a historical focus is “How have the perceptions of 'Indians' as foreigners, by fellow South African citizens, changed or fundamentally remained the same since the first arrival of Indians as indentured labourers in 1860, and what impact has it had on the identity formation of these South African citizens?” The historical aspect is thus important as it illuminates the changes, if any, that have occurred over a specific time period. According to Siebers (2004:75), “A multitude of processes, conditions, constraining and enabling factors, and subjective experiences contribute to how individuals, groups and communities envision, label and define themselves and others in specific historical, social and economic contexts.” Identities are “subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation”, writes Hall (1996a:4), and it is for this reason then that the discourse around identity needs to be located within particular historical processes. Hall (1996a:4) states further:

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative. Moreover they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity – an 'identity' in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive-sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation).

In addition, Foucault valued the historical analysis as it was through this that he came to believe there was potential to discover how and why various discourses came to be and also when they did (Churton, 2000:120). Foucault sensed that, in each historical period of time, “... discourse produced forms of knowledge, objects, subjects and practices of knowledge, which were radically different from period to period, with no necessary continuity between them” (Hall, 1997a:347).

2.4.2 Discourse

One of the main tenets of social constructionism then is the significant stress of discourse in the establishment of both the social reality and the individual. It is argued by social constructionists that whatever does exist is established through discourse (Grint, 1995:8). I suggest then that in examining the identity construction and perceptions of South Africans of Indian descent, the application of a Foucauldian framework is particularly useful to this study in that discourse and language are critical in attempting to make sense of how individuals perceive and understand the social world and in turn construct their identities; the ‘subject’, as Hall argues (1996a:14), is discursively constructed. Similarly Butler (1993:1), years earlier, in making a case for the construction of ‘sex’, explained that “ ... sex not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces (through the repetitions or iteration of a norm which is without origin) the bodies it governs ... ‘sex’ is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time”.

In the study I undertook, discourse is understood as:

... a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event (or person or class of persons), a particular way of representing it or them in a certain light. (Burr, 1995:48)³⁰

Identity is formed out of the discourses that are available to individuals in society and which are then drawn upon in their interactions with others (Burr, 1995:51). Discourses then are productive rather than descriptive in that they produce identities and subject positions while at the same time silencing others, for example apartheid discourses on ‘race’ produced racial divisions. Discourses give rise to ways of understanding who individuals should be and what they should do (Parker, 1989; Hall, 1992a; Hall, 1994; Burr, 1995).

³⁰ Similarly for Foucault, a ‘constructionist’ concerned with how knowledge and meaning were produced, ‘discourse’ meant, as Hall (1992b:291) summarises, “ ... a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment ... Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But ... since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect.”

For example, Durrheim et al (2011:94) state that “The only way in which we get to know ‘objects’ in the world - such as Afrikaners and Africans – is by means of the discourses that render them meaningful”. They argue further that the words that people use are significant in that words are carriers of meaning and stereotypes, which is familiar and easily recognisable to all. There are multiple discourses functioning for every individual which constructs their identity (Burr, 1995:53). Discourses, then, are inextricably linked to how social order is engineered and maintained. Social discourses are intertwined with the lived experiences of individuals and with the social and institutional power relations and, as such, have significant repercussions for individuals and for groups (Gunaratnam, 2003:7). As Thompson (1984:2) states:

... ideas circulate in the social world as utterances, as expressions, as words which are spoken or inscribed. Hence to study ideology is, in some part and in some way, to study language in the social world. It is to study the ways in which the multifarious uses of language intersect with power, nourishing it, sustaining it, enacting it ... language is not simply a structure which can be employed for communication and entertainment, but a social-historical phenomenon which is embroiled in human conflict.

In terms of analysing discourses in the ‘Foucauldian sense’ Soudien (2001:312) has developed a framework which takes into account three crucial discourses which he refers to as the Official, the Formal and the Informal.

The Official discourse as postulated by Soudien (2001) encompasses the ideologies, positions and perspectives of the political group of the day. As Alexander (2007:94) points out, the discourse of racial identity is “ ... embedded in the legislation ... and in the social practices and inter-group dynamics they give rise to or re-inforce”. In the case of the South African context the Official discourse will refer to the three broad eras of colonialism, apartheid and now democracy. The Official discourse of these three eras were, and are, embodied in the legislation, policies, the media, the political communication, and the general governing of society where ‘race’ was, and is, in large part included in the discourses framing each of these political eras. The Official discourse as asserted by Soudien (2001) is in line with Layder’s (1993) view of the ‘context’ discussed above and is significant in that, as Park (2008:7) argues, “The ability of states to maintain borders, define citizenship, and control access to resources gives them continued power over the identities of people within their borders.”

Complementing, and in some cases opposing, the political discourse of the day Soudien (2001) argues, is the Formal discourse which, outside of the Official discourse, is constituted of a variety of both social and personal activities and perceptions. The Formal is distinguished from the Official in that it corresponds with Layder's (1993), promulgation of the 'setting' which involves discourses within the context of work and social organisations.

Finally the Informal discourse proposed by Soudien (2001:313) is characterised by the macrocosm of social relationships inhabited by individuals and which are connected to their social, cultural and leisure activities. The Informal discourse is parallel to the concepts of 'situated activity' and 'self' as maintained by Layder (1993) and discussed earlier.

Soudien (2001) argues further that although aspects of both the Formal and the Informal may counter the Official discourse it may also act in unison with it and, in addition, as opposed to being a one dimensional structure, they contain sub-discourses and even opposing discourses.

2.5 Conclusion

Following from the literature review provided earlier in this chapter, it can be argued that statements from the public and political sphere have forced crude notions of identity and community to dominate. Furthermore, individual agency as well as the complexities of identity formation are ignored or underplayed in much of the current scholarship. According to Park (2008:3), "Ethnic identity involves setting boundaries – determining who is a member and who is not – and deciding what ethnic features are to be used to identify those members at a particular time and place"; taking this into consideration it should be noted that the category 'Indian' in South Africa was always a racial as well as an ethnic one. These classifications, although imposed upon individuals, in terms of the Population Registration Act³¹ under apartheid, and with the categories being unquestioningly employed in different ways in post-apartheid South Africa, individuals also, as Cornell and Hartmann (1998:79) argue "accept, resist, choose, specify, invent, redefine, reject, actively defend" identities.

³¹ In describing the extent and effect of the Population Registration Act, Ebr.-Vally (2001:52) states that this law, "... gave each South African an *objective* racial/ethnic identity ... an imposed identity, like the identity given to an object through a name, or through a label stuck onto it depending on its shape and origin. The law determined the membership of a group through the apparent phenotype, and through a wide array of religious, linguistic and cultural criteria, which went as far as including clothing and social habits."

Taking a social constructionist approach, my research then examines the articulated relationship between society's perceptions of 'Indians' and how South Africans of Indian descent have constructed their identities relative to this. In order to achieve this, the identity construction and perceptions of South Africans of Indian descent will be contextualised within the macro and micro processes, as outlined by Layder (1993), to reveal how these processes function to create and re-create the identities and perceptions of South Africans of Indian descent.

In addition this study also contributes to the debates on citizenship and belonging and what it means to be or 'become' a South African and attempts to discover the factors in society that encourage or oppose 'racial' or ethnic identity as opposed to a national identity (Mamdani, 1998). What is evident is that there is an empirical gap in the scholarship on how South Africans of Indian descent born and raised in a post-apartheid context have constructed their identities and in turn what notions of 'Indianness' prevail in the present circumstances. In addition little has been done to analyse whether perceptions of 'Indians' as the 'foreign other', even after becoming full citizens in 1961, have changed or remained the same since the first arrival of indentured labourers from India, and the consequences of this in a so-called non-racial society.

The study presented here, therefore, improves on existing designs for researching 'Indian' identity in South Africa by providing a critical historical and contemporary insight into perceptions of South Africans of Indian descent by the media, politicians, legislation, policies and the like. It also extends the scope of existing studies by providing imaginative ideas and challenges for how we engage currently with the discourse of xenophobia, citizenship and belonging, by approaching and locating attitudes and perceptions within the structural, societal and political conditions of the day. Traversing across time, the project also yields a valuable synopsis of the changes and continuities in the construction and perceptions held of South Africans of Indian descent, and how they have constructed their identities in relation to this, as well as the types of social structures and ideologies that serve to underpin these constructs.

In this chapter I have interrogated the secondary literature and examined how other authors have dealt with the issue of the identity construction of 'Indians' and specifically the notion of community and in so doing revealed gaps in the current scholarship that this research will

address. In addition I have provided the theoretical framework followed throughout by engaging with the scholarship on social constructionism and highlighting the essential components of my research approach. The following chapter provides a detailed discussion of the choice of research design, methods and methodology employed in this study. It argues for the use and relevance of cross-generational research as well as oral histories in researching South Africans in contemporary society. Additionally it makes a case for the importance, in this particular study, of periodising findings and analysing it contextually.

- Chapter Three -

Research Design, Methodology and Methods

“Cheshire Puss,” [Alice] began, rather timidly “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the cat

(Lewis Carroll - Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, 1920:89)

3.1 Introduction

Alice, the key character in Carroll’s (1920) fictional tale, experiences similar challenges to that of a sociologist in that she is constantly trying to make sense of a society that often appears ‘illogical’. As Marvasti (2004:1) states, “Social life is full of experiences that prompt people to re-examine their surroundings ... all human beings are interested in understanding and explaining everyday experiences”. Similarly Alice finding herself at a fork in the road, turns to the Cheshire Cat for direction. However, unlike the cat in this story who places enormous significance on the destination, the researcher, in attempting to explore sociological concerns, places just as much emphasis on determining the *process* of arriving there as with what he/she might discover at the end (Mouton, 1996; Rostron, 2009). As a result Mouton (1996:24) compares scientific research to that of a journey and argues that,

A journey, and also scientific enquiry, has at least four facets or dimensions: a traveler, a destination, a route and a mode of travel ... In the world of science these components are the researcher(s), the goal, the object of inquiry and the methodology that has to be followed.

Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006:370) add that the methods employed in research is dependent on the “philosophical presuppositions” of the researcher, in that the questions we ask about our social world, and the way in which we go about finding answers to these questions, is influenced by our disciplinary orientation (see also Marvasti, 2004). Hence, the ontological, epistemological, and methodological premises of the researcher are influenced by his/her philosophical assumptions which in turn give direction to the research design, methods and analysis selected. In addition, Marvasti (2004:3) argues that “ ... the hows of

investigation ... and philosophical presuppositions (theory) ... are intricately linked in that one informs the other.”

The previous chapter provided an analysis of the theoretical framework that underpins this thesis and which guides the research. The purpose of this chapter, following from the argument presented above, is to demonstrate the influence of the theoretical and philosophical assumptions and the research aim, in the choice of research design, methods and analysis employed in this study, by arguing that theory provides the lens through which data is analysed and thus “ ... provides a logical link between sociological knowledge and practice” (Churton, 2000:25). This chapter further demonstrates the value and relevance of cross-generational research as well as oral histories in researching South Africans in contemporary society. Additionally it makes a case for the importance, in this particular study, of periodising findings and analysing data contextually.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

It has been argued that the aim of social research is to investigate the meanings and interpretations of social actors in specific situations. This research then is guided by the interpretivist³² paradigm, as interpretivism has often been characterised as showing an appreciation of the centrality of interpretation in research (Snape and Spencer, 2003). In addition interpretivism is concerned with how human interaction assists in creating social reality and meaning (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Marvasti, 2004). Meaning, according to Gray (2009:18), is “ ... *constructed* not discovered, so subjects construct their own meanings in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon.”

The ontological aspect then of interpretivism is that there are multiple realities, and that social reality is the result of interactions between actors in real social contexts (Mouton, 1996; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). According to interpretivism, the social world cannot exist outside of the independent minds of social actors. Burrell and Morgan (1979:260) argue that:

³² Also referred to as the constructivist paradigm (see Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Marvasti (2004:5) argues that interpretivism refers to the basic tenets of constructionism, while Gray (2009:21) argues that interpretivism is a theoretical perspective linked to constructivism.

... the social world is no more than the subjective construction of individual human beings who, through the development and use of common language and the interactions of everyday life, may create and sustain a social world of intersubjectively shared meaning.

In addition, the interpretivist paradigm assumes a subjectivist epistemology in that the researcher and researched are thought to relate in a dialogic manner and co-create understandings which are historically, situationally and culturally specific (Burr, 1995; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Henning, 2004; Marvasti, 2004; Gray, 2009).

Methodologically, the interpretivist paradigm takes an ideographic approach to the study of society in that interpretivism requires a more detailed and thorough analysis of the social situation and the subjective accounts of the individual actors or situation (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Gray, 2009). By using methods that serve to highlight the unique elements of the individual phenomenon, this paradigm advocates a “naturalistic (in the natural world), set of methodological procedures” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:35).

Following from the above, the methodological approach of this research is qualitative in nature and, as Henning (2004:82) argues, qualitative research produces thickly textured description³³ and analysis of the quality of the human experience, and supports the ideas of the qualitative researcher as a ‘bricoleur’, one who employs a broad range of methods and techniques in several combinations in order to adequately portray what Husserl (1970:240) refers to as ‘lived experience’. I would argue, in agreement with Denzin and Lincoln (2003), that qualitative research practice is rooted in the deep need to change the world.³⁴

Qualitative research is defined as,

Inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. (Leedy, 1997:165)

³³ Denzin (1989:83) states that, “A ‘thick description’ does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard.”

³⁴ See section 3.5 - Ethics and Dissemination of Results further on in this chapter, for a discussion on researching for social change.

The ability of qualitative data more fully to describe a phenomenon is an important consideration not only from the researcher's perspective, but from the reader's perspective as well (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Further to this it has been argued that social science research is an interpretative science in search of meaning as opposed to a quest for universal laws that explain the causes of human behaviour (Geertz, 1973; Marvasti, 2004) as it intends to portray the significance of understanding research participants' description of their experiences from their own point of view thus revealing how these individuals or groups assign meaning to their everyday interactions and experiences (Beuchler, 2008).

In essence then, qualitative researchers agree that social research should be based on "... stuff of the real world: interactions, interviews, or observations from, and related to the social world" (Marvasti, 2004:8), and the specific techniques or tools used to study a topic "... should depend on the nature of what we are trying to describe, on the likely accuracy of our descriptions, on our purposes, and on the resources available to us ... " (Hammersley, 1992:163). To conclude, Festinger and Katz (1953:1) state that "It is a truism that no research results are any better than the methods by which they are obtained".

3.3 Research Design

Following from the above and drawing on the interpretivist approach, a phenomenological research design has been employed in this study, as phenomenology advocates that attempts to understand social reality have to be embedded in the experience of individuals of that social reality (Gray, 2009). In addition the phenomenological paradigm promotes the use of multiple methods in researching a phenomenon, as well as researching a smaller sample in-depth by "exploring the personal construction of the individual's world" (Gray, 2009:24). Silverman (2006) argues that there is value in utilising different approaches as it allows the researcher the tools best able to answer the research questions that frame the study. In addition, this research draws on the framework postulated by Layder (1993:114) who argues that "... if we view a multistrategy approach to fieldwork in terms of the elements outlined in the research map ... there is a shift in emphasis in the kinds of analysis and data that are pertinent to different layers of social organization."

3.3.1 Periodisation

To repeat the overarching question that serves as the basis for this study and informs the investigation is:

How have the perceptions of ‘Indians’ as foreigners, by fellow South African citizens, changed or fundamentally remained the same since the first arrival of indentured labourers from India in 1860, and what impact has it had on the identity formation of these South African citizens?

Due to the fluidity of identity construction, its variable nature in that it evolves or shifts over time, and the social construction of identity, it was important that the research be appropriately periodised, in order to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter One, so that the findings of the investigation could be analysed accordingly and in relation to the relevant social, political and economic context of the time. A logical basis then, to demarcate the critical historical moments, was by what occurred in society at various points in time, and to examine the events within each period that captured the social constructions of ‘Indians’ in South Africa.

Taking into account the history of South African society, the most useful method of periodising was to consider the major political events that have occurred over the last century and half, and the events that occurred within these periods, that could have had an impact on the perceptions of ‘Indians’, within a specific socio-political context. Political changes are inextricably linked to, and impact on, societal transformation and the events that occurred within each period, in their interaction, provide historical periods useful to the approach and purpose of this study. I anticipated therefore that periodising in this manner would provide important insight into how the major political disruptions in South Africa, and the resulting social and economic climate, affected the perceptions as well as the identity formation of South Africans of Indian descent. The periods were distinguished as follows:

1860 -1910

The first time period of importance that was considered, is the period from 1860 to 1910, as it was in 1860 that the first group of indentured Indian labourers arrived in the colony of Natal.

It was also during this time period that traders and other passenger Indians arrived in the colony.

These merchant traders from India, who initially immigrated to southern Africa to meet the consumer needs of the indentured labourers, were regarded as competition by 'white' traders, when they began moving their business interests into the towns. In addition, 'white' people in the colony of Natal were threatened by the movement of these Indian immigrants into agriculture and other skilled work, after their term of indenture was over (Freund, 1995). As a result of this, a spate of anti-Indian legislation was passed during this period, in an attempt to limit traders to various confines and also to deter, not only 'freed' indentured labourers from staying on, but also further immigration of traders from India. In response to this, the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) was founded by the Indian elites and professionals in Natal in 1894 with the main objectives being to improve the quality of life for 'Indians' in South Africa and to end the system of indenture. It is important to note that the government of the time, grouped everyone who came from the sub-continent, India or elsewhere, as 'Indians' and although there were strong divisions between the merchant class and the indentured labourers and the subsequent working class, the heterogeneity among 'Indians' was ignored by the government (Naidoo, 1998). When Gandhi left South Africa in 1914, 'Indians' were still divided along lines of religion, class, where they lived and how they identified with India, and Naidoo (1998) argues further that there was no common ethnic identity during this period, so much so that the *Indian Opinion*³⁵ made reference to "the different Indian races" inhabiting South Africa (Vahed, 2001:110).

As a result one of the purposes of the NIC, as stated in the previous chapter, was to bring together 'Indians' of different caste, language, religion and regional origins into a common "Indianness", and this in turn, created a greater separation between themselves and the other subjugated 'races' (Naidoo, 1998). All these factors both created and maintained 'Indian' as a relevant category, even though it was experienced in different ways by the people who were so classified.

Despite the efforts of the NIC, however, 'Indians' nevertheless remained in a precarious position with regard to their status as foreigners in South Africa, and in this regard, another

³⁵ The *Indian Opinion* was the first so called 'Indian' newspaper in South Africa and was established by Gandhi in 1903.

defining moment within the period of 1860 to 1910 was the Anglo-Boer War (now mostly referred to as the South African War) which took place between 1899 and 1902. The war years and immediate post war years were characterised by the changing perceptions of who was considered acceptable to “ ... belong to the nation and who could not ... ” (Stephan, 1991:105). For example, between 1904 and 1907 approximately 63,000 Chinese workers were imported into the Transvaal colony to work on the gold mines, and with the exception of a small number who could not be accounted for, all were subsequently repatriated to China (Park, 2008). One of the many reasons for the immediate repatriation after their term of indenture was over, was to avoid the ‘problem’ that was created as a result of the indentured labourers from India staying on after they had served out their indenture. This ‘problem’ became known as the ‘Indian question’ and the debate in this regard revolved around what to do with the ‘Indians’ in the colonies.

In 1910 the Union of South Africa³⁶ was created and its government inherited “ ... the old Indian problem of the colonies and the Boer republics ... ” (Ebr.-Vally, 2001:82). According to Peberdy (2009:44), the restrictive practices and legislations and the beliefs upon which it was founded, continued without intervention in the government of the Union, arguing that the “ ... anti-Indian immigration policies of earlier jurisdictions were now transported onto the new national stage.”

1910 – 1948

The next 38 years from 1910 to 1948 represents a continuing period of uncertainty regarding the status of ‘Indians’ in South Africa, and further anti-‘Indian’ laws were passed in this period in an attempt to persuade ‘Indians’ to return or emigrate to India or renew their term of indenture. Attempts were also made to discontinue the system of indentured labour, and in 1911 a resolution was passed in India, preventing the further recruitment of indentured labour for Natal, and the last sailing vessel, the Umlazi, arrived in Natal in July 1911 carrying the final group of indentured labourers (Brain, 2003).

According to Peberdy (2009:44), ‘Indians’ residing in the Union during this period, and potential immigrants from India were characterised as “ ... real and potential contaminants

³⁶ This will be explicated in greater detail in Chapter Five.

and ‘complications’ who threatened white rule.” As a result, debates on utilising immigration legislation to control the settlement and immigration of ‘Indians’ dominated the discourse on the development of such legislation in the Union during this period. The piece of legislation that emerged out of these debates was the 1913 Immigrants Regulation Act which served the purpose of preventing ‘Indian’, or any other ‘non-white’, immigration. According to Peberdy (2009:33) ‘ ... at its core the ... legislation was more concerned with exclusion than inclusion, with who should be kept out rather than who should be allowed in.’ She argues further that the fundamental component of the immigration legislation was the particular exclusion of ‘Indians’ which was based on the anti-‘Indian’ policies of the colonies that were in existence before the formation of the union.

In 1947, India achieved independence from British rule and Indian officials made representation to the United Nations about the racist practices in South Africa generally and the treatment of ‘Indians’ in particular (Reddy, 1995).³⁷ At this point in time, the leaders of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC), and the African National Congress (ANC), i.e. Dr. M. Naicker, Dr. Y.M. Dadoo and Dr. A.B. Xuma respectively, resolved to co-operate more closely in the interests of achieving “ ... basic human rights and full citizenship for all sections of the South African peoples” (NIC Agenda Book, 1947 in Bhana and Pachai (eds), 1984:193). The signing of this ‘Doctor’s Pact’, as it was termed, is regarded as a significant socio-political event as its purpose was to demonstrate the willingness of these ‘non-white’ political bodies to come together in their campaign against the racist state practices, and in turn unite the racial groups that these bodies represented, in joint resistance.

1948-1994

Despite joint efforts against the oppressive system of government, the National Party (NP) was nevertheless elected into office in 1948, and the period from 1948 to early 1994 represents the watershed years of apartheid, the system of government that institutionalised racial discrimination. Apartheid brought with it separate development legislation that entrenched segregation between the so called ‘population groups’ that it created. According to Posel (2001:58),

³⁷ It is significant to note here also that India supported anti-apartheid sanctions, and in this regard there was no trade or investment between India and South Africa prior to 1994.

Apartheid's principal imaginary was of a society in which every 'race' knew and observed its proper place – economically, politically and socially. Race was to be the critical and overriding faultline: the fundamental organising principle for the allocation of all resources and opportunities, the basis of all spatial demarcation, planning and development, the boundary for all social interaction, as well as the primary category in terms of which this social and moral order was described and defended.

Discrimination was written into law, and pieces of legislation such as the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Population Registration Act of 1950, and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 were promulgated. The Group Areas Act was a particularly atrocious law which resulted in the forced removals of 'Indians', who were already settled in specific areas, to inferior housing in areas distinctly set aside for 'Indians'. Freund (1995) argues that approximately 80 percent of the 'Indian' population in Durban was affected by the systematic execution of the programme of forced removals. In commenting on the Group Areas legislation the then Prime Minister of South Africa D.F. Malan stated in a parliamentary debate that, "I do not think there is any other Bill, affecting the relations between different races, the non-Europeans and the Europeans of this country, which determines the future of South Africa and of all population groups as much as this Bill does." (*Hansard*, 1950:col.7722 cited in Christopher, 2001:4).

In addition racially based systems of education were implemented, and between 1975 and 1976, 15 times more was expended for the education of a 'white' child than for a 'black' child (Shubane, 2007:362). In addition to this, 'black' school teachers did not possess the necessary qualifications, and the infrastructure and facilities in 'black' schools were substandard. Apart from these inequalities, the disparate curriculum of the different racial groups ensured that 'black' children were educated with the purpose of fulfilling particular roles in society. This system of schooling also served as a mechanism for knowledge dissemination about the different 'race' groups and resulted in the cementing of people's perceptions of the 'other'. Ebr.-Vally (2001:85) argues that,

The only representation that an Afrikaner child could have of a Zulu child ... originated in the image portrayed in school history books. Separate development ... and the official apartheid discourse ... conditioned all perceptions of the others.³⁸

³⁸ It should be noted however that considerable interaction, of a specific kind, between 'races', occurred in households and on farms.

In addition, Xaba (2001:44) argues that the Group Areas Act, which forced people of different 'race' groups to live apart in designated areas " ... produced an environment in which stereotypes of others developed."

These pieces of legislation, along with countless others, also influenced the socio-economic conditions of South Africans, and it is these conditions that have been argued to be the cause of the anti-'Indian' riots that occurred in Durban in 1949. Although the South African government stated that the riots was an indication of the racial, and racist, conflict between 'Indians' and 'Africans', it has been argued that government legislation together with the growing economic disparities between these 'race' groups sparked the violence in 1949 that claimed the lives of 87 'Africans', 50 'Indians', one 'white' and four "others" (Ladlau, 1975; Edwards, 1983; Bhana and Pachai (eds), 1984; Webster, 2000; Xaba, 2001; Landy et al, 2004). The 1949 riots was a pivotal moment in the political history of 'Indians' in South Africa, as it brought into the foreground the dire consequences of apartheid legislations and its bearing on the competition for resources amongst the so called 'non-European' 'races' that the state had created.

It has been argued that the 1949 riots spurred greater co-operation between the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) and the ANC, and in 1952 a joint campaign of defiance against the apartheid laws commenced (Xaba, 2001). In a letter to the then Prime Minister of South Africa, D.F. Malan, the SAIC, pledged its support to the ANC regarding the repeal of the state's discriminatory legislation and argued that " ... the Indian community of South Africa, is South African ... " (South African Indian Congress, 20 February 1952). However, it was only in 1961 that 'Indians' were given the status of a permanent population in South Africa and a Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) was then established, with a 'white' Minister of Indian Affairs. A few years after the DIA was formed, the South African Indian Council was established (by nomination) in 1964, the purpose of which was to serve only in an advisory and consultative capacity to the DIA (Horrell et al, 1973).

Approximately 20 years after 'Indians' became a permanent population group in South Africa, the NP government allowed them limited participation in the system of government. Compelled by protests for inclusion and political reform, the NP devised a parliamentary system to replace the 'whites-only parliament' that had been governing South Africa. The formation of the tri-cameral parliament then in the 1980s serves as another significant event

due to the political and social consequences of this form of government for 'Indians'. The purpose of the tri-cameral parliament was to include representation of 'coloured' and 'Indian' people in parliament, with responsibility for matters such as health, education etc. relating to its 'own affairs'.³⁹ This system excluded the 'African' majority as the government argued that 'Africans' had political rights in their own homelands which 'coloureds' and 'Indians' did not have. The so called political representation that the National Party (NP) government proposed did not actually involve sharing of political power or involvement in any meaningful decision making processes, and was therefore not supported by the ANC or the NIC. According to Naidoo (1998), although the leaders of the ANC and the NIC expressed solidarity during the 1980s this did not extend to their constituents, as the state continued to foster discord between the population groups as part of their divide and rule strategy, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

The result of this was yet another attack on 'Indians' in 1985 in Bhambhayi (Xaba, 2001). The separation between 'Africans' and 'Indians' as a result of the apartheid legislation, contributed to intense competition between these two 'groups' for housing, land, landlord privileges and other trading rights in the area of Bhambhayi in Inanda. The divisions and tensions resulted in increased hostilities in the area which manifested in the violence against 'Indians' in the area in 1985.⁴⁰ As will be discussed further in Chapter Six, the result of the violence was the loss of property for many 'Indians' living and trading in the area (Xaba, 2001:47).

1994 to present

After the general elections of April 1994, South Africa finally became a democratic society and the new government led by the ANC made a Constitutional commitment to inclusivity and to 'non-racialism'. However, processes of othering similar to that which occurred during apartheid persist in public and popular discourse. 'Race', ethnicity and class continue to be the organising principle of the economic, political and social spheres of a democratic South

³⁹ This type of parliamentary representation could be considered the equivalent of Bantustans for 'Indians' and 'coloureds', as Africans had already been 'allowed' political participation in the so called homelands created for them by the state.

⁴⁰ Xaba (2001) argues that those who attacked 'Indians' in the area were 'outsiders' belonging to a particular organisation. He adds however that the fact that the violence happened without significant intervention from the 'locals' is evidence of the strained relationships between 'African' and 'Indian' people.

African society. Legislation aimed at redressing past inequalities in the workplace are based on apartheid era classifications and, as Alexander (2007:92) argues, this has severe ‘unintended consequences’ beyond the workplace by “ ... wittingly or unwittingly entrenching racial prejudice.” In addition, questions around citizenship, nationality and ‘who belongs’ have been brought to the fore. Xenophobia expressed towards refugees and immigrants from the African continent as well as fellow South African citizens seen as unwelcome ‘foreigners’ provide evidence for a society that, 19 years after democracy, is still deeply divided along lines of ‘race’ and ethnicity.

Summary

The specific social, political and economic events that occurred within these four periods, represent the seminal moments that define how the social, economic and political world affected Indian immigrants and their descendants in South Africa. These events represent the movements that shaped the way in which ‘Indians’ were perceived by the rest of South Africa, and the way that ‘Indians’ constructed their identities in relation to these differing contexts, with history weighing heavily. Layder (1993:195) argues that historical analysis is essential to a research study that is based on,

... intrinsically historical problems, such as those implied in the questions of how and why such a phenomenon ... has come to take the form it takes. This ... requires investigation into the historical, forms, events, processes and so on ... It also requires a time-scale tailored to the specific problem at hand.

The research was guided by the important events that occurred within these periods, in the selection and analysis of the documentary sources and as well as in the construction of the family histories, which will be discussed further below.

3.3.2 Data Collection

In the case of this research, the different research questions, as outlined in Chapter One, required different research methods, in order appropriately to answer the various questions. As Layder (1993:114) argues, “Investigation of self and situated behaviour is best conducted by the use of classical forms of qualitative research, such as ... semi-structured interviewing

and so on, because these topics demand some ... interpretive account of the meaningful world of the individuals involved”. The primary sources of data germane to the macro elements of setting and context, on the other hand, can be gathered from documentary sources (Layder 1993:117).

In this regard, the data collection methods included documentary sources, oral histories, and semi-structured interviews. In addition, existing research reports, whether published or in the form of reports or theses, were surveyed for data that were put to use beyond the original intention and analysed differently. This proved invaluable in providing an integrated picture of how the Indian indentured labourers, Indian immigrants, and South African born ‘Indians’ were perceived at the time of writing. However, it was also necessary to seek from these sources answers to questions that were not at the forefront of the research done at the time. In other words such research would have looked backwards, or in the moment, whereas this investigation also interprets forwards in time, and traced events that has relevance for the present and the future.

Collecting documentary sources from 1860 to present and, in addition, tracing the journeys of five families over a century and a half, proved to be an incredible journey through lived history. The importance and value of the historical approach to this research cannot be emphasised enough. Mandela (in Faber, 2003:4) states that,

If we are able to learn, then we must be able to learn from history in particular, because by definition learning is based on knowledge collected over time ... We are shaped by events that came before us and processes that unfold in our own lifetime ... Our country has been formed by the events of history, of which we have been the masters to a greater or lesser extent.

It can be argued then that history illuminates the present and allows us to make sense of particular phenomena. Von Ranke (1956:61) argues that “What developed in the past constitutes the connection with what is emerging in the present”, and Lerner (1997:116) adds that the processes by which individuals “preserve and interpret the past and then re-interpret it in light of new questions, is history-making” and a social necessity as it concerns the way experience interacts with thought in the formation of personal identity.

Drawing on Lerner (1997:116), it can be argued that history fulfills a number of purposes. Firstly it functions as “memory and as a source of personal identity”, in that as memory, the experiences, works, and ideologies of past individuals are “kept alive”. Each individual life, Lerner argues, is a connection between generations thus providing a bridge from the past to the future and ultimately becoming a source of personal identity. History also serves as “collective immortality” by extending the life of individuals beyond their lived years (Lerner, 1997:116). This is done by creating a configuration in the mind of an individual that they are fixed in a continuum with people coming before and after them. In addition history also produces a cultural tradition which is made up of a “shared body of ideas, values and experiences” which individuals legitimate by rooting its source in the past (Lerner, 1997:116). Finally, history functions as explanation, by using historical events as examples and evidence of philosophies and broader frameworks. It could also serve as models and *challenges to the status quo*.

In sum, Lerner (1997:211) argues that,

The dead continue to live by way of the resurrection we give them in telling their stories. The past becomes part of our present and thereby part of our future. Being human means ... reflecting on the past and visioning into the future. We experience; we give voice to that experience; others reflect on it and give it new form. That new form ... influences and shapes the way next generations experiences their lives. That is why history matters.

3.3.2.1 Documentary Sources

In order to achieve the aims, as outlined above, and to establish how ‘Indians’ in South Africa have been constructed, historically and in contemporary society, it was crucial for an investigation to be conducted into documentary sources such as the media, published and unpublished texts, political speeches, government documents, popular songs and popular culture. According to Blanche et al (2006:316),

Such materials are also particularly useful for constructionist analysis, as they have an obviously ‘constructed’ nature and are means by which ideas and discourses are circulated in our society.

Individuals perceive through a frame of reference which is made up of a set of interlocking facts, ideas, beliefs, values and attitudes. This frame of reference provides the basis for their understanding of people, events and experiences because it filters their perceptions. As individuals receive new information, they assess it in terms of their existing frame of reference and either reject it because it does not align with their frame of reference; or they utilise it to provide support for, or extend their existing frame of reference (Oberholzer, 2005). Media, therefore, and political speeches, legislation, and popular culture become the lens through which people make sense of others in society.

Language is an important political tool that can both “mobilise and organise”, and in addition political language is influential in creating, altering or preserving identities, write Singh and Vawda (1998:1). Language is an instrument which reflects power dynamics within the political sphere; thus the discourses of the state are important sources of data as “ ... the aims of the state are articulated linguistically and express particular meanings within a ‘specific ideological context’” (Singh and Vawda, 1998:2).

In theorizing xenophobia in contemporary South African society, authors such as Danso and McDonald (2001) and McDonald and Jacobs (2005), argue that the media have contributed to increasing xenophobic and racist attitudes. The research undertaken by McDonald and Jacobs (2005) reveal an ongoing perpetuation of negative stereotypes in the South African press. Danso and McDonald (2001) support this argument and claim that problematic statistics and assumptions about foreigners are reproduced in the media without much critical interrogation.

The media, according to McDonald and Jacobs (2005:6) not only reflects racism and xenophobia but can also contribute to a misrepresentation of what is actually happening on the ground. Henry and Tator (1995, cited in McDonald and Jacobs, 2005:6) argue that the media does not always

... objectively record and describe reality, nor do they neutrally report facts and stories ... some media practitioners socially construct reality based on their professional and personal ideologies, corporate interests, and cultural norms and values.

Racial identities then are not simply described by talk and discourses but are *produced* through talk and discourses. Searle (1995) adds that ‘facts’ and social realities are constructed

through language. Research undertaken by Harris (2001) posits that this has contributed to a public culture of xenophobia and racism which accepts unsubstantiated and inflammatory statements by the media and politicians (through the medium of the media). Basically all society's ailments and government's failure to adequately address societal problems are blamed on those regarded as the 'other'.

Hall (1982) too reminds us that the media methodically give credence to and affirms particular systems of knowledge, values, ideas and beliefs that serve to add value and appeal to certain audiences and social and political agendas, while undermining or excluding others. Individuals who produce media are engaged in a process of power relations. Media practitioners, therefore, create, sustain or reproduce social and political values and institutional practices and this gives rise to significant issues of power; i.e. creating or re-affirming unequal power relations through the ways in which things are represented and people are positioned in society (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). Taylor and Willis (1999:40) add,

No cultural representation can offer access to the 'truth' about what is being represented, but what such representations do provide is an indication about how power relations are organized in a society, at certain historical moments.

Larson (2006) argues that themes that uphold the dominant ideology are found in news stories and entertainment communication, and that all news that covers 'minorities' puts across messages to readers that help them to expand on, strengthen or dispute assumptions about 'race'. It is important to note that influential politicians and other groups are able to change discourse as they have more power over discourse than others (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

The media, legislation, political speeches and parliamentary debates,⁴¹ therefore, served as an important data source to investigate how historical discourses and events influence, or feed into, or confirm contemporary perceptions of South African 'Indians' as the 'foreign other', and how they serve to uphold certain forms of exclusion rather than others.

⁴¹ The parliamentary debates analysed in this study were sourced from transcripts of the debates which were published in *The Mercury* and not through archival searches.

The main documentary sources collected from the media for this thesis included articles from *The Mercury* and *Ilanga*, spanning 150 years but taken from the key periods as discussed above. *The Natal Mercury* was founded in 1852 and in 1878 became the first daily newspaper (Independent Newspapers KZN, 2012).⁴² The newspaper was owned and controlled by the Robinson family who had migrated to the colony of Natal in 1850 (Pieterse, 2011:48). John Robinson who was the first editor of *The Mercury* along with his father George was also a politician and served as Natal's first Prime Minister in 1893 (Wilks, 1977). The paper then was not a politically neutral vehicle at that stage but rather spoke mainly to a literate, English speaking, 'white', middle class audience and maintained the interests of the sugar barons during the colonial period (as will become evident in the chapter that follows). Although letters to the editor were published from literate Indians and African people as well, as this thesis will reveal, the paper itself portrayed a racist discourse which was evident in letters to the editor, parliamentary proceedings and political speeches all published in *The Mercury*. The newspaper too was closely aligned to the sugar planters, especially J.R Saunders who was at the forefront of petitioning for Indian immigration to Natal, and therefore propagated the interests of these sugar capitalists (Tomaselli and Louw, 1991:6). In the Union years *The Mercury* assumed a more liberal position in relation to the politics of the day, however their reporting, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, suggests that although the newspaper advocated for social change, it nevertheless published solutions to the 'social ills' that represented unprogressive, right wing reform. During the apartheid years as Chapter Six will reveal, the reportage in *The Mercury* perpetuated narrow racial stereotypes. Currently, *The Mercury* boasts that the racial profile of its readership has since evolved and that "... 40% of readers are Black, 28% Indian, 30% White, and 2% are Coloured" and it claims to focus on an audience comprised of "upmarket and successful people across the province, as well as ambitious, upwardly mobile and aspirational people who recognise the value of keeping informed" (Independent Newspapers KZN, 2012). Reporting in *The Mercury* then has been influenced by the political courses of the various time periods under study and reflects the different and changing readership base.

Ilanga Lase Natal was founded in 1903 by Rev. John L Dube and was the first newspaper to contain articles primarily in isiZulu (there were some articles written in English as well).⁴³

⁴² The name of the newspaper changed post-1994 to *The Mercury* (and will be referred to as such throughout this thesis).

⁴³ In March 1965 the title of the newspaper was abridged to *Ilanga* (and will be referred to as such throughout

Along with Dube the contributions to *Ilanga* were made by African intellectuals or *kholwas*.⁴⁴ The newspaper however claimed to represent the views of the economically disadvantaged Africans in the country and was touted by Dube in his first editorial, on 10 April 1903, as the paper “for the black people in Natal” encouraging them to “wake up” to the atrocities perpetrated upon them by the “white people” (Hunt Davis Jr, 1997:83). Dube’s leadership encouraged the direction of the newspaper then towards the well-being of ‘black’ African people in the country, and the articles were written from the lens of viewing people, as Hunt Davis Jr (1997:83) argues, “... in racial terms, contrasting black and white.” The agenda of *Ilanga* while attempting to rouse Africans out of their perceived apathy was to also address their fellow *kholwas* with the aim of encouraging political participation to gain redress through obtaining franchise rights and to be on par in all arenas with ‘white’ people (Lambert, 1995:70). While the articles and letters to the editor from this newspaper will reveal the perceptions held of South Africans of Indian descent, it should be noted that these perceptions are obviously those of literate mainly working class isiZulu speaking people.⁴⁵

In addition to the articles sourced from the two newspapers discussed above, political speeches, legislation and parliamentary debates that took place within those key periods were also collected. Layder (1993:179) argues that “... a historical dimension may contribute to the originality of the analysis ... However, this does not necessitate that our historical materials be newly discovered or original.”

Mogalakwe (2006) argues that a good entry point into documentary analysis is to discover where these documents are held. In the case of the newspaper articles, the only hardcopies of *The Mercury* and *Ilanga* that were accessible were located at the Msunduzi Municipal Library in Pietermaritzburg. The libraries based in Durban that were approached, namely the

this thesis) (Hunt Davis Jr., 1979).

⁴⁴ According to Switzer (1997:27) “The *kholwa* (meaning “believers”), as members of the African Christian community were designated in Zulu, constituted the new social class in Natal, with definable interests that were not always in harmony with the Zulu majority.”

⁴⁵ It is important to note that for the purpose of this research study, newspapers are not recognised as a legitimate source to “re-tell” the history of the relationships between different groups of people, but it is used instead to reveal the role of discourse in shaping the perceptions held of South Africans of Indian descent, and to investigate the ideological construction of the category ‘Indian’ through analysing the discourse around the early Indian immigrants and their descendants in these newspapers (in addition to analysing the discourse of legislation, political speeches and parliamentary debates). As Brennan (2011:42) notes, “... newspapers themselves were produced as informational fragments in composite, a naked business model of advertisements, sports results, commodity prices, official departures and arrivals, and other local notices”. It is therefore acknowledged that changes to the socio-political status in southern Africa and the colonies, the evolving readership, as well as the funding of these newspapers through advertisements and the like contributed to the way in which news was reported, and to and for whom it was geared.

Independent Newspapers Library, Ilanga Lase Library, the Durban Municipal Library and Killie Campbell, only archive copies of the newspaper on microfilm. After exhausting all possible options in Durban, the demanding route of travelling to Pietermaritzburg was chosen as I discovered that it was far less time consuming, and ergonomically better, to peruse the hardcopies as opposed to navigating the microfilm, which is much more time consuming and labour intensive and requires significantly more ‘man’ hours as opposed to examining the hardcopies of the paper. This was especially so since I was examining a large volume - i.e. 25 years of *The Mercury*, and *Ilanga* within the years ranging from 1860 to 2010. I engaged the services of a Masters student from the School of Sociology and Social Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to assist with the gathering of newspaper articles from *Ilanga*, as he was proficient in isiZulu, his first language, and being a Masters student in this School he was able to grasp with relative ease the information I was searching for. The articles, from both *Ilanga* and *The Mercury*, were photographed using a digital camera and thereafter downloaded onto a computer. The photographs were then cropped, cut and dated and transferred into a Word document which was then converted into a PDF file. Articles obtained from *Ilanga* that were in isiZulu were translated into English. It was thereafter back translated to check for accuracy (see Erickson, 1998:545).

As stated in the previous chapter the year 2010 marked the 150 year commemoration of the arrival of Indians in South Africa. In this regard there was an explosion of new literature, and newspapers publishing information on the history of ‘Indians’ in South Africa, and of family histories and the like, on a weekly basis, and at times I found it challenging to keep up with this barrage of information. I did however collect news articles, advertorials and features that I deemed relevant from the *The Mercury*, *Independent on Saturday*, *Sunday Tribune* and *Tribune Herald*, *Post*, *Phoenix Tabloid*, *Verulam* and *Phoenix Sun*, *Eastern Express* and *The Rising Sun*, newspapers primarily distributed in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. However, it soon got to a point where I could not wait for the “celebrations”/commemoration to be over so that I could continue with *my* research.⁴⁶

In addition to the newspaper sources mentioned above, political speeches and legislation were collected from archives, and published documents such as the South African Institute of

⁴⁶ With the host of new information that was entering into my field of research, I believed that the study would have become unmanageable if not handled correctly. Although I valued the new literature and publications, I felt that the study was ‘on pause’ while I waited for anything and everything that could possibly be written on the subject, to be published.

Race Relations publications, and the internet. Existing research was found in journals, theses, research projects and books through online, library and general searches. In addition, networking with other academics and historians proved useful in this regard.

3.3.2.2 Data Analysis – Documentary Sources

No document is innocent ... Documents become historical sources only after having undergone a treatment whose purpose is to transform their mendacious function into a confession of truth. (Le Goff, 1992:184)

Complementing Burr's (1995:48) definition, discussed in Chapter Two, Wodak and Meyer (2009:3), refer to discourse as " ... anything from a historical monument ... a policy ... a political strategy ... narrative, text, talk, a speech ... to language per se". Given the data collected in this research, discourse analysis then was deemed an appropriate method of analysing selected sections of the documentary sources as social identities are constructed through discourse, as discussed above. Influenced by the interpretivist paradigm, discourse analysis was employed to identify how identity is shaped and reproduced. Discourse is not always overt and hence has to be highlighted to reveal intolerances such as xenophobia and related racial intolerances. Discourse analysis focuses on talk and texts as social practices or processes (Gray, 2009). These methods look at patterns of speech, such as how people talk about a particular subject, what metaphors they use and so on. Speech then is viewed as a performance; it performs an action rather than describes a specific state of affairs or specific state of mind. Much of this analysis is intuitive and reflective and does not focus on language at a micro-level but rather studies rhetoric and particular patterns of communication that indicates how South Africans of Indian descent were perceived through these media (Silverman, 2006).

In terms of the analysis of the data gained from the historical research, a critical stance was adopted in terms of evaluating what had been written, and an assessment of what is claimed to be facts. The political speeches, newspaper articles, parliamentary debates and legislation were interrogated and an attempt was made to provide an analysis of the nature of the changing perceptions of 'Indians' in South Africa. In contemporary South African society, the term 'xenophobia' is generally used to explain all manner of negative behaviour toward

foreigners. Historically, however, the term ‘xenophobia’⁴⁷ was not employed. The secondary material then was dissected and analysed to unearth evidence for what is commonly referred to as ‘xenophobia’ today, and to determine what content was given to the ‘foreigner’, or the ‘other’. From these sources of evidence, a chronology of perceptions of Indians and South African born ‘Indians’ was explicated and analysed accordingly. Dates, developments and events, relating to the movement of ‘Indians’ and their relationships with different ‘groups’ of people or what is commonly referred to as the ‘us’ and ‘them’ perception, was chronicled and each source was critically inspected to illuminate the perceptions of ‘Indians’, that were not obvious or immediately apparent in the terms employed.

In addition, the analysis of the documentary sources provided a broader societal view of the public perceptions of ‘Indians’ in South Africa and served to contextualise the data gathered from the in-depth interviews and family histories. As Gunaratnam (2003:viii) argues, “... the process of remembering and making sense of events is about the social embeddedness of experience and of ‘voice’.” What this implies then is that individuals’ accounts of their lives, their memories, have to be understood in relation to the specific social contexts of past present and future considerations.

3.3.2.3 Family Histories

The history of ordinary people and families has indisputable value. (Mandela in Faber, 2003:5)

Family is still the principal channel for the transmission of languages, names, land and housing, local social standing, and religion; and beyond that ... also of social values and aspirations, and ... taken-for-granted ways of behaving. (Thompson, 1997:43)

In addition to the sources mentioned above, and in order successfully to answer the research questions of this thesis and to illustrate the macro-processes referred to, it was deemed equally important to conduct in-depth interviews with South African families of Indian descent living in Durban and the surrounding areas in KwaZulu-Natal. It is appropriate that

⁴⁷ Although the term was not used in historical documents or newspaper reports, the etymology of word ‘xenophobia’ indicates that the word has been in existence since 1903, and prior to this “(c.1884) it meant ‘agoraphobia’” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2013).

this specific locality was demarcated for the purpose of this study, as the majority of South Africans of Indian descent reside in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, with 80 percent of this population inhabiting the city of Durban (Statistics South Africa, 2008). In addition, and as a result of the first indentured labourers arriving in what was then referred to as Port Natal, KwaZulu-Natal (especially the city of Durban) has become the location of historical records and archival material on the history of 'Indians' in South Africa. Hence more information is available and better records were kept particularly in this province. Although tensions are national, KwaZulu-Natal is historically where tensions between 'race' groups have been most prevalent, as will be discussed in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

The trajectories of five such families, and the shifting identities of the individuals within these family units, were explored, covering the period from the arrival of the first immigrant from India to South Africa, to the present day. The families identified for participation in this project have varied religious, political and socio-economic backgrounds, at present and in the past. Due to the fact that 'Indians' are not a homogenous group, the research aimed to capture such seemingly frequently unacknowledged heterogeneity. It was necessary to consider a gender spread within these families, as well as to trace family histories from the matrilineal line of some families and the patrilineal line of others, over approximately 150 years. In so doing, I then examined the lived realities of individuals in order to understand how identities have been constructed across generations, within the realm of the family unit and the broader socio-political context. As Miller (2000:2) notes,

Lives are lived within social networks, from early socialization on. People grow up in families, move into and through educational systems and labour markets, become subject to the regimes of health institutions and the like. The importance of the family, both the family of origin and the later family that a person may establish, can be central to understanding the biographies of individuals.

Four of these families were able to trace their ancestry back to the original immigrant/s that arrived from India, and in this case available documentary sources⁴⁸ and oral recollections were analysed to provide a depiction of the life history of the member(s) of the family who first came to South Africa. In the instance where the family was unable to trace the arrival of

⁴⁸ These documents included a published book on the history of one family; birth, marriage and death certificates; photographs (which revealed living and occupational spaces); and immigration documents. Unfortunately none of the families were in possession of diaries or letters that could have been analysed. In the case of one family all the family documents including letters, to and from family members in India, were destroyed during the 1949 riots.

their ancestors to South Africa, successful archival searches were undertaken in an attempt to identify the origins of the family. In addition, secondary sources including historical publications, and published and unpublished theses, were used to reveal what that family would have experienced in that period, and possible challenges and opportunities they would have encountered. Each family was depicted and investigated, focusing on one representative per generation, with a teenager representing the present generation.⁴⁹

3.3.2.4 Sampling

As Marvasti (2004) argues, participants included in an intended study can be based on theoretical considerations as opposed to technical requirements. In this regard an attempt was made to obtain as broad and heterogeneous⁵⁰ a sample as possible by accessing participants through various existing channels. The minimum requirement for inclusion in the sample was families who were South African citizens of Indian descent. Participants were identified through a process of purposeful and deliberate searching, networking and informal contacts (Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Schensul et al, 1999; Miller, 2000; Carton and Vis, 2008). In addition to contacting families who appeared in newspaper features and seemed keen to share their stories, I also contacted people via, the '1860 project' website launched by the *Sunday Tribune*; the '1860 Indians South Africa' facebook page, which at the time had 2,856 members; and through social contacts.

The challenge I faced with regard to interviewing different generations of the family, was attempting to gain the co-operation of all the relevant members of the same family. In the initial stages of this process, and after receiving firm undertakings by at least four families who were keen to be part of the project, the interviews, for various reasons provided by them, did not materialise. It also happened that in some cases getting the buy-in of all the family members proved difficult. An example of this would be the obstacles I faced trying to secure an interview with a teenager in one of the families. His lifestyle and personality served to

⁴⁹ Generation is used here to signify the different generations within a family (Great-grandparent/Grandparent/Parent/Children). These generational categories are not age specific, for example a third generation South African of Indian descent could be raised-free in one family whereas in another he/she could be much older, as this is dependent on the time of arrival of the first generation immigrant from India to South Africa.

⁵⁰ As stated earlier the religion, class, language of ancestors, origin in terms of arrival i.e. indenture or passenger and a gender spread, within the families were considered prior to inclusion in the sample.

hinder him coming on board, and I was promised an interview on several occasions but various reasons were given, at the time the interview was scheduled to take place, as to why it couldn't. I eventually contacted another prospective interviewee in the same age group as the initial participant and interviewed him instead.⁵¹

Table 3.1, following, provides a summary of each family that participated. My aim was to present and analyse the complex stories of identity construction of the individuals within these families, and to trace their position in their own changing and multifaceted families and in society. In doing so a religious, gender, socio-economic and generational spread across each family over 150 years was considered.⁵² The names of the family members that are highlighted in bold are the first generation immigrants to South Africa, and in some cases that of their children, who are now deceased.⁵³

⁵¹ This 'new' participant is the first cousin of the person who was supposed to be interviewed initially. So although I did not follow a line of direct descendants as I had initially anticipated doing, I had to make this very necessary inclusion in order to resolve the impasse (at this point all the historical and archival work into this family had already been done and all the other family members had been interviewed). I view this uncertainty while 'doing' research as part of the process which has to be appropriately accommodated to ensure that the aims of the study are achieved while still protecting the integrity of the method.

⁵² It is important here to note that religious, gender and socio-economic variables differ within families as well. For instance where the initial immigrant was Hindu the following generations converted to Christianity. Before a family was selected to participate in the study research into the background and history of the family was conducted, either through an informal interview with the family 'contact' (who was generally either the person I was put in touch with on referral from someone else, or the person whom I contacted via the social networking sites or other media), or the history of the family as provided by various mediums such as newspaper reports.

⁵³ These are not the actual names of the participants, as their names have been changed to ensure anonymity. All of the interviewees in each family (except in the case of *Family 3* where Deepa is related through marriage) are direct descendants of the first migrant/immigrant to South Africa and would therefore be a child, grandchild, great-grandchild and so on of the initial migrant/immigrant.

Family	Names of family members from each generation	Origin in South Africa		Age at time of study (2010) or Deceased	Occupation
		Approximate/Actual year of arrival in South Africa	Approximate/Actual year of Birth in South Africa		
Family 1	Frank Ramsamy	1890		Deceased	Unknown
	Jim Ramsamy		1893	Deceased	Court Interpreter
	Francine Christine Ramsamy		1913	Deceased	Housewife
	David Lazarus		1938	72	Retired Academic
	Jane Mary Chetty (nee Lazarus)		1934	76	Housewife
	Daniel James Chetty		1964	46	Captain SAPS
	Edward Chetty		1994	16	High School Student
Family 2	Pattamal Iyer	1905		Deceased	Indentured/Brahmin
	Joseph Iyer		1908	Deceased	Builder
	Sharm Iyer		1934	76	Red Cross
	Prem Iyer-Panday		1963	47	Administrator
	Rajendra Panday		1992	18	High School Student
Family 3	Ashok Kaur	1899		Deceased	Indentured
	Mulayam Kaur		1926	Deceased	General Dealer
	Deepa Singh		1930	80	Housewife
	Anusha Singh		1956	54	Housewife
	Pravin Singh		1979	31	University Employee
	Aarti Singh		1991	19	University Student
Family 4	Sayed Muhammed	1912		Deceased	Merchant trader
	Osman Sayed	1912		Deceased	Property/insurance
	Abdul Sayed		1932	78	Retired General Dealer
	Farhana Naidoo		1955	55	Pharmacist
	Sabeeha Mitha		1984	26	Student
Family 5	Mukammal Naidu	1893		Deceased	Indentured
	Raju Naidu		1927	83	Builder
	Mogie Reddy		1958	52	Municipal Employee
	Joel Naidu		1991	19	Part-time Student

Table 3.1 - The Five Families

Data was gathered from the families primarily by means of oral histories and semi-structured interviews. These methods are typical of the interpretivist paradigm and allow for the greatest acquisition of contextual understanding as it focuses on context specific meanings and social practices. It has been argued that while this type of research is limited in breadth, it is very deep in substance and meaning (Stark and Torrance, 2005). Willis et al (2007:293) remind us that the purpose of theory-based research is to “ ... identify the truth of the matter, or at least get as close as possible to it. That truth exists separately from the people who are studied, and it is separate from the researcher”. They argue further that because understanding is situational, this type of research concerns itself with an understanding of the details of the context in which the study took place as opposed to searching for universal laws. Sohng (1995:10) states “ ... the only criterion for the ‘rightness’ of an interpretation is ‘intersubjective’ ... we are not solely concerned about being right ... Being right has to be contextually valid”. What emerges from this then, is rich data results that include multiple perspectives.

As this research aimed to explore the articulated relationship between perceptions of ‘Indians’ and how those who classify themselves as ‘Indian’ have formed their identities, insights obtained from the historically contextualised investigation into the perceptions of ‘Indians’ by fellow South African citizens, were employed to structure the oral histories as well as the in-depth interviews with the families.

3.3.2.5 Oral Histories

South Africa at the present moment is living through a time of memory. It is a time when we are considering the past histories of individuals, families, institutions, events and periods. (Govinden, 2008:9)

Govinden’s statement indicates that in post 1994 South Africa there has been an extraordinary increase in terms of the interest in memory. It has been argued that this concern with memory is significant in terms of its ability, or at least attempt, to heal the past hurts as was done with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which was regarded as an ambitious attempt at generating past experiences through memory (Wieder, 2004; Denis, 2008a). As Harris (2012) reminds us “ ... there can be no healing without remembering ...” however, he argues further,

that we need to bear in mind that there is no “quick-fix” to healing and cautions that we do not ignore “the damage wrought by our histories” in our attempts to recall the past for purposes of “justice”. It was deemed important in the context of my own research to choose the oral history approach in line with the conceptual framework and theoretical assumptions about identity construction of this study. The memories of the older generational cohort who had lived through colonialism (in some cases), apartheid, and through the transition to democracy had to be ferreted out and captured by me the researcher. Wells (2008:22) argues that oral historians in South Africa have an “ ... unprecedented opportunity to contribute to the documentation of one of the world’s most significant transitions”. The stories people tell about their lives in turn reveal where they are in terms of their own individual trajectories and in terms of their identity construction, and as Walker (2005:44) argues “The study of lives can generate fruitful insights not only in relation to the lives being investigated, but also about the wider context in which that life is lived”, as the meaning attached to the experiences offers tremendous insight into both individual and collective identity (see also Wieder, 2004).

By definition oral history is a method used by a researcher in pursuit of historical evidence through dialogue and discourse with an individual about past events (Bozzoli, 1998; Thompson, 1998; Field, 1999; Wieder, 2004; Dennis and Ntsimane, 2008). Through interactive interviews a conscious attempt is made to generate testimonies about the past. The nature of this work therefore enables the researcher to document changes as well as continuities because it connects the past with the present, and this is significant as people’s present constructions of who they are, are shaped by the past.

Oral history interviewing requires patience, empathy and acute listening skills from the researcher (Wieder, 2004). This was evident in the oral history interviews I undertook for this research as respondents would travel to various places in time and across generations, in their life stories, and I would have diligently to follow or inevitably be lost. In addition I discovered that posing questions sometimes become an intrusion to the person narrating as it was not necessarily what he or she wanted to talk about. On many occasions with the older cohort I felt guilty to bring them on track when they did digress, as I understood also that the intimate interview for most of them was like a catharsis: there was someone willing to listen to them, and to hear their

stories, which were at times extremely personal in nature, and which could not take place in the context of everyday experiences and interactions. Wells (2008:33) confirms that “Very often the informants feel great relief and release from having had someone listen to their life stories”.

The emotionality of these interviews is another feature that stood out for me and this was evidenced by the entire oldest cohort generation crying at some stage during the interview when recalling the past.⁵⁴ As Field (2008) points out, oral history dialogue evokes various types of feelings that can range from joy to anger to sadness and in some cases guilt and shame. In the oral history interviews that I conducted, the outward manifestation of emotion stemmed from both sadness and trauma. BenEzer (1999:29) states that the “concept of trauma” does not have a “straightforward definition” however it does include experiences that lead to a significant negative effect on the psyche of individuals. This manifests, according to Leydesdorff et al (1999:2) in “... a range of bodily symptoms and disturbances, in neurotic behaviours, in nightmares and hallucinations, and in amnesia”. Field (2006) argues that although all traumatic experiences are painful, not all painful experiences should be considered traumatic (see also Herman, 1992; Auerhahn and Laub, 1998). For Jane, who was 76 years old at the time of the interview, what was particularly emotional was when she recollected her grandfather’s death because that single moment signaled what she understood to be the end of her personal well being:

KP: And so you stayed with your grandparents, what were they like?

Jane: Very nice (Chuckles).

KP: Tell me your earliest memories of them, what do you remember?

⁵⁴ According to Rindfleisch (1994:470), “A *cohort generation* is a group of persons born during a limited span of years ...”. In this regard, the term ‘cohort generation’ is used here to indicate the participants from the different families who fall within the same age group or are of a similar age to each other. So in addition to analysing within families, the data obtained from each cohort generation was also analysed accordingly. In addition, according to Miller (2000:32), in societies where significant social or political change has occurred, such as is the case in South Africa, three cohort generations are apparent: 1) a “*before* cohort generation” which refers to those individuals who became full adults before the change, which in the case of this research, would be the 1994 democratic elections; 2) a “*transition* cohort generation” which refers to people who were teenagers or young adults at the time of the transition into democracy. Miller (2000) argues that this group is significant in that they were born under the old political dispensation, in this case apartheid, but that their secondary/tertiary education, and their careers are lived out during and after the transition; and 3) “an *after* cohort generation” which refers to those who were born after the transition to democracy and whose entire lived reality occurs under a new democratic government. It is important to discover if this after cohort generation or born-free generation experience as Miller argues (2000:33) “... the vivid, life-defining experiences of the previous cohort generations ... as dead history that took place in a time of antiquity.”

Jane: (Jane starts suddenly to cry) It was so good to stay with them, (still crying) my grandmother was so good to us and my grandfather was so good to us then when they were gone that was the end of our life. I'm sorry.

Interview paused for about a minute to enable Jane to gather herself

Jane: They the only two people that cared for us ... nobody else. Nobody else bothered, not the aunts, nobody. They were the only ones.

In dealing with this as a researcher, I followed Bhatt (2004) when he notes that social researchers are not counsellors and should not attempt to provide counselling of any sort to an emotional person as it might do more harm than good. I did not intervene during this process except to simply listen and in one instance I switched the recording device off, as the individual needed some time to gather herself. Denis (2008b:77) suggests that researchers should employ “empathetic imagination” in instances like these, where researchers place themselves in the situation that is being recounted to them by the respondent. The sensitivity of the older generation brought to light the magnitude of how the social context affected the personal lives of these individuals.

Carton and Vis (2008) warn the oral historian that a one-on-one interview could turn into a group discussion, and this happened in the case of the interview with Raju from *Family 5*,⁵⁵ who was 83 years old at the time, when toward the end of the interview he requested his wife to bring him a cup of tea. After delivering the tea she, together with her daughter, sat in on the latter part of the interview and contributed their knowledge:

KP: Now the temples that your father built, is it still there?

Raju: It is still there, some of the parts are demolished.

Daughter: The temples are demolished only the church is left and the hall.

Raju: But he built a lot of pig sties there, and Indian houses.

Daughter: And white people's houses, and the silo.

Wife: And the repairs of the dairy and some buildings [are] all his.

This additional exchange, instead of being disruptive, actually proved to be quite productive as it augmented what the respondent remembered.

Unlike in conventional interviews where the researcher undertakes to destroy all data gathered once the work has been written up, or in some instances store the data for a certain number of

⁵⁵ Refer to Table 3.1 for a list of the families.

years and then discard it, in the case of oral histories or the “conversational narrative” (Grele, 1991a:xv), the work has to be preserved. It is argued that preservation and dissemination are crucial features of oral history research. It was interesting to note that four of the families requested me to send them the transcript of the oldest family member’s interview.⁵⁶ I gave each family an undertaking to do this once the thesis is written up. My intention is to create a ‘memory box’ as suggested by Carton and Vis (2008), which includes a copy of the transcript and the audio recording of the interview which I will present to the oral history participant. Through this symbolic gesture I want to acknowledge that I value the time and the memories shared with me and to indicate that the individual’s life story, or the parts thereof that were retold, belong not to me but to individuals who so generously shared their memories. It is interesting to note that participants were eager to hear about their families’ histories which in some cases and for various reasons they had not discussed before. My research then prompted a concern to know what happened before as was evidenced by my interview with Prem from *Family 2*:

KP: And when you were growing up did it matter to you to know this information? Where you came from or where your ancestors came from?

Prem: Not really, no, I didn’t even ... now you making me think that I should have asked all of this of my dad (laughs).

It was Prem in this instance who expressed a deep desire to hear what her dad had to say about their past and their family ancestry. As Studs Terkel, renowned American oral historian and Pulitzer Prize winner reminds us:

... it’s their truth. So if it’s their truth, it’s got to be my truth; it’s their experiences. Somebody lived through that time with a certain something he remembers, that scar left on him; the memory is true. (quoted in Grele, 1991b:14)

⁵⁶ One of the families is already in possession of a published book on their family history, and members are acutely aware of their origin and ancestry.

3.3.2.6 Semi-Structured Interviews: Raised-Free and Born-Free Generation

... but I need to know more than that ... I want to know about my father's dada, and his father before him. I have to know their history and what made them into the men they were. (Hassim, 2003:471)

My deep desire to research this particular cohort of people was borne from the need to find out if the youth of today have the burning curiosity to find out about their past, like the fictional teenage character in Aziz Hassim's story above. In addition I wanted to explore whether, as Lerner (1997:72) argues, "The continuity of ideas transcends time and space".

Although I had, and still have, a fascination with lived experiences of those who were born and or raised in a democratic South African society, I wondered how they would respond to me as a researcher, old enough to be their parent and to the questions I would ask. In writing about adult researchers Raby (2007:39) argues that they must traverse a "great gulf of development, culture and inequality" when researching young people. Heath et al (2009:46) add that relying on one's own memories of being a youth is fruitless due to rapid societal changes, technological breakthroughs and the continuously varying nature of youth culture and experience.

Adult researchers are unavoidably in a position of power and privilege compared to the 'subjects' of their research. Carton and Vis (2008) caution that the researcher should be mindful of the age and gender protocols that inform such hierarchical relationships. As a teacher in a tertiary institution, I engage on a regular, if not daily basis, with students from this very generation. So in putting together a strategy to deal with issues of researching across the age divide, as mentioned above, I drew on my experiences and interactions with students and the methods I use to build rapport with them to open channels of communication, and implemented these methods in this scenario. For example, before the interview began, and by this I mean before the tape recorder was switched on, I engaged in casual conversation with the young participant about the activities and hobbies he/she was interested in. I noticed that in the course of this casual discussion, some of the nervousness that I had sensed on the part of the respondent appeared to have dissipated.

The method I used to collect data from young people was that of semi-structured qualitative interviews as it is, according to Heath et al (2009:79), “... generally regarded as a young person-friendly strategy, providing opportunities for young people to talk about their lives on their own terms”. The flexibility of this method then allowed them to express their narratives in their own words and under their own conditions.

An interview guide was prepared on general topics that I wanted to explore during each interview. The guide made it possible for me to probe and inquire within these predetermined research areas (Byrne, 2004). In keeping with the flexible nature of qualitative research designs, I modified the interview guide over time to focus attention on areas of particular importance, and in some cases to exclude or rephrased questions that I found to be not as significant to the young respondent as it was to me. Semi-structured interviews also provided more opportunity to respond accurately to the needs and requests for clarification by the respondents and with ease.

The interviews took place at various locations but I was mindful of the risk of interviewing young people in private. Interviews with two participants were conducted at their respective homes with their parents and other members of the family in a separate area of the house. Prior to arranging the interview, which was done through the parents (or an older relative), I encouraged the adults physically to keep out of the interview space but they could for instance be in the next room. This was done to try and minimise the young person being unwilling to respond to particular topics. Surprisingly, however, although other family members were at times within earshot the participant still appeared confident (however I am not certain if answers then may have been influenced by who the respondent thought was listening in at the time and thus served as a censor to the youngster). This is one shortcoming that I am mindful of. Two interviews took place over the telephone as one participant, who was born and raised in Durban, was now a university student in another province, while the other participant was in the midst of writing his matric trial examinations and I, therefore, had to wait on him to indicate the most convenient time, during his study and exams, to interview him. The fifth interview took place at an outdoor café which was chosen by the respondent himself. Heath et al (2009:93) argue that holding an interview in a public space tends to “... minimise any potential discomfort ...

minimise the power differential ... (and) minimise the potential for risk both to young people *and* to researchers”.

3.3.2.7 Interview Techniques

The approach taken, in terms of the interviewing techniques employed, was guided by the necessity to obtain answers to the research questions discussed earlier. As such the conversational strategy I engaged in was to empathise with respondents, but also to channel the course of the discussions in line with the aims of the research. As Wester 1996:71) argues, “The interviewer has to alternate a listening and passive-reacting attitude with an active, initiating and diagnosing attitude”.

According to Lerner (1997:52) “History is the archives of human experiences and of the thoughts of past generations”; so in terms of the oral history interviews I as the researcher had a duty to re-create the historical events that occurred in the respondents life and to access the so-called archives of their minds. To do this I posed initial biographical questions and then open-ended questions to prompt respondents into speaking about their past and history; I then relied on their responses to guide, as some refer to it, the “conversation with a purpose” (Rossman and Rallis, 1998:126).

A useful technique that encouraged participants to discuss their history and to stimulate their memory of the past was the use of photographs, which I expressed the desire to see when arranging the interview. Price and Wells (1997:51) argue that a central importance in photographs is its ability to generate and attract meaning. Additionally Barthes (1984) emphasised that photography is intricately intertwined in the construction of history, arguing that a significant relationship exists between history and memory and this is inextricably linked to photographs (see also du Toit, 2006). Photographs provide individuals with a passport to travel through history and allow them to experience anew past events, and to trace ancestry by exploring photographs of parents and grandparents. This demonstrates and points to how one’s identity is shaped by the past as individuals approach a distinct understanding of historical events

and establish their own private story against this backdrop (Spence, 1987; Holland, 2004;). As Kuhn (2002:13) states,

Family photographs are supposed to show not so much that we were once there, as how we once were: to evoke memories that might have little or nothing to do with what is actually in the picture. The photograph is a prop, a prompt, a pre-text: it sets the scene for recollection.

I also arranged for follow up interviews with the participants, in the event that I needed to ask supplementary questions, after having listened to the audio recordings. The follow up interviews were done with three participants. Soon after the interview took place, fieldnotes and observations were written up. This included practical details about the time and venue, the participants, the duration of the interview, and details about the content and emerging themes. This allowed for preliminary data analysis to take place as after reflecting on the fieldnotes, questions were focused, further questions to be asked were identified, and the direction of future interviews were refined further in line with the research aim. Additional areas which required follow up were also identified. This process allowed me to engage actively with the data when it was collected, and examine the direction it was leading me as the researcher.

3.3.2.8 Engaging in Research on ‘Race’

Social constructionists argue that researchers should study the taken-for-granted assumptions which inform everyday social practices, such as ‘race’ (Jacobs and Manzi, 2000). However, if these practices are taken for granted then how do social science researchers go about doing this as active members of society who take these practices for granted themselves? Gunaratnam (2003) argues that an important concern for researchers engaged in knowledge production on ‘race’ and ethnicity is to consider how such knowledge about ‘race’ is produced without reifying these socially and politically constructed categories, as by its very nature researching ‘race’ has the unintended effect of upholding particular notions about ‘race’ in society, rather than challenging these constructs. In order for researchers effectively to do this, Schutz (1944) argues for the importance of sociologists and anthropologists becoming “strangers” in the societies they

are studying, which implies not taking for granted norms and values which, by definition, almost everyone does in their everyday lives and interactions. In this regard, Gunaratnam (2003) writes that the philosophical underpinnings of social constructionism provide a useful framework to contextualise such research.

My study then did not identify participants based on ‘race’, which would imply that participants would have had to be selected for this study based on physiognomy which would give credence to the process of identifying ‘races’ based on physical markers such as skin colour, and accent.⁵⁷ Instead participants were identified based on the ability to trace or acknowledge⁵⁸ their ancestry to either indentured or passenger Indians.

In addition questions were posed so as not to classify the individual as ‘Indian’ but allowed for any categorisation, naming or classification to proceed organically from the response of the participants. Although ‘race’ is not a biological reality the effects of the social construction of ‘race’ nevertheless has impacted the lives of the respondents. In this regard, once respondents spoke about their experiences as an ‘Indian’ or categorised themselves as such, I was then able to discuss further about what this self-identification meant to them historically and now in contemporary South African society. Hall (1996a) argues that ‘race’ and ethnicity are constructed through social discourse and, as Alexander (2007) points out, even though racial identities are constructed they nevertheless hold significance for individuals, as they are not aware of the historical, social and political ways in which their identities have been formed. With regard to the *before* cohort generation, forms of classification and the ‘natural’ taken for granted ability to self-classify came out in the stories that they told as they had lived through apartheid and through the discriminatory legislation based on ‘race’.

As a researcher attempting to research as a ‘stranger’ to classification and everyday assumptions I was mindful constantly to reflect critically on the research process so as not to fall into the trap of legitimating essentialist understandings of ‘race’.

⁵⁷ It is important to note that with South Africa having 11 official languages, accent has also become a distinguishing marker of ‘race’.

⁵⁸ There are numerous cases that exist where families, through oral testimony, are aware of their Indian ancestry/origin but are unable or have not attempted to trace their history.

3.3.2.9 Recording of Data

Due to the nature of qualitative research as well as the objectives of this research, it was important that the oral history interviews as well as the in-depth, semi-structured interviews be accurately recorded. This was done by means of a digital voice recorder. It allowed me as the researcher to concentrate on the interviewee and his/her responses, rather than writing copious amounts of interview notes. This allowed me to probe further into issues that were not forthcoming. In addition, Wester (1996:75) argues that the tape recorder is an important tool that allows the researcher accurately to register “ways of speaking”.

Respondents were asked for their permission to record the interviews, and were informed of the nature of the research and its intended use.

3.3.2.10 Data Analysis

The audio recordings of the oral histories and interviews obtained in this study were transcribed. Thereafter the transcriptions were corrected and further explanations added after a cross check was done during a replay of the recording. In additions connections between the field notes and the data were made during this process.

Labovitz and Hagedorn (1971:64) posit that data has meaning only in terms of the interpretations made by the researcher and as such, the hermeneutic phenomenological framework was employed, as discussed earlier, to reflect on the data, and an inductive procedure was then used to move from the stories of the respondents to the general patterns, categories and themes as is necessary of thematic analysis. These themes emerged from the data as I coded and worked through the transcripts. The challenge, as Wester (1996:69) so aptly describes, was to take the “... ideas and insights presented from an everyday perspective ... ” and arrange them according to themes in terms of their relevance to the research questions. The respondents’ answers then had to be evaluated in light of the broad research aim and the research questions.⁵⁹ My approach

⁵⁹ Research questions do not refer to the questions asked in the interview but instead to the broad questions

was iterative in that rather than coding data once and then attempting to draw final conclusions from that set of codes, I revised my coding structure, using preliminary data analysis as a guide and recoded several times; rethought elements of the questions and reflected on the data (Willis et al, 2007).

3.4 Generalisability

... detailed descriptions of their lives make generalisations impossible. How can one generalise about a culture if in a single family the differences between generations - and even within one generation – are so great. (Faber, 2003:8)

As Phillips (2007:52) argues, because individuals are carriers of culture, “Culture matters to people in many different ways”. Apart from the detailed documentary research, this study includes the stories of five families and therefore does not claim to present the definitive representation of ‘Indian’ identity, as these families do not represent the so-called racial category ‘Indian’.

Gray (2009:28) argues that phenomenological research is “ ... is not so much concerned with generalizations to larger populations, but with contextual description and analysis.” In addition, because of the high degree of subjectivity in interpretivist epistemologies, the data that originates from its research may only apply to the very specific social conditions of that research.

3.5 Ethics and Dissemination of Results

I discuss ethics here not in terms of ethical clearance as required by the university, but in terms of the responsibility of the researcher to his/her participants once the research is complete. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) engage in a debate on whether qualitative researchers should engage in action designed to change the world, or whether they should stop with research results and leave social action to activists and politicians. I believe that as social science researchers we *should* be idealists, researching for social change.

emanating from the aim of the research.

In line with this argument, this study is aimed at providing academic substance to a somewhat neglected social phenomenon of “internal” exclusion, xenophobia and othering that has had and will continue to have pervasive effects throughout South Africa if left unchecked. It also aims to bring about improvement in the quality of life for ‘all’ who live in South Africa. In other words this research aims to contribute to the self-reflexivity as a ‘nation’ and allow us to move towards a more desirable state of affairs in South African society.

This will be accomplished by disseminating the results of this research via conferences, teaching and publications, but most importantly through deliberate involvement of the media, for instance through the medium of newspapers; and engaging in public debate through participation in public and community forums, thereby contributing to the cultivation of a ‘public sociology’. Heath et al (2009) note that although research is often conducted on young people, it is fairly uncommon practice to disseminate research results to them. I aim to remedy that in this study by looking at innovative ways to disseminate the results of this research to the youth. One of the possibilities includes writing popular articles, based on the research, for online media that young people generally subscribe to. In addition young people will be targeted through curriculum development at tertiary level and encouraging young people to cultivate their sociological imagination and to think critically about social issues such as ‘race’ and xenophobia that are generally taken for granted. As Weber (1949:443) argues, “The primary task of a useful teacher is to teach his students to recognize ‘inconvenient facts’”. Bauman (quoted in Beilharz, 2001:335) too reminds us that “... sociologizing makes sense only in as far as it helps humanity”.

In terms of disseminating research to the wider public, Back (2004:106) argues that we need to be extremely mindful of what the research produces and the methods used to disseminate it to the social world that goes beyond the academic arena. Research is a “rhetorical activity”, writes Atkinson (1990:10), concerned with persuading non-academic audiences of the relevance of the research. Back (2004:406) uses the writing of WEB Du Bois to illustrate how Du Bois chose to convey social criticism and social commentary and leave out “the rhetoric of the sociological monograph”; results should be disseminated in forums and publications that exist outside of the academic format and arguments should be expressed in clear and accessible ways. Back

(2004:407) states, "... as researchers we need to be more promiscuous with regard to the genres of writing that we use to convey our message".

By doing this social science researchers will be able to develop innovative ways of intervening in the public space and reach wider audiences in a more effective way. I believe that social scientists need to gain audiences from outside the academic sphere and advance sociologically-informed research, and further public discussion of sociological issues at local, national, and global levels, and to promote the use of sociology to inform public policy.

Economists currently dominate discussions on public policy. Labour economists, for example, have taken the lead in producing the detailed studies about what is happening in the world of work, providing policy makers with the key descriptions and facts that need to be addressed. But Scott and Marshall (2005:178) claim that sociologists are arguably better placed to address the interconnections between the economy, the political system, social structures, ideological systems and culture as "... their strengths in empirical research mean they are usually better placed than economists to collect data and conduct studies to test theories and arguments about economic activity". In addition it could be argued that an increase in the employment of interpretivism in research would make space for more nuanced deliberation into public policy formulation. Although the majority of all policy decisions find their basis in numerical calculation, from crime statistics to environmental degradation, it can be argued that an acute awareness of public considerations should be deemed equally significant to policy makers as the use of quantitative data, as it is the public who bear the brunt of policy (Scott and Marshall, 2005).

Burawoy and Van Antwerpen (2005) state that at the University of California Berkeley's department of Sociology the desired intention is to "turn, as C Wright Mills would say, private concerns into public issues". Similarly, Aminzade (2004) from the sociology department at the University of Minnesota argues that, "Although good sociological research is often difficult to reduce to a soundbite, sociologists have an important part to play in providing useful, accurate, and scientifically rigorous information to policy makers and community leaders". Others say that public sociology is what Marx meant when he and Engels talked about the merger of theory and practice, of intellectual work and political action (Agger, 2007). For Burawoy (2005) sociology

should reach beyond the gates of the university and broaden the knowledge of the historical and social context in which it exists.

Burawoy (2005) in his personal statement for the American Sociological Association elections in 2004 maintained that:

As mirror and conscience of society, sociology must define, promote and inform public debate about deepening class and racial inequalities, new gender regimes, environmental degradation, market fundamentalism, state and non-state violence. I believe that the world needs public sociology - a sociology that transcends the academy - more than ever. Our potential publics are multiple, ranging from media audiences to policy makers, from silenced minorities to social movements. They are local, global, and national. As public sociology stimulates debate in all these contexts, it inspires and revitalizes our discipline. In return, theory and research give legitimacy, direction, and substance to public sociology. Teaching is equally central to public sociology: students are our first public for they carry sociology into all walks of life. Finally, the critical imagination, exposing the gap between what is and what could be, infuses values into public sociology to remind us that the world could be different.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research strategy and processes followed in this dissertation. It has also elucidated the methods and techniques used to elicit and analyse data. An interrogation of the documentary sources, as well as pursuing contemporary, cross-generational research allowed for comparisons to be drawn across eras and brought to the fore enduring issues as well as changes that have occurred. The oral history interviews as well as the semi-structured interviews provided invaluable data in terms of reconstructing past experiences and also uncovering what the new forms of antagonisms are in post 1994 South Africa. Thus the presentation and analysis of the data gathered forms the substance of the chapters to follow.

- Chapter Four -

*“The Coolies Here”*⁶⁰

1860-1910

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to reveal how significant social and political role players contributed to the shaping of ‘Indian’ identity and in turn the perceptions of ‘Indians’ in Natal, for the period 1860-1910.⁶¹ In addition I examine how those who first arrived from the Indian subcontinent and their descendants viewed themselves in relation to these perceptions and constructions. The forms of ‘othering’ of these initial immigrants and their descendants within this period, as well as how notions of foreignness pervaded the discourse around ‘Indians’ are also presented and discussed. In so doing I demonstrate empirically that the language of xenophobia was consistently employed in the hegemonic discourse throughout this entire period. In addition, I argue in this chapter that a category of people that did not exist before was created when the first group of indentured Indians arrived on the shores of Natal.

Existing literature and research, as well as data obtained from *The Mercury*, *Ilanga*, political speeches, government legislation, and parliamentary debates were interrogated to expose the role of the state and the media in shaping the identity of the Indian immigrants and their descendants. As Steiner (1978:41) points out, “It is in words and language that things first come into being and are”. It was deemed important then to analyse these sources as - as has been argued in the previous chapter - written or spoken words cannot be viewed simply as being neutrally descriptive. Instead information needs to be analysed in terms of its “discursive content”, as a connection exists between knowledge and power (Marvasti, 2004:112; Foucault, 1972). In addition, the media are regarded as the principal generators and confirmers of knowledge of

⁶⁰ This was the headline in *The Mercury* on 22 November 1860 after the first ship carrying indentured Indians arrived at the Port of Natal on Friday, 16 November 1860.

⁶¹ The data has been organised in line with the method of periodisation as discussed in Chapter Three.

society and provide information on ‘others’, i.e. individuals that we have no contact with, and events that we cannot experience ourselves (Larson, 2006:14). Added to this, views expressed by ‘Indians’, gleaned from sources such as correspondence in the media, evidence provided to the various Commissions, and petitions against pieces of legislation, have also been analysed.⁶² Although the period 1860-1910 spans 50 years, a similar political and popular rhetoric regarding ‘Indians’ is evident throughout this period of time. It was necessary then to arrange the data from various decades within this period together, where it did not negatively affect the chronology of events that took place. In addition extracts of articles from *The Mercury* and *Ilanga*, petitions, and letters are replicated, in order to provide support for the arguments presented as well as allow for richer detail surrounding particular events to be illustrated.

4.2 Bodies of Foreign Labour

As indicated in the Introduction to this thesis, Indians came to southern Africa to fulfill a labour shortage in the colony of Natal. Slavery had been abolished and planters were left with a labour challenge as African people in the colony refused to engage in the arduous physical labour that working in the plantations entailed, especially for the pay that was offered (Calpin, 1941:172; Freund, 1995; Christopher, 2001; Feinstein, 2005:54; Munsamy, 2005; Desai and Vahed, 2007:82; Du Bois, 2011:1). In describing indenture in the colony of Natal, Calpin (1941:173) states that “It was the cheapest labour, short of slavery, in the world ... ”

In 1857 when the debates around the introduction of Indian labour were taking place, Dr Charles Johnston, member of the first Legislative Council stated in his election address that:

I would rather cut the Gordian Knot with the sword, and place our kafirs under military law than would assist in the slightest degree to bring them in

⁶² Data collected from the interviews with the families will be presented and discussed later on in this thesis, as insufficient information was gathered from the family histories to determine how the first arrivals from these families were affected in their personal capacities. However information related to indentured Indians, passengers, and traders was gleaned from other sources as will be seen later on in this chapter and it is accepted that the first arrivals from these families would have had similar experiences as their lives would have been controlled in similar fashion by colonial authorities and employers.

contaminating connection with the refuse of the Mahommedan world which the coolies really are. (cited in Ferguson-Davie, 1977:4)

This reflects one of the dissenting voices, not to indentured labour per se, but to the introduction of ‘coolies’ into the colony. When resistance to indenture was met from colonialists it was often suppressed by the sugar planters and those who encouraged indenture. This was revealed when the *Witness*, the sister paper of *The Mercury*, sought to bring attention to ‘disease’ that could be introduced into the colony and therefore argued against ‘coolie’ labour. *The Mercury* responded and stated vehemently that the purpose of the article in the *Witness* was “calculated to do mischief” by introducing fear of ‘coolie’ immigration by using words such as “infectious disease’, ‘cholera’, ‘small pox’” and the like.⁶³ The writers from *The Mercury* add,

We think our contemporary overlooks the paramount importance of the sugar enterprise to the future progress of this colony, and that he fails to appreciate the urgent and growing difficulties of the planters with respect to labor. If any means were prospectively probable, within a reasonable time, whereby our amply numerous body of native labourers could be induced to render their labour in sufficient quantity, we would also join in decrying against the introduction of any fresh foreign colored immigrants.⁶⁴

The writers of the article then attempted to restore calm regarding the Indian workers, by citing examples from Mauritius and the West Indies where, they argued, the prevalence of disease had not increased. In addition they, once again, expounded the economic benefits of this labour by citing how the Mauritian economy had flourished since the arrival of ‘coolie labour’. Here again it is evident that if not for their labour power Indian immigrants would not have been added to the already large ‘native’ ‘colored’ population in the colony. *The Mercury’s* response to the article in the *Witness* therefore should not be seen as pro-Indian, but rather pro-labour as the newspaper was closely aligned to the sugar planters especially J.R Saunders who later on would refer to himself as the “father of Indian immigration”.⁶⁵

The Mercury in reporting on the subject of ‘coolie labour’ prior to its introduction into the colony stated that:

⁶³ *The Mercury*, ‘Editorial’, 12 July 1860

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – “Coolie Immigration” from JR Saunders’, 21 January 1885

Two or three thousand Coolie laborers would go far towards relieving the pressure on the sugar estates; would break the neck of all illegitimate and dangerous methods of supply; would greatly relieve what may be called the miscellaneous labor market; and would render more easy of application, suitable agencies for rendering available the locked-up labor of our own natives. Moreover, it is the belief of experienced colonists best acquainted with the characteristics of our colored population, and the influences that operate upon them, that the example of steady industry, with all its beneficial results, presented by bodies of foreign labor on sugar and other estates, would operate as a stimulus to the industry of the kafirs; and that the fear of being swamped by such a competition, and of thus being deprived of the means of earning money, would add strength and steadiness to that stimulus. Coolie labor though seemingly costly, would be really as cheap as kafir labor at its present high rates, especially when *docility* and *reliableness* are taken into the account; and one good effect of the introduction of the foreign element, - besides those already enumerated, - would be to keep down the exorbitant and daily increasing demands of our fickle and indolent native labourers-demands which, we are sorry to say, the Government abets and sanctions.⁶⁶

The above extract reveals that even before the arrival of the indentured workers, a narrative around ‘who they were’ was already being formed in public discourse. Apart from the term ‘Eastern Laborers’, the term ‘coolie’ was used predominantly in *The Mercury* to describe the Indian labourers prior to their arrival, and almost exclusively once they reached the shores of colonial Natal. The term ‘coolie’ was used historically in India in reference to people who performed low paying jobs and has been defined as “an unskilled native labourer in India, China, and some other Asian countries” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2010). According to Oxford Dictionaries (2010), the word originated in the “mid 17th century from Hindi and Telegu *kūlī* ‘day labourer’, probably associated with Urdu *kulī* ‘slave’”. This term was not only used in the media in Natal but also in all official documentation and legislation. For example the laws governing the immigration of the indentured Indians were referred to as “Coolie Laws” such as, Coolie Law - Law no 14 of 1859, which made it possible for the introduction of Indian indentured labour into the colony. In addition to this, the recruiters in India were referred to as “Coolie agents”.

Unlike the definition of a ‘coolie’ described above which applies to all those who performed low skilled and or low paying work, however, the word when used in the colony became imbued with racist overtones and stereotypes of specifically Indian immigrants. This view of the indentured labourers then was perpetuated in the media and political discourse, and the continuous usage of

⁶⁶ *The Mercury*, ‘Labor’, 1 March 1860

the word reproduced notions of a ‘servile’, ‘docile’, ‘contaminating race’ as the above extract suggests – that would harm or corrupt the colony in some way. It also created, and fuelled, perceptions that the indentured labourers were recruited from the lowest castes and classes which research has since proved was not the case. In addition, the word ‘coolie’ was applied not only to the indentured immigrants but also to the merchant and trader class who began arriving from over a decade later.

The reference to the indentured immigrants, that was to arrive, as ‘bodies of foreign labor’ reveals that they were viewed merely as bearers of labour with no thought of them as human beings, carriers of experiences and knowledge other than that of being workers. There is no commentary on the sacrifices they would have to endure to become cogs in the machine that was the sugar industry. They were viewed no more and no less than constituents of labour, to salvage the ailing economy of the colony, as the two extracts below, from *The Mercury*, indicate:

On the other hand, if we accept the moderate estimate that every adult Coolie laborer is equivalent to two acres of sugar cane, we shall find that these 3,000 East Indians, represent an annual production of something like £150,000, supposing the estates they are working on to be in full working order. Heavy, then, though the first cost of this immigration is, it rapidly repays itself, and develops (sic) an amount of natural wealth that would otherwise have lain dormant.⁶⁷

And,

Under the heading of finance [in the Indian Immigration Trust Board report] it is stated that the average cost of each male adult in India had increased from £3 15s. in 1879, to £7 1s. in 1883. In 1880 the annual instalment [sic] upon each male adult indentured was reduced from £4 to £3 10s. At that time the assets of the board showed a considerable excess over the liabilities, but the decreased payment and the increased charges in India soon showed a contrary result, and this is borne out by the fact that in 1883 the liabilities at the end of the year amounted to £157,182 13s. 7d., and the assets to £141,318 15s. 1d ...⁶⁸

The above extract reveals that they were viewed as ‘assets of the board’ representing assets and liabilities of the Protector of Indian Immigrants office. The words used portray how they were

⁶⁷ *The Mercury*, ‘Monthly Summary – Coolie v Kafir Labor’, 30 October 1863

⁶⁸ *The Mercury*, ‘Indian Immigration’, 23 February 1885

perceived and that their value in the colony lay only in what they could provide for the enrichment of the colony, the government and sugar capitalists. In the Wragg commission report released in 1887, a “statement of Indians returned to India”⁶⁹ was provided in very much the same form as a statement is given in accounting purposes, each line item (representing a person much like a commodity) was given a value and their sum total added to a number, in pounds.

As Bauman (2000:227) argues,

Abstraction is one of the modern mind’s principal powers. When applied to humans, that power means effacing the face: whatever marks remain of the face serve as badges of membership, the signs of belonging to a category, and the fate meted out to the owner of the face is nothing more yet nothing less either than the treatment reserved for the *category*, of which the owner of the face is but a *specimen*. The overall effect of abstraction is that rules routinely followed in personal interaction, ethical rules most prominent among them, do not interfere where the handling of a category is concerned, including every entity classified into that category just on account of having been so classified.

Although Bauman (2000) was writing about a different context, his theory of abstraction can nevertheless be applied to this situation of labour exploitation under indenture as the Indian indentured labourers were perceived as nothing more than a category of people, grouped together, with all distinguishing features and personal characteristics which make them unique individuals, removed, but were only seen as units of labour, brought to the colony for a specific purpose, and any traces of their common humanity was ignored.

In addition, the comparison of the Indian immigrants to the local African population in the articles published in *The Mercury* is also significant in that it illustrates that the colonial discourse around African people centred on notions of an ‘uncivilised’ ‘race’. Colonial discourse in Natal at this time served to legitimate economic interests. The division of the colony into the discrete categories of ‘white’ and ‘native’, as ‘races’ or species was not simply descriptive, but was about constructing certain people as ‘whites’ and superior, others as ‘blacks’ and inferior. As Miles (1989) argues, the dominant groups in society distort social reality through racist ideology

⁶⁹ Report of the Indian Immigrants Commission: 1885-1887 in Meer (1980:522-526). In 1885, a commission was appointed under Justice Wragg to investigate the consequences of the free and passenger Indians on the colony. The report was delivered in 1887.

as it serves their interests. By assigning people to different ‘races’ people were being divided hierarchically. As can be seen from the following extract published in *The Mercury*:

Native clanship is incompatible with the exercise of the rights of political citizenship under a free and civilized government ... In this colony the white man is constituted by Divine Providence the guardian of the black man ... If the natural order of things be reversed, and a preponderating power be conferred on the Kafir population, the inevitable result will be that the white man, deprived of the power of a wise and cautious administration, and even of the means of self protection, will be driven from the land, and the fruits of industry, and the hopes of civilization will perish together; while to the coloured population, civil war and mutual self destruction will certainly and terribly ensue ... The Kafirs’ (sic) as a people, are not capable, nor for long years will they be capable, of appreciating or wisely exercising the privileges of a civilized state ... So slow is the process by which the native mind is freed from the trammels of barbarism, and qualified for appreciating the duties and responsibilities of a civilized condition, that even in a native civilized community, many of whose members have been under instruction for nearly twenty years, we are assured on the best authority, that very few indeed are so advanced in sound ideas as to be safely entrusted with the independent exercise of the elective franchise.⁷⁰

The word ‘civilisation’ which appears frequently in the above extract is significant in that it is representative of the beliefs of the British colonists of their innate superiority and the corresponding innate inferiority of the local African people (located in what had become the colony and in the Zululand), and, that God had brought them there to civilise the ‘natives’ and to improve their ‘backwardness’. The discourse is constructed in such a way so that all forms of oppression and exclusion, such as exclusion from the franchise as mentioned above, could be justified and considered normal and appropriate. The narratives held by the media are integral to this justification and they offer reasons to explain the existing state of affairs. The racial ideologies perpetuated by mainstream media failed to acknowledge the stated aided creation of inequalities based on ‘race’ as evident in the extract below:

Too much blood of Cain still flows in the veins of the Kafirs now in our midst, for it to be prudent for us to allow ourselves to be placed in the least degree in jeopardy by the evil passions of the children of a Chaka, or the sons of those races that but a short time since perpetuated deeds of barbarous cruelty ... Their disunity is our strength ... Can we hope that the Kafirs will *soon* learn to be better

⁷⁰ *The Mercury*, ‘Native Clanship in Relation to the Franchise’, 30 August 1860

disposed, more civilized than they are? We cannot. As yet they from the white man have learnt but little ... some educated kafirs are less industrious and honorable than even their savage brethren ...⁷¹

The evidence of Christian notions of inequality in the above extract, with reference to Cain and notions of 'evil' was significant in the creation of homogenous categories of people with fixed essences. The colonised were thus presented in public discourse as being 'naturally' barbaric, lazy and morally devoid. These words were laced with meanings and created a belief as to what the 'natives' were like, what their abilities were and the moral code that they possessed. These ideas of *who* people *essentially* were, based on their 'race', contributed to notions in the 19th century of scientific racism, the idea that people, because of their 'race' were 'born' with existing characteristics and traits that made them different, either inferior or superior, to others (see Barkan, 1992:15). The media then did not only furnish their particular beliefs or judgments, but in so doing they contributed to the development of a colonial understanding of the 'native' (and the 'coolie' as will be seen later on). The African people were described as 'savage' and 'barbaric', the implication of this is that they are unable to restrain themselves and had no control over their bodies. These colonial narratives were rampant throughout 19th century and continued even into the Union of South Africa. Through public, political and social discourse; legislation; and even religious ideology, as is evident in the above extract, the superiority of the dominant group was grafted into the structure of the establishment.

It was against this backdrop, of inequality and racial hierarchy, that 'coolie' labour was introduced into the colony of Natal. Describing the arrival of the Indians who had contracted themselves to work on the sugarcane plantations of Natal, *The Mercury* reported:

A very remarkable scene was the landing, and one well worth remembrance and record. Most of the many spectators who were present had been led to expect a lot of dried up, vapid, and sleepy looking anatomies. They were agreeably disappointed. As the swarthy hordes came pouring out of the boat's hold, laughing, jabbering, and staring about them with a very well satisfied expression of self-complacency on their faces, they hardly realised the idea one had formed regarding them and their faculties. They were a queer, comical, foreign looking, very Oriental like crowd. The men with their huge muslin turbans, bare scraggy

⁷¹ *The Mercury*, 'Correspondence from One of the People', 25 October 1860

shin bones, and colored garments; the women with their flashing eyes, long dishevelled pitchy hair, with their half-covered, well-formed figures, and their keen inquisitive glances; the children with their meagre (sic), intelligent, cute and humerous (sic) countenances mounted on bodies of unconscionable fragility were all evidently beings of a different race and kind to any we have yet seen in either Africa or England.⁷²

The author of this article indicated that an ‘image’ of the ‘coolie’ was already in the minds of the people in the colony and what they saw before them was “a queer, comical, foreign looking, very Oriental like crowd.” In addition as can be seen from the above extract they are referred to as a “different race” and “new and strange race”. Not only do the words articulate these new arrivals as the ‘other’, as being dissimilar and clearly separate from the ‘races’ that were already inhabiting the colony, but it also emphasised their foreignness. This prominence and stress on difference is noticeable throughout the decades in media reportage “ ... Europeans, Coolies, and Kafirs, - three distinct races, with different habits, and antipathies ... ”⁷³

Their difference was further articulated by stressing the different ‘Coolie food’⁷⁴ eaten by the labourers, “Such articles as Ghee, Gram, and Dholl, have a strange sound to our unaccustomed ears, used as we are to the still stranger peculiarities of the Zulu tongue.”⁷⁵

They [the planters] are not informed who is to supply the rice-the food of these people-whether the government or the planters ...⁷⁶

Fish is a staple article of food amongst the coolies; they luxuriate in it, thrive by it, and do all but grow fat upon it ... Fortunately for Coolie epicures, our river and seas abound in scaly denizens so that they need never run short of food adapted to their dainty and very particular palates.⁷⁷

They go through their eight hours’ labor with clockwork pertinacity, - and in this respect are mere machines. Their capacities for devouring food are happily much less than the Zulus.⁷⁸

⁷² *The Mercury*, ‘The Coolies Here’, 22 November 1860

⁷³ *The Mercury*, ‘Editorial’, 24 April 1863

⁷⁴ *The Mercury*, ‘An Official Blunder’, 21 February 1861

⁷⁵ Supplement to *The Mercury*, ‘The Coolies’, 7 March 1861

⁷⁶ *The Mercury*, ‘Coolies’, 15 March 1860

⁷⁷ *The Mercury*, ‘The Coolies Here’, 22 November 1860

⁷⁸ *The Mercury*, ‘Coolies’, 20 December 1860

The description of the food habits of the Indian labourers, whilst it may have been accurate and appropriate, were used to create a distinction and to further construct the Indian indentured labourers as a separate group with *peculiar* customs of cooking and eating. The meaning then attached to these descriptions created the perception of a ‘different people’.

4.3 Heathens of a Higher Type

Although little is known about the views of African people in the colony to the introduction of Indian labour, *The Mercury* would often compare the ‘races’ as seen in many of the extracts cited above, especially regarding work ethic. In so doing it not only created a perception of antagonism between African people and Indian immigrants, amongst the ‘white’ colonists, but seemed also actively to encourage it with one of the intentions being that it would produce competitive local labour forces,⁷⁹ as illustrated in the five extracts below published in *The Mercury*:

Morally speaking the effect produced on our natives by this influx of a new and strange race, has been curious. Strong antipathies are manifested by master Kafir to his Coolie coadjutor or rival. Zulu cynics profess to look with great contempt on the lank East Indian body. They take a malicious pleasure in watching each Coolie gesture, and mimicking each Coolie movement. Underneath, however, it is easy to see the leaven working, and unless appearances turn out deceitful, the contemplated effect will be produced, and the Kafir will stick to his work more perseveringly than he has hitherto done.⁸⁰

These East Indian laborers have come upon us suddenly, and *en masse*. We can hardly yet realize their presence. Their advent in Natal is an historical event, which will bear materially upon our future. Once here, there is little likelihood that our colony will ever again be without its representatives of the Asiatic family ... This new and strange element introduced on our labor population will act as an irritant on the rest ... They are said to be avaricious, given to pilfering, and lustful; but so far we

⁷⁹ According to Meer (1985:58) “Whatever the Africans’ perception of Indian indentured workers was in 1860, included in it must have been the suspicion, if not the knowledge, that they had been brought in by the white colonist to replace the Africans and to be used against them in ways perhaps not immediately understood. It was in the interest of the white colonist to fan any hostility, for any consolidation of interest between the two labour contingents would have been fatal in a situation where the ratio between white and Black was already in the region of 1:10”

⁸⁰ *The Mercury*, ‘Monthly Summary’, 6 December 1860

have seen but little of these flaws in their character. Then, too, they are only heathen of a somewhat higher type, introduced into a community already overstocked by heathen of the rudest order. If the colony could have utilized the energies of our own coloured population, so as to supply all possible requirements, Coolies would never have been sought after, or heard of.⁸¹

Although more civilized than the Kafirs, they are yet susceptible of immense improvement...⁸²

It brings to the colony an industrious and docile population, between whom and the Kafirs there seem to be very few natural, social or domestic affinities. It acts as a continual stimulus to agricultural enterprise, and is a guarantee for the safe investment of capital.⁸³

There is yet another general benefit to be gained by the importation which is not often referred to, but which we think of vast importance. Every coolie brought into the colony decreases the danger from any kafir insurrection. There is a strong antipathy between the races, so that the Indian, in any future quarrel, will be found an effective and trustworthy ally. We think that any system of colonial defence which is brought before the Legislative Council should provide for the use of the Indians in time of need.⁸⁴

The latter piece was written to support the continuous labour supply from India, a policy which was being opposed in some quarters. What is interesting to note here is that although seen first as only useful for the labour they could provide, an argument is made in this case for their usefulness in case of a revolt by the African people. The 'coolie' becomes an 'Indian', a person from somewhere, with heritage and a nation that's good enough to fight in support of and together with the colonists but without any indication that he would receive the privileges as a fellow 'citizen'.

4.4 Oriental Strangers

Our first importation of East Indian laborers is now an accomplished fact ... What is it, then, that we see foreshadowed in this motley influx of dusky-hued beings, with their strange habiliments, novel customs, and pantomimic gestures ... The introduction of an Asiatic population on African soil that until very recently was

⁸¹ *The Mercury*, 'Review of the Year - The New Race', 3 January 1861

⁸² *The Mercury*, 'Editorial', 18 August 1863

⁸³ *The Mercury*, 'Monthly Summary – Coolie v Kafir Labor', 30 October 1863

⁸⁴ *The Mercury*, 'Labour', 22 June 1869

the exclusive property of native occupants, is an ethnological experiment as bold as it is interesting. Here we have thrown together, in close connexion (sic) with each other, the three greatest sections of the human family. The Caucasian, the Mongol, and the Negro confront each other on lands wrested, in the natural order of progress, by the first-named from the latter. How will the African and the Asiatic act upon each other? Will they intermix and coalesce?; or stand apart and remain divided? Will there be amity or antagonism permanently between them? Will the union of these two great elements - supposing that they do come together - result in a common deterioration, or will it tend to the mutual elevation and improvement of both? Will the cause of civilization be furthered, and the purposes of industry aided and matured? ... The coolies bring with them strange customs, strange social practices, strange habits of thought, and strange religious observances. They possess ideas on many subjects that are very much opposed not only to the higher conception of the European, but to the much lower notions of the Kafir ... It falls to the lot of the white colonists to render this exotic importation a serviceable and productive agency. We have to bend its supple branches into conformity to European usages, and obedience to British Law. The pliable characters, and abject dispositions of the East Indian immigrants are favorable to the imposition of colonial restraints, and the exercise of ameliorating influences ... We have entrusted ourselves with the guardianship of these Oriental strangers ... We must discharge our trusteeship in such a way, that the coolies themselves may have no reason to regard their removal to Natal in any other light than as a blessing ... They are not on the whole so physically strong as the kafir. They require a considerable amount of attention and supervision. They are given to evading work whenever a pretence can be improvised. They are great adepts in the art of shamming ... On one point the Coolie may exert a peculiarly beneficial influence over his darker fellow-laborer. He comes to Natal imbued with sentiments of profound respect for his English masters. The experience of a century in his own land has taught him that the Englishman is all-powerful and invincible. If he conveys this impression to the mind of the less enlightened and less experienced Zulu, a very salutary effect may be produced. For to the Coolie the name of England is synonymous with strength and power. He has seen the Rajahs and potentates of his own people one after another yielding homage to the indomitable Saxon. He has seen kingdom after kingdom wrested from the grasp of his native despots, and constituted appendages of the British Crown. He has seen every attempt at resistance or rebellion, however well planned or widespread, invariably quelled and crushed. Now crossing the ocean, he finds the ubiquitous Anglo-Saxon still dominant over another subjected race, and carving out of soil traditionally doomed the germs of new and yet greater empires.⁸⁵

The long quotation is presented here as it provides a fascinating glimpse into the range of issues that arise from the colonial thinking on matters of 'race', culture, control, and so forth. Not all can be explored in detail in this study but their articulation is pertinent. The discourse

⁸⁵ *The Mercury*, 'Editorial', 21 March 1861

surrounding the “Oriental stranger” or the “East Indian” labourer is pervasive throughout this period, from the time of their first arrival and into the 1900s.⁸⁶ The indentured labourers were positioned as the ‘oriental other’ of ‘white’ colonial discourses and enforced stereotypical representations of the East and ignored individuals and the heterogeneity of the Indian labourers. Foucault (1972:49) states that discourses are practices which “form the object of which they speak”.⁸⁷ In so doing racist, colonial discourses constructed people from the East and West as stereotypical opposites. Edward Said’s (2003) *Orientalism*, focuses on how the Orient was constructed and represented in European and Western texts and media in the 19th and 20th centuries, and similar stereotypes were identified about people from the East, or ‘Orientals’, as they were constructed by Europeans. Western discourses of Orientalism constructed an Orient in ways which produced and perpetuated the superiority of the West, as can be seen in the above extract. The following extract recounts an article written about an Englishwoman’s letter to an Indian Maharajah stating her ‘qualifications’ for the position of his wife:

It would be charitable to assume, as indeed is not improbable, that both the young woman and her spiritual adviser were lunatics, for as long as Native Society is not reformed, there can be no doubt that the wife of the lowest and poorest English peasant enjoys a life of greater freedom, happiness, and esteem, than the partner of the most exalted oriental prince. We should have avoided the subject, but we feel that it is necessary to protest against the “nigger worship” which exists among so many of the admirers of “Exeter Hall”... Of course, this letter is an extreme instance of that notion acting on a feeble and deranged mind.⁸⁸

This article, in *The Mercury* of 28 January 1869, confirms the stereotypes inherent in the thinking of the colonialists about people from the East, that any thought of the ‘Orientals’ as anything other than inferior or backward in terms of their level of civilisation, could only be attributed to mental illness. In addition, the narrative around the domination of India, by the British, is told from the point of view of the colonist – who writes what he presumes are the ‘feelings’ of the Indian in the colony. This “single story” (Adichie, 2009) of Indians told in the media perpetuated notions of the East and the stereotypes of Indians that had originated in colonial India. The single story reflects a ‘difference’ between people from the East and West

⁸⁶ see also *The Mercury*, ‘The Coolies Here’, 22 November 1860; Supplement to *The Mercury*, ‘The Coolies’, 7 March 1861; Crocker (1907:307) makes reference to “Oriental ‘housing’ arrangements” which he describes as “sleeping on boxes in compartments where sometimes even a dozen are herded”.

⁸⁷ See also Parker (1992:5) and Marvasti (2004:111) for analysis and discussion of Foucauldian discourse.

⁸⁸ *The Mercury*, ‘A Strange Story’, 28 January 1869

and does not consider similarities between ‘peoples’, or that of a common humanity. As Adichie (2009) posits,

That is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again and that is what they become ... stories too are defined by ... how they are told, who tells them, when they are told, how many stories are told are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person ... The single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story ... The consequence of the single story is this, it robs people of dignity, it makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult, it emphasises how we are different rather than how we are similar.

The stories then, told by colonists paint a picture of ‘dumb’, ‘heathen’, ‘filthy’, ‘thieving’, ‘lustful’, ‘coolies’, as reported on in *The Mercury*. The newspaper was a powerful tool for disseminating this knowledge in society which, as Hall (1997a:347-348) points out “ ... not only assumes the authority of ‘the truth’ but has the power to *make itself true*. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has real effects, and in that sense at least, ‘becomes true’”. This was even more so in the case of the Indian labourers who were far removed, physically from any other ‘race’ group in the colony, and their only interaction with African people in the colony and other ‘white’ people were on the plantations. The media therefore became the principal transmitter of information to the urban populace, and in turn, the image of the ‘coolies’ portrayed in the media became the ‘truth’, and the negative representations justified any mistreatment meted out to them.

Through the political authority of the newspaper, and behind the text the media was able to govern the reaction, and action, of people. As McLuhan (1964:7) has argued “The medium is the message”. The majority of the readers of the written words view the news offering as truth and as a factual portrayal of the ways things ‘really’ are, as opposed to a narrative that creates and perpetuates an ideology in order to promote a particular agenda relevant for that time (Larson, 2006). Through various themes and structures the media excluded and limited the position of Indian immigrants in the social and economic sphere, as will be seen in greater detail later on.

The reports provided in the news media, were then able to manipulate particular misrepresentations of the ‘coolie’.

In the 1890s while debate was raging regarding removing the right to vote from ‘Indians’, *The Mercury* reported:

If the Indians in the Colony conformed to our habits and customs and showed a desire to follow the lead of our civilisation the whole complexion of the matter would be altered. But instead of this they adhere to the habits of the East, while the Government of the country is conducted on the principles of the West.⁸⁹

4.5 I Am a Coolie

In providing evidence to the Shire Commission to investigate the abuse of labourers by Mr. Shire, a sugar planter and employer of indentured labour, many of the indentured, began their testimony with the following statement, “I am a Coolie in the service of Mr. Shire.”⁹⁰ Even though many of them were skilled workers in India, and of varying abilities they all became ‘coolies’ in the colony. For example Chadiroy, an indentured labourer, stated “I am a coolie in the service of Mr. Shire. In India I was a policeman and never worked in the field until I came here.”⁹¹ His identity shifts in a short space of time from a person of authority in India with the capacity to discipline, punish and protect to the polar opposite position of being dominated. There is a need, on his part, to state his position prior to his arrival in the colony to add weight somehow to his case against the abuses of his employer, to show that he was ‘respectable’ and was responsible for enforcing the law. In ‘fixing’ the indentured labourers as ‘coolies’ and only ‘coolies’ the establishment, i.e. the state, planters and legislature compelled them to assume “lower-status” definitions of self Lerner (1997: 137-138).

⁸⁹ *The Mercury*, ‘Editorial – Indians and the Franchise’, 12 July 1894

⁹⁰ Evidence by Cathalingum, Caniah, Jogee, Chadiroy, Ruggoo, Morty and Dooklist in The Shire Commission Report: 1862 in Meer (1980:97-98)

⁹¹ Evidence by Chadiroy in The Shire Commission Report: 1862 in Meer (1980:98)

A further example is contained in a letter sent to the Durban corporation petitioning to be able to trade on Sundays which was first addressed to the town clerk, and signed off as ‘5 Coolies’, and the second, addressed to the mayor, signed off as ‘2 Coolies’.

We beg to request your permission to keep our store open on Sundays, for the benefit of the Coolies who are unable to purchase their provisions during the week.⁹²

What is interesting to note also is that the petition sent to the Lieutenant–Governor of Natal in 1862 complaining of the injustices of Mr. Shire, contained the names of 22 indentured labourers and the names were divided into ‘Madrasee Coolies’ and ‘Bengalee Coolies’. It seems significant that they would distinguish themselves in this way. To not just accept the all-encompassing label of ‘coolie’ but to state a region, so as to belong somewhere. This was seen again in 1880s when a group of traders, 24 in total, submitted a petition to the resident Magistrate of Durban on 30 July 1883 protesting against an order to keep their heads uncovered and remove their boots when in court. The petition was signed off as ‘Madras merchants’,

That it is against the custom of your petitioners to uncover their heads and never either in this Colony, in Madras or elsewhere were your petitioners subjected to such an order as that made by your worship. That your petitioners humbly pray that your worship will reconsider such order and rescind the same so far as it refers to your petitioners ...⁹³

As Fanon (1986:83) states colonialism should not only be understood at an economic level – in terms of seizing land and resources – but also on a psychological level, as taking “the means and resources of identity” (Hook, 2004:98). Similarly the psychological experiences of indenture under colonialism contributed to the kinds of identities that the Indian immigrants constructed in the context of colonialism. In explaining the psychological effects of colonisation Fanon (1986) focuses on ‘race’ as the basis of alienation in colonial societies arguing that colonised individuals become marginalised and objectified in terms of ‘race’, and to be a colonised subject is to be subject to forms of cultural imperialism and to know oneself in the oppressor’s terms. I would argue, however, that this does not necessarily mean that these indentured Indians had

⁹² ‘Durban merchants plead for Sunday trading submitted to the Durban Corporation on 9 and 12 October 1866 respectively’ Source: C.O. 2057/1866. Vol. 259, Natal Archives in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:31)

⁹³ Source: Magistrates Records, Correspondence (Durban), file 26, 40 July 1883, Natal Archives in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:9)

accepted and or internalised the classification of ‘coolie’ and all the meanings attached to it. Identifying in particular situations with this term could be described as a performance, using it strategically but not adopting it as part of the way the person perceives him/herself (Siebers, 2004:87). Such an argument is supported by evidence given to the ‘Coolie Commission’ in 1872 which recommended that the derogatory term ‘coolie’, which the Indian immigrants found abominable, be removed from official correspondence and that they be referred to as ‘Indian Immigrants’:

There is one point which to most persons may appear but very trivial, but which nevertheless to a native of India is a matter of no little consequence; we allude to the term “Coolie.” This word in India is applied to the lowest classes only, and it is regarded as a term of reproach in the nature of abuse. On many estates this term was mentioned to us, in our conversations with the Coolies, as one of their objections to the Colony, and anyone who has resided in India, will be well able to understand that the objection is far from being without foundation. There is no doubt the term is galling, and a source of annoyance. We would suggest that the term “Indian Immigrants” be substituted for that of Coolie in all official documents, and that the designation of “Coolie Agent” be changed to that of “Protector of Indian Immigrants”. (Gallwey and Lloyd, 1872:13)

In addition, in a letter to the editor of *The Mercury* in 1894 at the height of the anti-‘Indian’ sentiment in the colony, a reader took umbrage with the indiscriminate application of the term,

Allow me to protest against the use of the word “coolie,” commonly used by the Europeans in this Colony. In branding respectable British Indian merchants and shopkeepers, &c., as “coolies,” people betray ignorance as to the race from whence we spring. The conception of Brahminism took its rise in the land of the coolie some centuries ago. The word “coolie” is derived from “coolie-kee vailaysayra” and means “works for pay,” or taking the word “coolie” by itself refers to labour. Certainly no one can deny that he doesn’t work for pay. It is merely a foolish whim to state that the Indians are only coolies, whereas the other nations are as well. Most certainly the term “coolie” is an Indian word and the other nations are aware of the meaning and yet they mis-use it. Whilst on the subject, let me assure my fellow-Indian citizens that as long as they abide by the law of the country they need not take notice of the idle scorn of certain persons and newspapers, but should treat such persons and papers with the contempt they deserve.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence - What is a Coolie? from A. FFITAL – British Indian’, 27 July 1894

These early Indian immigrants then were active agents in the construction of an ‘Indian identity’ albeit in a limited capacity and bound by the state imposed labels and classification. It is evident here that the Indian immigrants did not identify with the imposed label, they did not see themselves in the same way that the colonists did. Therefore, instead of being merely being acted upon, they were active agents in constructing their identities and how they wanted to be identified. Their self-narrative, self-definitions and self-image differed from that offered by the dominating discourse. The term ‘coolie’ however did not disappear from popular and social discourse, as evident from the letter to the editor above and as will be discussed further on. In addition, as a result of the commission an office for the Protector of Indian Immigrants was set up and in turn replaced the office of the Coolie Agent.

Another example of the colonists “appropriating the ... resources of identity” (Hook, 2004:98) was by the way in which Indian men and women were referred to by the ‘white’ people in the colony. Hassim (2009:14) fictionalised this phenomenon in his novel *Revenge of Kali*, “My name, *thumbee*. But they call me *Sammy*. You know, the way you call a dog”. Apart from the general term ‘coolie’, ‘Indian’ males were referred to as ‘Sammy’ by the ‘white’ settlers and the women were called ‘Mary’, and not by their actual names. It has been argued that this was so because Hindu surnames usually had the letters ‘samy’ attached to the end of it, “... such as Appalsamy, Munsamy and Ramsamy” (Vahed, 2002:84). A participant in a study undertaken by Badassy (2005:19) in recollecting his childhood growing up in a home that employed ‘Indian’ servants stated,

The Indians here, the Sammys and the Marys as we called them in those days, it wasn’t meant as a rudeness, we just couldn’t remember Chinnasamy and all those names ...

I argue however that an explanation for this cannot be simply justified as ‘forgetfulness’. The modus operandi of colonisation of peoples and of places was to destroy everything that was central to the identity of the people or place. Similarly the disregard for people’s names was a direct way of dehumanising the person, and by referring to all males as Sammy it was an attempt to remove all individual identity. In addition, what is interesting to note about the various commission reports, such as the Coolie Commission, Wragg Commission, and the Clayton

Commission, the names of the planters were written and listed with their initials and surname or their first name and surname e.g. planter G. Jackson, but the ‘Indian’ witnesses who gave evidence were captured in the document by a single name prefixed by the word ‘coolie’ e.g. ‘coolie Rangasammy’. It was reminder of why they were in the colony, as labourers of the lowest order.

4.6 ‘Free’ Indians and Disease

The impressions of Indians that originated in the colonised Indian subcontinent were not favourable and it was these representations that had filtered into the colony, and which were considered as true by the locals and perpetuated by the media. In one instance the writers of an article published in *The Mercury* stated,

We wrote as we always do, on behalf of the planters, whose interests have invariably met with the best support that we could accord to them ... We have far too sincere regard for the interests of the planters - whose cause we have studiously espoused ever since plantations were first formed here ...⁹⁵

The media blatantly expressed that their writing was pro-planters, being referred to as “ ... so thoroughly the colonists’ friend and more particularly the upholder of the agricultural interest”.⁹⁶ The narratives that were portrayed by *The Mercury* were effectively in the interests of the dominant group thereby upholding the status quo rather than providing a critique of it.

This in turn provided ideological justification for a denigrating discourse on Indians in the colony of Natal as portrayed in the following extract published in *The Mercury* in 1863:

The time has now arrived of which we pre-warned the public three years ago- when the forerunners of a free Coolie population will take their place in the general community ... It appears that several Coolies have accumulated during their term of service respectable little hoards. One man has a small capital, of no less than thirty-five pounds, which he has increased by a judicious process of

⁹⁵ *The Mercury*, ‘Editorial’, 7 November 1865

⁹⁶ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – Coolie Management from Henry Binns’, 7 November 1865

usury. Money-lending is, indeed, a favorite pursuit with some of them ... These Coolie capitalists have exhibited a desire to acquire land. One has already applied for a lease of town lands, and others avow their determination to settle down in the borough, and turn their attention to market-gardening, artisanship, and other callings to which they have been accustomed at home. This is the feature to which we refer, and it involves most serious considerations. It is very evident, with the large periodical influx of Coolies that seems likely permanently to take place, that in a few years there will be a large Coolie population settled in the borough ... Coolies, when under the stern discipline of a watchful master may be kept clean, and their dwellings kept wholesome; but Coolies released from that restraint and left to their own devices, with liberty to live, and eat, and drink what and how they like, are proverbially opposed to the commonest sanitary laws, -are, in fact, regardless both of cleanliness and health. It is a natural failing with them - this proneness to dirt - and needs no illustration to prove its existence. Anybody that is acquainted with the quarters occupied by the Malays of Capetown, the Malabars of Port Louis, the Indians of Java, or with the region commonly known as "Blacktown" in all Eastern towns, will well enough know what the domestic instincts of colored people when massed together are. It is in the localities where these races congregate that disease most loves to linger; it is there that epidemic is engendered, and that the organs of sense are so bitterly offended ... Fortunately for European residents, the price of town lots has reached so high a standard that few Coolies would be tempted, were it possible for them, to invest in what may be called the town proper. Neither is it desirable that members of a race so different in all their domestic habits and social ideas from our own, should be too promiscuously mixed up in our midst, or should hustle us too closely. Far better for both them and for us will it be if they are confined to a distinct locality, where plots of land can be procurable by them at moderate rates, where their national peculiarities will not interfere with the comfort of the European residents, and where effective sanitary supervision and control can be rigidly exercised ... The question of site is easily decided. It ought to be not too far from town, but yet at a distance sufficient to prevent any annoyance that might follow from over close contact. There is one spot near the town that seems to fulfil (sic), as nearly as can be, these requisite conditions. That dreary waste known as "the sandy flat," lying between Durban and the Montpelier Road, could not be applied to a better purpose than that of Coolie occupation. Its present state of drift, and its alarming encroachments upon the adjoining pastureland, are a chronic sore to the Town Council ... The point of greatest importance in the creation of these districts will be, however, the establishment and maintenance of an effective system of sanitary control. Unlimited license must not be allowed the residents to do just what they like, or these places will become nests of disease, vice or even crime ... We cannot be blind to the fact that East Indian communities exhibit in rather large measure, a partiality for petty offences, such as drunkenness, disorder, larceny, and other derelictions commonly known as "police cases"... Durban is much better off than those other and older cities we have referred to, where through former negligence of and indifference to the grave requirements of health, colored quarters, in the shape of "Blacktowns," "Coolietowns," "Bambootowns," and

other varieties of the genus, have gradually grown into centres and nurseries of filth or infamy. Here the evil can be checked, even before it is in the bud ...⁹⁷

The Indian presence in the colony until this point was seen only in terms of labour with no foresight as to how the ‘coolies’ would become new ‘settlers’, once their term of indenture had ended and they decided to stay on in the colony. The debates on the introduction of indentured labour did not include as much a robust discussion on what would happen after their term of indenture had ended.

As stated earlier, during the debates on whether Indian labour should be introduced into the colony, *The Mercury* did its best to thwart any implications that the introduction of Indian labourers would bring disease, as the focus of the planters at that stage was solely on economics. At this point in time however, once their contracts had come to an end, the Indian immigrants were accused of being carriers of disease. The words like ‘dirty’, ‘influx’, ‘disease’, ‘epidemic’, ‘crime’ and ‘filth’ used in the above extract are similar to the words used in contemporary xenophobic discourse when referring to foreign African migrants in South Africa. Similarly, the use of the words “national peculiarities” in describing the ‘habits’ of the immigrants, again re-enforced the notion of Indians as “other”, and creating an ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy thereby encouraging anxieties and fears among the ‘white’ colonists. In addition all manner of sickness, disease and deaths amongst the indentured were rationalised as the fault of the labourers due to their ‘preferred’ way of life, which was considered unclean and unhealthy, “Grass huts are numerous on estates. Indians are quite content to live in them and choose them before every other kind of habitation.”⁹⁸

A striking example of this was the investigation into the high mortality rates amongst the indentured at Reynolds Bros. sugar estate.⁹⁹ A commission was set up in 1906 but dismissed the complaints as unjustified. Another investigation ensued, and it was here where the deaths were attributed to the sub-standard ‘quality’ of Indians provided to Reynolds Bros. This implied that they were more prone to illness. In providing evidence during the investigation C. Reynolds, one

⁹⁷ *The Mercury*, ‘Editorial’, 27 November 1863

⁹⁸ Report of the Indian Immigrants Commission: 1885-1887 in Meer (1980:302)

⁹⁹ Between January 1899 and October 1900, 1,220 Indians were employed by Reynolds Bros, and of this number 74 died due to diseases/illnesses such as phthisis, dysentery, pneumonia, enteritis, and marasmus (Desai and Vahed, 2007:133)

of the proprietors of the sugar estate stated, “An Indian does not believe in fresh air ... Indians prefer a close, dry, and dark place, to an airy and bright one.”¹⁰⁰ Blame, then for the dilapidated housing of indentured labourers was taken off the shoulders of the employers and laid squarely on the doorstep of the ‘coolies’ and their preference for unsanitary lifestyles.¹⁰¹ And so began the discourse on disease which continued throughout this period.

4.7 He Treats a Coolie like a Bull Buffalo

I don't know what Anderson beats them with; he uses whatever comes next to hand; stones, sticks, shambok. He treats a Coolie like a bull buffalo.¹⁰²

The first group of Indian labourers that returned to India after their term of indenture was complete, provided unfavourable reports regarding the conditions and treatment they had received in Natal. Instead of the many promises of wealth that they expected, most discovered only poverty, being subject to a ‘master’, ill-treatment, poor living conditions and disease. *The Mercury* however when reporting on this issue, ignored the reality of the treatment of the indentured labourers and instead portrayed them as “misrepresenting” their condition to the Indian government:

We are not without specific reason for making this declaration and this appeal. A letter has already been received by the government from the Indian authorities, making enquiry as to certain complaints made by coolies who have returned to India, regarding their treatment when in Natal. Thus what we vaguely hinted at has come to pass. When we wrote “vengeance” we meant, of course, the only vengeance likely to be taken by such a people as the coolies-the vengeance which

¹⁰⁰ NAB, CSO 2854, Evidence of C. Reynolds in Desai and Vahed (2007:141). It is interesting to note that even after the commission, the deaths continued and in the four months between November 1907 and February 1908, 124 people were reported to have suffered from diarrhoea, with eight dying as a result and three being sent back to India (Desai and Vahed, 2007:142).

¹⁰¹ Swanson (1983) argues, that disease in colony was not only in reference to the threat of medical disease but also figurative for contamination of the colony by a new ‘alien’ ‘race’, a ‘social evil’, as evident in earlier extracts cited above. This is further evidenced in a comment by a resident magistrate Mr. Barter in his report at the close of 1884 who stated, “Wherever he [the Indian] was allowed to settle reeking dens of filth would be found, defying all sanitary laws and fostering a mass of physical and moral impurity.” The mere fact of their existence in the colony was seen as unsanitary.

¹⁰² Evidence provided by Rangasammy in Gallwey and Lloyd (1872:26)

the returned coolies in question have already taken-that of misrepresenting to the too ready and too credulous Indian government the state of things here.¹⁰³

As a result of these complaints the immigration of indentured Indian labourers to Natal ceased between 1866 and 1874. In addition the Coolie Commission under H.L Mason was set up to investigate the claims of abuse and mistreatment by the indentured labourers.

In describing the medical treatment given to the indentured labourers when they were ill, the report states,

The sick Coolies are treated in their own huts, and there can be no doubt that they greatly prefer such treatment to the isolation of a Hospital building. This will be easily understood, if it be remembered that most Indians object to take water or food from the hands of any person not of his own, or of a superior "caste"... (Gallwey and Lloyd, 1872:4)

Caste is used as a convenient scapegoat for not sending the labourers to proper facilities and also introduces this concept to create such differences. Traditional notions of caste had deteriorated during the 12 week journey across the ocean to Natal, as stated in the Wragg Commission report in 1887 "The Hindu Emigrants are compelled to throw off their caste prejudices, having to eat their meals in company with Mahomedans on board ship."¹⁰⁴ Further evidence of this was provided to the Wragg Commission by George Mutukistna, a free Indian who stated "Caste feeling has disappeared in Natal; this disappearance commences immediately the Indians get on board ship."¹⁰⁵ In addition Ramadeen, an Indian who had been under indenture in the colony for ten years, and was preparing to leave for India by the Umvoti in providing evidence to the Wragg Commission, stated, "Here, I have eaten with the different people and broken my caste ... No fine could bring back my caste, being a Brahmin ... When the coolies come here they lose all caste, even the Brahmins intermarry with the Shamars."¹⁰⁶

Regarding the medical treatment then of the indentured labourers, the Coolie Commission Report suggested:

¹⁰³ *The Mercury*, 'Editorial', 21 November 1865

¹⁰⁴ Letter to the Protector at Durban from the Natal Emigration Agent at Calcutta in Meer (1980:288)

¹⁰⁵ Evidence provided by George Mutukistna to the Wragg Commission in Meer (1980:393)

¹⁰⁶ Evidence provided by Ramadeen to the Wragg Commission in Meer (1980:370)

... for the consideration of Government the expediency of obtaining the services of qualified "Native Doctors" from India. We allude to a class of men who have been educated, and have passed the prescribed examination as "Native Doctors" at one of the Government Medical Colleges in India. Some of these men, it is believed, would be found well qualified for the charge of Coolies on estates. (Gallwey and Lloyd, 1872:6)

This implies that the medical treatment of the 'foreign bodies' of the Indian immigrants would be different to that of the 'white' people in the colony, and as though their illnesses would somehow be unique to their 'coolie' bodies. In addition to this, in providing evidence for the medical treatment of 'coolies' the former district surgeon of Victoria County expressed the desire for the erection of 'hospitals' for the treatment of Coolies stating,

In place of estate hospitals, I would recommend the erection of hospitals, for the county of Victoria, say at Verulam and the Avoca. These should not be expensive buildings, but erections of wattle-and-daub, allowing free ventilation ... a proper white attendant being always in charge ...¹⁰⁷

Although the evidence from the planters suggested that the labourers refused medical care and preferred to be treated by their 'family and friends', a report by the Protector of Emigrants in Calcutta revealed that this was not the case:

I regret to report, however, that they were equally unanimous denouncing the treatment which the majority of them said they had suffered in Natal ... But it was of the treatment suffered by the sick that their complaints were most bitter. They stated that the system of medical care and supervision was very defective. Too frequently medical aid was not applied for, unless the illness appeared or became serious, so that slight or incipient cases were often treated by the employers or managers themselves, who, in some instances, ignorantly accused sick laborers of malingering, and exacted work when they ought to have afforded rest and medical treatment. They complained, moreover, that a deduction was made from the wages of every sick laborer, at the rate of a shilling a-day, for every day's absence from work, and that those who had served their first five years under indentures, and were employed as free laborers on the estates, were not provided with medical care. They had to make their own arrangements. This was represented as a system that favored the most ruthless neglect of those who were sickly, simply because they were almost necessarily the poorest."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Evidence provided by Matthews in Gallwey and Lloyd (1872:37)

¹⁰⁸ Extract from a report from the protector of Emigrants, Calcutta in Appendix to Report of Coolie Commission: Correspondence by M. Power who was Head-Assistant of the Judicial Department (Gallwey and Lloyd, 1872:48)

The lives of the indentured labourers had no value apart from their labour power. In many cases their ill-health was viewed as a sham and their deaths considered an economic loss.

4.8 Asiatic Invasion

For this Asiatic Invasion, as it is called, I alone am to be blamed...¹⁰⁹

Following the report of the Coolie Commission, indentured labour was re-introduced in Natal in 1874, and as the system of indenture grew, so too did the number of free Indians in the colony, i.e. those whose terms of indenture had come to an end and had opted to remain in Natal. For example, in 1883 alone all 4,548 Indians whose five year term of indenture had expired did not re-indenture (Du Bois, 2011). In addition to this, in 1869 the first passenger Indians arrived in the colony, and they, together with the free Indians were able to engage in commercial ventures that caused a significant amount of antagonism from ‘white’ colonists who feared the competition and the growing numbers of a ‘new race’ unfettered in colonial society which threatened to outnumber the ‘whites’. These fears were expressed in letters to the editor of *The Mercury* that were published regularly, for example: “All the white population, other than planters will be “crowded out” by the Coolie...”¹¹⁰ and “... This Indian tide ... is fast threatening to swamp us ...”¹¹¹ Maré (2011), drawing on the work of Appadurai (2006), argues that this emphasis on numbering in society is a political undertaking, with the purpose of preserving power differentials in society.

The fear of the extinction of the ‘white’ people from the colony is evident throughout this period. The rapid increase and consistency in the amount of anti-Indian correspondence and articles in *The Mercury* is directly correlated to the increase of un-indentured Indian people in the colony (both passenger and free). As discussed earlier, contact with the indentured immigrants was limited as they were confined to the estates and needed passes to leave, hence their contact with others in the colony, more especially the ‘white’ settlers, were restricted. However, once free

¹⁰⁹ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – Coolie Immigration from J.R Saunders, 21 January 1885

¹¹⁰ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence’, 14 November 1882

¹¹¹ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence from A Durbanite’, 5 April 1882

Indians, and thereafter passenger Indians, began filtering into the urban space, contact increased and with it an explosion of ‘race’ based rhetoric. What was considered to be the “natural right of the whites”¹¹² was seen to be threatened by people who did not belong in settler society, and who were regarded as ‘alien’ and foreign. Correspondence in *The Mercury* well illustrates this as evident in the three extracts below published in 1881 and 1882:

This alien population is the great obstacle to colonial progress, the paralyser of European enterprise, and exerts an influence of an undoubtedly disintegrating character on the national life ... in the face of this evil implant measures of protection must be devised ever it be too late.¹¹³

They have taken cultivation of maize out of colonists’ hands, they are fast outshining the colonist in every other sphere of agri-cultural enterprise ... Coolie stores are legion in number throughout the districts; the colonist storekeeper has perforce to retire and make way for the Coolie storekeeper ... positions on the railway are no longer the natural right of the whites ... far removed from the sphere he was imported for and supplanting on all hands the very man who paid for his introduction.¹¹⁴

... British born men and women have abandoned their first love, and instead of reclaiming the native by teaching him to work for his living, have been traitors to their principles, for the sake of filthy lucre, by upholding the introduction of swarms of heathens, more bigoted than the Zulu, as debased as the hottentot, as patient and sleek as cats, and more cunning than foxes, and not only introducing them, but supporting and buying from them to save a halfpenny in the shilling ... and the country is filling with a vast multitude of industry, and who will ultimately paralyse commerce and civilization and drive the white men from the soil of Natal.¹¹⁵

In addition the ability of the Indian immigrants to compete, was not attributed to any form of commercial acumen, intelligence or skill on their part, but rather the reasons given were rooted in what the colonists believed was their ability to live a contented life in miserable conditions, and yet again, the superiority of the ‘white race’ was propagated :

¹¹² *The Mercury*, ‘Editorial’, 30 September 1881

¹¹³ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence’, 30 September 1881

¹¹⁴ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence’, 30 September 1881

¹¹⁵ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence - Free Indians from A True Natalian, 6 December 1882

It will naturally be asked by those not conversant at close quarters with this problem, why the European cannot compete with the Asiatic? It would therefore be helpful to capitulate, however briefly, the bare result of our experience on this point. It is found that the Asiatic can, and does, live on a scale of diet and accommodation very much below that of the meanest European. He is content at the commencement of his career in white communities with the most rude and restricted accommodation, sleeping on boxes in compartments where sometimes even a dozen are herded (I have myself seen, in Natal and the Transvaal, numerous examples of Oriental “housing” arrangements), with, except in rare instances, none of the commonest domestic appurtenances, and subsisting on little other than a small quantity of rice daily. (Crocker, 1907:347)

In addition to the cries against ‘Asiatic’ competition in commercial and business pursuits, there were also complaints that the free Indians were ‘stealing jobs’, which ‘rightfully’ belonged to ‘white’ people in the colony. A writer to the editor of *The Mercury* bemoaned the fact that ‘coolies’ were being used, and were paid a lot for working on the railways, and the writer could not comprehend why this was so as ‘coolies’ were ‘untrustworthy’ and the lives of Europeans who rode the railways were in their hands. He further stated that Europeans working in the docks were paid far less than the ‘coolies’ who had various kinds of railway jobs and were able then to build ‘cosy’ houses which should in fact belong to Europeans. He referred to them as “dirty, squalid coolies”¹¹⁶ and stated further, “We, as a body of true colonists, must open wide our eyes and choose without delay what sort of colony we prefer - Indian or European.”¹¹⁷ In a separate letter to the editor by ‘An Old Colonist’, the writer agreed with ‘Kintra Callan’, the author of the previous letter and stated that,

... it is a disgrace to the colony that such a thing should be tolerated in our midst; I quite concur with the remarks of your correspondent ... surely it is an injustice to us white colonists that while respectable men, quite capable of filling the situations held by these gentry, are slaving from morning to eve in the goods shed on a pitiable 3s. per day, these coolies should be allowed to hold these lucrative positions ...¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – Coolies on the Railway from Kintra Callan’, 25 September 1885

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – Coolies on the Railway from An Old Colonist’, 2 October 1885

It was not just the commercial pursuits of the free Indians that came under fire and viewed with disdain, but also that of the ‘Arabs’, as the Muslim traders were called irrespective of where they originated from:

A communication was read from the Bloemfontein Chamber of Commerce, stating that the towns of Harrismith, Bethlehem and Wynburg were raising an alarm, and asking the chairman to take steps to prevent the influx of Arab traders, and pointing to Natal, and especially Durban ... The Chairman thought that it was almost useless for the chamber to take action in the matter, as the Arabs had already established themselves ... From the commencement of the importation of coolies, the introduction of Arabs, and the trade influences they had been able to wield, he had seen that the question would have to be fought out as to whether Natal was to be the legitimate trading ground and the residence of Europeans, or whether it was to become a trading ground and a place of passage for Arabs and Indians ... The Arab traders were tainting the sound, honest trade of the country. In Maritzburg, up to two years ago, they had very little of it, but now it had greatly increased, and in all directions the spawn of this yeast was working into the very constitution of the place, and was causing a damage to the honest legitimate British residents, which could end in no other result than great disaster. He was startled in passing through Victoria County ... to find that there was not even a shadow of a remnant of the original European resident. As for the European blacksmith, wheelwright, carpenter or cotter of any description, he had been entirely purged out of the country. The Government was bound to do one of two things – to stop importation of Arabs into the colony, or cause such local and general taxation, to come as a license upon these Arabs and Indians, as would allow the country to be what it was intended to be. Anything more demoralising, unsound and unsatisfactory than the trade actions of the Indians and Arabs was never known before in any British possession ... it is the opinion of the chamber that the presence of Arab traders in the midst of a white community upon equal terms should not be tolerated.¹¹⁹

Similar to the words used and xenophobic sentiments expressed in the previous decade, as illustrated in the above extracts, Indian traders are portrayed in a negative light as bringing harm to the colony, as invading ‘white’ space and in turn chasing out Europeans who had made their living in a similar manner before. In a response to these accusations which continued throughout the years and were perpetuated in the letters published in *The Mercury*, a writer in *Ilanga* stated,

The following is a letter from the Mercury correspondence. It shows a very evil spirit from the part of some poor whites who would like to get a job driving. Why is it that what a white man wants to do a Native can never do well? Suppose even

¹¹⁹ *The Mercury*, ‘City Chamber of Commerce – Arab Traders in Natal’, 25 February 1885

working in the mines if some white people wanted it, they would say the Natives cannot do it well. Does this speak well for the white people to call the Coolies and Natives: “Thick headed Coolies and clumsy Kafirs” simply because that particular white man wants their job.¹²⁰

The African people then, saw through the complaints of the colonists and viewed it as uncalled for and unjust. However, politicians too further perpetuated this xenophobic discourse as evidenced by a speech given by Dr. Haggar when running for political office in the Borough by-election. He stated:

With regard to the Indian coolie question – the coolie was here an unmitigated curse. The question of cheap coloured labour v. white and intelligent labour had been fought out in connection with industries in other lands, and the result had always been in favour of white labour ... The coolie was a social evil. Then there was the effect upon wages. In Durban white girls of 18 years of age were employed at £1 per month and board, whilst a small coolie boy received £2 5s. and board. White men could end this state of things if they would; if not they were simply throwing their children to the wolves, and were content themselves to be slaves.¹²¹

The Mercury in reporting on Dr. Haggar’s speech summarised his platform for election as follows:

[Haggar argued that] The importation of Indians was a commercial blunder ... The Indians were spreading disease in the Colony. To-day, whilst white women and children were starving, Indians were employed on the railway doing work which ought to be done by expert white workmen ... He would establish an experimental farm on the racecourse, and in two years Durban could be supplied with vegetables, and the Indian vegetarian would depart.¹²²

The discourse around the removal or deportation of Indian immigrants from the colony was so severe that even the reasons for why they were brought to the colony in the first place were either forgotten, regarded as a mistake in some quarters, or viewed as a “necessary evil”¹²³ - a comment made by Mr. R.C. Alexander, Superintendent of the Borough Police, during examination by the Wragg Commission. He stated further “ ... we cannot do without them as labourers - we can do

¹²⁰ *Ilanga*, ‘Coolie & Kafir Drivers’, 15 May 1903

¹²¹ *The Mercury*, ‘Borough By-Election - Dr. Haggar on the Indian Question’, 30 November 1899

¹²² *The Mercury*, ‘Borough By-Election - Dr. Haggars Meeting, 12 December 1899

¹²³ Evidence provided by Mr. R.C Alexander to the Wragg Commission in Meer (1980:361-362)

without them as storekeepers.”¹²⁴ The perceptions of the Indian immigrants as morally objectionable were rampant throughout this period, with their presence in the colony after indenture often being referred to as an “unmitigated evil”.¹²⁵

And so the debate on ‘Coolie question’ raged vociferously in the media, in politics and eventually through legislation. Already in 1885 *The Mercury* editorialised:

The Coolie question bids fair to become one of the burning questions of the future in this colony. The murmurs of discontent which are now very often heard at the growth of the Asiatic population in our midst show a tendency to grow louder ... At the last meeting of the Maritzburg Chamber on Monday, Mr. Topham presented a series of resolutions drawn up by a sub-committee appointed to report upon the subject. We give the resolutions prominence here, as we believe their sentiments may be echoed by some of our local merchants ...¹²⁶

The resolutions offered by Mr. Topham included: halting funding for the importation of ‘coolie’ labour from public revenue; offering free passage back to India of all ‘time-expired’ Indians, i.e. those whose contract of indenture were complete; stopping further immigration into the colony of any “Indian, Arab or Asiatic” except if they agreed to return to India once their indenture had come to an end; implementing an annual fee for all Indian adults still in the colony and compelling all free “Indian, Arab or Asiatic” immigrants to register; enforcing a house tax on dwellings inhabited by free “Indians, Arab, or Asiatic”; precluding this category of people from residing or trading in the town except in designated areas set aside by the Corporation or local authorities for that purpose; and finally preventing this group from dealing in any type of intoxicating drinks. Topham argued further that, “ ... the question was whether the colony was to be one for Europeans, for their children, or whether it should be a colony and resting-place for Asiatics and aliens ... ”¹²⁷ This was a question, sounded off many times prior, as seen in earlier extracts, and which the ‘white’ colonists demanded be settled in their favour.

Following from these concerns, alarm bells were then raised about the consequences of Indian immigrants owning land in the colony. Couched in terms of crime and safety, ownership of land

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence from Bitter Truth’, 27 July 1885

¹²⁶ *The Mercury*, ‘Editorial’, 15 July 1885

¹²⁷ Ibid.

was ultimately about an enduring presence of ‘Indians’ in the colony. The implications of land ownership involved the permanence of ‘Indians’ in the country and of legitimating settler status for such arrivals that up until then was reserved only for ‘white’ people - who were viewed by colonialists as, as the earlier extracts have revealed, ‘superior’ and ‘civilized’:

I consider there will be four times as many Coolies as there are whites, say in twenty years; and if Coolies are allowed to become landowners (as there is every proof they are and intend to be) by the present owners of land leasing it to them with the option of purchase, what then? ... If they become possessed of blocks of land all along the coast, what is there to prevent them from forming settlements of their own, that will become hotbeds of crime and rebellion. Therefore, for the safety and comfort of the white population, the sooner a law is passed prohibiting Coolies from owning land the better.¹²⁸

Much to my surprise and horror I was informed the other day that if any of the speculative or other owners or lessees of land on the Berea thought proper, they could sublet such land, or portions of it, to coolies ... No one will purchase land at the price now ruling if they find that it is quite possible, nay probable, that in their immediate neighbourhood an Indian location may arise. The Musgrave Road is the very pick of the suburbs at present - there are really mansions there. How will the owners of these fine houses relish coolie neighbours? ... The rotten old cry - I hope soon to be exploded - about equal rights where different races are concerned may possibly be raised by those who have nothing to lose, and seek only notoriety ... It is only a similar step to fill up the Berea with coolies. As West Street is becoming an Indian bazaar so it appears the suburbs will change their present character. Is the white man to disappear?¹²⁹

As the fear of the extinction of ‘whites’ in the colony grew, so too did the slanderous discourse on Indian immigrants. They were seen to be ‘invading’ all aspects of colonial life including, the business district, suburbs, schools and even sport:

“Coloured riders excluded” is a common notice in connection with sport in South Africa, and in Durban such a rule has been frequently enforced on the turf. There are other branches of sport, to the credit of the coloured man, being invaded. Indians have their cricket and football clubs, and now the bicycle track will probably be invaded ... Last Sunday I saw three Indians careering down the same street [West Street] on safeties, and good machines they appeared to be. As they

¹²⁸ *The Mercury*, 16 April 1880

¹²⁹ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – Berea and the Indian Tenant from A Berean, 31 July 1885

cost at least £20 each, I could not help thinking that young Durban Indians must be doing well to indulge in such luxuries.¹³⁰

Although there were from some spheres, most notably the planters, attempts to alleviate the “fear and anxiety” or “childish race sentimentalities” as it was referred to by J.R. Saunders in the Wragg Commission Report, it nevertheless had very little or no impact:

If we look back to 1859, we shall find that the assured promise of Indian labour resulted in an immediate rise of revenue, which increased four-fold within a few years ... But a few years later alarm (a well-founded alarm) arose, that it would be suspended ... Simultaneously down went revenue and wages; immigration was checked; confidence vanished, and retrenchment and reduction of salaries was the main thing thought of – and yet another change some years later ... a fresh promise of renewed Indian Immigration created its effect and up again went the revenue, wages and salaries, and retrenchment was soon spoken of as a thing of the past ... Records like these ought to tell their own tale, and silence childish race sentimentalities and mean jealousies.”¹³¹

In addition a speech given by Mr. Binns to the Legislative Council in 1884 sought a similar result when he stated, “I for one enter my protest against the stigma and reflection cast upon the Indian population of the colony, because I believe them to be a most useful and industrious part of the community.”¹³² This however did little to quell the tide of anti-Indian sentiment and in 1885 a law was passed in the Transvaal applicable to “the persons belonging to any of the native races of Asia, including so-called Coolies, Arabs, Malays, and Mohammedan subjects of the Turkish Empire” (Law No.3 of 1885). This law effectively excluded people classified in the above categories from obtaining citizenship rights in the Transvaal and from owning fixed property except in “ ... streets, wards and locations as the Government for purposes of sanitation shall assign to them to live in” (Law No. 3 of 1885). They were also required to register if they wished to trade. This then enforced into law the suggestions made by Mr. Topham discussed earlier.

In a letter to the British Agent, Gandhi in 1899 responding to the continuous relocation of ‘Indians’ stated:

¹³⁰ Saturday Supplement to *The Mercury*, ‘Man on the Moon’, 21 July 1894

¹³¹ Report of the Indian Immigrants Commission: 1885-1887 in Meer (1980:336)

¹³² *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – Our Indians from An Indian’, 3 August 1885

The people were and are in a state of terror; they do not know what to do ... The Government of the South African Republic, it is understood, intends to remove the Indians in town to a place called Waterval, 4 3/4 miles distant from Johannesburg Market Square, the central part of Johannesburg ... It is submitted that to ask the Indians to remove to that place would be practically asking them to leave the Transvaal. The storekeepers could never do any business there. The hawkers could not be expected to walk with their wares from and to that place every day. The fact that there are no sanitary arrangements there, no water, no police protection and that the place is situated in the vicinity of the place where the refuse of the town and night-soil are deposited, are minor considerations in comparison with the fact that it is situated at such a great distance as 4 3/4 miles with no population of any kind within practically two-mile radius ... Now that there is a prospect of Indians generally being shifted to locations, will it be too much to expect a change of official name 'Coolie Location' for 'Indian Location'?¹³³

Trade and residential areas became segregated not just in the Transvaal but also in Natal. This in turn led to the creation of 'asiatic bazaars' or 'coolie locations'. The creation then of 'Asiatic spaces' was implemented by the colonial government but was made out to be the result of 'ethnic' enclaves created by the Indian immigrants themselves. Racist and xenophobic policy was framed in terms of 'filth' and 'disease' and justified the segregation and separation of Indian immigrants and their descendants, i.e. the children of the immigrants born in Natal.

What the above extract also reveals is that over two decades after it was initially discussed at the Coolie Commission, being identified as 'coolies' still prevailed. In addition the legislation which incorporated all people classified as "Coolies, Arabs, Malays, and Mohammedan subjects of the Turkish Empire" did not discriminate by social or economic class or educational status. What fundamentally joined these people together as 'Indian' was a common ancestry and that of originating from a specific part of the world, the subcontinent of India, a vast area at that point in time, from where they were not an ethnic or 'race' group. In this regard, this period in time constitutes the beginnings of the constructing of a category that did not exist before. When the Indian immigrants arrived as indentured labourers and thereafter as passengers, they did not carry with them cultural similarities, but these were imputed to them. During this initial period of arrival there were different factors that created and maintained a group identity in complex ways. Initially, as argued above, Indians were sent off from India as a group and arrived into the colony

¹³³ Letter sent to the British Agent by Gandhi in 1899 in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:45-47)

as a group, they were registered as a group and they had a class definition of who they were – they were indentured labourers initially and classified as ‘coolies’. This then enabled them to be controlled as a group and to occupy certain work and be involved in *specific* labour practices, which is another factor that made them a group, i.e. they were the ones who worked on the sugar cane fields whereas the African people did not, and the ‘white’ people owned the land. As Hacking (2007:293) expresses it, “Sometimes our sciences create kinds of people that in a certain sense did not exist before. That is making up people.”

This group categorisation then was extended to control the movement and actions of the people who were no longer just indentured workers. Although it has been argued that Gandhi recognised the heterogeneity within the category ‘Indian’ (see Chapter Three), in the extract below, Gandhi not only appears to acknowledge, but also accepts, this single ‘Indian’ group when discussing the piece of legislation that required ‘Indians’ who wanted to remain in the Transvaal to register, stating:

There was nothing in it except a hatred of Indians. It is not the last step. But the first step with a view to hound us out of the country. We are therefore responsible for the safety of not only the ten or fifteen thousand Indians in the Transvaal but of the entire Indian community in South Africa. (cited in Govender and Naidoo, 2010:59)

The construction of the ‘Indian community’ then was born out of multiple political causes including but not limited to exclusion from public spaces and education. For example, to prevent ‘Asiatic domination’ of the market the following suggestions were made:

Let the Asiatic have a market to himself, and the European one to himself, then there would be no difficulty in getting respectable people to keep the stalls.¹³⁴
... the market building should not be a rendezvous for dirty, jabbering Asiatics (who ought to be much better employed in answering the ends of the colony imported them for) ... and if they (corporation) can do nothing more, abate the fearful Asiatic nuisance in such an improving and important business centre.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence - Our Market from Bitter Truth’, 16 January 1885

¹³⁵ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – The Market House from Beta’, 3 February 1885

In addition, because of the hope that the Indian immigrants would eventually return to India, many did not see the need for educational facilities to be provided to the children of the immigrants. The extract below, published in *The Mercury* in 1885 reveals these sentiments and stresses that ‘Asiatics’ were merely “sojourners” and a distinction was made between “*our* natives” and “*our* farmers” implying *their* belonging to the country as opposed to the Indian “foreigner” :

... We do not see the government would be justified in establishing industrial schools for Asiatics-who after all are but sojourners on the soil- while it fails to do so for our natives, who belong by birth and association, to the country ... Our Government owes a common duty to all, and if there be any preponderance of duty it is on the side of the native-as distinguished from the foreigner. It must never be forgotten that the primary purpose for which Indians are imported is to provide labour for our plantations, our farmers, and our employers-a cheaper labour than can possibly be looked for from the European. The time is coming when our representatives and rulers will have to consider, and consider seriously, whether the Indian is to be regarded and treated as a hired labourer only, or as a settler.¹³⁶

In 1910 the Education Act, No. 6 (Natal) was passed which provided for compulsory education for ‘whites’ only but not for ‘Indians’. 50 years after the introduction of indentured labour, the Indians who had migrated to the colony under indenture or to trade, and those born in the colony and who knew no other country, were still regarded as foreign.

Discussing the Wragg Commission, a reporter for *The Mercury* wrote in 1885:

A commission to find out if it is true that Natal as a British colony is becoming swamped by Asiatics ... You imported the coolie for the special purpose he has served so well. So far so good, but you did not import him to reside in the colony beyond his term of work. The intended contract was so much work, so much money and back to your country, master coolie. There may be time yet to save yourselves.¹³⁷

What this quote portrays is the erroneous beliefs among many of the colonists that the Indian immigrants were supposed to return home, and not reside in the colony after their term of

¹³⁶ *The Mercury*, ‘Editorial’, 17 April 1885

¹³⁷ *The Mercury*, ‘Man on the Moon’, 31 January 1885

indenture was over.¹³⁸ However their initial contract stipulated that they could remain once their indenture was complete and they would be given a piece of ‘crown land’, they could re-indenture, hire themselves out, change residence *or* be given a free passage back to India. Ownership of land in Natal and prospects of wealth were the main reasons that enticed the Indians into the colony.

4.9 Coolies and Natives

Apart from the instances noted in evidence given at the various commissions regarding the abuse of indentured labourers by the ‘Kafir’, or individual court cases such as that of assaults that involved isolated incidents between ‘Indians’ and African people, little else is known about the social relationships between the new labourers and African people during this period, or the perceptions held of ‘Indians’ *broadly* by the local population.¹³⁹ As discussed earlier, comparisons between the two ‘races’ and playing one off against the other was apparent from the time the Indians arrived in the colony. What is noticeably different once the indentured labourers were free was that the ‘characteristics’ of each ‘race’ were mentioned in opposition to what was stated previously, in order to justify the current feeling at the time or the sentiments expressed on certain issues. At the time, when the ‘Asiatics’ were portrayed as a menace to society, they were considered of much less worth than the local African people which was contrary to the earlier discourse. As *The Mercury* editorialised in 1865 already, and again in 1881:

Coolies are only too fond of shamming and sinning ... The Coolie is a different being to the Kafir. He is more vindictive, revengeful, and retentive of his wrongs. He nurses his resentments and is, on the whole, strangely careless of consequences. A being of strong passions and vehement hates, he is apt to retaliate ...¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ The Wragg commission 1885-1887 brought to light the amnesia surrounding the conditions under which the indentured labourers were brought into the colony and the laws which governed their arrival and contract.

¹³⁹ Atkins (1986:55) discusses how ‘free’ Indians during this time period became the “first effective rival” of the Zulu washermen, which was a trade held solely by Zulu men for 40 years prior. However the laundry pursuits of both Africans and Indians were undermined by government legislation restricted trade as well as derogatory discourse on ‘Indians’ which included ‘Indian’ people being touted as ‘unsanitary’.

¹⁴⁰ *The Mercury*, ‘Editorial’, 28 October 1865

The Coolie is descendant of a race highly civilized in mechanical application, but also a race utterly wanting in moral rigidity; the Kafir may lack the former, but beyond question is fairly endowed with the latter. The Kafir may lack knowledge, but he is rich in wisdom ... As a servant the Kafir is cleaner, and in truthfulness, sobriety, faithfulness and physical strength far excels the coolie.¹⁴¹

In addition to the above, the ‘coolies’ were also described as “habitual smugglers”, “quarrelling with themselves” and “helping to ruin our Kafirs”.¹⁴²

Hughes (2007:161) however argues that like ‘white’ people in the colony, Africans too held ‘Indians’ responsible for “... all manner of social ills.” Anti-Indian sentiment amongst African people then were also expressed, with the ‘coolies’ being referred to as “great thieves” (Hughes, 2007:161). She argues further that Dube, the founder of *Ilanga*, regularly, during this period provided xenophobic commentary on ‘Indians’ and further published similar sentiments from others in *Ilanga* (Hughes, 2007:163), such as the excerpts below:

... we know by sad experience how beneath our very eyes our children’s bread is taken by these Asiatics: how whatever little earnings we derive from Europeans, go to swell the purses of these strangers, with whom we seem obliged to trade
...¹⁴³

And,

... we had land, we mortgaged the same, and now what once was our heritage is enjoyed by Indians.¹⁴⁴

The words used such as that of ‘strangers’ and ‘heritage’ in the extracts above, reveal both the foreignness of ‘Indians’ in the colony as well as, who the writer perceived to be, the rightful ‘heir’s’ to the land, and as Hughes (2007:163) notes “Resentment was never far beneath the surface”.

¹⁴¹ *The Mercury*, 30 September 1881

¹⁴² *The Mercury*, 29 June 1880

¹⁴³ *Ilanga*, ‘The Indian Invasion, 11 Dec 1903 (cited in Hughes, 2007:163)

¹⁴⁴ *Ilanga*, 20 November 1903 (cited in Hughes, 2007:163)

However in a letter to the editor of *Ilanga*, an appeal was made to ‘black’ Africans to make their lives better and a comparison was drawn between the Maoris in New Zealand and the ‘coolies’ in South Africa. In addition, there was a yearning expressed to find people to fight on behalf of ‘black’ people against discrimination as revealed in the following extracts published in *Ilanga* in 1903 and 1910:

Listen to my words. The sun is up now, go as you have been enlightened, stop being lazy, be hard working, get out of your homes and work hard. Learn from the Coolies who entered this country through a ‘Contract’ to work on the sugarcane fields but today they have land of their own and big houses.¹⁴⁵

The *Ilanga* is asking the Zulu nation until when will we be without a ‘Mediator’? Just look at the Coolies they have Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Khan, that whenever there is a discriminatory story told against the Indians, these respond on behalf of the Indians and their response becomes known even in London where their hard life in the Transvaal caused a shaking in Parliament there. The Indian Congress in Durban had a huge gathering against the speech of the Durban Mayor who said that the Coolies should not own shops in the beautiful streets of Durban. They rise up if they are discriminated against, you can also perceive that. We also have intelligent boys, who can get to know the law, can engage in debates like Mr. S Nyongwana , Mr. C Kunene , Mr. Saul Msane, Mr. Posselt Gumede and the others. O! Our Nation, won’t it be a nice thing if the Congress [NIC] has money in the bank, to elect one of these boys go to London to read the Law for us.¹⁴⁶

The Cape Coloured people are angry, I mean the black people from Cape Town. Now they are being discriminated against, their vote is no longer needed. They are now required to always carry their Pass (ID document), in some places they refuse and choose to go to jail. Someone even uttered hard words saying taking up arms won’t cause the Whites to leave us alone. But what can help is if people were united, i.e. the Indians, Coloureds and Blacks, and do one thing, have meetings together and only meet separately for church and other practices. And have one Congress for Indians, Coloured and Natives.¹⁴⁷

Again a comparison is made between the ‘coolies’ and the ‘Zulu nation’ (in reference to the local African people in the colony of Natal whose language was isiZulu). This comparison is viewed in a positive light with no xenophobic sentiments expressed. The ‘Indians’ are perceived as

¹⁴⁵ *Ilanga*, ‘Correspondence – from William Magubane’, 12 June 1903

¹⁴⁶ *Ilanga*, ‘Till When Will This Go On?’, 26 June 1903

¹⁴⁷ *Ilanga*, ‘Stories About Events and People’, 11 March 1910

inspirational in terms of what could possibly be achieved for 'black' people in Natal, and consistently expressed hopes of the NIC assisting to achieve the political goals. Gandhi's vision however was different, he could not see any co-operation between the two 'races', stating in 1909 that "We may entertain no aversion to Kaffirs, but we cannot ignore the fact that there is no common ground between them and us in the daily affairs of life" (cited in Reddy, 1955:19-76).

4.10 Rights to the Land

In response to an article that appeared in *The Mercury* articulating concerns about the noise that occurred during the 'Indian' festivals and that steps should be taken to "keep the coolies and their followers out of town".¹⁴⁸ Humbug writes in 1885,

I shall be glad to know whether the festival Mr. Steel appears so strongly to condemn is anyway worse than the ordinary English mummer festival or the buffoonery of a Guy Fawkes' Day.¹⁴⁹

Humbug articulates the double standards when it comes to the practices of the Europeans in the colony and 'others'. The practices of the Europeans are seen as superior and civilised as opposed to the 'heathen worship' where the 'Indians' "innate fanatical ideas seem to let loose".¹⁵⁰ J.T in response to Humbug's letter states,

Now, permit me to inform "Humbug" that the kafirs have more right to do this sort of thing than the Indians, who have been introduced into the colony at a great expense to the colonists, whereas the kafirs were the former owners of the soil? ... And "Humbug" must also know that what he is advocating is a growing evil, and will need checking before it becomes, as our native question has, almost past remedy.¹⁵¹

This writer in the letter to the editor immediately above brings in a new element of 'rights' to the land. 'Indians' here again are seen as having no claim to the colony as home, they are regarded

¹⁴⁸ *The Mercury*, 'Durban Corporation – Coolie Festival', 20 October 1885

¹⁴⁹ *The Mercury*, 'Correspondence – Indian Festivals from Humbug', 4 November 1885

¹⁵⁰ *Natal Advertiser*, 23 April 1902 cited in Vahed (2002:86)

¹⁵¹ *The Mercury*, 'Correspondence – The Indian Festival from J.T', 13 November 1885

as temporary and again as being brought in with a specific purpose to fulfill. The implications of allowing them to continue with their religious festivals meant that they were claiming their status and rights as belonging to the colony, and asserting their permanence, which J.T described as ‘evil’.

Colonial society too was not homogenous but it was often portrayed as such and so a distinct division between civilized and uncivilized ‘others’ and between citizen and foreigner, was created. William Arbuckle in providing evidence to the Wragg commission stated, “Coolies cannot be compared to Kaffirs as citizens, as Kaffirs cannot be citizens ... My chief objection to the Indian is, that there is a risk of their colonising Natal; by sending them back again I get rid of this risk ...”¹⁵² They were viewed as a threat to the social fabric of settler society and in many quarters it was argued that every effort should be made to prevent their permanent status in the colony, or, if they did remain they should not be elevated to the class of citizen or awarded any of the benefits and rights thereof, in other words they were to be kept at a certain class level and distinct from ‘white’ settlers in the colony. Harry Escombe Attorney-General and at times acting Prime Minister stated: “The Indians are to come here ... as laborers, but not welcomed as settlers and competitors” (cited in Henderson, 1903:4). During an examination of Mr. S.W.B Griffin, a planter, during the Wragg Commission, Griffin argued “I would not give the Indian a permanent location in a town in which to trade, and I would forbid (sic) him a license: if they choose to travel as peddlers about the country, well and good.”¹⁵³ Similar views were expressed in a letter to the editor of *The Mercury* that “Our Durban democrats do not object to Indian coolies, so long as they remain coolies, but don’t allow them to improve their condition by means of trading or purchasing land or houses. Keep them as slaves, or hound them back to India.”¹⁵⁴

Contrary to how the colonial government as well as colonial society perceived them, what is apparent is that the ‘Indians’ identified themselves as British subjects and expected to be viewed in that manner by the colonists. Gandhi in 1901 speaking for that ideal stated, “What we wanted in South Africa was not a White man’s country; not a White brotherhood, but an Imperial brotherhood” (cited in Bhana, 1997a:9). This sentiment reveals that the ‘Indians’ viewed

¹⁵² Evidence provided by W. Arbuckle to the Wragg Commission in Meer (1980:355-356)

¹⁵³ Evidence provided by S.W.B Griffin to the Wragg Commission in Meer (1980:431)

¹⁵⁴ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – Dr Haggar’s Democracy from Equality’, 1 December 1899

themselves as belonging to the British crown and as subjects of the queen. Thus they envisioned an imperial identity, far removed from notions of ‘race’ and physical difference. It was with this logic that a group of ‘Indians’ volunteered to participate in the South African War on the side of the Empire, to show their loyalty to the crown and to the colonists in Natal. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary published in *The Mercury* in 1899 a group of approximately 100 ‘Indians’ offered their services in the war and stated, “The motive underlying this humble offer is to endeavour to prove that, in common with the other subjects of the Queen-Empress in South Africa, the Indians, too are ready to do duty for their Sovereign on the battlefield”.¹⁵⁵

They attempted to assert this identity even in their petitions against discriminatory legislation and measures, as can be seen in the extract below, from a petition sent by Pillay and others to the Viceroy of India dated 14 July 1888 which stated “ ... the Indian immigrants are sent by the Imperial Government of India to Natal with the understanding that they should be treated properly as British Indian subjects ...”¹⁵⁶ A chief imperative of Gandhi and the NIC, which was formed on 22 May 1894,¹⁵⁷ at the time when the fear of ‘Indian’ traders and competition was at its peak, was to convince colonial Natal to accept Queen Victoria’s statement that “ ... so far as may be, our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity, duly to discharge” (cited in Huttenback, 1966:273). The colonial government however, was not ready to accept the notion of an ‘Imperial brotherhood’, and in July 1894, an article appeared in *The Mercury* attempting to ‘explain’ what it meant to be a British subject:

The term “British subject” has its limitations. The Indian people are British subjects to the sense that the British flag floats from its citadels and proclaims that here Great Britain’s power and might are at stake. They are British subjects in the sense that that flag will protect them from injustice and guarantee to them the purest and most righteous form of government that the world can give. But to assume that these privileges extend to their receiving equal political power with the inhabitants of a country associated with them by no ties of relationship is to

¹⁵⁵ *The Mercury*, ‘War Correspondence - Loyal Durban Indians’, 25 October 1899

¹⁵⁶ Source G.H.318, 1883-6, Natal Archives in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:11-12)

¹⁵⁷ The NIC made attempts to organise resistance around laws such as The Franchise Law Amendment Act of 1896, Act 17 of 1895, The Immigration Restriction Act (Act1) of 1897, and the Dealers’ Licences Act (Act 18) of 1897 (Bhana, 1997a:14). These were the laws which affected the Passenger or trader class the most.

reduce the term, sacred and honoured as it must and ever will be, to a gross absurdity.¹⁵⁸

Even though an ‘explanation’ is provided, what is evident is the inability of the colonists to see that even if the definition, as stated in the article is correct, the exact opposite was occurring in the colony regarding the tremendous injustice to both the indentured labourers as well as the free, and passenger ‘Indians’. The paternalistic rhetoric apparent in the above extract stems from the notions of superiority as discussed earlier.

Even though the NIC appealed for a unified imperial identity, they nevertheless also represented an elite group of people. With a membership fee of three pounds per annum, it was only the merchant class who could afford to belong to this organisation. Even more exclusionary was the meetings which were held in Gujarati, which was the language of most of the traders who had come from Gujarat (Henning, 1989:18). Broad distinctions then were clear between the ‘Indian traders’ and who they themselves considered to be ‘coolies’.

The laws that were passed placed restrictions on ‘Asiatics’ which included Chinese people in the country.¹⁵⁹ The logic behind grouping ‘Indian’ and Chinese people together was merely a case of geography, i.e. that Chinese and ‘Indian’ people originated from Asia. Law 29 of 1890 stated that “No Arab, Chinese, Coolie or any other Asiatic coloured will be able to settle in the country, or stay for a period exceeding two months ...” In 1903 Sir George Farrar, who was the chairman of the Anglo-French group argued the need for seeking labour outside of Africa, due to the shortages that were being experienced but he nevertheless made a point of stating that Chinese labour if so sought should not have the conditions as the indentured Indian labour stating, “I have seen the evil of the Indians holding land and trading in competition with white people and on no account whatever would I be party to any legislation that permitted this” (Yap and Man, 1996:106).

¹⁵⁸ *Mercury*, ‘The Week’, 6 July 1894

¹⁵⁹ Chinese people began arriving in South Africa in the 1870s and 1880s drawn by the gold prospects (Park, 2008).

This fear of ‘other nations’ settling in the colony was rampant and such feelings were further expressed in an article in *Ilanga* in 1903, referring to the potential migration of Chinese workers to the country:

It seems as if even the Chinese who were hoping to come here, won't be able to, they will only be allowed to come if the wealth owners say they don't have enough labourers anymore to dig for gold, and they will come only if the mine owners failed to obtain workers in the whole of Africa ... On top of so many different nationalities in South Africa, who are often fighting amongst themselves, we don't think it's a good idea to bring the Chinese here. Black people are born here. They are the ones made to pay taxes to support the government. It is the black people who should be given these jobs because these nations save money in order to spend it in their countries which has a negative effect on our taxes. It is also not an easy task to govern the mixture of so many different nations. We won't be surprised one day if the Whites regret why they ever brought the Chinese here, because these overseas nations sometimes compete for the same positions with the whites. Look today, they don't know how to get rid of the Coolies. They are even thinking it is better to send back to India every Coolie that has completed his labour task here. But once an Indian has been in South Africa for a period of about five years, he will devise some means of avoiding being sent back as long as he does not yet feel like going back.¹⁶⁰

The debate on the possible introduction of Chinese labourers also brought out the views of African people about ‘Indians’ in the colony. They too perceived ‘Indian’ people as an excess group, and they feared that the introduction of Chinese workers would further exacerbate the situation, as revealed in the extract below published in *Ilanga* in 1903:

Sir – A complaint concerning the above mentioned story on ‘Black and Chinese’. The *Ilanga* has long been bringing to the open the evilness of bringing the Chinese here into South Africa. This issue of bringing the Chinese to our country is bad and does not reflect a good social condition of our country. I am not only speaking in the context of the Black people, but this is also in reference to the White people because after the Chinese have been allowed entry into the country, they will never go back to their country like with the Indians who will never go back to their country anymore. Why? Because they have become one. There are those who come from their country from Madras, Calcutta etc. Now there is a second group type, those born here called the ‘Natalian Indians’. These now claim that “Natal is their land where they were born”. On top of such great trouble, still another bad nation (Chinese) is fetched from their country. This is the very nation of whom we have heard that they were killing Pastors in Europe. This nation is

¹⁶⁰ *Ilanga*, ‘People and Johannesburg Riches’, 5 June 1903

known as evil. We could have prevented the Whites from fetching such an evil nation who will corrupt our land. Even if we can come to the point of possessing nothing in this land, we know this is our land. But we have men in the community and Parliament who are fighting against the bringing of the Chinese people to South Africa, men like Hon. Mr. Sutton, M.L.C., Mr. Richards, M.L.A. Some men of the Congress, though are saying that this issue of the Chinese has nothing to do with Natal Colony but it has to do with other Colonies such as the Transvaal. What are the Whites trying to do to us? What do they think our wellbeing and life will be when the Chinese are working here? What are we going to be? This issue of the Chinese is shaking the whole nation that even the mine owners are against the employment of the Chinese. Even though we don't have a voice, we also are against the entry of the Chinese in our country. If the governments can agree on bringing the Chinese here in South Africa, there will never be any peace in this country but there will always be unrest even amongst all those who are from Europe. We can see the coming terrible danger, may God prevent the Chinese from coming here.¹⁶¹

The 'Indian Question' then began to draw attention to *who* should be allowed into the country. In addition, another piece of legislation which further attempted to exclude 'Indians' from participating as active 'citizens' in the colony, was the Franchise Law Amendment Bill which aimed to exclude 'Indian' people from voting. *The Mercury* reporting on the subject in 1894, offered the following view:

The aim of the Franchise Law Amendment Bill is to exclude the Indian population from such free use as they have at present of the right of voting for parliamentary representatives ... The natives of the Colony are at present under such restrictions as regards the franchise that only one on the whole Colony has qualified for the privilege, and this being so it is nothing short of an anomaly that another class of people of alien birth belonging to a civilization totally different from that held by the dominant and governing race in the Colony should be admitted almost indiscriminately to a privilege denied to the descendants of the original owners of the soil. The Colony has been developed and made what it is by men imbued with ideas of European civilization and the most liberal form of European constitutional government. The Asiatic comes of a race impregnated with an effete civilization and with not an atom of knowledge of the principles or traditions of representative government. As regards his instincts and training he is a political infant of the most backward type, from whom it is an injustice to expect that he should either understand the methods of our Government or have any sympathy with our political aspirations. He thinks differently and reasons in a plane unknown to European logic. As a rule our political questions are as mystical and involved to the Asiatic understanding as their Vedic literature is to us.

¹⁶¹ *Ilanga*, 'Correspondence - Blacks and Chinese by C.B. Dhlamini', 24 July 1903

Moreover, there are few Indians so well versed in the English language as to be able to read our newspapers and study the political questions of the day in such a manner as is essential to forming an independent judgment on any matter of colonial importance. Then, as regards their right to franchise privileges, they have even less pretensions on this than on any other ground to recognition. They have had nothing whatever to do with the colonisation of the country. They come here with the idea of trading and making money, not of developing the country. They are parasitical in their habits, not independent prospectors. They follow but they never lead ... the Indian race is not a colonising one and has had nothing to do with the actual colonising of Natal. To give the Indian who comes to this Colony the franchise, is placing in his hands a power of whose uses he is entirely ignorant ... They probably feel they had much better be relieved of a power whose influence for good or evil they do not understand ... The present social position of the majority of Indians as well as their intellectual capabilities lays them open to all these forms of political perversion [intimidation, bribery, and dishonest demagogy]. An Indian may be morally perverted in the political sense of the term quite unconsciously, because of his natural ignorance of our methods and principles of government and the Bill is really protecting him in his present untutored state from being made an even unwilling partner in dishonest political practices.¹⁶²

The above extract provides fascinating insight into the colonial mind and again reveals how notions of essentialism, that fed the idea of scientific racism as discussed earlier, was evident in colonial discourse throughout the decades within this period.

In response to the Franchise Law Amendment Bill a petition was sent to the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly against the passing of this measure.¹⁶³ The petition was an attempt to persuade parliament that the 'Indians' were capable of responsibly exercising the power to vote. In a letter to the editor Gandhi responded to the editorial published in *The Mercury* and pointed out the flaws in the editorial and provided evidence of political franchise rights in India. Gandhi stated,

Sir, I appeal to your good sense, and ask you will you not better serve humanity by collecting and pointing out points of resemblances between the two peoples than holding out to the public gaze points of contrasts, often far-fetched or merely imaginary, that can but arouse the worst feelings of a man, while they can do nobody any real good? I hardly think it can be to your interest to sow the seeds of jealousy and animosity between the two nations. That, I doubt not, is in your

¹⁶² *The Mercury*, 'Indians and the Franchise', 25 June 1894

¹⁶³ *The Mercury*, 'Indians Franchise - A Petition', 28 June 1894

power, as it is in anybody's more or less. But a thing far higher and far nobler, too, lies within your reach - a thing that would bring you not only greatness, but goodness, and, what is more, the gratitude of a nation that has not been crushed under 1200 years' tyranny and oppression - a fact by itself a miracle, and that thing is to educate rightly the Colony about India and its peoples.¹⁶⁴

It is evident here that Gandhi understood the power of the media and its ability to entrench into the minds of its readers, divisiveness. The writer of the article in *The Mercury* perpetuates the fear of being swamped by the 'millions' of Indians if given political rights and that 'Indians' would take over the colony and 'whites' would become 'extinct'.

4.11 Fixing 'Indians'

The blanket category of 'Indian' that was used for bureaucratic purposes, such as in the Figure 4.1 below, included all the new immigrants from India, those initial migrants who had been residing in the colony for over 30 years, as well as the children of those immigrants who were born in the colony, and knew no other 'home' beside Natal.

CENSUS TAKEN 18TH JULY.									
Districts.		Europeans.				Natives.		Indians.	
Ward No.	Men.	Boys.	Women.	Girls.	Males.	Females.	Males.	Females.	
1	894	588	696	527	1366	60	305	330	
" 2	593	402	466	293	778	54	103	43	
" 3	755	546	690	639	1084	46	123	40	
" 4	583	450	485	445	1113	95	970	668	
" 5	868	729	943	707	1225	93	284	126	
" 6	254	160	215	162	842	106	1781	1125	
	3947	2875	3495	2776	6408	454	3566	2332	
	Europeans	...	...	...	13,093,	increase	321	
	Natives...	...	..	...	6,862,	"	544	
	Indians...	...	...	...	5,898,	decrease	19	
	Total	...	...	...	25,853,	increase	846	

Figure 4.1 *The Mercury*, 'The Mayor's Minute', 1 August 1894

¹⁶⁴ *The Mercury*, 'Correspondence - Indians and the Franchise from MK Gandhi', 11 July 1894

Figure 4.1 reveals a census taken in 1894 of Durban and discloses the categories of people that were enumerated. According to Christopher (2009:102) “It is this ability to catalogue and name, which is vital to the definition of the nations ... Numbering was an essential part of the imperial project, as the colonial administrations sought to create order out of the apparent chaos of the diversity they encountered in strange lands”. Christopher (2009:101) argues that South African censuses provide an understanding of the way in which the ‘nation’ was perceived at the moment the census was taken.

4.12 Immigration, Tax, and Language

The Immigration Act in Natal of 1897-1906 compelled all Indian immigrants who were arriving in the colony from India, except the indentured, to undertake an educational, health, age and means tests. The educational test was essentially a literacy test which ascertained the immigrant’s level of proficiency in a European language. The implementation of the law was left to the discretion of the immigration officials. This was done so as to prevent illiterate ‘white’ people who wanted to settle in Natal from being turned away. The point of the Act was to ensure that ‘Asiatics’ could in no way become a prominent constituent in the country, and outnumber ‘whites’.

A petition sent to the Natal Governor on 8 August 1894 by Abdoolla Hajee Adam, Parsee Rustomjee, Doroosamy Pillay and others, attempted to explain the illogicality of the laws designed to ‘force’ immigrants to return to India:

That your petitioners, as representing the Indian community in the Colony, venture hereby to petition your honourable Council with regard to the Indian Immigration Law Amendment Bill, so far as it affects the present term of indenture and proposes a yearly licence of £3 to be taken out by every immigrant wishing to stop in the Colony as free Indians after finishing his term of indenture. Your petitioners respectfully submit that both the clauses above referred to are entirely unjust and uncalled for ... For an Indian to return to India after a continuous 10-years’ stay in the Colony would be pure fatuity. All the old cords and ties will have been broken up. Such an Indian will be comparatively a stranger in his mother land ... Such an Indian, therefore, even if he ventured to

return to India, would be compelled to return under indenture, and thus his whole life would be spent in bondage ...¹⁶⁵

Although India was viewed as a ‘mother land’, South Africa was considered ‘home’. In effect these laws were designed to send or compel people to return to a land that had since become foreign to most and who many had never even set foot on before.

... Thus, an Indian, who is learned in any of the Indian languages, but does not know any European language, cannot land in Natal even though it is temporarily ... If an Indian prince wanted to travel round the world and came upon Natal, he would not be allowed to land there unless special permission was accorded to him ... The Dealers' Licenses Bill is, if possible, the worst of all. It not only requires that traders should keep their books in English, but also gives absolute power to the licensing authorities to refuse to issue or renew licences without the right to the aggrieved party to appeal to the highest tribunal of justice ... It would be noticed that even hawkers, who move about with a few pounds' worth of goods from place to place, would be expected to keep their books in English. As a matter of fact, they do not keep any books at all.¹⁶⁶

Regardless of educational pedigree, knowledge of the English language in the colony equalled superiority, civilisation and intelligence. Without it, or the ability to speak it fluently, ‘Indians’ were regarded as lacking intellectual acuity. In addition by making English the language of business, it was an attempt to impede the commercial pursuits of ‘Indians’ who up until that point had been doing their accounting in their own language. Novelist Aziz Hassim (2003) in his book *The Lotus People* fictionalised this phenomenon to provide an ‘insiders’ perspective:

“This country,” Yahya said to Madhoo Daya, “has not been kind to us. Look at me. I’m an educated man, I can read and write fluently, I take nothing that does not belong to me. Yet I am reduced to a level below that of even a manual labourer.” “Your Gujerati education is of no value here,” Madhoo said quietly. “Outside of our tiny community the only language that is spoken is English; without it we always appear stupid and dumb.” (Hassim, 2003:51)

Language, as social constructionists argue, is linked to power and identity. By enforcing ‘intelligence tests’ and English tests it imposed an ideology of the colony onto the incoming immigrants. So even before entry into Natal the Indian immigrants were made aware of *who* was

¹⁶⁵ Petition to Natal Governor in 1894 in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:53-55)

¹⁶⁶ Petition to Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary in 1897 in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:55-60)

in control and that in order to be regarded as someone who could compete on any level they had to be proficient in the language of the colony. Fanon (1986) argues the colonised subjects become closer to being seen as a ‘real’ human being according to the colonised ability to grasp and use ‘white’ language, appropriating ‘white’ culture and attaining certain levels of wealth.

4.13 Indenture Under Review

In 1909 the Clayton Commission was tasked by the government of Natal to investigate indenture and whether it was in the best interests of the colony to continue with that project. According to the Clayton Commission report, “ ... several industries owe their existence and present condition entirely to indentured Indian labour, and if the importation of such labour were abolished, under present conditions, these industries would decline, and, in some cases, be abandoned entirely.”¹⁶⁷

By 1909 the indentured Indians were distributed as follows:

Industry	Number of Indians
General Farming	6,149
Sugar Estates	7,006
Coal Mines	3,239
Tea Estates	1,722
Natal Government Railway	2,371
Domestic Servants	1,949
Corporations	1,062
Brick Yards, Etc	740
Wattle Plantations	606
Landing and Shipping Agents	422
Miscellaneous	313
Total	25, 579

Table 4.1 Distribution of Indentured Indians – Clayton Commission Report (Meer, 1980:638)

¹⁶⁷ Report of the Indian Immigrants Commission: 1909 in Meer (1980:638)

Although the Commission argued that Natal was so reliant on indentured labour that the system could not be stopped, they nevertheless stated that “... the Indian is undesirable in this Colony other than as a labourer, and, in view of this unanimous opinion, steps should be taken to prevent an increase in the number of free Asiatic colonists.”¹⁶⁸ In addition they further recommended that the indentured and their families should be returned to India without any option to stay in the Colony.¹⁶⁹ Further to this they argued that:

Whites to replace Indians in public institutions – Wherever it is found that Indians are doing work usually undertaken, in Government and Municipal Departments, by whites (which the Commission is of the opinion is the case) steps should be taken to rectify the matter.¹⁷⁰

It was around this time also that the Union of the Colonies of South Africa was close to being formed and in July 1909 a petition was submitted to the Secretary for the Colonies in London. There were six organisations represented by 14 people in their capacities as presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries and treasurers. The petition was signed by 1,138 people in total:

Your petitioners are British Indians resident in Natal, either by virtue of immigration to or birth in this Colony. At a time when the closer union of the South African colonies is on the point of being achieved, your petitioners humbly venture to approach you, with a view to placing before you a review of the many grievances under which they, as a community, labour, and to endeavour to secure redress before their affairs are handed over to be dealt with by a federal parliament composed generally of men hostile to the race from which your petitioners are derived. Since the grant of Responsible Government to this Colony, a lengthy programme of race and class legislation aimed at British Indians has been devised, and the grievances under which your petitioners labour have now become so numerous and so burdensome as to render the existence of any self-respecting British Indian in this portion of His Majesty's dominions almost intolerable. Having hitherto failed in securing redress therefore by all other methods of constitutional procedure, as a last resort they now appeal to His Majesty's Government ... many of your petitioners were induced to emigrate to this Colony, the responsibility for whose development they have been ready to share both in peace and in war, where they have built their homes, and brought up their families, in which they have invested their capital and have established themselves in various pursuits, agricultural, commercial, industrial, and otherwise. During the late Anglo-Boer war, the community represented by your

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. pg 639

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

petitioners assisted His Majesty's troops in every possible way in the capacity of stretcher-bearers, and they raised men and money to carry operations of the Ambulance Corps, and were willing to share in active military service, but their request was refused by the military authorities ... Natal is the mother country of a very large number of the Indians whose parents, in some cases, were born in this Colony. In view of the fact that in the Draft Constitution for a united South Africa, British Indian subjects of the Crown have been totally excluded from exercising those rights to which they, as natural-born subjects of His Majesty, are justly entitled and in view of the many grievances under which they have laboured in the past in this Colony, and as there is no prospect of a brighter future for them under the Union Government, your petitioners have to emphatically protest against the ratification of the aforesaid Draft Act until their grievances have been redressed. Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that His Majesty's Government will be pleased to make such amendments in the aforesaid Draft Act of South Africa as would give to every British Indian citizen in Natal equal civil rights with other British subjects in South Africa in the eye of the law, and also pray that a royal commission be appointed to investigate our grievances or give such other relief that you may deem fit. For which act of justice, your petitioners shall, as in duty bound, forever pray.”¹⁷¹

The appeals for recognition of belonging to South Africa as a ‘mother country’ for those born there, however fell on deaf ears, and on 20 September 1909 King Edward VII signed the draft constitution for the Union of South Africa into law. The Act was implemented on 31 May 1910 and the Union of South Africa was established, uniting the Cape, Natal, Transvaal and the Orange Free State (Christopher, 2001:11). The Union however maintained the discriminatory legislation of the old Colonies and enforced further restrictive measures.

4.14 Conclusion

Representations of the Indian immigrants from even before their arrival were crucial in construction of ‘who’ would be arriving in the colony. They were heathen as opposed to Christian, ‘colored’¹⁷² as opposed to ‘white’, ‘coolies’ signifying docile labour as opposed to landowners or settlers, and uncivilised as opposed to colonial civilisation. As a result of this, the official hegemonic discourse embodied in legislation, policies, the media, and political

¹⁷¹ C.O. 179/253, 10 July 1909, Public Record Office, London in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:105-109)

¹⁷² Indian indentured workers were also referred to as “imported colored labor” see *The Mercury*, ‘Editorial’, 21 March 1861

communication, portrayed 'white' colonial society as superior in all respects to any other 'races'. *The Mercury* throughout this period blatantly wrote on the side of the planters, in the interest of the economy and well-being of 'white' colonialists, constantly disparaging both African people and Indian immigrants and their descendants as less than and in need of assistance to reach an 'acceptable level of civilisation'. This paternalistic, racist, xenophobic discourse was further evident in letters to the editor, parliamentary proceedings and political speeches all published in *The Mercury*.

What is evident throughout this period is the various terms used to describe and ultimately define the Indian immigrants and their descendants. The words were used interchangeably but at times, those in office and authority made attempts to explain what they meant as evident in the extracts below:

The words "Indian Immigrants," as used in this report, do not mean or include those persons who in Natal are usually designated "Asiatics" or "Arab Traders"
...¹⁷³

In the term 'Asiatic population,' in my speech in the Legislative Council, I include Indians and the so-called Arabs.¹⁷⁴

By the words 'Indian Immigrant', I understand such as come under the Indian Immigration Laws.¹⁷⁵

Now by article 8 of Law 8 of 1893, the expression 'Coloured person' appearing in this Law shall be interpreted and taken, unless the context clearly forbids it, to apply to and include a man, or men, as well as a woman, or women, above the age or estimated age of sixteen years, of any Native tribe in South Africa, and also all Coloured persons, and all who, in accordance with law or custom, are called Coloured persons, or are treated as such, of whatever race or nationality they may be. (cited in Bhana and Pachai (eds), 1984:64)

Together as a whole 'unit' they were regarded as the 'Indian population' but there were many sub categories such as the ones mentioned above. The divide between 'white' and 'coloured' was a similar attempt at racial ordering and othering. Nationality and citizenship was viewed as the

¹⁷³ Report of the Indian Immigrants Commission: 1885-1887 in Meer (1980:314-315)

¹⁷⁴ William Arbuckle in the Report of the Indian Immigrants Commission: 1885-1887 in Meer (1980:355)

¹⁷⁵ Henry Binns, chairman of the Indian immigration Trust Board in Report of the Indian Immigrants Commission: 1885-1887 in Meer (1980:368)

exclusive domain of Europeans and all those of 'colour' were excluded from the discourse of the nation. A unified national identity was greatly discouraged and instead the government of Natal and thereafter the Union of South Africa actively promoted, through legislation, for people to view themselves through ever increasingly narrow lenses and in microscopic terms. Throughout the 20th century then, the construction of 'Indians' was as a discrete and 'different' racial group justifying the legal measures taken to limit, control, regulate and exclude.

The category 'Indians' in South Africa, which had not existed before, came into being through classification, bureaucratic organisation and administration, and knowledge about the people so classified.¹⁷⁶ This knowledge was disseminated via the media and officials, in colonial Natal, all of whom were 'white', through derogatory discourse of disease, criminality, laziness, filth, heathenism and intellectual inferiority. Drawing on myths, these ideas soon became reified in public consciousness and thus stereotypes of the 'Indian' were born out of the assumptions held by 'whites' in the colony. These stereotypes strongly influenced how 'Indians' were perceived. As much as the media relied on politicians and officials as 'credible' sources of information, politicians in turn used the medium of the newspapers to help justify discriminatory policies against 'Indians'. Through this discourse, the state wielded its power against the "foreign race".¹⁷⁷ Increased anxieties against "strangers, forcing themselves on a community reluctant to receive them"¹⁷⁸ began to worsen. The official category that was created for bureaucratic expediency thus became 'a people'. Through colonial discourse the 'Indian' in South Africa was constructed and defined, and in turn it imposed ways in which 'Indians' were discussed in popular and political arenas in different ways as illustrated above, as people who were not European settler or 'our native'. As illustrated earlier it was a construction shared by others already marginalised and excluded as reflected in the discussions in *Ilanga* on the potential introduction of Chinese workers and the comparisons drawn to the indentured labourers who 'refused' to go back to India.

In order then to agitate for political rights in the country and against discriminatory legislation, the immigrants from India together with their descendants who were born in colony assumed the

¹⁷⁶ See Hacking (2007:289) for a more detailed discussion of classification broadly.

¹⁷⁷ *The Mercury*, 'Editorial', 7 November 1865

¹⁷⁸ Statement by Lord Milner in 1904 cited in Huttenback (1966:286)

collective category ‘Indian’, created by the colonial state. This self-identification however was strategic and included a significant amount of performativity. In addition the Indian immigrants worked against the official discourse and were active agents in the construction of their identity (as was evident with the complaints to the Commission of 1872 against the term ‘coolie’) and not passive recipients. As Siebers (2004:92) argues,

... the constitution and positioning of oneself in the world is profoundly political in nature. It takes place in the interactions between hegemonic processes and structures and the everyday politics of groups and individuals with diverging and conflictive interests. Identity formation is intertwined with the struggle for scarce resources, is embedded in asymmetrical power relations and is articulated with the contestation and imposition of dominant discourses ...

In writing on why 31 May 2010 (the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Union of South Africa) should be celebrated by *all* South Africans and should indeed be a public holiday, as was the case during the apartheid regime, Harvey Tyson states “Remember the elation of being free, normal and equal? Remember how good it was to share that joy? We celebrated that on Freedom Day. We can repeat that on the 100th anniversary of our common citizenship”¹⁷⁹ Tyson (2010) however does not take into account that at the time of the Union, the ‘Indian Question’, which will be further elaborated on in the next chapter, was still very much on the agenda of the new government. ‘Indians’ were not citizens and all anti-‘Indian’ laws were maintained. By the end of this period no matter how hard ‘Indians’ attempted to prove their acumen, intelligence, civilisation and skill they were nevertheless still ‘aliens’ and “a sophisticated and active menace to ... colonial society, competing for space, place, trade and political influence”.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ *Sunday Tribune*, ‘A Date to Unite Us All Approaches’, 16 May 2010 [Freedom Day is a public holiday in South Africa, set aside to commemorate the first day of the democratic elections which took place on 27 April 1994]

¹⁸⁰ Cited in Henderson (1903:19)

- Chapter Five -

“The Indian Question”

1910-1948

5.1 Introduction

The next 38 years from 1910 to 1948 represents a continuing period of uncertainty regarding the status of ‘Indians’¹⁸¹ in South Africa. Further anti-‘Indian’ legislation was passed in this period in an attempt to persuade ‘Indians’ to return/emigrate to India, or renew their term of indenture. In the following chapter I argue firstly that during this period the label ‘Indian’ was confirmed as a ‘racial’ classification through political, social and legislative discourse. I provide evidence to demonstrate how, despite internal divisions within this category these were nevertheless ignored and ‘Indians’ were constructed and perceived as a homogenous group with a single identity.¹⁸² I contend further that the continuation of this category suited the political purposes of the Union government in their attempts to provide a solution to the ‘Indian Question’, by ridding the country of an undifferentiated, uniform group of people.

Secondly I argue that the classification ‘Indian’ was appropriated and maintained by the politicians who were fighting for the rights of ‘Indians’, and against the discriminatory measures of the Union government. I demonstrate that the appropriation of this classification served as a mechanism to garner assistance from India, and also from other countries who had gained labour and immigrants from the sub-continent in a similar fashion.

¹⁸¹ In this chapter the word ‘Indian’ in inverted commas includes all immigrants to South Africa from the sub-continent and their descendants residing in South Africa, and is used to distinguish them from Indian nationals from India.

¹⁸² These internal divisions included those of religion; class; language; being indentured or ex-indentured; passenger/immigrant; born in South Africa; or of ‘mixed-race’ ancestry.

In addition, I show how the publications in *The Mercury* assumed an arguably more liberal approach toward ‘Indians’, in comparison to the previous period, but the xenophobic rhetoric reminiscent of the colonial era was nevertheless still subtly, and in some instances overtly manifested in the coverage of the political, economic and social issues that affected ‘Indians’ in the Union.

In order to provide support for the above arguments, data gained from existing literature and research, as well as data obtained from *The Mercury*, *Ilanga*, political speeches, government legislation, and parliamentary debates are examined and discussed. In addition, views expressed by ‘Indians’, gleaned from sources such as correspondence in the media, evidence provided to the various commissions, petitions against pieces of legislation, and family interviews have also been analysed.

5.2 Creating a ‘Nation’

The whole meaning of the Union of South Africa is this: we are going to create a nation – a nation which will be of a composite character, including Dutch, German, English and Jew, and whatever white nationality seeks refuge in this land – all can combine. All will be welcome.¹⁸³

In attempting to explain what the Union of South Africa represented, Smuts in a speech given in 1910, provides a clear picture of how the Union government saw the national identity of the country being formed. ‘Indians’, ‘coloureds’, and ‘Natives’ were effectively excluded from the discourse of the nation in their attempts to establish South Africa as a ‘white nation’.¹⁸⁴ This was further emphasised by Louis Botha, the first Prime Minister of the Union, at the Inaugural Congress of the South African Party in 1911, when he stated that their program was “... to make a great White man’s land of South Africa for ourselves and for generations to come” (cited in

¹⁸³ Smuts, minister in the Union government (cited in Moodie (1975:75)

¹⁸⁴ According to Christopher (2001:17) even though racial categories were reduced in complexity and extent at the time of the Union, a racial classification system was nevertheless employed which was based on “physical and social characteristics.” The three broad racial groups that were recognised by the Census director in the Union period included ‘European or White’, ‘Native’ (later to be termed Bantu, Black or African), and the classification “residual Coloured (including Indians, people of mixed race and the Cape Malays)” in other words all those who could not be neatly slotted into the aforementioned categories (Christopher, 2009:104).

Krüger, 1960:51-52). Botha argued for and underlined the importance of one ‘white race’, i.e. bringing together both British settlers and their descendants, and Dutch settlers and their descendants. In other words the Union of the Colonies was also a union of English speaking ‘whites’ and Afrikaans speaking ‘whites’. ‘Race’ and racial hierarchy then continued to dominate state discourse and inform legislation in the Union. ‘Indians’ therefore did not feature in the nation building narrative and Smuts confirmed this when he said to Gandhi in 1911 “... We Whites are a handful. We do not want Asia to come in.”¹⁸⁵

As discussed in the previous chapter, Indian immigrants in South Africa and their descendants who were born in the country had, for 50 years prior to the formation of the Union, experienced discrimination through legislation which regarded them as foreign elements, ‘aliens’ in the country who did not warrant the same treatment as ‘white’ settlers. The sugar planters required the *labour* of the ‘Indians’ but not ‘Indians’ themselves, as if one could be separated from the other. Following countless testimonies of mistreatment, attempts were made by the Indian government to discontinue the system of indentured labour, with much protest from various industries dependent on this labour force in Natal. In 1911 a resolution was passed in India, preventing the further recruitment of indentured labour for Natal and the last sailing vessel, the Umlazi, arrived in July 1911 carrying the final group of indentured labourers (Brain, 2003).¹⁸⁶

Even though recruiting of indentured labour from India was halted in 1911, the *system* of indentured labour nevertheless continued in Natal until at least 1934. As Meer (1980:21) points out, “Indentured employment offered certain built in securities for the more helpless and hence more valuable workers – housing to which they had become more reconciled, no matter what its condition, and rations.”

Ilanga, reporting on the end of the recruitment of new indentured labour, stated in January 1911:

¹⁸⁵ Smuts to Gandhi on 19 April 1911 (cited in Bhana (1997a:9)

¹⁸⁶ Although the Indian government actively opposed indenture due to a range of atrocities perpetrated against the indentured labourers such as assaults, irregular payments, extra working hours and poor medical facilities to name a few, the opposition to indenture also arose from the colonials who themselves were divided on the question of continued immigration from India. While some argued for compulsory repatriation after the term of indenture was over, others were vociferous in their demand for the government to stop subsidies to colonial employers in order to discourage them from importing labour, while some further insisted that all Indian immigration should cease and be replaced by an ‘African’ work-force.

Things have gone wrong. The Indian government has sent word to the government here notifying them that as from the 1st of July 1911, no Indian will be sent to South Africa anymore under the so called 'Agreement'. We learn that the cause for such a decision is because the Whites here are no longer treating the Coolies in a good manner and the state of Natal has stipulated that every Indian that has come to the end of his stay according to the contract should go back home. Because of such reasons the Indian government has taken this decision. This will affect the Whites who gain through Coolies, those who have sugarcane fields and who have other work done by Indians. We hope that the government will do something and apologise maybe the Coolie government will feel sorry for them. It is a great joy to the Indians when they hear that their government has intervened.¹⁸⁷

The indiscriminate use of the word 'coolie' is evident in the above extract, and in addition it is also used to describe the government of India. Throughout the article, the word 'coolie' (Kula) is used interchangeably with the word 'Indian' (Ama Indians) indicating that it was viewed by the writer/s of the article as a synonym for 'Indian'. Having been used in the colony for 50 years in all media, but not in legislation (after 1872), the word 'coolie', as evidenced from the above extract, was a norm. What is also evident is the use of the possessive adjective 'their' when discussing the 'Coolie' government, which indicates that the writer/s believed that the government of India was also the government of the 'Indians' residing in the Union, including those who had been born in the Union. This implies that the Indian immigrants and their descendants were still viewed as belonging to another country, as foreigners, and in some instances as immigrants in the land of their birth.

The article also displays an interest in the well-being of the economy of Natal with the writer/s lamenting that "Things have gone wrong". These sentiments were further expressed in a subsequent article in *Ilanga* when there was hope that indenture would continue:

It is with satisfaction that we notice indications of a compromise being come to with the Indian Government regarding the continuance of Indian indentured labour. The possible ruin of many large industrial undertakings can be averted, provided there is not too much dignity that is opposed to humbling itself a little ... We should always remember that the Union is made up of many interests, and

¹⁸⁷ *Ilanga*, 'They Have Lost it', 20 January 1911

that not one of them should be sacrificed under the supposition that the common welfare can do without any of them.¹⁸⁸

There is an indication here as well of the importance of ‘Indian’ labour to the economy of Natal. However, as will be seen later in this chapter, it is once again only the *labour* that is valued. According to Brain et al (1982:739), 152,184 indentured workers came to Natal from India between 1860 and 1911, and according to census figures published in *The Mercury*, by 1911 “Indians and Asiatics numbered 141,568 as opposed to 98,582 ‘Europeans’.”¹⁸⁹ These figures continued to cause alarm in Natal and so the question of how to deal with these ‘numbers’ rose to the top of the agenda in Natal and the country as a whole, as its resolution, or non-resolution, had consequences for the ideal society that the Union government envisioned.

Calpin (1941:177-178) in writing about the perceptions of ‘Indians’ at the time of the formation of the Union, stated:

The Indian who had served and made the sugar industry became a pest, a constant irritant to the European, not only because of his commercial competition but also because, unlike the Natives who are conceded a right to the country, he was an alien, a coloured alien at that. Worse than being an irritant to the flesh, he was an aggravation to the mind. His presence, as the lowly representation of a civilization more ancient and no whit inferior to western civilization, denied the prerogative of the European - the Divine Right of White Skin - consciously approved by the Dutch, and long since assumed by the British. The Indian was a reminder of a subterfuge that made the White man’s supremacy possible, and was fast proving in every sphere he was allowed to enter that he was the White man’s equal. His presence disturbed a European complacency that might have continued for decades as far as any Native advance endangered it.

The Union government had little choice when it came to the ‘Natives’ in the country, whom they often referred to as the ‘former owners of the soil’,¹⁹⁰ i.e. they could not be sent to another ‘home country’. In addition the people that the Union government classified as ‘mixed race’ posed no threat economically, ‘Indians’ however threatened the supremacy of ‘white’ rule and the national identity that the government wanted to forge which included ‘whites’ as central and African

¹⁸⁸ *Ilanga*, ‘Prospective’, 17 February 1911

¹⁸⁹ *The Mercury*, ‘A Review of the Indian Question’, 17 October 1913

¹⁹⁰ See for example, *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – The Indian Festival from J.T’, 13 November 1885

people on the periphery and kept under state control. There was no room therefore for an ‘alien’, in-between ‘race’.

5.3 The Exodus of the Hindu

Ilanga in reporting on this ‘Indian difficulty’,¹⁹¹ as they termed it, published the following in 1911:

There are politicians who roundly assault (sic) that the Botha Ministry has resolved upon the exodus of the Hindu, and as there is little reason to doubt that an effort will be made by all classes of anti-Hindu electors to clear the country, the serious aspect of the case becomes the more evident. And it must be remembered that the attitude of the Indian Government on the question does not ease the difficulty a bit, but rather opens the door of opportunity for the anti-Hindus to operate.¹⁹²

What is noticeable in the above extract is the reference to ‘Indians’ as Hindus, which was only one of the religions practised by the immigrants and their descendants. This became one of the ways in which ‘Indians’ were homogenised, with the Hindu religion becoming synonymous with being ‘Indian’.¹⁹³ In addition to this there is a clear indication from the above extract that the discourse on the ‘exodus’ of ‘Indians’ from South Africa was gaining momentum.

The debates and discussions of government were then centred on methods of facilitating this exodus, and out of these discussions, immigration legislation was postulated as a key tool for the purpose of controlling the ‘numbers’ in Natal and limiting further entry of Indian immigrants to South Africa. In the period between 1910 and 1913 a policy to control immigration was formulated in the Union, and this resulted in the 1913 Immigrants Regulation Act, the purpose of which was to encourage ‘white’ immigration, while particularly restricting immigration from India. By means of controlling Indian immigration from the sub-continent and the policing of not only its internal boundaries but also its international borders, the control of ‘Indians’ residing in

¹⁹¹ *Ilanga* often referred to the situation of indenture and the overall treatment/management of Indians in South Africa as the ‘Indian Difficulty’, see for example *Ilanga*, ‘Stopping the Sugar Mills’, 9 September 1911 and *Ilanga*, ‘The Bishop and the Indian Difficulty’, 14 October 1911

¹⁹² *Ilanga*, ‘The Coming Labour Problem’, 14 October 1911

¹⁹³ see also *Ilanga*, ‘That £3 Tax’, 31 October 1913

South Africa, in terms of where they could travel, settle and trade within the 'borders' of the country had now been shifted to an international level.

The chief elements contained within the Immigrants Regulation Act of 1913 included the following (drawn from Klotz (2004:3-5) and Walker (1963:656-657)):

- Individuals not literate in a European Language would be prevented from entering the country;
- 'Undesirables', i.e. persons deemed undesirable on economic grounds or on account of standards or 'habits of life', could be excluded from entering the country;
- The right of a wife to join her husband was denied in instances of polygamous marriages, and persons wanting to gain entry into the country, especially Muslims from India, had to provide proof of a monogamous marriage (even if they were in one);
- Ports of entry for Indian immigrants were limited to prevent illegal entry of Indians into the country such as via Mozambique; and
- All Indians immigrating to the Union would be compelled to sign a document indicating that they would not own land, trade or farm in the Free State (which was already prohibited by law so even if this declaration was not signed, the immigrants would still be unable to do any of the above. Immigration policy therefore did not only restrict movement of people into the country but also between provinces within the Union as well).

Immigration officers at the ports were given the authority to interpret the law as they saw fit, thereby including and excluding people as they deemed appropriate. Although the ability to read and write in a European language was a requirement for entry, literacy in Yiddish was considered acceptable for entry into the country. Exclusion by 'race' was implicit in the legislation, although not directly worded as such. Evidence for this was provided by Smuts as Minister of the Interior, reflecting on the Immigration Regulation Act in 1919 at the House of Assembly. His argument was summarised in the parliamentary proceedings as follows:

He admitted that if the question were not complicated he would like to call a spade a spade and say clearly and exactly those they wanted to keep out, but they recognised their imperial obligations, and that they were part of the British Empire, and they should do all in their power to avoid embarrassing the Central Government ... but they wanted to be masters in their own house, and they wanted to be in a position to say whom they did not want in the country ... they all knew it was the intention of South Africa to exclude Asiatics ... it was a matter of the self-preservation of the white man in South Africa ... Therefore, they would avoid naming any race by name, and excluding them on that account, but they must make it clear that they deemed the European civilisation the desirable one from which to see progress and advancement of the country.¹⁹⁴

In addition to the Immigration Regulation Act, it should be borne in mind that the three pound tax that was in place prior to the formation of the Union, as discussed in Chapter Four, was still being enforced which compelled immigrants that arrived under the indenture scheme to either re-indenture, return to India, or pay the three pound tax which would allow them to remain in Natal. Coupled with these was a Supreme Court ruling in 1913 which legalised only Christian marriages. This meant that marriages conducted under either Hindu or Muslim rites were not recognised by the State.

In recounting the return to the country of “Durban’s well known citizen, and the leader of the Indian community, Mr. Dawad Mahomed” who had travelled to various places including India and had returned to Natal, *The Mercury* published the following article in 1913:

He heard with intense regret the harshness of the administration of the Immigration Act at the Point, and difficulties -nay, the injustice- of the authorities in keeping the minor sons away from their parents, wives from their husbands, and the domiciled passholders from their adopted land. Feeling in India was getting stronger on the recent developments in these matters, especially when these people returned there to tell their tale. He was much pained to hear that none of the 80 passengers except himself was yet allowed to land, though the Salamis had been in the harbor nearly 24 hours. He assured the meeting he would soon move in the matter.¹⁹⁵

The discourse around the single ‘Indian community’ was prevalent in *The Mercury* during this time as evident from the title of the extract above. What is important to note also is the frustrations at the legislative reforms that were beginning to build, and the subsequent promises

¹⁹⁴ Source: *Hansard* 1913, cols. 2050-2051, 30/4/1913 cited in Peberdy (2009:31)

¹⁹⁵ *The Mercury*, ‘Indian Merchant’s Return – Mr. D. Mahomed Welcomed’, 12 March 1913

given by 'Indian' political leaders to address it. These frustrations at the Union government and their policies were also felt internationally:

Lord Ampthill, who was Governor of Madras 1899-1906, and Viceroy and Governor-General of India (pro tem.), 1904, has contributed a vigorous article to the "Empire Review," in which he champions the cause of the Indians in South Africa. He condemns the failure of the new Act to fulfil (sic) the promises made, and declares that its real object is to drive free Indians back to the status of indentured Indians with enforced residence in locations, conditions which, in the case of the Chinese working on the mines, were described as "slavery." Lord Ampthill brushes aside the excuse that it is impossible to interfere in the affairs of a self-governing Dominion, and says it cannot get on without our interference.¹⁹⁶

The article by Ampthill that *The Mercury* mentions in the above extract was clear in its condemnation of the Union government's treatment of 'Indians' in South Africa. Ampthill in his article further stated,

The pledges, given in writing to the Indian community by the Union Government in a correspondence known as the "Provisional Settlement of 1911," were as follows:- That legislation should be passed in the next session repealing Act 2 of 1907 (the Act which gave rise to passive resistance and all the devoted self-sacrifice to their ideal of the Indian community) subject to the reservation of the rights of minor children. That there should be no "racial bar" in any future legislation for the whole Union. That existing rights should be maintained; and that there should be an amnesty for passive resisters. On the faith of these pledges the passive resistance campaign was suspended by the Indian community in 1911. But the promised legislation was not passed in the next session or indeed until the present year ... Can anyone doubt that if British subjects were ill-treated in a foreign country we should protest and be prepared to enforce our protest? But if it be our right to insist on the fair treatment of British subjects in foreign countries, surely it is far more our right to insist on the same claim in lands under the British flag, lands which we protect with our armed forces and which share with us the advantages of the Imperial partnership. (Ampthill, 1913:293)

Ampthill (1913), in agreement with the Indian government, was insistent that the Union government inquire into the treatment of 'Indians' in South Africa. These sentiments however went unheeded, and in response to these discriminatory measure against 'Indians', a second

¹⁹⁶ *The Mercury*, 'The Indian's Champion – Lord Ampthill's Article Condemns New Immigration Act, 5 September 1913

passive resistance campaign was launched in 1913. The vociferous arguments against the campaign were reflected in *The Mercury* both by the reporters, and by the letters to the editor.

5.4 *The Mercury* – ‘Less than fair’

Considering how alien they are to us in speech, blood, religion, and type of civilisation, and the economic danger to our own race that their presence spells, the new Act makes some substantial concessions. For the rest, as Mr. Gokhale¹⁹⁷ suggested, they are entitled to expect the gradual amelioration of their legal status, including the abolition of the £3 tax. It might be possible, for instance, to extend the policy of the Natives’ Land Act, and to mark off for them a portion of the country large enough for their numbers, in which they might acquire fixed property and enjoy a large measure of self government. But such amelioration will quicker come through a sustained attitude of respectful petition and remonstrance combined with entire obedience to the laws.¹⁹⁸

The writer of the article referred to immediately above proposes that if ‘Indian’ people were ‘obedient’ to the laws and did not oppose it as in the case of the passive resistance, then a possibility existed that a ‘homeland’ within South Africa would be created specifically for ‘Indians’. In as much as the English press was viewed as ‘liberal’ during this period (Calpin, 1941:322), the evidence, as will continue to be demonstrated throughout this chapter, suggests that the political stance of *The Mercury* was conservative. Although it preached social reform in that the discourse around ‘Indians’ in the newspaper appeared in many cases to support the cause of ‘Indians’, the prejudice and discrimination were at times glaringly evident, and the solutions provided by the writers in *The Mercury* seemed to advocate for unprogressive, right wing reform, as in the article above.

In response to this publication, Gandhi submitted a letter to the editor of *The Mercury* indicating his disdain at the suggestions made, stating:

¹⁹⁷ G.K. Gokhale was a member of the Indian National Congress in India and travelled to South Africa at the invitation of Gandhi in 1912.

¹⁹⁸ *The Mercury*, ‘The British Indians – Their Quarrel with the Government, How Far is it Reasonable?: The Right Policy for the Indians’, 20 September 1913

... your correspondent's advice that we should accept thankfully what has been granted, and what has been denied as being of little importance, and then press forward the redress of the balance of grievances by way of petitions, etc., and his suggestion that then we may be blessed with a special law such as the Natives' Land Act, whereby we may have a reserve set apart for us where we can buy land, etc., remind me, if he will forgive me for the analogy, of Esop's (sic) justice-loving wolf. We have petitioned in vain all these years. Right after right has been taken away from us. And an Indian reserve means that the substantial right at present enjoyed of owning and buying land in Natal, and the Cape, and a modified right of possessing land in the Transvaal should be surrendered, and we must allow ourselves to be penned in an enclosure, and then bless the Government for this grace as a reward for not offering passive resistance, which involves suffering for nobody but ourselves, but which if it ensures nothing else, at least saves us from a surrender of our manhood.¹⁹⁹

An example, however, of *The Mercury* writing in condemnation of discriminatory measures against 'Indians', can be found in the extract below, taken from an article written in 1913 on the effects of the three pound tax and the resistance to it:

Both the men and the women, when they contracted their indentures, signed an undertaking to pay the tax after their term expired at the price of their remaining in South Africa should they not choose to return to their country of origin. The liability of the children to pay the tax on becoming 16 years is, from a constitutional point of view, not a pleasant thing to contemplate. One does not like to think that a human being by the mere fact of having been born on British soil is doomed on reaching a certain age to the alternatives of exile or slavery – that he must either leave his fatherland or indenture himself as the goods and chattels of an employer. Mr. Gandhi justifiably protests against a tax with such an incidence ...²⁰⁰

The writer/s of the above extract also acknowledge that the descendants of the Indian immigrants born in South Africa 'belong' to the country referring to it as their 'fatherland'. In addition however to either demonstrating blatant discrimination and prejudice or support for the cause of 'Indians' in their articles, *The Mercury* would also, in a single article, comment on the 'behaviour and attitudes' of 'Indians' thereby perpetuating racial stereotypes but nevertheless still plead for fairness on their behalf,

¹⁹⁹ *The Mercury*, 'Correspondence – Indian passive Resistance from M.K. Gandhi', 25 September 1913

²⁰⁰ *The Mercury*, 'The British Indians – Their Quarrel with the Government, How Far is it Reasonable?: An Objectionable Tax', 20 September 1913

It is well known that one of the difficulties with which the officials administering the Immigration Law have to contend is that in many cases the Indian's sense of truthfulness and straightforwardness is far from being normally developed. However, the point we wish to bring out is that the Appeal Board is in practice proving a real protection to Indians who may suffer injustice for any reason from the officer charged with the working of the prohibition clause of the Act. This clause, as we asserted when the Bill was before Parliament, is a discredit to our Legislature, as it places too great an arbitrary power in the hands of a seaport official. While public opinion demands that a check shall be put upon Indian immigration, it is necessary to insist that the law be carried out with scrupulous fairness, that acquired rights shall be respected, and that nothing shall be done contrary to the principle of justice as between races which is the strength of British rule in India and elsewhere.²⁰¹

The Mercury on the one hand advocated for certain rights of 'Indians' to be acknowledged and redressed, but on the other hand desired some semblance of the status quo to remain. The writers appear ignorant of the injustices they themselves perpetuated in their reportage and suggestions for 'policy'. For example, their stance on the passive resistance campaign was clear, "... the Indians should refrain from needlessly provocative action, such as Mr. Gandhi and those associated with him are now endeavouring to carry out."²⁰²

The Mercury's coverage however did not go unnoticed, and letters were sent to the editor expressing concern over this. One such letter published in the newspaper in September 1913 was written by the then acting editor of the *Indian Opinion*:

As the "Mercury" is always considered, and rightly so, a well-informed and fair-minded critic of public affairs, it is regrettable that, in your leaderette of Tuesday last, your leader-writer displayed a want of appreciation of the real position of the Indians in the Union and under the new Immigration Regulation Act. When you say that, by making a grievance of the racial bar, the Indians "are preventing those who sympathise with them in their other grievances from giving them the assistance which they might otherwise be able and inclined to give," you are less than fair, and you are misleading your readers into thinking that this is a new and minor matter, of little importance to anyone. The history of the struggle shows that this has always been the first and most important point. The Imperial Government, who have so lamentably failed to stick to the position they took up before, held it to be indispensable to a settlement that no racial bar should exist. And what does the racial bar consist of? It is simply that the Free State members

²⁰¹ *The Mercury*, 'Indians and the New Act', 20 September 1913

²⁰² *The Mercury*, 'Indians and Passive Resistance', 2 October 1912

are not satisfied with the position that Indians are absolutely prohibited from owning land or farming or trading in their Province. They must needs insult the few immigrants who may be admitted into the Union annually with the demand for a useless declaration that they will not do what it is impossible for them to do, i.e., to own land to farm, or to trade. The absence of this declaration will not mean that a single additional Indian will be able to get a living in the Free State. A small matter, after all, it may be argued, and so it is to the Free Staters, but it is certainly not to the Indian community, who have all along fought for a principle. On the one hand, there is a stupid demand for a useless bit of paper; on the other, there is a question of Imperial importance. The first party stand to lose nothing if they remain satisfied with their secure position without the declaration, but the Indian community lose the right to enter a part of His Majesty's Dominions on equal terms with Europeans, so far as immigration only is concerned.²⁰³

The Mercury's lack of full sympathy with the cause and plight of 'Indians' is further evident in their response to the above letter wherein they are accused of being 'less than fair'. They argue that the reason that the racial bar should not be given prominence in the programme of the passive resisters was because it,

... might estrange a certain amount of public sympathy. This effect is liable to be produced because many people think that the Indians desire to open the way to unrestricted immigration, and it must be confessed that some recent utterances of Mr. Gokhale, whose moderation and statesmanship were applauded whilst he was here, bear the interpretation that unrestricted immigration is his ultimate ideal.²⁰⁴

This discourse of fear of unbridled numbers of Indian immigrants entering the country was not only reported on but perpetuated by *The Mercury* itself. Politicians too manipulated the 'fears of the undesirables' and then used the issue of 'unrestricted Indian immigration' as a platform for electioneering as evident from the following extract:

Addressing his constituents to-night, Mr. F.H.P. Cresswell, M.L.A., said that one thing all parties were determined upon was that they must not have any more Asiatic immigration. He thought the country would be spending money to advantage if it set aside sums to encourage Asiatic emigration.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ *The Mercury*, 'Correspondence – Immigration Restriction from A.H. West, Acting Editor of "Indian Opinion"', 27 September 1913

²⁰⁴ *The Mercury*, 'Correspondence - Editor's Response from Ed., "N.M."', 27 September 1913

²⁰⁵ *The Mercury*, 'White and Coloured - The Asiatic Question. Speech by Mr. Cresswell', 25 September 1913

The discourse around ‘Indians’ in the media and in the political arena therefore boasted a similar rhetoric. However despite opposition to the campaign on the local front, internationally, support for the passive resistance campaign and sympathy with the ‘Indian struggle’ grew. *The Times*, a London based newspaper, supported the passive resistance campaign and spoke out against the Union government, describing its position in relation to ‘Indians’ as “unjust”.²⁰⁶ This was published in the wake of the arrest of 16 passive resisters who were charged with contravening the Immigrants Regulation Act of 1913 by crossing over into the Transvaal. Without any legal representation all pleaded guilty, including four women. The penalty for this was harsh as reported in *The Mercury*:

They were sentenced to three months’ imprisonment, with hard labour, each pending removal, which means that the Immigration Department has the right to deport them at any time during the term of their sentence.²⁰⁷

The Immigration legislation thus made it possible for the Union government to deport anyone classified as ‘Indian’ or ‘Asiatic’ who contravened the Act, whether or not they were born in the country. The disapproving outcry from the Indian government as well as the Indian media as a result of these arrests were explicit –

Reuter’s correspondent at Bombay reports that the “Bombay Chronicle” severely criticises the sentence passed on various Indians at Volksrust, as the result of the re-opening of the passive resistance campaign, and says that it is inconceivable that the Imperial Government will maintain its present non possumus (sic) attitude in the face of the latest “atrocities.” “Unless all confidence in the power of the British Government to protect Indian subjects is to be destroyed hopelessly and permanently, Lord Crewe had better awake from his lethargic attitude and deal firmly, promptly and fearlessly with this outrage.”²⁰⁸

The Mercury however continued to report in a way that attempted to invalidate the passive resistance campaign. In a series of articles it argued that the slow rate of the passive resistance campaign would ultimately result in its ‘collapse’, and the newspaper put forward reasons as to why the campaign was ineffective.²⁰⁹ In a lengthy letter to the editor however, Polak²¹⁰ the editor

²⁰⁶ *The Mercury*, “‘Times’ Supports the Indians - Union Government Denounced”, 2 October 1913

²⁰⁷ *The Mercury*, ‘Passive Resistance – Cases at Volksrust. Sixteen Indians Sentenced’, 24 September 1913

²⁰⁸ *The Mercury*, ‘The Passive Resisters’, 27 September 1913

²⁰⁹ See *The Mercury*, ‘Passive Resistance – Campaign to Go Slowly’, 30 September 1913; *The Mercury*, ‘Indians

of the *Indian Opinion* who was also involved in the passive resistance campaign and subsequently arrested, provided evidence to refute those arguments, and stated further that the article required “re-writing” given the available evidence.²¹¹ In addition, he also pointed out how marriages were used as a tool to keep ‘Indians’, those who legally had a right to remain in Natal or return to Natal, out of the country, stating:

... Indians will discover that they have once more been betrayed by the Government. It is a fact, as shown by the last census figures, that out of 1,000 marriages celebrated in India, only 11 are polygamous. Practically 99 per cent. of Indian marriages are monogamous, in fact, as European marriages in South Africa. It was to meet the Indian community and protect these 99 per cent. of married people and their children that the Government introduced an amendment, in the Senate, to the Immigration Bill, recognising monogamous marriages celebrated outside the Union. The Government were bound by their own clause and by the will of Parliament. But the Durban Immigration Officer was allowed to challenge the validity of these marriages, and the Supreme Court has now decided that the wives and children are not protected by the Act after all. Such an act of bad faith on the part of the Government is bound to have the most far-reaching effects both in South Africa and India. You have spoken of the constitution and procedure of the Immigration Boards. I am not dealing in personalities, but I think it will be conceded by all fair-minded people ... that excellent as is the personnel of the Durban Board, no Board of Appeal should have as one of its members the Principal Immigration Officer, who is the head of the department from whose decision an appeal is made. His proper place is before the Board, and not on the Bench, and that principle was recognised by the Imperial Government in the composition of Immigration Boards under the Aliens Act. Moreover, good as the Boards may be, they are bound hand and foot by the faults of the Act, which, in many cases, deprive Indians of rights ... You ask for a display of the spirit of conciliation. I think that if you read carefully the correspondence between Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Fischer and Mr. Smuts, recently published, you will not fail to observe a spirit of patience, moderation, and conciliation on the part of the Indian spokesman that is refreshing as it is unusual amongst controversialists. But how, when the Government finally, after two years’ negotiations, refuse to carry out the principles of their undertaking in 1911, can the Indian community, faced with an attack upon its very existence, fail to protest with all the vigour that it can command, and insist, in the name of British fair play, upon the implementing by the other party to the agreement of the conditions that it has accepted?²¹²

and Passive Resistance’, 2 October 1913

²¹⁰ Polak was the editor of the *Indian Opinion* from 1909-1916, however during Polak’s visits to India Rev Joseph Doke served as acting editor (see Mesthrie, 1997:108 and 116).

²¹¹ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – Passive Resistance from Polak’, 3 October 1913

²¹² *Ibid.*

In the extract above what is most noticeable is the continued frustration at *The Mercury* for not only their skewed reportage but also the denial or downplaying of the importance of the passive resistance campaign and in turn the rights denied to ‘Indians’ domiciled and born in South Africa. Similar opinions were expressed in a letter to the editor of *The Mercury* by a correspondent stating:

I and thousands of Indians throughout South Africa have always admired the fearlessness and spirit of justice and equity which has always pervaded your columns, especially when protecting the rights and privileges of the weak, helpless, voiceless, and despised “British” (?) Indians ... But when you say our grievances are “sentimental,” and we know and feel that our grievances are real, oppressive, heartburning, and humiliating to any self-respecting human being in the world, we cannot help differing from you ... if we follow the European mode of living and dressing, we are called “upstarts”; but where, if we follow our own civilisation, we are called all the hard names in the calendar and decalogue. We do not know how to please the European population of South Africa – I hope a policeman will tell us.²¹³

Interestingly, the letter writer questions the term ‘British Indians’ used often by *The Mercury* in reference to ‘Indians’ in South Africa (they were also referred to in the newspaper as members of the ‘British Indian community’).²¹⁴ Ironically, in the previous period, covered in Chapter Four, when ‘Indians’ attempted to draw attention to, and base their arguments on, their imperial rights as citizens of the Empire it was never acknowledged in the media or in legislation. The reference to them as part of a broader British Indian community is also telling in that it places them as belonging to British India as opposed to South Africa with no reference being made to them as settlers. The settlers from Britain were not referred to as ‘British whites’ whether in public, social or political discourse.²¹⁵

However, even though they were viewed and treated as a single entity, the religious divides even during political meetings were nevertheless evident as in the case of the mass meeting attended by the Anjuman Islam²¹⁶ for Muslims and then in the same month a meeting of the Natal

²¹³ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence from John L. Roberts’, 17 October 1913

²¹⁴ In addition, the Asiatic Inquiry Commission Report states, “The large Asiatic population in Natal consists almost entirely of British Indians” (Union of South Africa, 1921:39).

²¹⁵ See *The Mercury*, ‘The Indian Grievances’, 3 October 1913

²¹⁶ *The Mercury*, ‘Restricted Immigration – Indian Mass Meeting’, 3 October 1913

Brahman Manday which was attended by Hindus who offered support to the Muslims who were affected by the legislation governing marriage rights.²¹⁷

In a speech, published in *The Mercury*, by an ‘Indian leader’ the marriage rights were further expounded:

One of these (rights), generally recognised by both sides at the time of the settlement, was that of our wives and minor children to join us here. But the ink had hardly dried on the correspondence concluding the settlement when the Government instigated their officials first to challenge our polygamous marriages, and, later, even our monogamous marriages.²¹⁸

A report in *The Mercury* explained this further,

In a decision reported yesterday as having been given in the Natal Division of the Supreme Court, it was held that a woman is to be classed as a prohibited immigrant if married under Mohammedan law, although she may be the sole wife of an Indian possessing the right of domicile. We do not question the Court’s reading of the law, but it is alleged that the section on which the decision is based does not carry out the professed intention of the Government and, in any case, it is a section that ought to be altered. The section in question provides for the exemption from the prohibition clause of “the wife or child of a lawful and monogamous marriage,” and the effect is to bring under the prohibited class the wives and children of all Mohammedans whose religious faith permits of the marriage of more than one wife. But if a Mohammedan, notwithstanding the latitude allowed by his religion, chooses to have one wife only, why should she be excluded from the country if admissible on other grounds? Then, why extend the exclusion to the children on the religious grounds alone? A Mohammedan youth converted to Christianity would be an undesirable, under the wording of this law, simply because his parents were Mohammedans. The racial bar is bad enough, but a religious bar is worse. The restriction of Asiatic immigration is the accepted policy of the Union, but in the carrying out of this policy let this British Dominion observe some respect for justice. There are provisions in the Immigration Regulation Act which are a blot upon the Statute Book.²¹⁹

The Mercury while being critical of the status quo regarding marriage rights of ‘Indians’, nevertheless still showed support for the existing state of affairs, through its acceptance of the “restriction of ‘Asiatic’ immigration”, without expressing criticism of the flaws inherent in the legislation itself or the grievous purpose of the legislation.

²¹⁷ *The Mercury*, ‘Indian Grievances – A Protest by Hindus’, 8 October 1913

²¹⁸ *The Mercury*, ‘Restricted Immigration – Indian Mass Meeting’, 3 October 1913

²¹⁹ *The Mercury*, ‘The Indian Grievances’, 3 October 1913

5.5 I Am a £3 Poll-Tax Indian

The Immigration Regulation Act however was not the only reason for the passive resistance campaign. The three pound tax was another issue that had begun pre-Union and which was ignored by Gandhi in the previous campaign. This issue however was brought to the fore during Gokhale's visit to South Africa and was then spearheaded to the top of the NIC agenda. Whereas during the previous passive resistance campaign the NICs interests lay only with the needs of the trading class, the abolition of the tax, encouraged by Gokhale, became equally as important as the Immigration Regulation Act. The tax, as mentioned in Chapter Four, was used as a tool in an attempt to rid the then colony of Natal of Indian immigrants who had been released from their indenture contract. Many who had found the tax a huge burden had been compelled to return to India. As one of the individuals affected by the tax stated in a letter to *The Mercury* in 1913,

I am a £3 poll-tax Indian. There are thousands of us in this Colony. The tax is a hardship on the majority of us; it presses heavily on the man with a family, more than on the strong-built man.²²⁰

In addition, an indentured worker who arrived at the age of 14 in Natal in 1910 stated:

The Gandhi strike took place in 1913 during which time I earned ten shillings monthly with three pounds tax to pay. We had to carry passes to visit friends and relatives in other estates. Failure to do so meant imprisonment.²²¹

Ilanga too reported on the issue of the three pound tax, stating the following:

So far, the conclusion promises to be freedom or exclusion for the Hindu. The £3 tax stands on a very rotten foundation, and it is a pity all concerned cannot see that such is the case ... Indians have been greatly demoralized by the tax which is usually far beyond their power to pay.²²²

Demands for the tax to remain however, were evident by the articles and letters to the editor published in *The Mercury*. The words used in the extracts below such as 'undesirable', 'uncontrolled,' 'overrun', 'dirty', 'unhealthy', all used in the description of 'Indians' reveal the

²²⁰ *The Mercury*, 'Correspondence from ERAMASWAMI', 11 October 1913

²²¹ Interview with R. Appal Naidoo in Naidoo (1986:121b)

²²² *Ilanga*, 'That £3 Tax', 31 October 1913

xenophobic sentiments that was overwhelmingly a part of the discourse on 'Indians' in South Africa at that time as revealed from the extracts below, published in *The Mercury* in 1913:

Were the £3 license abolished, a greater part of the undesirable element would be absolutely uncontrolled, and as the uneducated proportion greatly preponderate and unsatisfactory working is now the rule, and not the exception, further loss of control would be calamitous.²²³

I, for myself, say, no, and a hundred times no, the £3 tax should not be taken off on any account ... We are overrun by Indians ... If the Indians were treated on the same scale as the late Chinamen, all would have been O.K, and we would have then had a prosperous Natal. The Indians came here as servants, not as masters, and should have been kept so, and not allowed to open stores and own land, and compete against us Europeans ... Labour, yes, there is abundance of labour to be had in the Union without the importation of labour. If the native will not turn out to work, tax him-yes, tax him in such a way that he will have to seek work to pay his taxes ... I have no sympathy with the Indians in their passive resistance ... Who are they that they should dictate to us, for as servants they came here, and such they should have remained?²²⁴

If by any chance this tax should be repealed, what will be the result? The number of dirty, unhealthy coolie hawkers of fruit, fish, and vegetables in our towns will be increased by hundreds. The number of itinerant coolies wandering from one place of employment to another, working a day here and a day there, will be increased by thousands. Who will have to pay for the additional policing that will be necessary to cope with the wastrels thus bred of our own folly? The Europeans, of course. Who will also ultimately suffer for the disease that will be spread and bred, too, by the squalor and irregularity of the lives of such a large number of destitute, uninspected Asiatics? ... The Native is cleanly in his habits, and with proper treatment is easily managed and requires little police supervision, compared with the coolie, taking, of course, into consideration their relative numbers.²²⁵

Although little support for the passive resistance was found within the Union, the inclusion of the three pound tax on the passive resistance agenda, engaged even the indentured and ex-indentured workers, whereas the previous passive resistance campaign did not:

The passive resistance movement has moved another stage to-day. The Indians from the Ballengeich Colliery and from the Newcastle Collieries have come out,

²²³ *The Mercury*, 'Correspondence - Indian Immigration from South Africa', 27 September 1913

²²⁴ *The Mercury*, 'Correspondence from E.T., 50 YEARS RESIDENT IN NATAL', 17 October 1913

²²⁵ *The Mercury*, 'Correspondence from AGRICOLA', 25 October 1913

and they number something like 400 between them. I further understand that it is the intention of the miners down the line at Dannhauser and Hatting Spruit and other mines to follow suit ... The following resolution was passed at Newcastle: "This meeting of indentured and ex-indentured Indians, men and women, in the Newcastle district, employed upon the Natal coal mines, protests against the retention of the £3 tax in spite of the promises of its repeal, and declares that those present will suspend work, being prepared to accept the consequences of their action, until such time as the Government shall be pleased to undertake to introduce legislation in the next session of Parliament repealing the tax upon their freedom. The meeting further respectfully urges the European section of the community to join with Indians in the request for the repeal of an unjust and cruel tax ..."²²⁶

Hundreds of Indians, mostly from the South African Collieries, visited Dundee yesterday ... Mr. Gandhi urged the Indians to keep out on strike ... The Indians at the Dundee Coal Company's mine and the Burnside, some 500 in number, have come out now, and also about 300 employed at the South African collieries.²²⁷

In an article in the *Indian Opinion* in 1914 after Gandhi had left South Africa, and in recounting his experiences of the passive resistance campaign from 1906 to 1914, he wrote: " ... I never dreamt that 20,000 poor Indians would arise and make their own and their country's name immortal ... South African Indians became the talk of the world."²²⁸

One of those 20,000 was Ashok Kaur. In 1899 the first generation of the Kaur family, *Family 3*, arrived in the colony of Natal. Ashok Kaur originated from Uttar Pradesh in the Northern part of India and arrived in South Africa on the SS Umlazi XI on 6th February 1899. At 21 years old, he was sent from the ship to the Dundee Coal Company Estates. According to his family, the recruiting agents in India exaggerated "tales of gold nuggets ready to be dug up in the country side".²²⁹ Ashok was impressed by the agents' talk of the wealth that was to be found in Natal. As his family lived in poverty, this opportunity seemed like a way to be able to provide a better life for them and relieve his father of the burden, and so, when he was no longer a schoolboy and was able to recruit he did just that, but with the intention of returning to India after five years and

²²⁶ *The Mercury*, 'Indian Passive Resisters – Coal Miners' Strike Work', 21 October 1913

²²⁷ *The Mercury*, 'Indian Strikers – The Movement Spreading', 28 October 1913

²²⁸ Source: Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. 12, pp. 508-518 in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:139-140) [It is unclear from this quote whether South Africa or India's name was made "immortal" however Gandhi does refer to *South African* Indians which leads one to postulate that the country that he is referring to is South Africa].

²²⁹ Source: Kaur family documents

settling his family in a nearby town and fulfill his dream of opening a business. However, at the Dundee Coal Company he worked shifts which lasted 12 hours and there was little else to do but work and sleep. The realisation soon dawned that he would not return home wealthy as the agents had promised and he changed his plans.

Although much has been written and said about the lives of the indentured labourers on the sugar estates, not much is known about life on the coal mines or in any other areas that indentured labourers were sent. The coal mining industry was situated largely in Dundee, Vryheid, Utrecht, Newcastle, Dannhauser and Glencoe. Railway construction in Northern Natal promoted the coal mining industry and it soon became extremely profitable. By 1906, nearly 45 percent of the total workforce in coalmines comprised of indentured Indian labourers earning between 12-15 shillings per month. Their movement was limited and they were unable to leave the estate without written permission from their employer. The punishment for breaking this rule was very harsh and involved the deduction of a month's salary or even stopping the labourers' rations.²³⁰ A few years after Ashok had arrived at Dundee Coal Company, he moved to Burnside Collieries and married a woman who also had come from India in 1896 and had been employed at the Dundee Coal Company. While at Burnside, Ashok discovered that his parents had died and both his sisters were married. That gave him little reason to return to India so he concentrated on his family in Natal. According to family documents, Ashok was active in the passive resistance campaign of 1913 and participated in the march from Newcastle, crossing the Volksrust border between Natal and the Transvaal. The fact that Ashok had nothing to return to India for, prompted his participation in the strike, as the issues that were being fought against affected him directly.

According to Swan (1984:239), this strike which took place during October and November 1913 had brought certain sections of the Natal economy to its knees. Lone voices from various camps argued that that if all "coloured races" adopted passive resistance it would completely damage the economy of the country, however this united opposition did not occur, and the struggle for rights continued separately. *Ilanga*, in reporting on the passive resistance campaign and a joint struggle, stated in October 1913:

²³⁰ Ibid.

The newspapers belonging to the White community these days tell us that the Indians meeting in every house, collecting money to support Mr. Gandhi who is fighting on their behalf against the law established recently against Indians. The wives and husbands of prominent Indians are now filling prisons as they deliberately break the law in order to express their anger against this new law. When Gandhi reached Pietermaritzburg, he found people having money in their hands in support of the Passive Resistance because the families of some in prison are struggling financially, so they had to be supplied with food. We are not saying at this point that the Blacks should fight the same way as Indians, there are ways that have already been pointed out by our Black leaders but the support is not like that found amongst Indians in support of their leaders. It's been a long time since we verbally started fighting against this law, if we started then collecting money, by now we would have been able to send our leaders overseas. But it seems as if our leaders are just dealing with unresponsive ant hills. When will you Black people wake up? Here are the Indians teaching you a great lesson, whose leaders are in jail including Gandhi's wife herself. Ours is just to collect money to go to the King (of the British Empire) and tell him about the way we are treated in our land. You are called to support Mafukuzela for exposing the truths about your ill treatment in courts and also the way you are ignored and denied the right to see the Magistrate; you are called to reveal the names of those in exile. Stop being ant hills and wake up from your sleep.²³¹

What is evident in the above extract, is the continuation from the previous period in which comparisons were made between the 'Indian' political leaders agitating for political rights on behalf of their 'people' and an appeal made to 'black people' to follow this lead. In addition the theme of in *Ilanga* during this time of calling on 'black' people to "wake up" is also evident.

A subsequent report in *Ilanga* in November 1913 declared,

But this protest by the Indians is a great move. Some Whites hate it because they feel it will teach Black people to do the same also. They are not wrong because that is what once took place in Durban. One time when Black people were mishandled by the police, they gathered in large numbers and halted traffic when they crossed the road. They were marching silently. They were demanding the response of the chief of the police, Mr. Binns. Such actions teach other people the right ways of protesting which is practiced by enlightened people. The Indians also, they don't fight but they would rather go to jail than have their men and women pay the three pound tax. The Government promised that they will cancel this tax but unfortunately the government is adamant and determined, they cannot easily end the source of flowing money. This does not look good for the Afrikaner Union. The Indians and the Blacks are fighting against them, they themselves (Afrikaners) are fighting against each other. Truly it was coming to the point

²³¹ *Ilanga*, 'Abantu Ziduli', 10 October 1913

where the government should change things and apply better ways of managing the country. Even in England such action compromises their dignity. I wonder what the Indians will do since their leaders are in prison. Wishing you good health Gandhi.²³²

The strikes however which appeared to inspire joint action, and which were intended to be peaceful on the part of the strikers, was not without incident and loss of lives. Violent police brutality ensued resulting in police opening fire and killing striking workers. In addition, both employers and police beat the strikers and forced them back to work, and many suffered serious injuries (Swan, 1984:239). As *Ilanga* reported,

Before this was something that was easy to talk about (the issue of Indian protests) but now it is not easy to talk about it because some are now in graveyards. In Esperanza where the soldiers were deployed, two Indians were shot dead, ten became paralysed. We also hear that in Park Ryne, Avoca and Verulam, there have been confrontations between the soldiers and Indians.²³³

In spite of the fatalities, the resistance continued and a writer in *Ilanga*, in lamenting the state of the Union, commented on the 'Indians' standing their ground, and expressed pessimism about a united future and of the future of 'blacks' in South Africa,

They would rather choose to break the law and go back to jail. That is the stand of the Indians and they won't move. The funds from India will support them in their fight against the scrapping of the three pound tax law and other grievances ... They are united and the government is in trouble if this is not resolved. Woe unto us indigenous people! We have no representative. We don't have any India supporting us, there is not a single word from India that is in our favour though the right to own or rent the land was taken from us. We are forced to accept slavery in order to have houses. Woe unto us Black people!²³⁴

Yet again, the intervention by the Indian government was noted in *Ilanga*, and the reference to 'black' people as 'indigenous', provides a stark contrast to the 'Indians' as foreigners, with a foreign government assisting them. This support offered by India, I argue also contributed to the formation of a homogenous 'Indian' identity. To gain the backing of India, meant to strategically acknowledge oneself as an 'Indian', whether born in South Africa, and having never been to

²³² *Ilanga*, 'AmaIndians', 14 November 1913

²³³ *Ilanga*, 'AmaIndians', 29 November 1913

²³⁴ *Ilanga*, 'Indian Men', 26 December 1913

India. In addition, what this did, as evidenced from the above extract, was enlarge the chasm that already existed between the ‘races’, and perpetuated the notion that they ‘belonged’ to and therefore had to be taken care off by another country. The ‘Indian community’ then, created by the state and perpetuated in the media, was appropriated and maintained, by this so called ‘community’ as a form of resistance to the status quo. The ‘community’ in this instance was not linked to a particular geographical space in South Africa, but rather related to origin and ancestry, and by default physical features which linked individuals to this group.

The reference in the above extract to being “forced to accept slavery in order to have houses” is related to the Natives Land Act of 1913 which effectively began the creation of reserves for Africans. African people were forced into working in mines and factories for wages, as land for farming was no longer an option, and thus the Union government was able to control almost every aspect of African life and labour. In August 1913, *Ilanga* related a speech by a Mr. Fawcus who was speaking against the Land Act,

Mr. Fawcus emphasised one instance in which the new law was certainly most unfair to the native, and in doing so, stated that the other day an Indian asked him to let him land to squat on, and by the law he could accept this Indian as a tenant, but could not do so to a native, although the Indian was an alien, with no rights except as a British subject, with no sympathies or anything in common with Europeans.²³⁵

Without detracting from the atrocious nature and abominable purpose of the Natives Land Act, what is interesting to point out is that after almost 53 years in the country, the word ‘alien’ was still deemed appropriate to use to describe ‘Indians’ most of whom had been born in the country and knew no other ‘home’.

Despite the many discriminatory measures in place, the Union government began to discover that a single solution to the ‘The Indian Question’ could not easily be found. *The Mercury* published the views of the *Morning Post* of London on a possible solution to the vexing ‘question’. Interestingly, *The Mercury* did not provide any commentary of their own which suggests a subtle agreement with the alternatives offered by the *Morning Post* for a solution to the ‘Indian Question’:

²³⁵ *Ilanga*, ‘Speech by Mr. Fawcus, M.L.A – Natives’ Land Act’, 29 August 1913

The “Morning Post,” in the course of an editorial on the South African Indian question, says that a scheme which would afford a new home for the surplus South African Indians might lead to valuable amelioration of present conditions. It points out there are parts of the Soudan and British East Africa which are urgently in need of a population of this type, and suggests that the question might well be considered by the Imperial Government.²³⁶

This idea, although seemingly implausible, was not completely discarded and as will be discussed later on, a similar solution was eventually proposed by the Union government. In the interim, however, the Indian Inquiry Commission, also known as the Solomon Commission, was established in December 1913 and began its investigations into ‘Indians’ in the country in an attempt to resolve the impasse related to the legislation that the ‘Indian’ people were fighting against. Once again India intervened and sent a delegation to assist the Solomon Commission in its inquiry. The final report produced by the Commission led to the passing of the Indian Relief Act of 1914, which brought an end to the passive resistance campaign. The Act abolished the three pound tax; validated marriages conducted according to Muslim and Hindu rites; and allowed for the wives and children of ‘Indians’ already residing in the Union to enter. What this law did not do however was overturn the restrictions on ‘Indians’ in terms of living, owning property and trading in the Transvaal and the Free State.

In a letter to Mr. Gorges, Secretary for the Interior in June 1914, Gandhi gratefully acknowledged the passing of the then Indian Relief Bill but stated further,

As the Minister is aware, some of my countrymen have wished me to go further. They are dissatisfied that the trade licences laws of the different Provinces, the Transvaal Gold Law, The Transvaal Townships Act, the Transvaal Law 3 of 1885, have not been altered so as to give them full rights of residence, trade and ownership of land. Some of them are dissatisfied that full inter-provincial migration is not permitted, and some are dissatisfied that on the marriage question the Relief Bill goes no further than it does ... Whilst therefore they have not been included in the programme of passive resistance, it will not be denied that some day or other these matters will require further and sympathetic consideration by the Government. Complete satisfaction cannot be expected until full civic rights have been conceded to the resident Indian population. I have told my countrymen that they will have to exercise patience and by all honourable means at their disposal educate public opinion so as to enable the Government of the day to go

²³⁶ *The Mercury*, ‘S. African Indian Question – “Morning Post” Views’, 4 October 1913

further than the present correspondence does. I shall hope that when the Europeans of South Africa fully appreciate the fact that now, as the importation of indentured labour from India is prohibited and as the Immigrants Regulation Act of last year has in practice all but stopped further free Indian immigration, and that my countrymen do not aspire to any political ambition, they, the Europeans, will see the justice and indeed the necessity of my countrymen being granted the rights I have just referred to. Meanwhile if the generous spirit that the Government have applied to the treatment of the problem during the past few months continues to be applied as promised in your letter in the administration of the existing laws, I am quite certain that the Indian community throughout the Union will be able to enjoy some measure of peace and never be a source of trouble to the Government.²³⁷

Gandhi, in the above extract referred to the people he ‘represented’ as ‘his countrymen’,²³⁸ as opposed to ‘our countrymen’ which would have included ‘Indians’ in the broader South African ‘community’ together with ‘white’ and ‘black’ people. This further fed into the notion of ‘us’ and ‘them’, with ‘us’ belonging to and having ties with each other *and* another country, creating a distinction between ‘Indians’ and other South Africans and suggesting a grouping of people belonging to another ‘country’ other than that of South Africa. This phrase was also used earlier by Cachalia in 1913 when explaining in a letter to the Secretary of the Interior as to why the campaign was resuming, “As it is well known, over 3,500 imprisonments were suffered by my countrymen during the struggle, over 100 deportations to India took place...”²³⁹ In addition the word ‘community’ is used in both letters, for example in the letter written by Cachalia, he states, “In the circumstances, there is now no course left open to the community but to take up passive resistance again, which now naturally will not be confined to this province alone ... The leaders of the community fully realize their responsibility in the matter.”²⁴⁰ Even though there were various divisions, along the lines of religion, class, language and so on, for the purposes of the struggle against the State, ‘Indians’ identified as a ‘community’. As Hall (1996a:6) reminds us,

Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us ... They are the result of a successful

²³⁷ Letter by M.K Gandhi to the Secretary of the Interior in the Report of the Asiatic Inquiry Commission (Union of South Africa, 1921:18-19)

²³⁸ In this instance when Gandhi refers to his “countrymen” it is much more clearer that he is referring to his countrymen from India whereas in a quote presented earlier in this chapter, we have to deduce that he refers to South Africa.

²³⁹ Source: Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. 12, pp. 183-186 in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:134)

²⁴⁰ Source: Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. 12, pp. 183-186 in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:135)

articulation or ‘chaining’ of the subject into the flow of the discourse, what Stephen Heath, in his pathbreaking essay on ‘Suture’ called ‘an intersection’ (1981:106). ‘A theory of ideology must begin not from the subject but as an account of suturing effects, the effecting of the join of the subject in structures of meaning.’ Identities are, as it were, the positions which the subject is obliged to take up while anyways ‘knowing’ (the language of consciousness here betrays us) that they are representations, that representation is always constructed across a ‘lack’, across a division, from the place of the other, and thus can never be adequate – identical – to the subject processes which are invested in them.

In addition, the statement by Cachalia referring to the “leaders of the community”, had no basis in an actual mandate given to the politicians by the majority of the people categorised as ‘Indian’ in the Union. Gandhi, although being viewed by many, including the media and the state as the ‘spokesman’ of the ‘Indian community’,²⁴¹ others still saw him as fighting for merchant class ideals. For example, the Colonial Born Indian Association was formed in 1911 as a result of the dissatisfaction of the issues that the NIC represented (Bhana, 1997a:38). The government however appeared to recognise the NIC, and thereafter the collaborative South African Indian Congress (SAIC), as the ‘official’ political representation of ‘Indian’ people.

5.6 We Want Them Out of Our Ancestors Land

Unfortunately Gandhi’s ideal South Africa which included the peaceful co-existence with ‘Indians’, as indicated to Mr. Gorges the Secretary of the Interior in 1914, mentioned earlier, was not to be, and as he had predicted in the same letter, the issue of trading licenses and property rights had to eventually be dealt with. Accordingly in February 1920 the Asiatic Inquiry Commission also referred to as the Lange Commission, chaired by Johannes Lange, was established to investigate the restrictive legislation that limited the rights of ‘Indians’ to purchase property and to trade within the Union.

As *Ilanga* reported in April 1920,

²⁴¹ *The Mercury*, ‘Correspondence – Passive Resistance from Polak’, 3 October 1913

The evidence of the ill treatment of the Indians in South Africa is still being collected. Apparently the whites are now taking all the rights away from the Indians by charging them more for their shops, they are even thinking of depriving them of business licenses. These men have been sent to collect the evidence that may point to the source of the problem so as to find possible solutions. Their sites where they are supposed to build and also their houses are taken away from them. This is a serious issue, it seems like the laws only favours race. No matter how hardworking you can be, you are not allowed to have progress if you are not White. When this land was taken from us, we were not made aware of these things.²⁴²

Although the article above reveals a neutral reporting of the issue, these were not the sentiments expressed by all the writers or readers of *Ilanga*. In the above extract, there is no blame laid at the door of ‘Indians’ in terms of which rights they were afforded or excluded from, however an acknowledgement of the granting of ‘race’-based rights and privileges by the State is recognised. Xenophobic discourse around ‘Indians’ did not abate, but instead continued to increase in the 1920s. A letter to the editor of *Ilanga* expressed outrage at not only ‘Indians’, but the reporting on ‘Indian’ issues by *Ilanga*,

Can we make a comment on your paper read by all Zulus. We don’t want to hear about the Indian story. We want them out of our ancestors land. Chief Mtonga son of Mpande was also here in Durban supporting the same feeling, he sent me to write this article. He doesn’t want to see the Indians as now he can see them in the Zululand region selling cigarettes to Black people and buying their chickens and goats. We don’t know who gave them the right to move in the whole of the land of the Zulus making people poor like they have done across the Tugela River now called Natal whereas it also belongs to the Zulu kingdom. We know that according to the law, they are not allowed to cross the Tugela River and to be seen in Reserves. He says that he can see that the Indians are now having wrong practices claiming they came through ‘Agreement’ whereas that has long expired. Let them go because now they are depriving Black people in their places of employment. They are now even collecting animal skins and are charging less against their true value. Have you ever seen a calf skin costing 20 pounds? Let alone the calf skin that now costs 10 pounds. How about blankets and clothing? Au! Woe unto us because of robbers who come from their countries. Let their number be decreased now, they have made our country poor and even cut our forests. That is what the Chief (Mtonga) is saying. We also support the Chief in

²⁴² *Ilanga*, ‘The Indian Commission’, 16 April 1920

this. He also says that the Indians are also preventing Blacks from getting employed in hotels. Forgive me for being too long, this is because of this annoying issue of Indians having rights when we don't have any. This is the list of those elected among us to write to *Ilanga* Editor. Messrs: E. Mkhize, Micah Mthembu, Z. S. Cele, A. M. Cele, M. N. Ngcobo, M. G. Gumede, N. N. Ngema, N. B. Ngema, Sambela kaMkhonto Ntuli, A. M. Mdlalose, Dick Mashabane, Saul Lahlongwana and (Sigd) PHINEAS M. CELE.²⁴³

Isolated on the farms, however, there were many people both 'Indian' and African who did not express the same sentiments. As stated by Raju, a second generation South African of Indian descent, from *Family 5*, who was 83 years old at the time of the interview, when asked to recall how the political situation affected him,

Raju: No, no, wasn't affected. We were on the farm you see ... we worked for the blacks, the Africans ... I had a Zulu foreman, he used to tell me what to do ... we all were together. Work together, play together, sing together. We eat together!

'Indians' isolated in farming communities and sugar estates were oblivious to the political programmes of the government and in turn the never-ending quest by the government to repatriate 'Indians'. Most who were uneducated would not read, or even have access to the local press.

However, the discourse around the deportation of 'Indians' continued with the report of the Asiatic Inquiry Commission proposing voluntary repatriation and residential segregation of 'Indians' in the Union. In addition the report also recommended the introduction of legislation, similar to that which already existed in the Transvaal, to prevent 'Indians' from purchasing coastal land for farming. 'Witnesses' who provided testimony to the Commission raised various grievances against Asiatic Traders in the Transvaal. Amongst the usual rhetoric of uncleanness, immorality, standards of living, depreciating property etc. two in particular stood out:

²⁴³ *Ilanga*, 'Mtonga's Words Concerning Indians', 11 June 1920

(10) Their religion, language, colour, mode of thought, ideals, manners and customs are entirely different to those of Europeans; they cannot be assimilated and their presence is a menace to European supremacy ... (12) They become too familiar with Europeans, especially females, in the conduct of their business, and thus destroy the respect of natives for Europeans.²⁴⁴

Even though similar sentiments were expressed during Colonialism, what is interesting to note here is that the 80 percent of the ‘Indians’ residing in the Union at that point in time, i.e. in the 1920s, had been born in the Union (Gell, 1951:432). The argument against their ability to ‘assimilate’ in the country of their birth indeed reflected the crude xenophobic attitudes of the day. The Commission report went on to state,

We were much impressed with the evidence given at Durban on this aspect of the question, as on many others, by Mr. Leon Renaud, an advocate of the Supreme Court in Natal, who has been closely associated with the Indian community in that province during the past 35 years. He knows their character and idiosyncrasies, speaks their language, and is well acquainted with their views and habits. As he puts it, there is no man more easily influenced than the average Indian; if fairly treated he is easily led; but he will submit to anything rather than force; he does not like to be driven, and any sort of compulsion makes him a martyr; he is not very strong physically, but morally he is strong. On the subject of separate residential areas, Mr. Renaud made the following statement:- “ ... An Indian does not like to live in a neighbourhood where he is looked upon as a helot; he prefers to be with his own people, and I think that sentiment will always be so ... I do not think it is desirable that Indians should go into European residential areas, because they are not welcome; and I do not think they like to see Europeans in their neighbourhood either.”²⁴⁵

The Commission took into account the testimony of someone who they believed, and who purported to be, an ‘authority’ on ‘Indians’, as if they were a different species of being and in turn described them as such, i.e. ‘their habits, character and idiosyncrasies’. By accepting this testimony, the Commission legitimised the stereotypes of ‘Indians’ that had already been created and further perpetuated the notion of difference between ‘Indians’ and those who ‘belonged’ in the Union. Following from this testimony the Commission made the following recommendation, “We are of the opinion that ... Municipalities should be empowered to establish one or more separate residential areas for Asiatics.”²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Asiatic Inquiry Commission Report (Union of South Africa, 1921:30)

²⁴⁵ Asiatic Inquiry Commission Report (Union of South Africa, 1921:34-35)

²⁴⁶ Asiatic Inquiry Commission Report (Union of South Africa, 1921:35)

The language used in Renaud's testimony, constructed 'Indians' as different and as other. Language, as many social constructionists have pointed out, situates individuals into racial 'groups' thereby laying down a foundation for race-based atrocities to occur and stereotypes to be created and perpetuated (Durrheim et al, 2011:87). As Heath (1981:101) points out, "Individuals are constituted as subjects through discursive formation". In addition, the acceptance of the testimony by the Commission provides an example of how power gives some people or groups the ability to attribute a particular identity on others. As Parker (1989:61) reminds us "What is spoken, and who may speak, are issues of power ... As well as organizing and excluding forms of knowledge, discourse relates and helps organize social relations as power relations. Power is usually thought of as the exercise of the will of one social actor over others". In addition, Foucault concludes that only the individual can determine what is "true knowledge", however what is allowed to be considered as true is determined by discourse (Parker, 1989:61).

What is interesting to note is that even though segregation was recommended, the Commission revealed that it had found no evidence to indicate that 'Indians' posed any economic threat to 'whites' in the Union, stating, "Your commissioners failed to discover evidence proving that white skilled labour has suffered seriously from the competition of Indians."²⁴⁷ In addition they also dispelled reports of the growing numbers of 'Indians' which threatened to 'swamp' Natal by providing population statistics which revealed that the number of 'Indians' in Natal had increased by only 2 percent in eight years. In providing statistics of the total number of 'Indians' in Natal in 1919, the report indicates that of the 135,515 'Indians', about 20,000 were estimated to be "Mahomedan traders and their families" who had arrived as passengers. In other words, the number of people who belonged to the merchant class (including women and children who were not actual business owners) was less than 14.7 percent of the total 'Indian' population in Natal. This also provides evidence which dispels the notion amongst both 'whites' and Africans that the majority of 'Indians' in the country were wealthy merchants. This myth was erroneously perpetuated throughout the years and even into democracy, as will be discussed in the Chapters to follow. Soske (2009:31) states,

The most striking aspect of the stereotypes regarding Indians was their obvious falsity. The vast majority of Durban's Indians were hideously poor, many lived in

²⁴⁷ Asiatic Inquiry Commission Report (Union of South Africa, 1921:48)

earthen-floor dwellings built from scraps of corrugated iron and pieces of wood, and only a minority could afford anything beyond subsistence. The single largest occupation group during the 1940s and 50s was semi-skilled and unskilled industrial labor. African and Indian observers from outside of Natal, even in later decades, were frequently struck by the expanse and poverty of the Indian working class.

The Commission also found no evidence to support accusations that ‘Indian’ traders were ‘dishonest’ in their dealings stating:

... they were accused of habitually evading the laws relating to the sale of foodstuffs, giving short weight, and so on; and they were said to be adepts at defrauding their creditors, and contravening the provisions of the Insolvency Laws. No comparative statistics of convictions for any of the above offences were produced in support of those allegations, and there was an extraordinary conflict of evidence upon the question. A great many European witnesses of repute testified to the honesty and fair dealing of Indian traders, and a considerable number of wholesale merchants described them as thoroughly reliable men to deal with.²⁴⁸

The Indian Government too, submitted a report to the Commission, which argued:

In submitting the views of the Government of India on the Asiatic question to the Commission, Sir Benjamin Robertson emphasised that they have always felt a peculiar responsibility for the welfare of Indians in South Africa, and could not but acknowledge special obligations to a community which originated from an organized system of recruitment to which they assented. Nor have they been able to distinguish between the labourer who was directly recruited and the trader who followed him. They have always held that the case of all the Indians in South Africa must be regarded as one. This is shown by their negotiations with South African Governments from time to time in regard to the emigration of Indian labourers, of which two instances may be quoted.²⁴⁹

This further reveals the participation of the Indian Government as well in the creation of an ‘Indian community’ in South Africa. As Christopher (2009:104) points out, a separate ‘Indian’ group was created in 1921 in the Union as the government of India inquired about “ ... information on its diaspora and to monitor progress in the South African government’s repatriation programme”. In addition to this, in the census the 1921 ‘Indians’ specifically were

²⁴⁸ Asiatic Inquiry Commission Report (Union of South Africa, 1921:48)

²⁴⁹ Asiatic Inquiry Commission Report (Union of South Africa, 1921:54)

requested to provide information on “original nationality” (Christopher, 2009:105).²⁵⁰ The result of this was that 97 percent classified themselves as ‘Indian’. However in 1936 only ‘nationality’ was requested and 82 percent identified as ‘Indian (South African)’ and 17 percent identified as ‘Indian (British)’ (Christopher, 2009:105). The census then further entrenched ‘Indian’ as a racial grouping and compelled people, by virtue of the phrasing of the questions, to identify as such.

In their final analysis, the commissioners stated,

We regret having to admit that we have not found the questions submitted for our consideration so easy of solution. Sixteen years ago, not long after the close of the Anglo-Boer War, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Transvaal, in dealing with the Asiatic Question in his dispatch to the Secretary of State before referred to, said “in my opinion we are face to face with a most difficult problem of “modern civilisation”.”²⁵¹

Interestingly one of the commissioners, W. Duncan Baxter, made his reservations known at the end of the report regarding the restriction of land for farming for ‘Indians’ stating,

It is also a restriction of existing rights of ownership, and, in the case of ex-indentured Indians and their descendants, a breach of the conditions of recruitment, which I think should be scrupulously adhered to in the interests of good feeling and the sense of fair-play, so necessary in our relations with the Indians in South Africa and the Government of India.

The Union government however, would not be moved by the Indian government’s pleas for fair and equitable treatment of ‘Indians’ in South Africa. At the Imperial Conference in London in 1921, the Indian representative, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri argued for full citizenship rights to be granted to ‘Indians’. This call however was rejected by Prime Minister Smuts who stated,

The whole basis of our particular system in South Africa rests on inequality ... it is the bedrock of our constitution ... you cannot deal with the Indians apart from the whole position in South Africa; you cannot give political rights to the Indians which you deny to the rest of the coloured citizens in South Africa. (cited in Joshi, 1942:104)

²⁵⁰ Interestingly ‘whites’ and ‘coloureds’ were asked their ‘nationality’ and ‘blacks’ were not asked their nationality at all in any of the Union censuses (Christopher, 2009:105)

²⁵¹ Asiatic Inquiry Commission Report (Union of South Africa, 1921:55)

Efforts then were fast underway to put into effect the recommendations of the commission. The result of this was the Durban Land Alienation Ordinance No. 14/1922. This was the first legislated attempt to create separate residential spaces for ‘Indians’ in Natal. This Ordinance gave the Town Council the authority to restrict land ownership according to ‘race’, and in effect the power to decide who could own property, where they could own it and how much they could own. More legislation was later proposed in 1924 to further advance the segregation of ‘Indians’ with regard to residential and trading areas, and the Class Areas Bill was put forward. In a speech discussing the introduction of the Bill, Minister of the Interior, D.F. Malan stated,

I must say, that the Bill frankly starts from the general supposition that the Indian, as a race in this country, is an alien element in the population, and that no solution of this question will be acceptable to the country unless it results in a very considerable reduction of the Indian population in South Africa ... The method which the Bill will propose will be the application of pressure to supplement the inducement which is held out to Indians to leave the country. (cited in Gell, 1951:431)

This blatantly xenophobic speech followed by the Bill caused much opposition from the NIC and resulted in intervention by Sarojini Naidu, an Indian poetess who became regularly involved in the affairs of ‘Indians’ in South Africa (Vahed, 2012:319). She called for meetings with Prime Minister Smuts to discuss the ire that the Bill had caused amongst ‘Indians’. The years following the proposal of this Bill saw continued intervention by the Indian government in the affairs of ‘Indians’, with requests for meetings with the Union government which in one instance was denied by the Union on the basis that the Indian government would be intervening in South African matters. In addition the Union was insistent on discussing issues related only to the repatriation of ‘Indians’ with the Indian government, and in 1925 the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration Bill was introduced in parliament with the prime purpose being the repatriation of ‘Indians’. This prompted the SAIC to visit India in an attempt to influence the government to intervene once again. Reluctantly and amidst pressure from Britain as well, the Union government relented to a round table conference in 1926 on the proviso that only repatriation would be discussed. Following a conference between the two governments and the SAIC the Cape Town Agreement between South Africa and India was signed in 1927. This Agreement resulted in two important outcomes, firstly the withdrawal of the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration Bill by the Union government and secondly the consent to

voluntary repatriation by the Indian government. Ultimately what this meant was that ‘Indians’ in South Africa would be assisted if they left the country willingly. In addition the Agreement also gave rise to the appointments of Agents of the Government of India in South Africa, to represent India and facilitate the repatriation process. This however, was not received well by many and a letter sent by P.S. Aiyar, L.R. Gopaul and 45 other ‘Indians’ in Durban to the Prime Minister in March 1927 regarding the Cape Town agreement stated:

The alleged South African Indian Congress is not a representative institution of the varying interests, and since representation on the central body is confined only to members of the Natal Indian Congress, British Indian Association and Cape British Indian Council, the total membership of these constituent bodies put together [does not exceed] a handful of Indians compared with the population. Indeed, it would be injurious to public interests to accept the opinion of a body, composed as it is of such a microscopic number ... as the true voice of the Indian community in South Africa ... We, therefore, on behalf of the enlightened Indian public, and on behalf of the permanently settled Indians in this country, disagree with the settlement, and declare that the alleged South African Indian Congress has no title, or claim, to represent that the Indian community in general have accepted this settlement – a settlement which confers no benefit on them.²⁵²

This letter demonstrates the deep divides that existed within the so called ‘community’, and the arguments around who could represent ‘whom’. In addition, the Cape Town Agreement, the conference, and the communications between the Union government and the Indian government that preceded it, reveals the extremely interconnected, yet complex, nature of the relationship between the Union government and India, and the ongoing intervention of the latter in ‘Indian’ affairs in South Africa. It demonstrates how ‘Indians’ and India were inextricably intertwined politically even though more than half had been born in South Africa. This connection between India and ‘Indians’ is important as it indicates how and why ‘Indians’ were still viewed as having a homeland other than that of South Africa. The lamentation by the writer in *Ilanga* cited earlier, bemoaning the fact that African people did not have ‘any India’ to support them reveals the acute awareness by other South Africans of the connection between India and the concerns of ‘Indians’ in South Africa.

²⁵² Source: *The Mercury* 24 March 1927 in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:160)

5.7 Indian - Deport Thyself

One of the chief outcomes of the Cape Town Agreement was the introduction of the Immigration and Indian Relief Bill, the aim of which was to allow for certain concessions regarding the previous legislations that were put in place. In addition, it also launched a system of what it termed 'voluntary repatriation'. 'Indians' who decided to leave South Africa and return or emigrate to India received free passage to India plus twenty pounds per adult and ten pounds per child. As Malan, Minister of the Interior stated, "The whole object of the agreement is to get as many Indians repatriated as possible" (cited in Gell, 1951:432).

However, as Gell (1951:432) points out, only 10,738 people left South Africa for India in the five years following the Act (even though the funding that was provided to emigrants doubled in 1931). The repatriation efforts failed mainly, as was acknowledged in 1932 at the second Cape Town conference, because of the fact that at the time of the scheme 80 percent of 'Indians' had been born in the Union (Gell 1951:432). In addition what the repatriation scheme could not achieve was to convince the merchant class, or the skilled 'Indians' to leave South Africa. In 1929 the Minister of the Interior stated, "If this agreement is not going to touch these classes, it is no solution of the Asiatic problem" (cited in Gell, 1951:434). Abdul, who was 78 years old at the time of my interview with him, and grandson of the first generation of the Muhammed family,²⁵³ *Family 4*, when asked about how repatriation affected his family made a similar argument:

Abdul: ... They had come with a scheme that if you want to go back, they would give you so much you know, a repatriation scheme they use to call it.

KP: Was there anyone that you knew who took that up?

²⁵³ According to the family documents, Sayed Muhammed lived in Bhanvad, India with his wife, four sons and two daughters. He ran an oil extraction business, i.e. pressing oil from peanuts using a very traditional method of farming. Without basic amenities such as water, sanitation or electricity, the family found life difficult. In addition, to receive medical care they would have to travel several miles. These challenges were the driving force behind Sayed's desire to search for a better life for his family and so he decided to explore the opportunity to trade in South Africa. Having extended family in Lesotho, Sayed travelled there first and thereafter migrated to Durban where he established a business as a dry food wholesaler. The business premises were in Commercial Road, and a residence was also rented in the same building, above the business. Being a Muslim trader in Durban, Sayed would have been referred to as an Arab merchant and the antagonism directed to non-indentured Indians at the time that Sayed arrived would have been brutal, as evidenced from the extracts in the previous chapter. Following the first World War however, the business sustained severe losses and had to close. The women and the children in the family returned to India but were greeted with terrible living conditions and three grandchildren died as a result of cholera. The family then returned to South Africa as the conditions and environment in India were not conducive for the children.

Abdul: No, some people did but not that I know of. I don't think any of the merchant guys did that. A few of the indentured guys may have done it for the sole reason that the rest of his family was there possibly. If they were given 50 pounds it was a good amount of money in those days particularly in India. The guy maybe in his 60s or 70s has got a few years to live [and says] I rather die in my homeland, you know what I mean. You see in those days homeland was a big thing, mother India was a big thing.

According to Abdul, the call of home in the latter years of the indentured person's life as well as the thought of re-uniting with family would have been the only reasons for taking up the offer of repatriation. Just as the Muhammed family experienced hardships, related to the environment and climate on the children in India, so too did the Naidu family, *Family 5*. In 1893, Mukammal Naidu, the first member of the Naidu family, arrived as an indentured labourer in the colony of Natal. An interview with his youngest son Raju who was 83 years old at the time of the interview, revealed that all of Mukammal's eight children had been born in Natal:

KP: What year were you born?

Raju: 1927

KP: And where was this?

Raju: Baynesfield

KP: Do know how your parents came to live there?

Raju: Ja my father came, when he was 17 years old, he came with my mother ...

KP: Did your father come directly from India to Baynesfield?

Raju: He told me first he worked in a Wattle plantation that was in Drummond ... My mother was looking after the cows, for the white man ... From there he went to Dundee to the coal mines, from the coal mines he came to Baynesfield. That's were all the children were born ... he worked in the butter factory ... but you can't work there permanently in one job. You got to learn all the farm jobs. So they transferred him. They must have asked him if he knows about building so he said yes and they asked him to build. While he was building, he became a carpenter, he knew how to paint. So that was his job after the butter factory. Then he became a community helper. He was you know, able to read in Tamil and write, so he taught people there, Tamil school. Then he taught the people drama acting and he taught dance, that time it was six foot mostly [*six foot dance is an Indian village dance*]. Then he used to go to every religious event, he used to take his boys to dance and make some money for the temple. When he came there [to Baynesfield] there was no temple in that place. He saw people all going to sit under the tree and pray, so he came up with an idea, he said the best thing for us is to earn some money and build a temple there. First I know there was two temples built, mud wall and iron roof. They use to have drama in that ... Then I began working there and then in 1936 my mother passed away, 1936.

Mukammal had placed firm roots in the country and had raised eight children while labouring in various sectors and in different trades over many years. He did however, return to India with his children and Raju recounts what transpired:

KP: Did your father ever speak about India?

Raju: ... once I asked him, I said “Listen Dad, I think you better send me to India”, “Why?” “To go see the place.” You see before that, I went and came, when I was six years old, they took us India ... He built a house in the farm side ... They went and stayed one year, built a house, brick and tile house ... [and] then they started getting rashes ... because that country is hot and the food [was different] ... Then my mother, who was alive then, she told my father I think we better go back to Baynesfield. The children are suffering we are wasting more money here ... After one year, he decided to come back. They wrote a letter to the manager [at Baynesfield] saying we are coming back, the children are not agreeing with this place ... They say alright anytime you can come back, your job is here ...

KP: And you were telling me that you told your dad that you wanted to go back to India.

Raju: And he said “Listen, you can’t go and live there, because I took you when you was young, and it didn’t agree. So now why do you want to go?” So I said “No, I just want to go and see. And he said “It’s no use you going there.”

KP: How old were you then when you asked him?

Raju: About 16.

Very much in line with the Muhammed family who had adapted to the climate and environment in South Africa, Mukammal and his wife found that the land that they once called ‘home’ was foreign. It was their homeland, but not the country of their children. So much so that Mukammal was insistent that his 16 year old son remain in South Africa, even though he was curious to see the country that his father had originated from.

There were those however who did agree to go back. The ascendants of the Iyer family, *Family 2*, arrived from Wandiwash in India in 1905 as part of the indentured system. According to Sharm Iyer the grandson of Pattamal Iyer, who was the first person from the family to arrive in the then colony of Natal, his grandfather’s brother Samuel took up the offer of the Union government to return to India,

Sharm: ... then they told them “Look here whoever want to go to India should go away”.

KP: Who told them that?

Sharm: The white man told them, if they want to go away, they can go away ... My grandfather’s brother said ‘I want to go back’. He took his two children and went back to India ... he got so fed up with these rules, he had a hard time. My grandfather, why he changed himself was because at that time when he was a priest, he was looked after well. No hard labour. Now these people here [in reference to Samuel, his grandfather’s brother] they had a hard time. I don’t know what trouble he had, he was so fed up he went away ... he went back to his father’s house in Wandiwash and his children grew up there, all my father’s first cousins are all there.

According to Sharm, when his grandfather arrived in South Africa he was a Methodist Christian. However he saw that there was a need for Hindu priests, and so he ‘became’ one. His grandfather’s brother however remained in the church,

Sharm: ... two grandfathers came here [*he refers here to his grandfather Pattamal and his grandfather’s brother Samuel*]. The older one is Pattamal, my grandfather and Samuel is the second one. They were all in the Methodist Church. Now when my grandfather came here ... they had no priest and that sort of thing, so he became a Brahmin. He was a Brahmin [*term used amongst Hindus in South Africa to describe a Hindu priest*].

KP: So they were not Christian?

Sharm: He was a Methodist, but when he came here he changed himself, because they had no Brahmin for weddings and ceremonies, my small grandfather [Samuel] ... he was a Methodist, he use to go to church ... My grandfather [Pattamal] managed to come through to Cato Manor. He had a big place there, and a temple there, all the families grew up there at that place. I was born there.

In order to survive and avoid the hardships that his brother endured, Pattamal adjusted to the circumstances presented to him in order to make the most of the situation he was in. Kumar (2000) argues that Hinduism in South Africa stemmed from traditions that were non-Brahminical in that it did not have its roots in the original Hindu practices and customs. The above proves this point. Kumar argues that priests in South Africa, while performing religious ceremonies and practices, did not always know the meaning behind it or how and why the practice originated. Bhana (2001:406) argues that “The Hindu faith developed in a non-Indian context in which its adherents adapted to South African conditions.” It is also evident however that it was not only the case of adapting to South Africa, but it was non-Hindu people like Pattamal who influenced

Hinduism and the practice of it in the country. If Pattamal however had not done this, it is likely that he too may have returned to India with his brother.

Voluntary repatriation then was promoted by the State even though the various commissions, by using statistics and other evidence, dispelled notions that ‘Indians’ were ‘penetrating’ every area of employment, commerce, and society in general. It was nevertheless still maintained that ‘Indians’ in Natal were a problem that needed remedial attention. As V.S. Sastri, the first Indian Agent-General in the Union, stated in 1921, “White people in South Africa reject the testimony of facts without hesitation” (cited in Gell, 1951:435). However it was not merely simply a rejection of facts, but also a denial of the deep seated xenophobia towards ‘Indians’ that was apparent during that time.

The proposal of voluntary repatriation was vital to the Union government’s project to rid South Africa of ‘Indians’. In the Union it was not just repatriation (which would mean, returning to a country of origin), but in fact voluntary *expatriation* in terms of the ‘Indians’ who had been born in South Africa, as they would be leaving their native land, their country of origin.

5.8 The Doctrine of Assimilability

The subjects of citizenship and nationality then were central to the socio-political debates in the Union. This resulted in the passing of the Nationality and Flag Act of 1927 which refused ‘Indians’ the right to become citizens of South Africa through naturalisation, followed in 1930 by the Immigration Quota Act which considered immigrants by their homeland rather than by their individual situations. This Act prescribed and placed limits on ‘who’ and ‘how many’ could enter South Africa. In discussing the rationale behind the Act, Malan who was the then Minister of the Interior, Education and Public Health in the Union, stated that it was based on,

... The desire of every nation to maintain its basic racial composition ... The doctrine of assimilability; and South Africa’s desire to maintain its own ‘type’ of civilisation ... (cited in Elazar and Medding, 1983:156)

Notions of ‘assimilability’ and ‘civilisation’ were once again used as justification to exclude ‘others’ in the Union government’s attempts to create a ‘white’ national identity. Eugenics and ‘race science’ and notions of a ‘pure race’ were increasingly pervading the political sphere across the globe, including South Africa, where so called evidence for a superior ‘white’ ‘race’ was being promulgated. *Ilanga* commented:

The notorious Nazi methods of using cultural organisations for political purposes have found their way into this country. Recently the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies issued a statement ... It is ‘put forward,’ we learn ‘as a policy to guide the Government in order to save white South Africa.’ The irony of it is that it is said to be based on the Holy Bible. The F.A.K recommends separation, trusteeship, the maintenance and restoration of the tribal system, African education to be the field of the Afrikanervolk, that Africans must never get citizenship rights of the white state, but should have their own territories; that the tendency to use African Labour in the Union’s industrial system is undesirable, and that Liberalism, Communism, and Roman Catholicism were foreign to South Africa and disturbed racial peace.²⁵⁴

The superiority of the ‘white race’ in the Union was asserted in every sphere of society including the political, social and economic arenas. When Dr. Goonam, the first ‘Indian’ female doctor in South Africa, applied for a position at a state hospital in the early 1940s, it was turned down with the following reply “the policy of the country is that non-European doctors could not be admitted to Government hospitals as white nurses would not be prepared to take orders from black doctors” (Goonam, 1991:60). In addition, their occupation as ‘Indian’ doctors was not treated with the same importance as that which was reserved for ‘white’ doctors, and neither were the lives of the patients they treated seen as something of value. The professional practice of medicine therefore was limited as an ‘Indian’ or African doctor. Even being a professional of any kind was not respected. Skin colour trumped knowledge and expertise, as evident from the extracts below taken from the autobiography of Dr. Goonam,

My chemist telephoned me one day and said that he had been fined for supplying me a Winchester of methylated spirits. I was flabbergasted. As black doctors, Indian and African, our supply of methylated spirits was restricted to two Winchesters per month. The spirit was indispensable in those days before the invention of disposable syringes, and we nearly always ran short of it. We had to suffer the ration because Indians and Africans were not allowed to purchase

²⁵⁴ *Ilanga*, ‘Weekly Review and Commentary – Nazism in Culture’ by Busy Bee, 28 October 1944

alcohol, and methylated spirits fell in that category. I had dropped and broken one Winchester of methylated spirits that month and had asked my chemist to replace it. The inspector examining his records charged him for supplying me the spirit illegally! (Goonam, 1991:68)

The specialist practice at the time was purely white ... They did not mind performing operations, but attendance at their consulting rooms was another matter and many well educated patients returned infuriated by the treatment they received. One of my patients was a well-known solicitor who had returned from England ... Instead of being led into the waiting room, he was left standing in a storeroom filled with X-ray plates, pathological specimens and dust laden newspapers. After an hour of this treatment and no attention, he returned to me in unspeakable anger and disgust. (Goonam, 1991:68)

‘Indians’ in South Africa then, were already considered of a ‘lesser civilisation’, ‘alien’ and ‘unassimilable’ and legislation such as the Quota Act gave the government authority to prevent or limit further immigration from India, while plans to expatriate, repatriate, or deport the current ‘Indian’ populace was still being executed. One such plan was the ‘Colonisation Scheme’ that was born out of the second Round Table Conference, the first being in 1926 as mentioned earlier, in Cape Town in 1932. Voluntary repatriation was regarded as a failure at that point as it had not produced the desired results and a new way forward was required. The Colonisation Scheme entailed *relocating* ‘Indians’ to other suitable countries, and an Indian Colonisation Enquiry Committee (also known as the Young Committee) was established to examine potential countries that ‘Indians’ could be relocated to. Interestingly the SAIC while not agreeing to support the scheme nevertheless participated in the investigation into whether the scheme was a suitable answer to the ‘Indian question’ (Bhana and Pachai (eds), 1984:170). Like the first round table conference which included the SAIC, the Union government again looked only to one single group of people as representing the ‘Indian community’. Had the SAIC agreed to the Colonisation Scheme, it would have been accepted by the State that ‘Indians’ had mandated it. Unlike the referendums that were held to get ‘white’ views and opinions on issues, ‘Indian’ people’s views and opinions were reduced to the political organisations that claimed to represent them.

The complexity of the lived experiences of those categorised as ‘Indians’ however was a far cry from the homogenous group that could easily be deported or relocated, as suggested by the

Union government. For example, born in 1934, Jane, a fourth generation South African of partly Indian descent, from the Ramsamy family, *Family 1*, is the third child and only daughter of Francine Ramsamy and Timothy Lazarus. Timothy's parents were Indian immigrants but Francine was born to an 'Indian' father, Jim Ramsamy, and 'coloured' mother, Juliet Fynn, and was registered in the "Register of Births of Indian Immigrants in the Province of Natal" in 1913. Her birth certificate has a column with the title 'Indentured or Free/Ingeboek of vry'.²⁵⁵ Under this column heading her father Jim was categorised as 'CB', meaning Colonial Born, and her mother Juliet was classified as 'coloured'. Although neither Francine nor her father was born in India, they were nevertheless still regarded as 'immigrants' in the Union. They were expected to register births, marriages and deaths in the Register for Indian Immigrants. Jane's birth certificate reveals that her mother Francine was also classified as 'CB' as was her father Timothy. For all intents and purposes then, according to the State, Francine was 'Indian'; according to family testimony, however, Francine "appeared coloured" and identified as such. Francine's mother Juliet's parents were both classified as 'coloured', and were descended from 'white' English immigrants who had had children from Zulu speaking women, whom they did not marry. The figure below is a graphical representation of Jane's ancestry including only those discussed in the narrative above and is by no means a complete family tree:

²⁵⁵ All official documentation in the Union was printed in English and Afrikaans only.

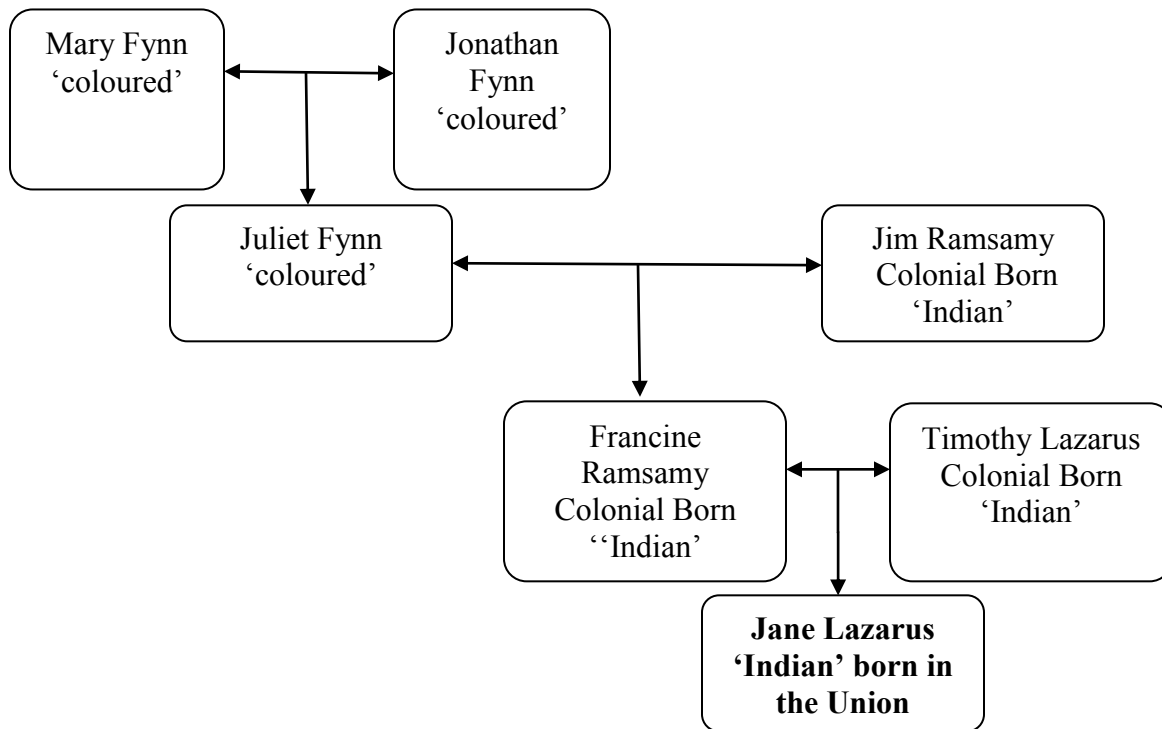


Figure 5.1 Jane's Ancestry

The complexity of this heritage and ancestry was difficult to negotiate in South African society for Jane and her siblings, as rights, privileges, resources and access were based on outward appearance. An example of this was related to me by Jane's brother David in e-mail correspondence [David emigrated to North America in 1967 and has only returned once for a brief visit],

David: Although I and my siblings went to Coloured schools, we had a rough time because the Coloureds regarded us as Indians. The first school we enrolled in was Clairwood Coloured Primary school. At the foot of Dunn Road and Shale Road, off Jacobs Road. My mother in the late 1930s had taken my eldest brother Mark and her brother's son William, to enroll in primary school. She took William to the Coloured school because he was fair-complexioned and had the features of a "pure coloured".²⁵⁶ The principal, a Scotsman ... born in Scotland, enrolled William, and then asked my mother if she wanted to enroll Mark as well. My mother was surprised because Mark was dark and appeared Indian. My mother

²⁵⁶ According to David, "pure coloureds" were very light skinned and could easily pass for 'white' (in fact some did, as will be discussed later on in this thesis)

had tried enrolling Mark at the Indian Boys School on Dunn Road but they refused to enroll him because to them my mother appeared to be a South African Coloured. Giving up on enrolling my brother she went to the Coloured Primary School to enroll William. And so all of us went to Coloured schools. The Scottish principal had told my mother that there was no reason at all not to enroll her son at the school.

Jane in recounting her school experiences states,

Jane: The Indian school was here and the coloured school was here (pointing on the table a short distance between the two schools), so when I used to go they used to say, hey look at that Indian girl going to the coloured school.

KP: Did all your brothers, even the children that were born from your mother's second husband, did they all go coloured schools? [*Jane's mother had remarried and had four sons from her second husband Sivanathan Govender*]

Jane: Ja, they couldn't get into an Indian school because when they saw my mother they didn't want them and then their father refused to take that responsibility to take them to school.

The complexity of being 'Indian' or 'CB' on paper, having the outward appearance of an 'Indian', going to a 'coloured' school and being identified as 'coloured' by others was difficult terrain for a young Jane to negotiate. Even at 76, the difficulty of being 'in-between' is apparent. Although all her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are classified as 'Indian' in contemporary South African society, and have not experienced similar angst (as will be discussed in later chapters), Jane does not identify as an 'Indian'. Neither though does she identify with or relate to being a 'coloured' person.

Jane's 'colouredness', according to her, lies in her ancestry and her upbringing,²⁵⁷ being raised by her Catholic, 'coloured-looking' mother who identified herself, according to Jane as 'coloured', and who was her primary care-giver and thereafter being raised by her 'coloured' grandmother. At the age of 20 Jane married an 'Indian' man and subsequently relocated to an area set aside by the government for 'Indians'. Her extended 'coloured' family paid little attention to her as many considered themselves "pure coloureds" and wanted to dissociate themselves from any 'Indian' relatives.

²⁵⁷ Timothy abandoned Jane, her mother and siblings when she was very little. When asked how old she was when her father left she states "I don't know my father. I don't ever remember him being around."

When speaking about her feelings of ‘being different’ the issue of accent came to the fore and Jane stated “ ... when I opened my mouth to speak everybody turned to look because I wasn’t speaking like them [referring to ‘Indians’].” She recalled the time she spent at a hospital for ‘Indian’ patients and recounted very proudly “ ... I was walking past the nurses and they were talking about the patients and ... one says to the other ... but she doesn’t speak like these people hey.” There was a sense of satisfaction that even though she appeared ‘Indian’; she did not speak like ‘them’. When discussing the declarations of ‘race’ that all South Africans are obliged to make on official documentation, such as for the purposes of applying for a job or entrance to University, Jane, in talking about the box that she would tick on an official form to signify her ‘race’, says “So I’ll just say, non-white”.²⁵⁸ Jane therefore constructs her identity in relation to ‘whiteness’ as being the norm. In addition this also reveals that her self-image is controlled by the boundaries of the ‘race’ categories available to her and when she discovers that she cannot ‘fit’ in neatly into the available boxes, she chooses to identify as ‘non-white’. In an interview with Jane’s son Daniel, born in 1964, he recalls how he realised early on that his mother did not identify with being an ‘Indian’,

Daniel: We used to visit my father’s sisters, his brothers ... but I think that because my mother was mixed, they didn’t really identify ... to me from what I gathered ... she wasn’t like an Indian in the sense that I would have liked her to have been. I think she was really mixed up you know coming from a mixed family I think that really mixed *her* up ... I don’t know, it was like she was more coloured than Indian. I got the feeling that she never really identified with the Indians and I think she just looked Indian. But for all intents and purposes, I think she was more coloured.

What is revealed here is Daniel wanting his mother to identify as ‘Indian’, which is evident in the tone that he uses when speaking, and the words he uses to express his feelings about his relationship later on in the interview, with his mother. When speaking about his granny, Francine, Daniel says,

Daniel: ... we never interacted with her, I never felt that she was my granny in the sense of like a motherly person ... she looked coloured, she was a fair coloured, I couldn’t really identify with her ... when we had family functions, I

²⁵⁸ ‘Non-white’ is not an official racial category of the State, and I make Jane aware of this, as will be seen later on in this chapter.

couldn't really identify with the coloureds, like I couldn't be friendly with them, it was like I was trying to cross over a barrier, you know, like I am trying to reach out to you as to opposed to ... you know that we were just friends and family. There was a divide. But obviously there wasn't the same divide with my uncle Niel ... he looked coloured but he stayed with the Indians. Or George who was a very friendly person or with Louis, but Louis looks Indian, and obviously with Harry, Harry looks coloured but there wasn't a problem with them because they were always around us. But the other family that lived in Wentworth, when they came to parties and stuff ... the cousins that came, it was like there was a void between us.

Niel, George, Louis and Harry are Jane's half-brothers. Interestingly, it was her full siblings who had married 'coloured' women, moved to 'coloured' residential areas, and who maintained a distance, except for David who, although in North America, would regularly contact her and ensure that she was taken care off financially.

On the other side of the spectrum Jane recounts how she was treated differently by her in-laws because they regarded her as a 'coloured' person,

Jane: ... when I was about 18, I think I was about 18 or 19, they used to bring him home ... so that's how I got married to him ... I went and stayed there but then life was even worse because they didn't like me, I was supposed to be a coloured girl marrying their Indian son, and he didn't want anybody else. So they treated me like a servant over there.

KP: Now do you think that this was the case because you were regarded as being a 'coloured' person and not for any other reason?

Jane: Ja that's what it was. Coloureds didn't like Indians and Indians didn't like Coloureds ... Ja, they didn't like it ... even if you were pregnant you had to slog and do work like a servant and then when I gave birth to Amy she was two weeks old they told me I must go pick wood ... and she'd [husband's sister] put the biggest bundle on my head because she hated me you know ... and she used to do the same thing with the coal she'd put the biggest one and when I come home when I touch my head I couldn't feel my head ... and do you know why she did that? Because I was not her nation.

Not being of her sister in laws 'nation', Jane was viewed as being 'different', an 'other', and an outsider. When I told Jane that 'non-white' was not an official category of the State she replied that if forced she would say that she was 'Indian' although she has no thoughts of India as a 'motherland': "I am South African ... this is the only place I know". According to Jane, her 'Indianness' lies not in the fact that her father and grandfather were both South Africans of

Indian descent or of any shared heritage with ‘Indians’, but in the final analysis she attributes it to marrying an ‘Indian’ man, living most of her life in an ‘Indian’ residential area, and appearing ‘Indian’. Apart from that, this classification has no meaning for her. As Hall (1996a:14) states,

... individuals as subjects identify (or do not identify) with the ‘positions’ to which they are summoned; as well as how they fashion, stylize, produce and ‘perform’ these positions, and why they never do so completely, for once and all time, and some never do, or are in a constant, agonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating the normative or regulative rules which they confront and regulate themselves. In short what remains is the requirement to think this relation of subject to discursive formations as an articulation ...”

As easy as homogenising this so called ‘group’ was for the purposes of control through legislation and for the purpose of repatriation, the individuals that made up this ‘group’ could not neatly fit into the categories prescribed by the State, as evident from Jane’s experience.

The SAIC, despite all the criticisms leveled against it, especially with regard to its participation in the Colonisation Scheme inquiries, nevertheless argued to the Young Committee for full citizenship rights to be granted to ‘Indians’. Neither this recommendation nor the Committee’s, that ‘Indians’ could be relocated to British North Borneo, British New Guinea, and British Guiana, were implemented.²⁵⁹

5.9 The Plague from the East

The cries of ‘Indians’ ‘penetrating’ the economic and social sectors did not weaken even though further evidence to the contrary was being provided year after year. For example, the Industrial Census of 1936 revealed the numbers of ‘Indians’ in various occupations (rounded up to the nearest thousand):

²⁵⁹ Anonymous. (undated). *Liberation History Timeline 1930-1939*. Retrieved 25 July 2011, from <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/liberation-history-timeline-1930-1939>

	Total	%	% of all races
Farming, forestry, fishing	18 000	28.1	0.5
Commerce and finance	18 000	28.1	11.4
Manufacturing	11 000	17.2	4.4
Domestic and hotel service	7 000	10.9	1.5
Public service, professions	4 000	6.3	2.4
Transport	3 000	4.7	1.6
Mining	1 000	1.6	0.6
Miscellaneous	2 000	3.1	2.1
	64 000	100	1.2

Table 5.1 Percentage of ‘Indians’ in Various Occupations (cited in Gell, 1951:436)

This reveals that the economic threat posed by ‘Indians’ was unfounded, as in previous years, and lent further support to the fact that indeed the majority were “poor labourers, smallholders and petty traders” (Gell, 1951:436). This however did not halt the barrage of anti-‘Indian’ rhetoric as described in the extract below, published in *Ilanga* in 1939,

In a meeting of the whites from Ward 8 at St. James Church in Venice Road that pay tax, the door was found closed. The speaker was Mr. S.M. Pettersen who spoke all about the perception of the whites concerning the Indians attacking the rights of whites. He urged whites to unite and destroy this plague from the East. He threatened that if the Parliament fails to pass the Bill of putting aside all those who are non-white, they will stand up and do it themselves. They should unite and declare “It is only us that can build here, not anyone else!” He commented about the Indians who are now competing with whites in Durban and said there are now 3,000 Indians who work for the Corporation, some of them are now earning 24 pounds, and even receive subsidies food and accommodation. There are some white boys who earn 3.10 pounds a month, and the whites have 4,200 licenses here in Durban whilst the Indians have 4,800. The building sites belonging to Indians only are now almost equal to the size of Durban and still increasing. They now have better houses that decrease the value of the land where they are built.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ *Ilanga*, ‘Colour Discrimination in Durban’, 10 June 1939

The vexing issue of property ownership by ‘Indians’ in terms of where they could purchase, trade and reside, was not just incited by ‘white’ fear but was evident from African residents as well. In addition to this, the common xenophobic oratory of ‘they are stealing our jobs’ was also apparent from African people during this period as well. Evidence for this can be seen in the extracts from *Ilanga* below:

I am instigating the people from Umlazi Reserve to engage in an uprising to chase the Indians out of Glibeni. This is the law that favours them to chase the Indians out: “Any Trust for Natives with intent and object that the said lands may be occupied and inhabited by Natives (not Indians) in order that the Missionary body referred to in the deed might have a fixed population to labour among as Missionaries without let or hindrance upon certain conditions imposed, set forth and declared.”²⁶¹

And,

The attitude and action of these Indian washermen is amazing. This business which used to be carried on by African men has gradually fallen into their hands and instead of befriending the Africans they have gone to the extent of encroaching on their means of living. The penetration of these people in small jobs suitable for Native Africans provides a remarkable story and a glaring example of selfishness and lack of consideration for others. The position now attained by the Indians has been reached through the support of Native Africans. It is less than a hundred years when their grandfathers came here, very poor, and they began from the bottom as farmers and petty storekeepers and 90 percent of their customers were none other than Africans. Most of them have now amassed fortunes and instead of trying to give a lifting hand to those who have materially helped them on the upward path, they now have the audacity to look down upon them and block their way to earn a wherewithal to live. In the case of this washermen affair, it may be easily proved that the Indians still get the lion’s share of this business since they are able to take to their laundries (sic) piles of washing in cars and carts while the African women themselves and their children carry the bundles on their heads! Is it not strange that they will grudge them even this little bit which is not on the basis of a business but only to make up a living in order to keep themselves alive with their children? It is well-known that all Native men or as they are called “boys,” are paid a boy’s wage which is scarcely adequate to meet the various demands of a life in an urban area. It would be a disaster, were the municipal and civil authorities to give a willing ear to or sympathize with the inhumanity of a people who are well-to do and enjoy most advantages over the Africans. They claim that these women should be made to take out licenses whereas at present Indian women may be seen every day besieging the Native

²⁶¹ *Ilanga*, ‘The People of Umlazi Should Wake Up’, 22 July 1939

Location in Somseu (sic) Road calling upon all and sundry to buy mealie-meal, potatoes etc, whereas there are stalls conducted by Africans inside the Location. They have so taken the upper hand against Africans that anything that they try to take for keeping soul and body together is snatched at by them. One wonders what the African will become in a few years if this Indian invasion of Native rights is left uncontrolled and nothing is done for the protection of the aborigines of this land. These people have a monopoly of the carrying trade so that when an African attempts to seek a small share of the business they unite in opposition to such legitimate aspirations. It is an unthinkable contingency to witness Indians supporting an African business and help that up. In Native areas they have all the plums. They rise early and collect the fowls and eggs as well as goats and skins to profit thereby. The principle of “live and let live (sic)” is non-excstent (sic) in their philo-ophy (sic) and economy.²⁶²

And,

... The truth is that the Indians live from our sweat ...²⁶³

The discourse around all ‘Indians’ being wealthy was perpetuated in the media despite evidence to the contrary, as demonstrated earlier. It was not African agitation though that prompted the slew of anti-‘Indian’ measures that were to follow but the safe-guarding of ‘white’ interests. So ‘fearful’ of the ‘Asiatic invasion’ was the Union government that another commission was set up in 1940 to inquire into the level of ‘Indian’ ‘penetration’ into ‘white’ areas, in both the spheres of trade and property ownership, in Natal and the Transvaal from 1927. The Indian Penetration Commission as it was called provided evidence to show that penetration was not threatening. In addition the allegations that property was devalued when ‘Indians’ purchased in an area were also found to be without merit as witnesses could not provide evidence to this effect in terms of values in monetary amounts. The Commission further discovered that the decline of specific areas was due to urban development as opposed to ‘Indian’ occupation and that the movement of ‘whites’ into the suburbs preceded ‘Indians’ purchasing in that area. In fact what was discovered was that sales to ‘Indians’ occurred *because* the area had already degenerated and the purchasers who placed the highest offers were the ‘Indian’ traders (Broome, 1942).

However, in spite of this, one of the recommendations of the Committee was ‘voluntary segregation’, in other words, areas would be set aside for ‘Indians’ to purchase for residence and trade. This however did not stop the outcries against ‘penetration’ and many discriminatory

²⁶² *Ilanga*, ‘Editorial – Indian Penetration’, 30 September 1939

²⁶³ *Ilanga*, ‘Correspondence – from G.P. Madlala’, 7 October 1939

measures, apart from the legislation, were taken to prevent 'Indian' intrusion into 'white' areas. Two of these measures included refusal of home loans to 'Indians' who wished to purchase in 'white' areas, collusion amongst residents in a particular areas not to sell to 'Indians', or for residents to purchase surrounding properties to prevent 'Indians' from inhabiting those areas (Maasdorp et al, 1977:88). These unofficial measures were indeed followed by similar laws such as the Pegging Act which legislatively enforced methods such as controlling the sale of property between 'whites' and 'Indians' (Maasdorp et al, 1977:90).

The Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act No. 28 that followed later in 1946, was harsher than the Pegging Act and imposed even more sanctions and limitations on property purchases, such as acquiring permits to sell to other 'races' and to purchase from other 'races'; land could be leased from 'whites' in non-'Indian' designated areas but only for the purpose of trade. This Act, dubbed the 'Ghetto' Act by the people who fought against its implementation, laid the foundation for the Group Areas Act of 1950 which separated people, on the basis of 'race', i.e. where a person resided or was allowed to reside was determined by 'race'. The Group Areas Act, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, created residential, social and economic segregation and left a lasting legacy of socio-economic catastrophe in the country.

Opposition to the 'Ghetto' Act and pressure for its removal came from the NIC, the Indian government and other heads of state and resistance leaders. After India achieved independence in 1947, the government brought the case of the treatment of South African 'Indians' and the general discriminatory 'race'-based practices of the South African state to the United Nations. In addition, as Goonam (1991:106), who was involved in the resistance campaign against the 'Ghetto' Act, points out, "We received messages of support from all over the world. Mahatma Gandhi ... Pandit Nehru and heads of state of British Guiana, Jakarta, Singapore, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and black American leaders sent their messages of support." However these pleas were ignored by the Union government and this then led to a passive resistance campaign which began in June 1946. In the same year, a presidential speech given by G.M. Naicker of the NIC, expressed the reasons for the campaign as follows:

... We are not here to make extravagant demands or to seek any privileges that are not our due. We are citizens of this country. We are taxed in the usual way. All we ask is to be given in return those rights which belong to all citizens in a democratic state. We are not foreigners. We are South Africans of Indian descent, in the same way as others are South Africans of English, European or African descent. Nearly all of us were born in this country. Our fathers came here in the 1860s and after at the express desire of the then Government of Natal on the promise of rights 'not a whit inferior' to those of the white man. We do not accept the theory that just because our skin is darker than that of Europeans we should get inferior treatment, and should be relegated to the position of 'drawers of water and hewers of wood'. The world has just emerged from the greatest crisis of humanity in its fight against Nazism and Fascism, the supreme embodiments of the '*herrenvolk* ideology'. Recognising that such ideas are bound to lead to further wars the nations of the world, assembled at San Francisco, in framing the Charter of the United Nations resolved categorically to ban racialism from the world, and all the members of the UN subscribed to the Charter, prohibiting discrimination based on colour, race or creed. South Africa in signing the Charter accepted the proviso and thus in effect agreed to the abolition of its colour-bar policies. Notwithstanding her solemn world obligations, notwithstanding her repeated agreements with India, not only did she refuse to frame a programme for the gradual elimination of all such legislation but, on the contrary, introduced the 'Ghetto' Act, thereby depriving the Indian community of fundamental human rights and imposing a policy of segregation. The UN, after a careful and full examination of South Africa's conduct, decided by a two-thirds majority that S.A. and India should meet so as to bring the treatment of Indians in this country in accord with the UN Charter and in consonance with agreements between the two countries. In other words the UN implicitly ruled that S.A. had violated the Charter, but that she be given an opportunity to remedy the situation. We, the Indian people, stand by the UN's decision as the judgment of the highest tribunal in the world. We realise that the world is not only concerned about our treatment but that it recognised that in S.A.'s treatment of its non-Europeans generally were hidden the seeds of vast international conflicts. Just as the peoples of the world had refused to tolerate the racist ideas of Hitler, so the UN had agreed not to allow S.A. to menace world peace. Can South Africa defy UNO? We think not. It would be wrong, of course, to give the impression that we demand our liberty by the sweep of the pen. That is not so. What we ask is first the unconditional repeal of the Ghetto Act. Secondly, a programme of progressive removal of all the laws that place Indians in an inferior position ...²⁶⁴

The need to identify as South African citizens was important as the political leaders had to now emphasise that the 'Indians' fight for rights was in the country of their birth. They had originated from a foreign land, much like the rest of 'white' South Africa, but the 'burden' of being foreign and different was placed only on the shoulders of 'Indians'. Dr. Goonam, who had been born and

²⁶⁴ Source: N.I.C Agenda Book, 31 May-1 June 1947 in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:189-193)

raised in Durban but had a medical education in Edinburgh, stated that when she returned to South Africa she realised that she had changed and had “ ... a far lower tolerance for colour discrimination than our parents” (Goonam, 1991:41). Like Dr. Goonam, there were many ‘Indians’, who had not travelled overseas, but nevertheless, would not willingly comply with the state’s imposed discriminatory measures, and on other hand there were ‘Indians’ who were not politically aware and went along with the status quo. Abdul, from *Family 4*, recalls how, as a child, he attended the rallies organised by the NIC:

KP: Where about in Durban did you live when you were growing up?

Abdul: ... I don’t know if you know Durban at all, you know Grey Street? Do you know where Ajmeri Arcade is? Right in the centre of Ajmeri Arcade was a cottage. Now I grew up there probably from the age of eight or ten up to 1955 ...

KP: Were you very much involved in politics? [*This question stems from a previous answer given by Abdul where he mentions his contemporaries at Sastri College who became well known political figures in South Africa such as Mac Maharaj*]

Abdul: I was involved a little bit. Not to the extent that the others were involved in. Do you know where the Nicol Square Garage is? It used to be an open space and they used to park trucks there ... So, well after 5 [pm] it was an empty ground. So what the Congress [NIC] did was place two lorries back to back so you have a platform, get a mic, and they use to have meetings there. And because I was staying in Ajmeri Aracade as a youngster, I attended all the meetings. Dr. Naicker, Dr. Dadoo, all the Indian speakers because at that time the ANC wasn’t allied to NIC. And Dr. Naicker had a march from there. I don’t know if you know Umbilo Road? Now Umbilo Road goes this way, Gale Street goes this way and they meet [Making a figure with his hands]. See this triangle here, they went and pitched a tent in that triangle, to stay there for a couple of days because it was a white area. So we as youngsters I must have been ten or 12 years old, we marched with them from Nicol Square to there. And you know the usual slogans, shouting of slogans and all that ...

KP: So at that young age you were aware of what was happening?

Abdul: Oh yes, yes, definitely ... And I was a little bit of a cheeky bugger when I was small you know ... my father had a little office, and he used to collect insurance premiums and give it to the insurance company. So one day he tells me, take this two or three pounds, fold it nicely put it in your pocket, go to a certain place, on the 8th floor and give it to a certain man. I go there, I am not going to walk up to the 8th floor so I press the button, the lift comes down and there is an old white guy sitting there, a retired guy, they give him the job, they don’t give anybody that job also, lift attendant you know. I told him I want to go to the eighth floor so he tells me there is a service lift in the back. So I told him, ‘I haven’t come to service the lift’.

KP: How old were you then?

Abdul: I was in high school. Say 14. I said I haven't come to service the lift I have come to the insurance company. He says you can't use this lift. So I said "Do me a favour and go to the eighth floor and ask the manager to come down. Because I can't use this lift, I am not going to walk up, and I am not going to go in the back." So he went up and he came back. And he tells me ok get in. The manager must have told him to let me come in. So I went in and he took me to the eighth floor. I didn't say anything to the manager, I gave him the money ... and coming back now, there were two lifts there. So I press the button to go down, the other lift comes and there is no lift man in there. So I say no, no, this is not right. I let this one go, I want that guy, I want that guy to take me down [laughs]. Press second time and then he comes. I tell him I want to go to the ground floor please. Now I am being courteous, in a sarcastic way, you know. I tell him ground floor please and I am saying please. I came to the ground floor and I say thank you very much. I am saying it in a hell of a sarcastic way, you know, you can say it very nicely and you can say it very badly you know ... My father wouldn't do that. My brother would do it. He would do exactly what I am doing. But he would get angry and he would fight with them. You are not supposed to fight with the guy, you must ... you must win, let him know where he is wrong.

Unlike Abdul who was very much aware of the political situation, the programmes of government and the resistance to it, Jane however indicates that it was not the same in her family:

KP: What access did your family have to the media, newspapers and the like?

Jane: Well ... we weren't living in that sort of, how shall I say, you know like educated people ... we didn't know anything about that.

KP: So how then did you know what was happening in the country?

Jane: You just lived from day to day. What you can do and what you can't do that's all you knew ... You follow the line ... All you know is to listen to whites. You're told 'don't go there' and 'just do that'.

The difference between Abdul and Jane can be attributed to the fact that Abdul, who was descended from merchant traders lived in Grey Street which was considered to be the heart of 'Indian' trading and most traders, did reside in the same area as their business, much like was the case with Abdul's family. The NIC too arranged mass meetings in and around the Central Business District. Grey Street eventually became symbolic as a site of 'Indian' resistance. People like Jane who lived on the outskirts of the city and others who lived on farms away from the urban centres, as in the case of *Family 5*, the Naidu family, were not acutely aware of the

political upheavals in the country.²⁶⁵ In addition, as opposed to Abdul, who was adamant that he fight for his ‘rights’, Jane and her family being uneducated and of little means were fearful of going against the system. Even though the laws were in place to legislate separation, it’s the small acts of rebellion as evidenced by Abdul’s experiences, and as will be seen later on in Chapter Six, that reveal the lived experiences of ‘Indians’ in relation to the status quo. As Hall (1996a:63) argues, “The knowledge that circulates in discourse is employed in everyday interaction in relations of submission and domination”. Although the discourse was of ‘Indians’ being separate and different and needing to conform to practices of separation, such as in the case of using the ‘service lift’, there was opposition in significant ways as in the case of the resistance campaigns but also in smaller, individual ways as in the case of Abdul. As Parker (1989:56) reminds us, “The self is constructed in discourses and then re-experienced within all the texts of everyday life”.

In writing about the passive resistance campaign against the ‘Ghetto’ Act, Goonam (1991:122) states, “It was a perennial subject for discussion in the local papers, but the public protests were ignored and the opposition party in parliament, the Nationalists capitalized on it as another significant issue, anti-Indian being the first, to woo the Natal electorate.” This reveals how the single category ‘Indian’ was also convenient for politicians and the like, to show one group with all its ‘evils’ that needed to be done away with.

The passive resistance campaign caused an explosion of debates to occur around ‘rights’ in the country and discussions around the pros and cons of joint campaigns between ‘Indians’ and Africans against discriminatory legislation, measures and practices, as evident from the extract below published in *Ilanga* in 1947:

The Passive Resistance Campaign is one of those seemingly “small” and innocuous things we take for granted or look at askance, when, in fact, they are of such magnitude and hidden meaning that they begin and end a period and an attitude in the life of a community ... the Campaign is bringing about a revolutionary change in the relation of Indian and European, African and Indian, Non European and European. Whatever the results of the Campaign may be, there

²⁶⁵ While this may be the case for the families who were interviewed in this study, it should be noted that there were many others who resided in outlying areas who did participate in the political struggle and in political activities planned and executed by the NIC.

is no doubt that from now on, the whole problem of Race Relations in this country will definitely and palpably be changed. The pity is that many leaders and thinkers do not realize what is happening. This is especially true to Africans, unfortunately. If as a group, we realised the implications, opportunities, dangers and the logical repercussions of the situation, we could use the phenomenon as a great and mighty wave upon which to ride to success. Times of upheaval and flux are times of gain or loss, progress or retrogression ... all depending on one's readiness and ability to exploit the situation. The recent War was a case in point. Now we have the Resistance. Shall we let this opportunity slip again?²⁶⁶

In addition, within 'Indian' politics similar sentiments had already been expressed, prior to the passive resistance campaign, by more revolutionary 'Indian' politicians. For example, the Natal Indian Association published the following communication in the *Indian Opinion* in 1940,

The basic fact [is] that the struggle of the Indian people in South Africa is part of the general struggle of all oppressed people throughout the world against domination and exploitation of imperialism. It is the non-recognition of this fact in the struggle for national liberation that is the cause of so much confusion and helplessness in moulding a leadership that will truly speak with the voice of the masses. (cited in Singh and Vawda, 1988:4)

Not everyone however agreed with joint resistance, including Gandhi as discussed in Chapter Four. In an interview discussing a united front with the Reverend S.S Tema, Gandhi stated,

It will be a mistake. You will be pooling together not strength but weakness. You will best help one another by each standing on his own legs. The two cases are different. The Indians are a microscopic minority. They can never be a menace to the white population. You, on the other hand, are the sons of the soil who are being robbed of your inheritance. You are bound to resist that. Yours is a far bigger issue. It ought not to be mixed up with that of the Indian. This does not preclude the establishment of the friendliest relations between the two races. (cited in Reddy, 1989:25)

Similarly *Ilanga* pointed out that the divisions within 'Indian' politics, was also an obstacle that needed be overcome before any thought of a joint struggle:

Some Indian leaders are suggesting that all non-Whites should form one organisation to fight against White discrimination towards all non-Whites. I have

²⁶⁶ *Ilanga*, 'Weekly Review and Commentary – Passive Resistance', 6 July 1947

been hearing of this story but whenever something has to be done about the formation of such organisation, something distracting comes up. Mahatma Gandhi felt it would not help to rush matters but people should take matters step by step being aware where they put their feet. He also felt that forming an organisation with Blacks is premature because the Indians themselves are not united. A serious squabble between leaders from Johannesburg and those from Durban to the extent that the leaders no longer see eye to eye. This shows they are not in unity as it seems.²⁶⁷

In addition, arguments against a United Front was provided in *Ilanga* in 1945, along the same lines as Gandhi's earlier interview mentioned above:

A striking feature of the Parliamentary debate on this question, is the different policies and treatment the Government is determined to apply to Indians, Coloureds and Africans. The first two groups are given better privileges and higher status than the Africans who, obviously, is the cause of greatest concern to the Government. Now tell me you United Front enthusiasts, will this divide and rule stunt not smash your united front? What will you do? Will the practical African leader ... waste his time on the Front instead of devoting all his energies on the African national struggle first? This is no simple matter, for the Coloured and Indian masses, ignorant of higher politics, have been poisoned against the African - and what will stop Africans being equally antagonistic against the Indian and the Coloured?²⁶⁸

This can be seen as a prophetic utterance for the 'race'-based violence that erupted in Cato Manor later on in 1949, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six. African people sought to drive the 'Indians' out of the area and blamed them for all the social, and economic ills that they faced.

Although there were calls from both sides at various points for joint participation, there was always reservation from various sectors of the oppressed society. A change of leadership in the NIC and the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) however, prompted a range of cross-racial alliances to form toward the end of the 1940s and early 1950s (Padayachee, 1999:393). In addition Zulu intellectuals, as they referred to themselves, argued for the importance of a joint struggle as evident in the extract below published in the *Inkundla Ya Bantu* in 1947:

²⁶⁷ *Ilanga*, 'Things Are Bad', 2 September 1939

²⁶⁸ *Ilanga*, 'Weekly Review and Commentary – Unity Movement and Colour Question', 24 March 1945

... the Indian's battle is ours ... there is a dangerous tendency among sections of our people to fall in for the propaganda from white circles to the effect that the Indian is the African's worse exploiter ...²⁶⁹

The start of the formal alliances between 'Indian' and African politicians began with the signing of a declaration in March 1947 by the leaders of the three Congresses, Dr. A.B. Xuma of the African National Congress (ANC), Dr. G.M. Naicker of the NIC and Dr. Y.M. Dadoo of the TIC, undertaking cooperation between the three organisations. This became widely known as the Doctors Pact, and it stated:

This joint meeting declares its sincerest conviction that for future progress and goodwill and good race relations, and for the building of a united greater and free South Africa, full franchise rights must be extended to all sections of the South African people and to this end, this Joint Meeting pledges the fullest cooperation between the African and Indian peoples and appeals to all democratic and freedom loving people of South Africa to support fully and cooperate in this struggle. This Joint Meeting is therefore of the opinion that for the attainment of these objectives it is urgently necessary that a campaign be launched to compel the Union Government to treat the Non-European peoples in South Africa in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter. (cited in Goonam, 1991:127)

Although the aim of this pact was to create a united resistance, the declaration nevertheless maintains the dichotomy of two separate 'races' working together as opposed to the construction of an 'oppressed majority'. In addition, although the Charter was signed in 1947, it was only in 1952 that a *joint* 'Defiance Campaign', as it was termed, took place.

5.10 Conclusion

The 'Indian Question' was thus a complex one and a single solution could not be found. The answer for the Union government lay in a multi-pronged approach designed to root out 'Indians' as a 'race' from the population of the Union. Prong 1, consisted of the Immigration policies which attempted to halt further immigration from India and thereby create and preserve the fabric of society that the Union government envisioned. This was stated clearly in 1937 to

²⁶⁹ *Inkundla ya Bantu*, 'Straight Thinking on the Indian Problem', 20 February 1947 cited in Soske (2009:96)

Parliament, “We will prevent aliens entering this land in such quantities as would alter the texture of our civilisation. We intend to determine ourselves what the composition of our people shall be.”²⁷⁰ So restrictive was the immigration legislation during this period that, according to MacDonald (2007:190), “... immigrants to South Africa between 1946 and 1963 made up only 2% of the total population, as opposed to some 22% in the United States and even 14% in a similarly exclusionist Australia.”

Prong 2 of the Union government’s approach, lay in the three pound tax which forced those who couldn’t afford the penalty to either re-indenture, return to India or emigrate to India as in the case of the children who had been born in the Union to indentured parents. This tax was instituted prior to the formation of the Union and was ignored by Gandhi and the NIC during the first passive resistance campaign. Encouraged by politicians from India, however, it was placed on the agenda of the second campaign together with the Immigration legislation and the issue of marriage rights.

The non-recognition of Hindu and Muslim marriages then, was the third prong in the weaponry of the Union government to prevent further immigration of Indians into the country. This prevented the spouses of ‘Indians’ already domiciled in South Africa to enter the country, unless monogamous marriage could be proved. However, due to the authority given to the port officers to allow or deny entry into the Union, many legitimate cases were turned away.

Voluntary repatriation was the fourth prong, the aim of which was to facilitate the ‘return’ or emigration of ‘Indians’ to India. As pointed out, the inherent flaw in this measure was that 80 percent of the ‘Indian’ population at that time had been born in the Union, and India was in fact a foreign land to them. In addition, none of the merchant class had opted to take up the Union government’s offer of free Passage to India and a stipend in exchange for returning or emigrating.

Prong 5 was the establishment of the various Commissions, Panels and Committees that were set up to find ways to justify and recommend strategies of removing ‘Indians’ from the

²⁷⁰ Minister to Parliament in 1937 cited in Peberdy and Crush (1998:26)

country, such as voluntary repatriation, legislating separate spaces for residence and trade, and the colonisation scheme, that were outcomes of these inquiries. The panels did not provide neutral accounts of the investigations they undertook but rather furnished the State with ‘tools’, ‘evidence’ and support, even if it contradicted the findings of the Commission, to implement the various discriminatory measures. The Commissions also homogenised ‘Indians’ as all were ultimately centred on inquiries into ‘Indians’ as a singular racial grouping, with little thought given to the many fractures within this so called ‘community’.

In addition, the different ways in which the questions were phrased on the census forms encouraged individuals to classify themselves as ‘Indian’ and thus contributed to entrenching an homogenous ‘Indian’ racial group and positioned the individuals within this group in stereotypical ways. As referred to in the previous chapter, Hacking (2007:285-288) refers to this as “... ‘making up people’ ... the ways in which a new scientific classification may bring into being a new kind of person, conceived of and experienced as a way to be a person ... the classified people enhance and adjust what is true of them ... changing conceptions of who the peoples are, both for ‘us’ and for ‘them’ ”. He refers to this process as the ‘looping effect’, i.e. in the case of ‘Indians’ they were so classified by the state – first by the Colonial government and then by the Union government, this classification was then appropriated by those so called ‘Indians’ and used in the struggle against the discriminatory measures directed against them. However, the case of Jane from *Family 1* reveals the complexity of identity formation in that although the state viewed her classification on paper as ‘Indian’; could ‘repatriate’ her as ‘Indian’; and that she was represented, as part of a category by those fighting for ‘rights’ and freedoms for ‘Indians’, she did not identify as ‘Indian’.

Prong 6, was the slew of anti-‘Indian’ legislation that limited trade, employment and residence within the country. Approximately 64 anti-‘Indian’ laws were passed between 1885 and 1941 and even more were to be proposed and adopted (Essop, 2002). The idea that people could be classified hierarchically based on ‘race’ was seen as scientifically valid during that period, and gaining ground in countries across the world, including South Africa. The fact that ‘Indians’ were able to compete with ‘whites’ on an equal footing, weakened this notion of hierarchy and

superiority of one 'race' over another. In discussing the falsity of scientific racism in South Africa, *Ilanga* reported the following:

The first part of Dr. Malan's speech was the best argument against his conclusions. This part of the speech was a long statement showing the progress, rise, aspirations and capabilities of Non-Europeans. Yet Dr. Malan felt that Non-Europeans should be discriminated against. It was no longer a question of the stupidity, ignorance, laziness, uneducability (sic) of the African that caused fear, but his rapid progress. The white man fears and wants to check this progress! General Smuts in his reply said White Supremacy must and will be maintained, but that justice and fair play must be given to all sections of the community. As a great philosopher, General Smuts should know that this is a contradiction in terms.²⁷¹

The alliance between Africans and 'Indians' which only came to pass in the late 1940s is also an important feature that contributed to the shaping of an 'Indian' identity. Had the struggle for rights been combined much earlier in the late 19th century a separate identity may have been created and forged, as that of an 'oppressed peoples' as opposed to separate 'races'. As Shotter and Gergen (1989:viii) argue " ... persons are largely ascribed identities according to the manner of their embedding within a discourse – in their own or in the discourses of others. In this way cultural texts furnish their 'inhabitants' with the resources for the formation of selves; they lay out an array of enabling potentials, while simultaneously establishing a set of constraining boundaries beyond which selves cannot be easily made." Within the official discourse, they were referred to as 'Indians' and not located as part of the broader African majority. Nor were they aligned with the 'coloured' population. The construction of an 'Indian' identity was based on how they had been 'embedded' both within the colonial and union discourse; within the discourse of the nation; within the discourse of the media; and within political and legislative discourse.

There was a concerted effort then, through various measures to solve the 'Indian question'. However the force of international pressure as well as resistance from the 'problem' itself, made a concrete single solution to the question impossible. 87 years after the arrival of their ancestors

²⁷¹ *Ilanga*, 'Weekly Review and Commentary – Colour Question Debated', 24 March 1945

in South Africa, and with 80 percent born in the Union, 'Indians' were nevertheless still regarded as the 'plague from the East'.²⁷²

²⁷² See *Ilanga*, 'Colour Discrimination in Durban', 10 June 1939

- Chapter Six -

“Perpetual Foreigners”

1948-1994

6.1 Introduction

The period from 1948 to 1994 represents the political course of apartheid, the system of government that continued, and extensively elaborated on, *legislated* discrimination and ‘difference’ based on ‘race’. The aim of this chapter is to explore the ways in which the South African state, between 1948 and 1994, set limits to the identity choices of ‘Indians’. Although this had begun much earlier as indicated in the previous chapter, it was during this time period, however, that state policies and legislation institutionalised racial discrimination through systematic and deliberate efforts to segregate the ‘population groups’ which it had created. It was also only in 1961 that the South African government accepted ‘Indians’ in the population landscape of the country as a *fait accompli*, as all the methods to drive them out had failed and the involvement of the Indian government in South African affairs was no longer welcomed (especially since the continued involvement of India held a spotlight over the atrocities committed by and discriminatory practices of the ‘white’ state). The apartheid government used administrative tools, such as the census and other descriptive devices that served to classify and categorise people for purposes of statistics and numbering, to organise society according to ‘race’, and to allocate resources accordingly. ‘Race’, therefore, was a prominent societal feature governing economics, politics, and all aspects of society in general.

This chapter demonstrates this argument by examining how identity was inextricably connected to the apartheid regime’s programmes of divide and rule which furthered and entrenched the already existing racial divisions. Differences between people were iterated and strengthened through political and social discourse, and any commonalities between people across ‘racial’

boundaries were disregarded. In so doing then the heterogeneity within the racial boundary of the so called category 'Indian' was ignored, to present a 'race', that appeared uniform in composition and structure to the rest of South Africa, and the world. Empirical evidence will be provided to show how tension between 'race groups' was fostered to prevent joint struggle against the regime, and how categorising administratively became even more fundamental to the regimes political plans. In addition, this chapter further contends that the notion of 'Indians' as the foreign other pervaded social discourse even after they were accepted as a permanent part of the population in South Africa in 1961.

6.2 Apartheid - *An Election Winning Slogan*

According to Simons (1959:16) the campaign to advance the principles of what was to become apartheid began in 1940 with a series of publications by academics in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology, at leading universities, advocating segregation based on 'race'. These 'race determinists' as Simons (1959:16) refers to them propagated the notions of the superiority of some 'races' over others, as ordained by God, and advocated the natural inferiority of Africans and the inherent degenerateness of children born to parents of different 'races'. For example, G. Cronjé, a professor in Sociology at Pretoria University who published a litany of books advocating these principles, including '*Afrika sonder die Asiaat*' which, translated from Afrikaans to English, means 'Africa without the Asian' published in 1946, put forward 'policies' based on his claims, which Simons (1959:16) outlines as follows:

- (1) Total separation for Africans; their 'development along own lines', under White trusteeship;
 - (2) The development of a separate Coloured nation under the guidance and protection of the Whites;
 - (3) Repatriation of all Indians, whose slogan 'Asia for the Asians' had as its logical corollary, 'Africa without the Asian'.
- He did not assert, however, the parallel couplet: Europe for the Europeans, Africa without the European!

Apartheid was being formulated by a select intelligentsia, the principles of which were adopted by the National Party (NP), under D.F. Malan in 1948. The word 'apartheid' was referred to by

Malan as “ ... an election-winning slogan that would draw voters away from the U.P (United Party)” (quoted in Simons 1959:20), which it ultimately did, as more and more ‘white’ voters lent support to the extreme racial policies of the NP.

Apartheid legislation that had a significant and lasting impact on the social fabric of South Africa, some of which will be discussed in greater detail further on in this chapter, include: the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 which prevented people from marrying across ‘race groups’; the Group Areas Act of 1950 which segregated residential areas according to ‘race’; the Population Registration Act of 1950 which resulted in the establishment of a national record to register the ‘race’ of every individual in the country and which was then used to allocate resources accordingly; and the Separate Amenities Act of 1953 which allowed for separate public facilities based on ‘race’, including, beaches, hospitals, and schools, to name a few. In addition, the school curriculum was a tool used by the state to reinforce the apartheid agenda. For example, an inspection of textbooks in South Africa by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) revealed, “ ... the perpetuation of several myths, among them that the Dutch entered an empty land and that unprovoked African tribes attacked unsuspecting white farmers ... ” (Parker, 1972:270). In addition, the education received in African schools reinforced notions of “tribal loyalties”, stressed manual labour, and further inculcated in pupils that development could only take place in the rural reserves (Parker, 1972:270).

The agenda of the NP government was to create *new* tools to implement their discriminatory programmes, as opposed to those employed by previous regimes. Apart from the legislation mentioned above, another tool was the creation of the “language of the enterprise” (Rose, 1989:120). The creation of a language of apartheid which stressed ‘race’, racial difference, ethnicity, hierarchy, citizen/other, belonging, migrant/immigrant and the like, augmented existing programmes, and facilitated new ways, of domination and exclusion. As Rose (1989:120) argues, “ ... such languages do not merely legitimate power or mystify domination; they actually constitute new sectors of reality and make new aspects of existence practicable.” As Posel (2001:65) concludes:

If race was a description of a shared essence that made people what they were, then its ubiquity was not simply a descriptive feature of experience, but also its primary cause. Within this mode of reasoning about race, race was ‘in’ everything essentially rather than accidentally. Racial differences were considered the primary determinants of other differences, the very *raison d’être* for difference across the plethora of interaction and experience.

There was therefore the creation of a language and the construction of a knowledge base for state control, and, administrative devices created to enable categorisation and ultimately facilitate authoritative power over the people by the government. By this point in time then there was also a language for talking about ‘Indians’ in particular; not only as another ‘race’ group’ but, as will be discussed further, also as foreign or alien.

Prior to the promulgation of the legislation mentioned above, the repatriation of ‘Indians’ was still very much on the agenda of not only the political parties but also those thought to influence the political process. There was however some contrary voices as well amongst ‘white’ people. Bishop Denis Hurley, who was the Roman Catholic Vicar Apostolic of Natal and Bishop of Durban at the time, when making a motion to the Maritzburg City Parliament, a citizens debating forum, argued for the equality of all ‘races’, as published in the *The Mercury* in January 1948:

“It is inevitable that racial equality must come, and in recognising it we should begin to prepare for it,” said Bishop D. Hurley, O.M.I. (Oblates of Mary Immaculate), last night at a meeting of the Maritzburg City Parliament, when he moved “that we should gracefully prepare for the end of European supremacy in South Africa.” Bishop Hurley explained that his motion did not mean the forfeiture of European inheritance but meant that Europeans should allow other races to develop themselves and enjoy this inheritance with them. Non-Europeans should be encouraged to develop so that they might take their rightful place in the country, he said. The Europeans should educate themselves away from the idea that they were a master race which should dominate others. Christian teaching inculcated liberty, dignity and equality of all men, and democracy was a practical application of Christianity. The discrepancy in numbers between the European and non-European peoples in South Africa was such that domination for any length of time was not practical ... The labour policy in South Africa had been such that non-Europeans had been debarred from entering most of the skilled trades, but if South Africa was to expand industrially the Coloured races should be allowed to help.²⁷³

²⁷³ *The Mercury*, ‘All Races have Place in Future – Bishop Hurley’, 14 January 1948

The action that was to soon follow, however, was the exact opposite of Hurley's motion mentioned above. Apartheid, the implementation of 'white' supremacy in every echelon and sphere of South African society was introduced, and the 'Indian' "problem" was still high on the NP agenda. The 'encroaching' of 'Indians' into 'white' spaces even after the Pegging Act was introduced, discussed in the previous chapter, was disquieting to politicians and the 'white' public. This was evident in numerous articles published in *The Mercury* at that time:

Dr. E.G. Jansen (H.N.P.,²⁷⁴ Wolmaransstad) said the solution to the old problem would have to be found on the basis of apartheid ... Behind all the Indian agitation in South Africa was the idea that this country should provide lebensraum for Indians. Mr. J.G. Derbyshire (S.A.P. [South African Party], Durban Central) said the Indians in Natal were treating the Pegging Act with contempt but the Government appeared to be doing nothing about it. He warned the Minister of the Interior (Mr. H.G. Lawrence) that the people of Natal would not continue to allow the Indians to evade the Pegging Act.²⁷⁵

And,

The Indian problem can no longer be settled satisfactorily inside the Union without the outside world being concerned, Lt-Col. K. Rood (U.P. [United Party], Vereeniging) told the House. Small nations like South Africa must consider the results of their actions in the world outside. If South Africa defied world opinion she would lose friends who could be of great assistance to her ... There were people in South Africa who were deeply concerned about the future of White civilisation whose actions nevertheless undermined it. In public they made speeches against the Indians and then lent them money. Volkskas did that. Mr. M.J. Van Den Berg (H.N.P., Krugersdorp) said that when the Prime Minister had introduced the Indian legislation he had said that it was essential that such legislation should be enacted if the matter was not to become the subject of international dispute. Instead of avoiding that danger, however, the introduction of the Indian legislation had brought the whole matter into the international sphere.²⁷⁶

In line with the above arguments, *The Mercury*, which claimed to offer balance reportage but, as discussed previously, had right wing political views took a strong anti-'Indian' stance on 'Indian' "penetration" arguing that:

²⁷⁴ HNP is the abbreviation for Herenigde Nasionale Party (Reunited National Party) which was the name the National Party used in the 1948 Elections (du Toit, 1991:638)

²⁷⁵ *The Mercury*, 'Nationalists Will Go to People for Decision, says Jansen', 22 January 1948

²⁷⁶ *The Mercury*, 'Indians a World Affair says M.P.', 23 January 1948

Immediate action should be taken in connection with the allegations of further Indian penetration into European areas. If the charges made are correct – and there is every reason to believe that they are – then there has been a clear violation of the Asiatic Land Tenure Act and someone has been more than lax in not taking steps to deal with it ... As Indian leaders well know, it was Indian penetration into European areas on a considerable scale that brought about the situation which caused the “Pegging” Act to be passed. The Indians may object to the Land Tenure Act, which succeeded the “Pegging” Act, but while they live in South Africa they must obey the law of the country. The alternative is for them to return to India - and none of them shows any inclination to do that. What is more inexplicable, however, is the attitude of the Department of the Interior. Apparently the new instances of Indian penetration into European areas have been brought to its notice but no action has been taken. It is quite useless for the Government to pass Acts if they do not intend to implement them. Such procedure does nothing but bring the law into contempt and can only encourage the Indians to defy the law deliberately. When Parliament meets, Durban members of Parliament owe a duty to their constituents to find out the reason for the apathy of the Department of the Interior. Nor should they be satisfied with vague assurances that something will be done. They have a right to know whether the Government intend to allow the Land Tenure Act to become a dead letter or whether the provisions of the Act are going to be enforced. The statement by Senator C.F. Clarkson, the Minister of the Interior, on the situation that has arisen is completely unconvincing. Something much more concrete is needed before European opinion in Natal will be nearly satisfied.²⁷⁷

Evident in this extract is the phrase “while they live in South Africa” which implies that South Africans of Indian descent were still regarded as sojourners, who could leave or be asked to leave, at any moment. The questions around why South Africa should provide ‘lebensraum’ or living space, for ‘Indians’ adds to this notion, that ‘Indians’ who had been born in South Africa, and whose parents had also been born in the country, were considered merely as temporary residents, in the country of their birth.

A letter to the editor received in response to the article quoted immediately above states:

It was very disquieting to read in the “Mercury” your reports about the deliberate flouting of the Asiatic Land Tenure Act by Indians ... our legislators have passed an Act to regulate and control the areas where Europeans and Indians may live. These regulations are embodied in the Asiatic Land Tenure Act and appear to be the only solution to this intricate matter. It must therefore be a question of grave concern to your European readers and particularly to those who live in areas where these “invasions” are taking place, to see the law of the land so flagrantly defied, and with results so unwelcome to themselves ... interested persons are

²⁷⁷ *The Mercury*, ‘Indian Penetration: Action Needed’, 8 January 1948

wondering whether the lack of enforcement in the Asiatic Land Tenure Act is due to the deliberate soft-peddling because of India's case against South Africa at U.N.O. (United Nations Organisation), or apathy on the part of officials and Ministers.²⁷⁸

Questioning the inaction of the government against 'Indian' people, who 'invaded' 'European areas' is evident in the above extract. At that point in time India had made representation to the United Nations on behalf of 'Indians' and all other oppressed groups in South Africa, which is what the reader alludes to in his letter. The words used to convey the point of view of the writer such as 'invasions', 'penetration' and 'regulate and control', were all part of the xenophobic discourse around 'Indians' during that period.

In addition, the xenophobic attitudes toward 'Indians' as immigrants, was further evident in that they had to apply for permits to travel across the country, even though they were third, fourth or fifth generation South Africans of Indian descent. The following case, reported in *The Mercury* in January 1948 provides an example:

Because they did not apply in Durban for visiting permits to come to Capetown (sic) and because the authorities here were not informed of the purpose of their visit, three Indian professional boxers from Durban were required to pay £11 each - a deposit of £10 and £1 for a temporary permit. The three Indians, Kid Sathamoney, Young Hussan and Seaman Chetty, took part in a non-tournament (sic) in the City Hall last Wednesday and left the next day. In a letter to the "Cape Times," Mr. G. Munsook, chairman of the Cape India League, says that the sportsmen in Capetown (sic) are indignant at the "shabby way" in which the Immigration Department treated the three men, all of whom were born in South Africa. As they did not carry permits they were liable on conviction to imprisonment for six months without the option of a fine, the letter continues.²⁷⁹

Seaman Chetty, one of the boxers involved in the above matter wrote the following to *The Mercury*:

I am a South African by birth and served in the war until discharged on medical grounds. I did what I could when the country was in great difficulties and now find that I must have a permit to move about the country - even for an engagement of only a few days, and that a purely sporting one ... I left South Africa to fight against Nazism, but I feel it is still dogging my footsteps.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ *The Mercury*, 'Letter to the Editor from ELM', 9 January 1948

²⁷⁹ *The Mercury*, 'Why Indian Boxers were Fined', 28 January 1948

²⁸⁰ *The Mercury*, 'Letter to the Editor - Immigration Law from Seaman Chetty Ex-Sergt-Major.', 30 January 1948

In addition to the restrictions on travelling within South Africa, archaic immigration laws that had governed the entry, life, and labour of the original indentured Indians, from approximately 88 years before, were still in force and were used to govern the lives of the ‘Indian’ people born in South Africa, as the extract below reveals:

Mr. P.R. Pather, joint secretary of the Natal Indian Organisation, stated yesterday that his organization was disappointed with the provisions of the Indian Immigration Bureau Transfer Bill which had been introduced in the House of Assembly by the Minister of the Interior, Dr. T.E. Dönges. “The Indian community has for many years past pressed the Union Government for the total abolition of the Indian immigration laws of Natal,” he said. The existence of these laws is an anachronism for they were passed to govern the Indian immigrants who were introduced in Natal from 1860 onwards. Immigration was stopped in 1911 and indentured labour, as we knew it in the first decade of this century, is now a relic of the past. The number of original Indian immigrants who came out from India as labourers is infinitesimal and nearly 90 per cent. of the Indians in Natal are born in this country. “It is absurd,” continued Mr. Pather, “to have the ‘passenger’ Indians governed by the general laws of the country and the descendants of Indian immigrants by another set of laws. The registration of marriages, births and deaths of the descendants of Indian immigrants and their divorces are governed by the Indian immigration laws and, surprisingly enough, all of them are debarred from being appointed as marriage officers. The Indian community, while thankful for the abolition of the Indian medical tax and the absorption of the Indian Immigration Bureau by the Union Government, will not be content until the Indian immigration laws are abolished.”²⁸¹

Xenophobic discourse, around ‘Indians’ in particular and immigrants in general, pervaded the social and political landscape of South Africa at the time. This was evident in an editorial published in *The Mercury* in February 1948, on the arrival of new immigrants to the country. The article revealed the writer’s disdain and displeasure at the introduction of ‘new races’ to South Africa, albeit that these immigrants would eventually assume the blanket classification of ‘white’ when they entered the country. The divisions however between ‘us’ and ‘them’ were stark as evident from the extract below, and also from a cartoon that was published soon after, with the writer/s of the article raising the issue of the ‘type of immigrant’ required in the Union and of *who* could be ‘absorbed into Union life’:

²⁸¹ *The Mercury*, ‘Indian Bill Statement by N.I.O.’, 14 February 1949

Among the 442 passengers who arrived in Durban yesterday in the Italian vessel “Toscana” were 233 British subjects (the majority of them, it is understood, Cypriots and Maltese), 98 Italians, 20 Yugoslavs, 18 people without states, 16 Poles and others. This is indeed a strange cargo of humanity to dump in South Africa. Mr. H.G. Lawrence, the Minister of the Interior, told our Political Correspondent in Capetown (sic) on Monday that he had no knowledge of the 500 Italians who were alleged to be aboard the ship, and he added: “I am certain that no one will be admitted to the country for either temporary or permanent residence unless he has complied with the relevant provisions of the Aliens Act and the Immigration Act.” ... What the public will want to know, however, is under whose auspices these particular immigrants came to South Africa; whether they were sponsored by the Government or if not, by whom; and what steps were taken to ensure that they are the type of immigrant the Union requires. Among them there are, doubtless, many men and women who can be absorbed into Union life; but, if first impressions are anything to go by, a large number of them should never have been allowed to make the journey to this country ... South Africa is faced with enough problems without going out of her way to add to them, and there is something that does not ring altogether true about the whole circumstances attending the arrival in Durban of this mysterious assortment of aliens and so-called British subjects.²⁸²

²⁸² *The Mercury*, ‘Immigrants Who Are Not Wanted’, 4 February 1948



Image 6.1: *The Mercury*, 'Who Gave Them the Key', 5 February 1948

Following the publication of the article on the new immigrants, the cartoon that was published in *The Mercury*, shown above, depicted stereotypical imagery of 'poor Europeans', the dregs of the continent attempting to gain entry into South Africa with the well-dressed 'white' male in charge attempting to stop the entry of the new 'aliens'. This discourse around new immigrants fed into the immigration policy adopted by the National Party following its election. The party argued for immigrants that would be compatible with the "national pattern and way of life" and who would be involved in the "spiritual development" of the country.²⁸³ 'Indians', therefore, the majority of whom were Hindu and Muslim were clearly excluded from this imaginary as they would be unable to fit in with the 'white' Christian ethos espoused by the state. As Govinden (2008b:72) a South African author and academic of Indian descent, stated:

²⁸³ SAB A326, box 3, item 7, Memorandum to the Minister of the Interior, author unknown, 8/1948, p.1 in Peberdy (2009:100)

My parents were resolutely taught by the white missionaries that religious syncretism was a cardinal sin. Still, I imagine that my grandmother was yearning for a Christianity in an “eastern cup,” but the missionaries around her and her family would have been oblivious to this need ... The church would not have emphasized questions of culture and identity. As a devout Christian woman, my grandmother was to accept unquestioningly the teachings of the missionaries of this period that she and her family were being saved from superstition and “idol worship,” and what her “proper place” was to be in the larger scheme of things as a Christian woman. And while there were very cordial relationships with families of other faiths (mainly Hindu in Kearsney) in the neighbourhood, friendships that endure to this day, there was a complex mix of contact and separation between “self” and what was perceived to be “other.” While many Indian cultural practices were preserved, a continual process of sieving and sifting out “true” Christian identity was also taking place.

Here Govinden reveals the mission of conversion of ‘Indians’, an attempt to mould them into the ‘correct’ way to ‘be’, and in turn what it meant to be a ‘true’ Christian, for those who had already converted away from Hinduism. The practices of Hinduism therefore were not welcome in a Christian society and ultimately in the fabric of ‘white’ South African society.

Preserving “ ... the pre predominantly European characteristics of this city [Durban] ... ”²⁸⁴ and the country was paramount. An article published in *The Mercury* in January 1949 revealed how amendments to legislation would give the Durban City Council free reign over the expropriation of ‘Indian’ owned land in order to maintain the ‘whiteness’ of the city :

The Durban City Council is discussing plans to strengthen the provisions of the Asiatic Land Tenure Act ... The memorandum points out that it has been clear since 1946 that the Act is in urgent need of improvement. Indian penetration into European areas had gone on, and hopes that the Act would check this process had been disappointed. Certain provisions of the Act allowed Indians to acquire and occupy property in European areas under permit and this appeared to be the main defect. Certainly the hope that European areas which had been penetrated would be reclaimed for Europeans had not been realised. Indians held on to property they already had tenaciously and the number of applications for permits to occupy property in European areas was evidence of the way in which advantage was being taken of the weaknesses of the Act. The Act placed no obstacles in the way of complete Indianisation of the scheduled areas but its effect was to restrict and discourage the reclamation of areas into which Indians had penetrated. If the

²⁸⁴ *The Mercury*, ‘Stay-put Plan for Indians’, 10 January 1949

suggestions were adopted, the effect would be to peg finally Indian penetration, as the Council felt it should be pegged ...²⁸⁵

Controlling where 'Indians' could live and own property had begun prior to the NP coming into office but the efforts to pursue this legal course of action to ensure that 'Indian' 'penetration' did not occur in the late 1940s was stronger than ever.

This anti-'Indian' rhetoric, and the tensions prevalent in the media and politics at this time also played out in society, with the most violent and lethal interaction being the so-called "riot" which occurred in 1949.

6.3 1949 - *Xenophobia at its Worst*

Anti-'Indian' sentiments were expressed in the deadliest way in what was dubbed the '1949 riots'. This episode of violence which lasted three days resulted in 142 deaths, 1,078 being injured and approximately 44,738 'Indians' being displaced (Bhana and Pachai (eds), 1984:208; Vahed, 2001:123). *The Mercury*, after the first day of violence, reported that:

Scores of Natives and Indians were injured when they were involved in a series of clashes which quickly spread through Durban's Indian quarter and into the suburbs yesterday evening. Indian buses and cars were stoned and shop windows smashed ... The trouble began at the Victoria Street Indian bus rank behind the new Indian market where Native crowds are said to have resented an assault by an Indian on a Native lad ... The receiving office at King Edward VIII Hospital resembled a wartime casualty clearing station. Bruised and bandaged victims - chiefly Indians - stood in bewildered groups in the corridors and reception rooms.²⁸⁶

And,

At least 50 Indians and Natives were killed - burned alive, shot or stoned to death - in Durban and surrounding districts last night in one of the fiercest racial battles ever seen in S. Africa. More than 300 were injured ... Whole streets of Indian houses and stores were burned down and looted at Cato Manor, Jacobs and Wentworth. Thousands of Natives, chanting their battlecry, ran amok in an orgy

²⁸⁵ *The Mercury*, 'Stay-put Plan for Indians', 10 January 1949

²⁸⁶ *The Mercury*, 'Natives and Indians Clash in Durban: Scores Injured', 14 January 1949

of killing and sacking. Whole families of Indians were murdered in their homes, and in some cases they were held prisoner while their houses and shops were fired ... For the first time in South Africa's history detachments of the Navy, Army and Air Force were called out to re-inforce the South African Police and the Traffic Police to help restore order ... Extra police were drafted to Durban from all over Natal ... Pitiful clusters of refugees, clutching the little valuables rescued from their homes, packed round the patrols of police and soldiers.²⁸⁷

The Mercury labeled the violent outbreak as a 'racial battle', and 'black' South Africans were referred to as 'natives'. In addition, words and phrases used to describe the behaviour of the 'natives' included: 'battlecry' and 'orgy of killing' thus referencing stereotypical attributions of tribalism and tribal wars. As Edwards and Nuttall (1990:1) state, arguments were put forward by the state too, to imply that the riots were as a result of " ... primordial antagonism between Africans and Indians". The discourse then around the violence centred on ethnic/racial divisions. *The Mercury* stressed the differences between the two groups through its reportage. It also reiterated the 'swart gevaar' or 'black peril' perpetuated by the National Party regarding the danger or threat that 'black' people posed and used this as evidence as to why separate development was 'necessary'. In a letter to the editor of *The Mercury*, one writer blamed the violence on "cowboy" movies and insisted that 'natives' should not be allowed to watch them as they "put into practice what they see at the theatre ... Tomorrow there may be a clash with the Europeans then what may be the answer?"²⁸⁸ Similar sentiments were expressed by international media outlets:

... Typical headlines for the Indian Press says Sapa-Reuter, were: "Savagery Rages in Dark Africa"; "Gruesome Attacks on Indians." ... Other London headlines were: "Sunday Dispatch": "Police Charge on Loot-Mad Rioters." "The People": "Bayonets Clear Chanting Zulus." "The Observer": "Durban Calm Again – 100 Riot Deaths." The "News of the World": "150 Dead and 1,000 Injured in 3-day Zulu Riots. Troops Mobilised in City of Terror." In Australia the "Sydney Sun" used the story as its front-page lead under a banner headline: "27 Killed in Race Riots – Negroes Amok." The "Sunday Telegraph" had the headline: "100 Die In African Riot Because Child Slapped."²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ *The Mercury*, '50 Dead: 300 Hurt in Riots: Indian Families Shot and Burned – Streets Ablaze: Hundreds Flee', 15 January 1949

²⁸⁸ *The Mercury*, 'Letter to the Editor – Danger of Films from Harmony', 17 January 1949

²⁸⁹ *The Mercury*, 'India Press Bewildered: Riots Make World News', 17 January 1949

Again words like ‘savagery’, ‘chanting Zulus’, and ‘Negroes amok’ all construct the violence as resulting from inherently violent, tribal and uncivilised people. In a letter to the editor of *The Mercury* one correspondent attributed the violence to “... the periodical urge of Bantus to faction fight or have a bit of rebellion ...”²⁹⁰ Even the report of the Riot Commission that was established to investigate the cause of the ‘riot’ used phrases that indicated inherent characteristics of the ‘different’ ‘race groups’:

... there are certain racial characteristics which played an important part in the riots. As on the whole the Native was the aggressor, we are more concerned with the traits which he exhibits. These characteristics, combined with the stage of development to which the Native has attained, induce in him certain habits of mind ... The Indian has nimbler wits than the Native. Consequently the Native is inclined to assess merit in terms of physical strength ... In trade, in industry requiring skill and in other ways the Indian tries to prevail by using his wits ...²⁹¹

And,

The Zulu is by tradition a warrior. The veneer of civilisation which has come to him during his urban existence is but a thin covering. When this breaks under the stress of emotion – especially the emotion of a mob – he again becomes one of the braves of Chaka ... The Native is hostile to strangers merely because they are different.²⁹²

The media then, shaped the coverage of the news and the discourse around the ‘riots’, by controlling the content covered, words used, and the prominence given to issues deemed relevant by the media. As Larson (2006:81) notes, in producing news, “... reporters ... rely extensively on government sources to explain and defend the status quo ... evaluative words are used to slant a story in a particular way ... reporters “frame” stories with headlines or interpretative introductions that point to what the events mean.” Larson (2006:9) refers to this as the “system-supportive nature of mainstream media” which perpetuates categories and stereotypes and allow them to become “well learned” (Gorham, 2010:95) by society and as such provide “... highly edited and distorted images of groups that tend to support the ways groups are treated in society” (Gorham, 2010:98). In so doing, the media promoted a perception of society that was in line with

²⁹⁰ *The Mercury*, ‘Letter to the Editor from K.F.S.’, 18 January 1949

²⁹¹ Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Riots in Durban (Union of South Africa, 1949:12)

²⁹² Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Riots in Durban (Union of South Africa, 1949:13)

the apartheid propaganda. This is significant as it has been argued that media reportage can affect the associative relationships that people make between their perceptions of racial groups and political issues concerning 'race', such as the case with the 1949 'riots' (Domke, et al, 1999). Issues that are frequently linked with 'race', such as 'riots' or 'immigration', prime racial perceptions of groups even if 'race' is not mentioned. In other words, the ways in which these issues are framed in the media encourage readers to view 'black' people as violent or 'Indians' as foreign.²⁹³

Unlike *The Mercury* however, *Ilanga* attempted to show how the riots were a result of the unequal policies of the day which favoured people based on 'race'. The editorial published in *Ilanga* following the violent outbreaks emphasised the unjust system which gave 'Indians' economic advantage over Africans. It also argued passionately that the system also allowed 'Indians' to exploit Africans, stating " ... the whole grim business was logical, simply inevitable ... " arguing that the rationale for the violence against 'Indians' was as a direct result of " ... black-marketeering by Indians, Indian opposition to the economic expansion of the African, 'shacketeering' by Indian landlords, social and racial humiliation of Africans by Indians and the differential treatment of Indians by Europeans which gives the Indians 'not only better rights, but a sense of snobbishness and superiority over the Africans'" (quoted in Nowbath, 1949).

Although the majority of the 'Indians' were working class people, and not traders, and lived in the same areas together with Africans, this was nevertheless ignored and the stereotype of the wealthy, exploitative 'Indian' was exacerbated.

H.I.E Dhlomo the writer of the editorial in *Ilanga* expressed this sentiment further writing:

Africans would be less than human not to feel humiliated, frustrated and outraged to find what to some of them are 'foreigners' and 'people who did not conquer us and who came here as slaves,' lording it over them in the land of their birth.²⁹⁴

²⁹³ Meer (1969:116) argues that "quick opinions" were formed of Africans based on experiences such as those of the riots and she articulates how one housewife was "dubious about 'natives'".

²⁹⁴ *Ilanga*, 'How Long, O Lord!', 22 January 1949 cited in Soske (2009:53)

Once again, reference here is made to ‘Indians’ as foreigners and that South Africa was the birthplace of Africans, and the implication then was that ‘Indians’ belonged elsewhere. A ‘white’ resident from Pietermaritzburg in speaking about the 1949 ‘riots’ stated:

I detest Indians. When the anti-Indian pogroms began and Africans in Durban killed many Indians, burning and looting their shops and homes and attacking them in the streets, I sat down gleefully to write a letter to the Natal Indian Congress. In it I asked if this was not surely their warning to leave South Africa and return to India. I had taken the fact that African anger was vented against the Indians, leaving the Whites untouched, as a sign that they were resented by both the Africans and us, and it was clear that *we* and the Africans got on very well together. The riots did not spread to Pietermaritzburg, where I was then living, but one Sunday afternoon when I was driving with friends through the city’s main street, I had a glimpse of an African running towards an elderly Indian, balancing on one foot with his arm raised to shoulder level, and kicking out and upwards at the old man’s face ... The old Indian was petrified. I was disgusted at the time, but only as I might have been disgusted by cruelty, say, to a dog. (Quoted in Van Rensburg, 1962:22)

The xenophobia reflected here is evident in the writer’s recollections of how he would inquire of the NIC if they were ready to go ‘back to India’, it did not matter that the people he wished for to leave South Africa had all been born there, very much like himself.

David, a fourth generation South African of Indian descent from *Family 1* (introduced in the previous chapter), who was 11 years old at the time of the riots, recounted his experience and provides his analysis of the ‘riots’:

David: I climbed up to the top of a very tall gum tree in our front yard to see what was happening all around [in Clairwood]. I became so afraid at seeing fights with sticks and knives and choppers in any direction I looked, that I lost my balance in the gum tree. I sustained serious bruises on my arms and legs as I fell through the branches. I didn’t fall all the way to the ground ... The scars from the injuries in that fall are still visible today on my legs ... In areas of businesses owned by different races, only the Indian businesses were selected for attack. At our home in Clairwood our grandmother would stand on the front verandah ... Since she had “pure” Coloured features, our home was not attacked. My grandfather worked as a chief interpreter in the Durban Courthouse. He saw corpses of white men who had blackened their faces to take part in the rioting, looting, raping and murders. The government report [on the riots] ... blamed the Indians and the foreign press for the riots. It was contemptuous of the Indians for not defending

themselves, describing them as “pathetically passive.” This criticism of a people’s reluctance to respond with criminal violence to criminal attacks was in accord with the widespread belief that the riots had been engineered by the white racist government in the hope that the South African Indians would retaliate, so giving the government a pretext to take drastic action against the Indians. It was well known that the government regarded all South African Indians as foreigners who had to be repatriated to India sooner or later.²⁹⁵

In a presidential address in June 1949 Monty Naicker stated, “The venom of anti-Indian propaganda, the preaching of race hatred from high places ... was bound sometime or other to throw the country into a racial conflagration.”²⁹⁶ Naicker implies that the anti-‘Indian’ discourse perpetuated by the media and the state climaxed in the violence that occurred. This was therefore the inevitability of propagating racial difference.

In line with Naicker’s arguments, Sam Kahn who was the ‘Native’ representative in the House of Assembly echoed this opinion in an article published in *The Mercury*:

Several hundred supporters of the Communist Party walked in procession today from the Grand Parade to Parliament House, where they were addressed in Parliament Street by Mr. Sam Kahn, M.P., Native Representative in the House of Assembly and its first Communist Member ... Responsibility for the recent riots in Durban rested with every Government that the Union had had for spreading doctrines of racial hatred. The people of South Africa must stand together and break down the system of apartheid which led to murder, arson and pillage.²⁹⁷

South African playwright Ronnie Govender argued too in 2012,

As Pallo Jordan observed in his Parliamentary office when we had a personal discussion of this shameful part of our history, this was a ‘pogrom’. I think that’s the word we should be using. The word ‘riot’ implies disorderly protest against authority. This was xenophobia at its worst, stoked by a threatened regime.²⁹⁸

A former President of the Institute of Race Relations when commenting on anti-‘Indian’ sentiment at that time noted, “Anti-Semitism in Europe is so like anti-Indian feeling in Natal that it would be possible for any Natalian to advance all the arguments of the anti-Semite without ever having seen a Jew” (quoted in Gell, 1951:435). This was further emphasised by evidence

²⁹⁵ Extracted from a book written by David on some of his life experiences during apartheid.

²⁹⁶ Monty Naicker Presidential Address June 1949 cited in Desai and Vahed (2010:232)

²⁹⁷ *The Mercury*, ‘Break Down Apartheid says Kahn’, 24 January 1949

²⁹⁸ *Post*, ‘The Aftermath of the Notorious 1949 Riots’, 19-23 December 2012

given to the Riot Commission by Maurice Webb on behalf of the South African Institute of Race Relations:

An important factor in the deterioration of the relations between Natives and Indians which led to the Durban riots was a hardening in June last year of the Government's attitude towards Indians, said Mr. Maurice Webb, who gave evidence on behalf of the South African Institute of Race Relations ... Durban, said Mr. Webb, had for more than a quarter of a century been the centre of anti-Asiatic feeling. This had been the attitude of the European for the Indian, but the Natives would not have been unaware of the feeling. The official Government attitude, however, as reflected in the Capetown Agreement of 1927 entered into by Dr. D.F. Malan as then Minister of the Interior, and Indian Government delegates, was that as many Indians as would accept repatriation would be sent back to India, but many of them were regarded as an integral part of the population of South Africa. This has been the attitude until June, 1948, when the Government attitude changed, and Indians were regarded as foreigners who should be sent out of the country. In recent months there had been added the statements of responsible Ministers expounding the Government's intention to repatriate Indians and declaring them to be a foreign element in the South African population. It was this change which had brought about the first signs of danger in Indo-African relations. During the sitting of the Broome Commission in 1947 Native witnesses had been fully cross-examined and no evidence had been given against Indians. "It is not to be wondered at," said Mr. Webb, "if the Natives' own rising sense of grievance and bitterness and frustration, came to be focused upon the Indian who became the scapegoat for their ills. We find here a sinister similarity between anti-Indianism, as it is being inculcated in South Africa, and the grim spectre of anti-Semitism as it was fostered in central Europe in the days of disillusion and inflation."²⁹⁹

The lawyers representing 'Indians' and 'Natives' at the Riot Commission wanted to argue along a similar line that the attacks were triggered by propaganda against 'Indians' that were spread, for many years, by the state. The Commission however refused to allow the cross-examination of witnesses by the lawyers representing the various organisations:

... Dr. Lowen said that he spoke on behalf of about 250,000 Indians in South Africa as well as thousands of Natives. He maintained that it was vital for the organisations to have the right of cross-examination. The organisations, he said, were not there to listen, but to disprove certain facts, and prove others ... We want to prove [he argued] that any overcharging that may have occurred was done by a small percentage of Indian traders, and that it certainly did not exceed in

²⁹⁹ *The Mercury*, 'Trouble was Mounting Before Riots', 23 February 1949

extent the overcharging by European traders. Also that those killed during the riots, or injured, were not merchants, but the poorest of the Indians. We want to prove that the basic causes of the riots were slum conditions for Indians and Natives alike, racial antagonism and racial hostility propagated for years by the previous Government, and by the new Government, the publicising of the Government's Indian policy in speeches about repatriation, and speeches by Ministers showing the Government's attitude towards Indians and made by Dr. Malan, Dr. Dönges, Mr. Schoeman, Mr. Swart and Dr. Jansen – and the attitude of the Press towards the Indians.” Mr Pather said that it seemed to his organisation that the decision not to allow cross-examination was a vital departure from the procedure followed by previous commissions.³⁰⁰

Here the lawyer wanted to prove that the xenophobic discourse towards ‘Indians’ was what prompted the attacks. However as a result of being unable to cross examine witnesses these organisations subsequently withdrew from the Riot Commission enquiry. *The Mercury* too ran an editorial agreeing with the refusal to allow cross examination, commenting that if cross examination was allowed then the commission would become “the heritage of our children”³⁰¹ implying that they wanted a quick sitting and a quick resolution to the commission of enquiry. This too suggests that the commission was a mere formality and that the urgency to get to the truth of the cause of the ‘riots’ was replaced by the need to hasten the proceedings and to affirm the argument of the state that the ‘riots’ was a result of ‘different’ ‘race groups’ residing together in the same area. The state then required *evidence* to show the volatility of ‘different’ peoples inhabiting the same space and developing together.

The xenophobic sentiments expressed in the testimony of the witnesses at the Riot Commission was also apparent. A witness during the commission, Alfred Mgobosi, stated (as reported in *The Mercury*):

... “The Prime Minister of India is always preaching to Africans and Indians, telling them how to form a ‘united front’ and, in their capacity as members, to oppose every measure passed by the Government. If the Indian in South Africa is going to receive instructions from India, why doesn’t he go home and leave us in peace? We don’t want to fight with the Europeans; our ancestors did and they were defeated.” ... Referring to a grievance arising out of over-charging and black marketing, the Chairman asked: “How is it if you are angry with traders and bus owners that you set out with pick handles to attack such people as labourers or waiters who also struggle to make a living?” Alfred: “If you go out and see a

³⁰⁰ *The Mercury*, ‘Cross-Examination Banned: Counsel May Withdraw from Riot Commission’, 18 February 1949

³⁰¹ *The Mercury*, ‘The Riots Commission’, 21 February 1949

rat you kill it; if you find a nest of young rats you kill them, because you know that in due course they will grow to worry you. That is why the Native kills the Indian's wife and his children" ...³⁰²

In line with this testimony, in an article entitled 'Indians and Natives Deny their Leaders', *The Mercury* published quotes from 'Natives' and 'Indians' which all expressed similar sentiments, i.e. that each 'group' wanted to live apart; that they did not want a 'pact' against a 'common foe' which they did not even know about; and that they distrusted each other but trusted the 'Europeans' to treat them well, "... we would rather look to Europeans for guidance".³⁰³ This may well have been the case; however the article reads like propaganda for the apartheid policy of separation and segregation. The article went on to state, "Natives, on the other hand, are equally insistent. They are race proud. They regard the Indians as foreigners and would prefer to live their own lives in their own areas, living and dealing with their own people."³⁰⁴ The Riot Commission proceedings and the report that stemmed from it as well as reportage from media outlets such as *The Mercury*, supported the governments version of the reasons behind the violence, in order to ultimately provide support for the separate development legislation that was to ensue.

So although the narrative of the '1949 riots' was portrayed in the English media and by the state as "communal battles among relatively primitive peoples"³⁰⁵ or "racial fighting"³⁰⁶, what was clearly apparent was that 'Indians' had become 'refugees' in the country of their birth. The images and the language used to portray the victims revealed scenes of helplessness and destitution, as reflected in the image below:

³⁰² *The Mercury*, 'Panic Among Indians: Appeal to Inquiry', 25 February 1949

³⁰³ *The Mercury*, 'Indians and Natives Deny their Leaders', 16 February 1949

³⁰⁴ *The Mercury*, 'Indians and Natives Deny their Leaders', 16 February 1949

³⁰⁵ *The Mercury*, "'Daily Telegraph' on the Riots", 17 January 1949

³⁰⁶ *The Mercury*, 'Tense Peace Broods Over Riot Areas: Patrols Fire on Isolated Prowlers – Death-roll Now 105; 1,000 Injured', 17 January 1949



Image 6.2: *The Mercury*, 'Refugees Find Peace in Cowshed Sanctuary, 17 January 1949

Thousands of frightened, beaten and bewildered Indians are flocking to the refugee stations in Durban. Who is to care for them, where they are to go, how they are to be fed, what arrangements can be made for sanitation and shelter? These are questions facing authorities already busy with the organization for quelling the fighting, looting and burning ... Facilities in most of the camps are bare essentials. The women and children, and many men, cluster on the grass ... A family squats on the grass with its pitiful bundles in wisps of cloth - all that remains of a home or a business ... The biggest refugee camps are at Wentworth (7,000), Clairwood (6,000) and Malvern and Cato Manor (2,000) each.³⁰⁷

And,

³⁰⁷ *The Mercury*, 'Long, long Trail of Refugees', 17 January 1949



Image 6.3: *The Mercury*, ‘The Pathetic Aftermath of Terror’, 17 January 1949

The aftermath of the ‘riot’ left not only the media debating issues of where people should live, but also had politicians in a frenzy over what was to be done, and the countless proposals that were put forward all had the common thread of separation:

Townships for Indians and Natives with the whole Cato Manor set aside for the Native population was suggested by Councillor M. Spanier Marson yesterday. Mr. Marson, who is vice-chairman of the Native Administration Committee of the Durban City Council, was recently the Council delegate to the Race Relations Conference held in Capetown ... He was of the opinion that the Natives should have a large measure of control in their own town areas, which would come under Council authority. He thought that the Natives should have their own bus service owned and operated by themselves. The time had arrived when theory must give way to practical suggestions. Native villages must be provided and they must have proper houses, schools, trading stores and various amenities for the Natives. He considered that the Council should in future take more notice of the Native advisory boards.³⁰⁸

And,

³⁰⁸ *The Mercury*, ‘Indian and Native towns urged’, 25 January 1949

Speaking at a Provincial Council election meeting at Boston, Mr. A. Ingle, United Party candidate for Umvoti, expressed his regret that party politics should have to enter the coming election to the extent they had ... In reply to a question about the Indian problem, Mr. Ingle said that he was in favour of segregation. He supported the Pegging Act, and would if possible implement it still further. Trading licenses should be granted to Indians only where they served an Indian community, to Africans where they served Africans, and to Europeans in European Areas. A vote of full confidence in Mr. Ingle was proposed and unanimously carried.³⁰⁹

The United Party was considered by its own claim to be a liberal organisation however it nevertheless advocated for discriminatory measures. A self-confessed 'liberal' wrote an article in *The Mercury* and attempted to explain who liberals were and what they represented. According to the writer, liberalism was relative and the writer argued further that 'black' people and 'Indian' people were to be treated as human beings but different to Europeans in a racial hierarchy of humans with 'whites' being at the top. In addition, they should be given basic amenities but in their own areas, as the extract below reveals:

I am a Liberal – or so it is said; a Liberal whatever that may mean. For in South Africa a Liberal has a variety of meanings, ranging from Communist to United Party member. Anyone who works for co-operation and greater harmony between the races is liable to be dubbed Liberal-Communist, particularly if in the races is included the Black men. To regard them as human beings is surely to brand oneself un-South African, negrophile, kafir-boetjie, Communist ... Anyway I fall into some grade or other of Liberals, because I believe that Black men are human beings ... I am under no misapprehension about the inferior status of Black men (I am a South African!); I do not for a moment think of political equality for them, and far less of social equality. Indeed I should hate the latter – Black men smell, even the cleanest of them ... Cleanliness, tidiness, order and arrangement are not the Black man's predominating characteristics and he does not fit into our social order ... Let us first consider the Indian – crafty fellow, innately dishonest in business, a confirmed perjurer ... Unless and until he learns to conduct himself in his public life according to Western standards, the Indian cannot expect to take that part in government for which he contends ... He is entitled on land to which to live, but let him live among his fellows ... Coming now to the Native – he is mentally a savage – as witness (sic) the recent disturbances in Durban, the tribal clashes, the ritual murders, the ready resort to assegai or sticks; only a very few Natives can claim to be not savages at heart ...³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ *The Mercury*, 'U.P. Candidate Favours Indian segregation in Union', 7 February 1949

³¹⁰ *The Mercury*, 'Confessions of a Liberal: His Approach to Racial Problems', 11 February 1949

Evident yet again was the stereotyping of ‘Indian’ and ‘black’ people, with an emphasis once more on innate characteristics that rendered ‘Indians’ unassimilable. Conforming to ‘Western’, standards which included dress, fluency in English and the like, all of which were considered to make people superior and civilised, would allow the ‘Indian’ to be more acceptable in society.

This discourse of ‘Indians’ as foreign and also as a threat because of their growing numbers which would mean the economic ruin of ‘white’ people in South Africa, was constantly perpetuated by politicians and the media alike. For example, feeding into the notions of ‘Indian swamp’, a newspaper article headline in 1949 read, “Durban 50 Years Hence: 2 Indians to 1 European”.³¹¹ However the actual lived reality of ‘Indians’ in South Africa was a far cry from the public discourse of all of them as wealthy merchants. According to the ‘Mayor’s Minute’ published in 1951, the causes of death in Durban for Europeans and ‘Indians’ were stipulated as follows (Logue, 1956:7):

Causes of Death	European	Indian
Broncho-pneumonia	26	256
Diarrhoea and enteritis	9	145
Tuberculosis	35	163

Table 6.1: Causes of Deaths in Durban 1951

In addition the statistics on infantile deaths in Durban in 1951 revealed that 653 ‘Indian’ babies had died in infancy as opposed to 88 ‘European’ babies. According to Logue (1956:8), the stark difference in the health of these two groups who were approximately the same numerically,³¹² suggested that poverty amongst ‘Indians’ was the number one cause of these figures. This suggests then, the construction of all ‘Indians’ by the media and the state as economic threat to ‘white’ people was invalid.

³¹¹ *The Mercury*, ‘Durban 50 Years Hence: 2 Indians to 1 European’, 7 February 1949

³¹² According to the figures of census taken by the Union Government in 1951, ‘whites’ numbered 131,430 and ‘Indians’ numbered 145,744 (N.I.C. Secretarial Report on the Group Areas Act. Source: N.I.C. Agenda Book, Durban Conference, 21-23 November 1958, S.S. Singh Collection in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:213-216)).

6.4 The Group Areas Act – ‘*With every footstep echoed so many memories of my years...*’³¹³

The consequences of the 1949 ‘riot’ as well as the debates on segregation that ensued, prompted greater collaboration between the NIC and ANC which began with joint calls for an end to the violence:

Appeals to both Indian and Native workers to maintain order and to do everything in their power to prevent further disorders were broadcast over the S.A.B.C. station at Durban yesterday. The appeals were issued jointly by both the Natal Indian Congress and the African National Congress and called upon both Indians and Natives to avoid congregating in the streets and public places and to remain indoors as far as possible ... The joint appeal also called on both Indians and Natives to assist in trying to discourage wild and false talk which is said to have started the trouble.³¹⁴

The debates on segregation however did not cease but culminated in the passing of the Group Areas Act of 1950 (GAA). It has often been argued that this Act caused the greatest amount of damage to South African society, with its effects still being felt to the present day. Many argued that the purpose of the Group Areas Act was to ‘ruin’ the ‘Indians’ in South Africa and force them to repatriate. W.A Maree, who eventually became the Minister of Indian Affairs, was reported in 1956 to have said, “After the effects of the Group Areas Act had been felt, Indians would be only too pleased to get out of S.A.”³¹⁵

What facilitated the implementation of this Act however was the passing of the Population Registration Act (PRA) of 1950. The purpose of this act was to provide a register of everyone in the country according to ‘race’. The ‘race group’ that each person was assigned then became their “official classification” in the eyes of the state and thus all other resources pertaining to that ‘race’ applied (Christopher, 2002:405). This act then was tied to the GAA as both worked together to govern where individuals could live, as the Group Areas Act allowed for the creation of residential spaces for each ‘race’/population group. According to Christopher (2002:405), the

³¹³ Farhana (*Family 4*)

³¹⁴ *The Mercury*, ‘Stay at Home Appeal’, 15 January 1949

³¹⁵ *Natal Witness*, ‘NT’, 23 June 1956

classification system reflected the divisions used by the state since 1911 which initially included only three racial classifications namely, European or ‘white’, ‘bantu’ or ‘native’, and ‘coloured’ (Christopher, 2009:104). The ‘coloured’ category was further subdivided into “... Indian, Chinese, Cape Malay and Griqua sub groups in addition to the basic Cape Coloured group.” (Christopher, 2002:405). West (1988) argues that the term ‘population group’ was created by the Apartheid government for its use in its programs of governance and was unique to South Africa. What made this racial classification system even more pronounced was the fixing of cultural attributes to each ‘race’ to provide cultural descriptions of each ‘race’, and along with that, ethnic stereotypes (Posel, 2001:53).

Hockey et al (2005:12) maintain that,

Birds can be classified in many ways – by size, shape, colour or even palatability – but biologists strive to classify organisms in a hierarchy that reflects their evolutionary relationships. Such a natural classification has to be inferred from the pattern of shared derived characters ...

In much of a similar way, these imagined shared characteristics of ‘Indians’ was perpetuated via discourse and entrenched through legislation. As Posel argues (2001:53) “Race, in their view, was a judgment about ‘social standing’, made on the strength of prevailing social conventions about difference.” ‘Race’ during apartheid, and because of apartheid’s programmes, according to Posel (2001:53) was distinguishable by both biology and culture, which were interchangeable to the apartheid government. ‘Indians’ then were viewed as ‘Indians’ biologically and culturally and thus inferior in a hierarchy of racial superiority. And as Balibar and Wallerstein (1991:228) point out, although ‘race’ is continually being constructed it can become solidified and ‘meaningful’ for the people who appropriate the classification. The stereotypes then became essential characteristics in the minds of people. The categories created by the government *required* people to abide by it and identify as such in order to receive services and resources. Government policies, or the official discourse, then filtered down to the formal, and informal settings and became part of the discourse in every sphere of society, from employment and education to family life. These discourses then offered to individuals meanings and identifications in the construction of their identity (Siebers, 2004:90).

For example, Daniel, from *Family I*, who was 46 years old at the time of the interview, recalls how, he was forced to accept the category 'Indian' as it was prescribed by the state, but also continually reiterated by colleagues and society at large. This quote was used in Chapter Two, but it bears repeating here as it illustrates a different argument:

Daniel: They want you to be an Indian ... When you say no I am not an Indian, or I am a South African or something, they tend to think I don't know, in my mind, they tend to think that you are trying to like identify with their culture ... You must *be* an Indian and you must *know* you are an Indian ... That is what I experience ... Its starts to dawn upon me that when you make them know that you are Indian and they seem to prefer it that way, that hey you are an Indian and that is it ...

W.E.B Du Bois (1903:3) describes this as a “ ... double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others ... One ever feels his two-ness ... two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body.” Similarly Mazzucato (2004:145) argues that often categories created for 'official' purposes are assumed by the groups themselves and identify, or are forced to identify, as in the case of Daniel as the category created for them. Mazzucato (2004:144) states:

As said, popular categories, even if they originate as administrative devices, do have consequences for the way in which the political debate is structured. While the isolation effect leads to the constitution of the public self (undifferentiated public) (the citizen, the foreigner, the guest worker, the alien) under the impact of given categorization devices, the identification effect leads to the internalization of these devices and hence to the constitution of the 'private' self.

Billington et al (1998:50) contend further that people play roles which are ultimately appropriated by them, how they view themselves and how others view them. In turn Giddens (1991:244) explains identity construction as a “reflexive” process “ ...whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives.” The individual's identity construction then is contingent upon the social context and the position of the individual in society in relation to the 'others' he/she is in contact with. The legislation promulgated by the state, such as the PRA and the GAA contributed to a society that forced people to think and behave along racial lines, leaving little or no room for change.

As mentioned earlier, the GAA however not only separated ‘races’ but many believed its main purpose was to force ‘Indians’ to repatriate by taking away from them prime property for trade and residence and thus creating economic devastation. This purpose however was widely known and was not made secret by the state. For example, Alan Paton (1958) in writing about the effects of the GAA on ‘Indians’ in 1958 wrote the following:

The first proclamations under the Group Areas Act have just been published in Durban ... There are Indian settlements in Durban known as Prospect Hall and Riverside. The first Indians settled there in 1865. There was no one else there. Now 93 years later they are to be moved. There is provision for compensation, and this is what is most feared. The authorities will attach a “basic value” to the properties after hearing representations from both the owner and the Board. From this decision there is no appeal. Was the Group Areas Act intended to cripple the Indian population? Or was it intended, as Dr. Dönges said in the House, to be carried out with justice to all? Let the facts speak for themselves. Soon after the Nationalist Government came into power, the Land Tenure Act Amendment Committee and the Asiatic Land Tenure Laws Amendment Committee met together to collect evidence and produce a Joint Report, U.G. 49 of 1950. One of the passages of this report will never be forgotten. It read: *‘Before starting our recommendations we feel that reference should be made to one matter which, strictly speaking, falls outside our terms of reference but which is so clearly associated in the public mind with the Asiatic question that it has a determining influence on the evidence tendered to us and accordingly also on recommendations based on such evidence, and that is the possibility of repatriating the Asiatic from South Africa. There appears to be an ever-growing belief in the public mind that the only satisfactory solution of the Asiatic question is repatriation, and whatever is done by legislation should be such as not to endanger the possibility of repatriation and deprive the public of its most cherished hopes. The fundamental theme of the evidence throughout the years has been and still is “repatriation, or, failing which, compulsory segregation”. In the most recent evidence there is noticeable a distinct tendency for this theme to assume the form of repatriation and, pending which, compulsory segregation with boycott to induce repatriation.’* Mr. W.A. Maree, M.P., leader of the Nationalist Party in Natal, speaking at Newcastle in 1956, said “the Indians would be only too pleased to get out of South Africa after the effects of the Group Areas Act had been felt.” Mr. Theo Gerdner, M.P.C., speaking at Port Elizabeth in January 1956, anticipated the time when the Group Areas Act would restrict Indian traders to Indian trade. Mr. V.G. Hiemstra, Q.C., appearing for the Municipality at White River, said of Dr. G. Lowen, Q.C, who was appearing for the Indian community: “My learned friend has been studying the Act to find a provision stating that the Indians must be moved outside the town. Well, he will not find it inside the Act but will find it outside the Act. It lies in the fact that the Act was passed at all.” No one should have been in any doubt as to the purpose of the Act. It was

intended to cripple the Indian community. It was intended to cripple people who had been brought to the country to assist in its development, people who in two years' time will be celebrating the centenary of their arrival, and who have a record of industry and law-abidingness second to none. ... This is the Act which, said Dr Dönges, was to be carried out with justice to all. No good will come of this, only suffering, grief and bitterness. There is no common good worth pursuing that allows individual persons to be broken. Who blackens the name of South Africa abroad? Those who protest against this evil law, or those who made it? It is a sign of our corruption that we can even debate such a question.

The actual economic effect of the GAA was quantified in a NIC secretarial report in 1958, as the following extract from the report reveals:

... It is essential that at this conference we place on record the devastating effects of the proclamation affecting Durban. According to the figures of census taken by the Union Government in 1951 the population of Durban was as follows:

Indians	145,744
Africans	132,841
Whites	131,430
Coloureds	16,104

The position in respect of landholdings for Durban is as follows:

	Acres	Value
Total area of Durban	39,732	£178,645,960
Owned by Government and local Authorities (all white)	12,885	£40,113,620
White-owned	16,419	£113,879,100
Indian-owned	10,323	£24,541,061
African and Coloured-owned	105	£90,000

It will thus be noted that of all the non-white groups Indians own a substantial area of Durban ... It is our contention that one of the aims which the Group Areas Act seeks to achieve is to destroy the Indian people in the economic field, make them also a reservoir of cheap labour and coerce them to expatriate from the Union of South Africa ... In the Union Parliament Dr. Dönges, replying to a question as to the estimated number of persons who would eventually have to be moved from their homes and premises in Durban as a result of the proclamation of June 6th, said that based on the 1951 Census the approximate numbers were as follows: Indians 75,000 Coloureds 8,500 Whites 1,000 ... It would not be an exaggeration to state that there is a move to make Durban an all-white city by expelling from its boundaries more than 200,000 of its non-white citizens ... Taking into account the present-day market value of the properties affected it is estimated that Indians in Durban stand to lose over £30,000,000 under the

proposed race-zoning plans. It has been estimated that if the zoning plans of the Durban City Council are fully implemented 35 Indian schools with an enrolment of 8,771 pupils will be uprooted. This will have devastating effect on Indian education in Durban, a city where already about 10,000 Indian children are without any schools whatsoever because of the policy of racial discrimination in the educational field ... Thousands of Indian businesses in Durban will be ruined as a result of the proclamation. It is not possible at present to estimate fully the total losses which Indian commerce will suffer in Durban with the city completely zoned under the Group Areas Act ... Not only are businesses and homes affected but also mosques, temples and churches ... The Group Areas Act in respect of these places of worship violates the fundamental principle of religious freedom. The proclamation of June 6th has the immediate effect of making large areas owned and occupied by our people in and around Durban immediate Group Areas for white ownership ... ³¹⁶

Despite the fact that the state argued that the GAA would be applied with justice for all, as the above reveals, 'Indian' and 'coloured' people suffered most extensively as 'groups' and the biggest losses in terms of money and property. In addition 'Indian' traders too were crippled by the GAA and had to wait for long periods of time, from the time they were removed, to be relocated to trade in a new area (Maasdorp and Pillay (1977:181). Evidence for this was provided in the parliamentary debates where it was revealed that by the end of 1976, of the 5,078 'Indian' traders only 1,678 had been resettled in areas set aside for 'Indian' trade. In comparison only 81 'white' and 329 'coloured' traders had been required to relocate (Maasdorp and Pillay, 1977:181). 'Indian' traders were thus the most affected of all traders by the GAA. Moodley (1975:263) argued that the GAA was indeed the " ... most severe piece of legislation to affect Indians ...".

The effect of the GAA however could not be measured merely by the loss of property and market share. The emotional and psychological effect of having property 'taken' away was immense. Ahmed Kathrada (2004:284), in his autobiography, writes about this trying time in his family's life:

Under the Group Areas Act, the part of Schweizer-Reneke where our shop and the house where I was born stood, was declared 'white'. My brothers received a mere pittance in compensation, and were removed to an undeveloped Indian suburb on the outskirts of the town. My brother Ismail put on a brave face, but I knew

³¹⁶ N.I.C. Secretarial Report on the Group Areas Act. Source: N.I.C. Agenda Book, Durban Conference, 21-23 November 1958, S.S. Singh Collection in Bhana and Pachai (eds) (1984:213-216)

instinctively that he was going through a traumatic experience. So many memories, good and bad, were rooted in that property, yet the buildings were simply razed to the ground.

Devi Rajab (1999:38), an academic and columnist in a daily newspaper, wrote of her father's last words on his deathbed:

My father died last week after a short illness ... there was one lucid strain that he repeatedly mentioned with much emotion which I jotted down. "The South African government owes me an apology. They took away my property. They must say sorry. I was right and they were wrong ... They must write it in bold print ..." How deeply imbedded is a sense of injustice that it took so long to unfold!³¹⁷

The feeling of being violated by having possessions removed by force, not having the right to live wherever he pleased, and of complete and utter helplessness is evident from the above extract. Unlike the common perception that 'Indians' when faced with this circumstance would 'return' to India, 90 percent had been born in the country so there was no other place to go to, and they could not 'return' because they had not 'arrived' from India, to begin with.

In order to enforce the GAA, existing communities, some integrated with different population groups living side by side, had to be forcibly broken up and the families relocated to the residential area set aside for their population group. According to Durrheim et al (2011:4), "... It broke community and spiritual ties, fragmented families, and irrevocably changed peoples means of subsistence and ways of life". Sharm Iyer from *Family 2* recalled his experiences of the GAA when he had to move from Mayville to Chatsworth, and stated:

Sharm: ... they gave us a letter, "Here is a house for you move". Then we had to move to that place, that's all ... we can't do anything. And we moved from a nice place, we had nice land, nice black soil ... We could plant mielies, flowers. We had beautiful land. We had a jackfruit tree, madoni tree³¹⁸, mango trees, guava trees, all kinds of flowers. Everything was there. Here you see *nothing*. You see only people around.

³¹⁷ The articles that appear in this publication are a collection of Devi Rajab's columns, entitled Devi's Diary, which appeared in *The Mercury* between 1996 and 1999.

³¹⁸ Madoni in South Africa refers to a violet coloured, seasonal fruit known elsewhere as Jamun fruit.

In line with this, Abdul, from *Family 4*, commented on how livelihoods through market gardening were also eroded:

Abdul: ... you know Durban North? That whole area was Indian, it's got very good soil there, all market gardening was done there. And they just got rid of them and they virtually gave their things away to the Nats [referring to the NP], they virtually gave it away. You will find that a lot of roads have got Afrikaner names, still, like where the Pick n Pay is, Waterkant Road.

Farhana, also from *Family 4*, who was in high school during this time recalls:

Farhana: I remember it was the group areas ... and I remember writing a poem about being forcibly removed from there. It was when I was in high school so we had to literally pack everything because the other flats were deserted and you had vagrants coming in there. For a big family, we had a double flat in Umgeni Road. Then we moved to a three bedroom flat in Overport.

KP: And what was it like, during that time of the forced removals?

Farhana: Very sad, because the thing is you know ... it was so convenient we were just outside town and my dad had a shop in Cross Street, the school was in Cathedral Road and we lived in Umgeni Road, so to go up to West Road, Overport, it was like rushing in the morning, it was hectic. At that time I was going to high school. We stayed there for a few years, I know my sister got married from there. It was like so cramped compared to the space we were used to. And then subsequently my dad bought a house in Reservoir Hills which was more travelling even though it was regarded as very upmarket you know. But the convenience was gone and to get up early and to travel to town was not so nice.

KP: And how were your parents, what were their emotions like when they had to leave Umgeni Road?

Farhana: Very sad because the thing is we had some very nice neighbours there. There was that old Kismet Dry Cleaners and they had the whole flat upstairs for years ... and we had a fantastic relationship. And then there was the Damjees Building there owned by the Damjee Jeweller brothers, Popatlall-Kara's was also in Umgeni Road. And Popatlall Kara's didn't only sell saries and things, they use to sell toys. I used to buy my toys from Popatlall Kara's ... and there was a Mr. Bux butchery downstairs, we had a lovely, you know everything was there and then you go somewhere like Reservoir Hills, there is up to now, there hasn't been a shopping centre there. So it was if you want anything, you get it from town. And then my dad and me used to come on Saturday afternoon after closing that store, he would do the vegetable shopping I think in First Avenue or something and now when they moved to Reservoir Hills we use to stop on Sparks Road and obviously buy all your veggies and things. So it did change our lifestyle quite a bit. In Umgeni Road, you use to have the ladies coming through with baskets and they sell mangos and veggies and we use to have like the bahgie-aunty came and the

mango ladies. They use to come to our door step. You knew there was a jarring change in your life. And that was quite upsetting because I remember writing a poem ‘with every footstep echoed so many memories of my years’ I must find it one day.

The Separate Amenities Act, very much like the GAA, legislated amenities such as beaches, toilets, parks, buses and the like, for the exclusive use of particular ‘races’. Abdul from *Family 4* recalled his lived experiences restricted by apartheid legislation:

Abdul: I am going to use some bad words, but after I was married, I had three children, two boys and a girl, and we use to take a walk around West Street. And in the corner you buy ice creams for the kids and you take a walk. And the benches are there and they are written ‘whites only’. What do kids know? They go and sit on the bench. And you find a well-dressed white guy coming along and tell you, and I am going to use something that you can record me if you want, ‘fuck off coolie’. And [now] the same guy wants to make you forget. I have forgiven him, but I haven’t forgotten.

Similarly Farhana recalls her experiences:

Farhana: ... we used to go to the Indian beach ... We were never allowed by the white beaches right. I remember feeding the seagulls ... and coming home with toffee apples. But it was always the Indian beach, right by Sunkist ... And you knew there was a *white area* and there were *white benches* marked ‘net-blankes’. Ja I remember that, so we were aware of that, yes. Also when we walked in town, we weren’t allowed to live in this area right so we never lived here [referring to where she currently resides in Durban’s North Beach area] ... but we grew up knowing that we were not allowed *everywhere*. We knew that certain things are for whites only. And you grew up with that and only when I went to varsity did I realise how *big* the thing is [referring to apartheid], when I went to UDW ... there was a lot of boycotts and things and my parents said don’t get involved in politics, you are going there to study ... The other thing was when I was in Grahamstown I wanted to study at Rhodes University ... in 1980 ... I had to apply to the Minister of Interior to get permission to attend Rhodes University!

The vulnerability felt by the majority of ‘Indian’ families in terms of poverty and merely surviving day to day, and also for the somewhat more ‘well off’ families like Farhana’s who owned businesses and had arrived as merchants, was to keep their distance from politics to survive on another level as citizens of the country and to not draw attention to themselves.

Mogie too, from *Family 5*, discussed how even the farm at Baynesfield was not exempt from the Separate Amenities Act or GAA:

Mogie: We were in Baynesfield but it was also there ... because certain areas, certain sections was only for the whites you know, we couldn't enter there. And it was all over, whether you were in Baynesfield or what I think it still affected, which ever area you were ... it did affect a lot. I remember clearly even when we were taken to the beach or to the dam we were like, you know, we were totally barred out you are not allowed in this section or you are not allowed to use that toilet and things like that.

This emphasis on racial differences and on the superiority of being 'white', and the allocation of resources based on 'race' became so entrenched that 'becoming white' if one could was coveted. The people who could 'become white' by reclassification, or pass for 'white' where generally fair-skinned 'coloured' people who fit the description of what it meant to be 'white' according to the PRA. According to the PRA (quoted in Posel, 2001:56):

A white person is one who in appearance is, or who is generally accepted as, a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a Coloured person ...

The phrasing of this definition implied that if a person could 'prove' that they were generally accepted as 'white' in addition to their skin colour then they could be re-classified as 'white'. Re-classification was a legitimate process that occurred in apartheid South Africa.³¹⁹ Although this *process* revealed the falsity of the apartheid government's notions of 'race' based on biology and culture, their philosophy nevertheless endured.

Jane, from *Family 1*, who, as discussed in the previous chapter, grappled with her identity in terms of appearing 'Indian', and being classified as such, but being raised by a 'coloured' mother and identifying herself as 'coloured' growing up, discussed how her 'coloured' family began to distance themselves from her once she married an 'Indian' man and moved to the 'Indian' area of Chatsworth. She stated:

³¹⁹ For more on re-classification in South Africa during apartheid see Erasmus (2007).

Jane: ... that's why we used to stay away from there, because they didn't want to know their black relatives ... They are coloureds ... but they don't want to be known as that so they pretend to be whites. We used to call them play whites. The coloureds themselves called them play whites ... And you see the bus the double decker bus only the whites sit at the bottom and so these [play] whites can go sit at the bottom

KP: And did they live in the white designated areas?

Jane: Ja

KP: And so Nathan [Jane's cousin] married a 'play white' and lived like a white person?

Jane: Ja he was supposed to be like a white man because he had the features and all you know fair, cos my granny was like a white lady, she looked like a white lady

In some cases, people did not go through the channels of 'becoming white', but 'played white' in that they were able to access resources indirectly by pretending to be 'white', resources such as, as Jane recounts, preferential seats on the bus, to gain advantages that 'white' people had.

What these acts effectively did then was to entrench and legitimise racial silos. By forcing people who looked similar and who the state believed shared certain belief systems and 'traditions' into contained spaces.³²⁰ To the ruling party 'Indian' was more than just a population group, it represented also a nationality, and implied that South Africans of Indian descent 'actually belonged' elsewhere. It therefore categorised indiscriminately everyone who came from the sub-continent, India or elsewhere, as 'Indians'. Percy Osborne, the mayor of Durban in the 1950s, bragged that the boroughs of Durban had been implementing segregation policies prior to the passing of the GAA and even before the National Party came into office. He argued further that that the Group Areas Act was, "the lifeline whereby the European City of Durban will be saved" (quoted in Maharaj, 1997). The implication was that 'non-whites', referring specifically to 'Indians', were destroying the 'whiteness' of the city centre and the suburbs by purchasing land in these areas. In addition the Pegging Act which was introduced years before was seen to be ineffective in curbing this 'problem'. The GAA however would assist in resolving the issue once and for all.

³²⁰ This was also evident when descendants of freed African slaves from Zanzibar who were settled in Kings Rest on the Bluff in Natal by the British, were relocated to Chatsworth during the forced removals. Due to the fact that they were Muslim, the government believed they shared a commonality with 'Indians' as opposed to 'black' South Africans.

As a result of the GAA, the group area of Chatsworth was commissioned and created to serve as a residential area for 'Indians'. At present, it is said to house the largest number of 'Indians' in South Africa, and thousands of families who had been forcibly removed from their homes were relocated to this township which consisted of "tightly packed, semidetached apartments" (Bhana, 2001:407). According to Freund (1995:73) Chatsworth, which was made available for residential dwelling in 1964 was made up of 11 'neighbourhood units' which comprised 21,000 houses. Chatsworth was deliberately situated between Umlazi, which was the township developed for African residential accommodation and the 'white' residential zones. It was thus created as a 'buffer' to diminish the danger on 'white' residents if conflict arose from African people.

Although 'Indian' people were heterogeneous in terms of religion, original language, class, etc, as discussed in the previous chapter, the creation of these exclusively 'Indian' locations to house only South Africans of Indian descent, further entrenched the construction of 'Indians' as a homogenous group. Relationships with people assigned to other 'race groups' were limited as everything from education to hospitals were segregated along these lines. As Brah (1996:168) argues, one of the fundamental features of racism and discrimination is the emphasis on "...cultural difference as the primary signifier of a supposed immutable boundary: a view of the Asian as the 'alien' *par excellence*, the ultimate 'Other'". This was evident in the political speeches and public discourse where 'Indians' were continuously constructed as foreign and 'alien' and it was often stated that they should only be allowed "guest rights" albeit in the country of their birth (Maasdorp and Pillay 1977:95).

The National Party election manifesto in 1948 clearly reflected this position, stating that,

The party holds the view that Indians are a foreign and outlandish element which is unassimilable. They can never become part of the country and must therefore be treated as an immigrant community. The party accepts as the basis of its policy the repatriation of as many Indians as possible and proposes a proper investigation into the practicability of such a policy on a large scale in cooperation with India and other countries. (quoted in Dadoo and Cachalia, 1952)

'Created' difference assisted the apartheid state to maintain the status quo. They used fear of inter-group conflict to maintain the divisions between the population groups that it had devised.

When the GAA was introduced to parliament in June 1950, T.E. Dönges the Minister of Home Affairs stated,

Now, this, as I say, is designed to eliminate friction between the races in the Union, because we believe, and believe strongly, that points of contact-between the races must be avoided. If you reduce the number of the points of contact to a minimum, you reduce the possibility of friction ... The result of putting people of different races together is to cause racial trouble ... (quoted in Western, 1984)

The apartheid state inevitably prescribed the identity choices of South Africans by legislating and *defining* population groups. In addition, by fostering a fear of the ‘other’ and creating a racial hierarchy through numerous pieces of legislation, South Africans were forced, legislatively, to remain in *their* ‘rung’ on the ladder of ‘race’ and resources. The state in effect told people, in these ‘race’ groups, *who* they were, *what* they should be, how they should be educated and what jobs they would eventually be employed in. This system not only encouraged allegiance to a ‘race group’ but in turn bred hostility between groups due to the hierarchy of privileges that it created.

Experiences of these differences, perpetuated by the apartheid state, were evident in the daily lives of individuals. According to David from *Family 1*, prior to being evicted from an area designated by the GAA as ‘whites only’, he and his family lived in Fynnland on the Bluff with ‘white’ neighbours. He recalls:

David: In Fynnland we were subjected to all the petty spitefulness that racist whites were allowed and encouraged in by the law of the land. If a white person approached us on the pavement ... we had to walk on the road itself ... carrying a basket of groceries on the streets of Fynnland was always a risk. White children would grab items from the basket to throw back at the non-white bearer ... Petra [a ‘white’ child] boldly walked into our yard with a box of toys and said her mother said she could come and play ... Children throw tantrums. Children do not like to lose. Children get hurt during play. If Petra was made unhappy, there was no telling what her mother’s mood might change to. [So] the games [we played] were ridiculous. My mother ordered my brothers not to touch Petra at any time, to let her win every time, not to throw anything to or at her. Whenever she threw a tantrum everyone ran for cover. My mother watched over all the games ... We set up a Petra watch. When she was at her home, we played no yard games ... While Petra’s mother was comfortable with her daughter playing with non-European

children, some of the other white neighbours were not. Our uneasiness worsened as the peerings of white neighbours became more and more overt. On a number of occasions, we had to explain Petra's presence to whites who came storming into our yard for an explanation ... A little over a year after Petra's visits had begun, we were evicted ...³²¹

Thus, the differences between people, were propagated by the state, and enforced by the 'citizens' who supported the status quo. The GAA for example, had the full support from the majority of the 'white' electorate. An opinion poll conducted in Durban in 1975 for the *Daily News* provides evidence of this, see Table 6.2 below, by indicating where 'white' people preferred other 'race' groups to live, for example from the table below only 5 percent indicated that 'Indians' should 'Live wherever they please' while the majority preferred some type of separate residential spaces.

	Indian	Coloured	African
Live in separate towns	26	22	29
Live in separate suburbs	39	40	33
Live in White Towns as temporary workers only	19	25	28
Live in same suburbs	5	4	3
Live wherever they please	5	3	3
No opinion/refused	6	6	4
TOTAL	100	100	100

Table 6.2: Percentage Distribution of White Attitudes Towards Black Residential Patterns, Opinion Poll conducted by Market Research Africa for the *Daily News*, Durban, 7 August 1975

Although the government vehemently argued that it was 'natural' for the different racial groups to want to live apart, the 'Indian' politicians however argued that if a natural instinct to separate did exist then there was no need to enforce separation by means of legislation (Maasdorp and Pillay, 1977:162).

As stated earlier, the GAA not only affected residential location but also education. Although education was segregated from before the act was passed the GAA formally legislated it. Such segregation was apparent at all levels of education including the tertiary level as evidenced by the following extract published in *The Mercury* in 1949:

³²¹ Extracted from a book written by David on some of his experiences during apartheid.

An academic procession in the full regalia of robe and gown will be staged in Durban from Broad Street to the City Hall on the morning of March 19 as part of the ceremony planned to celebrate the granting of full status to the University of Natal ... On arrival in the City Hall, where the non-Europeans will occupy the top-gallery, the University anthem will be sung and General Smuts will deliver an address. In the afternoon a garden party will be given at Howard College. Non-European students will hold a similar function at Sastri College. Functions during the week include a ball at the Durban City Hall on March 18 (non-European students will hold a special dance at Sastri College that night) ...³²²

It was not just academically that students at educational institutions were segregated, but also socially. Sastri College, the university for 'non-European' students, the vast majority of whom were 'Indian', was described by Kader Hassim (2002) in an interview for the Voices of Resistance Project. He stated:

... The "university" was situated at the back of Sastri College. It consisted of a small office, a well-furnished common room for the lecturers; an ill-furnished, flea-infested common room for the black students. We had a library, which we used to call "two-by-two" ... a tiny library and there was a prefab building. That was Natal University Non-European Section. Sum total of it! ... I spent six years at Natal University and only went twice to Howard College ...

Sastri College, mentioned above, was the product of an experiment undertaken at Natal University College to keep 'black' students and 'white' students at the same university studying the same material with the same teachers except at different locations. Dr. E.G. Malherbe who discussed this experiment in 1948 however describes a different picture of Sastri College to the one provided by Hassim above:

The policy of Natal University College on the question of provision for non-Europeans was "a plan which avoids most of the weaknesses of the 'mixed' university on the one hand and of the completely segregated 'nigger' university on the other," said the Principal of Natal University College, Dr. E.G. Malherbe, giving evidence before the Select Committee on the University of Natal (Private) Bill. Dr. Malherbe said that in view of the fact that Natal University College's experiment of handling the higher education of non-Europeans was somewhat unique, it might be well to explain how the policy operated in practice and how it differed from that obtaining (sic) in the so-called mixed Universities of the Witwatersrand and Capetown. The present number of about 300 non-European

³²² *The Mercury*, 'Academic Procession in Durban', 12 February 1949

students had grown from a bare dozen ten years ago when the Natal University College agreed to provide higher education for non-Europeans on condition that they were taught separately. This condition was accepted by the non-Europeans, then nearly all Indians. They were taught by the same staff as taught the European students, but in a different part of the city. They sat for the same examinations and attained the same diplomas and degrees as were attained by the European students. They had their own common room which was much better furnished than even some of the staff common rooms in the European section of the college. They had their own well-appointed library, staffed by a qualified non-European librarian, enabling them to participate in the whole college library. Instead of earmarking only a few special lecturers to lecture exclusively to non-European students, the various departments were so strengthened that non-Europeans could have the benefit of hearing also the professors and senior lecturers in a subject ... Provision was made for a separate Students' Representative Council to manage all the non-European students' social activities. Through the separate Students' Representative Council they had direct access to the Principal without having to go through the European Students' Representative Council, where they might be in a hopeless minority and where it was possible they might not be very sympathetically treated ... Rather reduce to a minimum the occasions when such friction may arise and give each group its own university campus. It is natural, too, that the non-European when slighted will seek consolation with other minority groups, for example Communists who are aggrieved and 'agin' the existing order in South Africa. This is probably what Sir Godfrey Huggins, Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, had in mind when he said to me not very long ago, 'Malherbe, we in Rhodesia do not like to send our Natives to the Union for higher education, because your universities make agitators out of them.'" ... In the presence of millions of non-Europeans in our immediate vicinity who need their own doctors, teachers, veterinary surgeons, agricultural experts and administrators, that has led the Government to set aside nearly 100 acres of land in Durban in order to enable the University of Natal to provide for the rapidly expanding educational needs of the people. Here the non-European students will have their own residences, sports fields and students' organisations in which they can learn to develop leadership among their own kind, instead of being relegated to a position of social inferiority in a European student body ...³²³

The reasons then for tertiary education at all was because of the growing need for experts among the 'non-European' population, and the need for segregated education was to prevent a rise against the regime should 'Indian' students feel marginalised and aggrieved in a mixed university. In addition, their being able to develop amongst "their own kind" suggests notions of intellectual difference as well as social differences.

³²³ *The Mercury*, 'Methods of N.U.C. Outlined', 17 February 1948

This experiment, discussed in the extract above, was taken further with the opening of the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) in 1961 on Salisbury Island, for the sole registration of ‘Indian’ students. It was referred to then as the University College for Indians and only renamed in the 1970s when it was awarded the status of a university and relocated to Westville (UKZNDABA, 2010:5).³²⁴ The picture below depicts students arriving at Salisbury Island via ferry to attend classes.



Image 6.4: UKZNDABA, Monthly Campus Newsletter Volume 7, Number 3, March 2010

Sam Moodley a former student at Salisbury Island reflected on her experiences, stating:

In 1961 – a place of Higher learning, known as the University College for Indians (UNICOL) was established for Indians only on Salisbury Island on the Bluff. I had entered the island 5 years later, in 1966 ... The first day of registration was hailed by the arrival of the rector, Professor SP Olivier, being chauffeur driven in his black hearse-like car. We all stood to attention in the hall as he strode, smiling, down the aisle to the podium placed on the stage. Behind him was the array of white lecturers in black gowns. A handful of Indian lecturers were interspersed among them. We were reminded that we “should be proud of our university” and we “were the future leaders to build the culture of the Indian people” and that we

³²⁴ The UDW campus became well known during apartheid for the many political demonstrations rallied against the regime.

should not forget how the white lecturers on the staff were there at great sacrifice and “who had given up everything to serve Indian students” and “how lucky, happy and safe we should feel being sheltered from the cosmopolitan, communist ‘open’ universities.” ... An hour later, after a personal interview, and signing up for an aptitude test, standing in a queue, I registered for my first five subjects towards my B.A. Degree. I couldn’t wait to get back to the residence, the hostel, to get out of the confines of my black straight-lined skirt, white starched-frill blouse, black fish-net stockings and pencil-heeled shoes, into a pair of shorts and walk bare footed on the sandy shores of the bay that edged the surrounds. No sooner my friend (with whom I had shared a room) and I entered the cafeteria and we were summoned back to the hostel to be lectured to by the female warden on our dress code. This was the first assault on my self, on my body, on how I should dress, and “on what was right for an Indian girl”. It was the beginning of the rules and regulations that we were asked to follow if we were to live at the hostel ... These regulations became a pattern enforcing us into a type of incarceration behind the waters that surrounded the militarized academic camp of Salisbury Island. In the next few weeks, the harsh draconian laws of the university began to emerge. We were told that no meetings could be held without permission from the Rector; only approved student committees may meet according to the rules of an approved constitution; no magazines, publications, pamphlets for which we were totally or partially responsible for could be circulated without the permission from the rector; no student or groups of students may visit another institution without the permission of the rector, nor could any persons visit the island without prior permission as well ... The rector knew who was engaged in cross-ethnic relationships, who was wearing a mini-skirt and who was not wearing a tie which broke a rigid dress code ... They knew who was singing freedom songs and what was said in the hostel dining room. On the academic front, the professors and lecturers were recruited from Universities of Pretoria, Free State, Potchefstroom and Stellenbosch. Many of them had mere diplomas and were in the process of completing their degrees. We suffered academically and called the University “a glorified high school”, because lecturers preferred to dictate notes to us. Critical analysis, debate or engaging opinions were curbed ...³²⁵

Dennis Pather, former editor of the *Sunday Tribune*, who also attended lectures at Salisbury Island stated, in line with the above, that during his time there, it was impressed upon students through frequent repetitions and admonitions that they were ‘Indian’. He states further that they “survived all of the intentions of the apartheid government to Indianise them”.³²⁶ The desire of the apartheid government to entrench notions of ethnicity and difference between groups was

³²⁵ *Sunday Tribune*, ‘How Students Resisted a Separate University by Sam Moodley’, 7 November 2010

³²⁶ Anonymous. (2010). Salisbury Island Friends Meet Again. *UKZN Online*, 5 (25). Retrieved 12 December, 2011, from <http://enewsletter.ukzn.ac.za/Story.aspx?id=42&storyid=467>

also then fostered at institutions of higher learning. To prevent, amongst other things, collaboration between groups to end the discriminatory regime.

In 1991 the Group Areas Act was rescinded. However the damage to communities and families had already been done, and the spatial and racial landscape of South Africa had been irrevocably changed.

6.5 South Africa Belongs to All Who Live In It

As discussed earlier, following the 1949 ‘riots’ stronger links were forged between the ANC and the NIC, which continued and culminated in the joint Defiance Campaign of 1952.³²⁷ At the sixth annual provincial conference of the NIC in February 1953 Luthuli, the then president of the ANC stated the following regarding the relationship between the parties:

Ours is not a marriage of convenience but a political alliance based on a common record for true democracy, and is resulting in a growing spirit of friendship ... Except for a few insignificant voices of dissenting response to the invitation “Away with the Indian”, all shades of responsible African public opinion have replied that inasmuch as Africans were never responsible for the coming of the Indians to South Africa, so they shall never be a party of efforts to repatriate them.³²⁸

The ANC then was deliberate in its efforts to show its allegiance with ‘Indians’ and to foster harmony between their two parties and their constituents. In another affirmation by Luthuli, he stated that, “Since we welcome the sympathy and support of all ‘races’ in the rest of the world, it would be absurd and contradictory to reject Indians in our own country. I myself would rather see the African people destroyed than see them turn against Indians” (quoted in Pillay, 2012:14).

³²⁷ The Defiance Campaign was the first joint campaign by the ‘Indian’ congresses and the ANC to defy the discriminatory apartheid laws such as the GAA, the Pass Laws, the Separate Representation of Voters Act, the Suppression of Communism Act, and the Bantu Authorities Act. The Government was urged to rescind the laws by 29 February 1952, if not the ANC and the SAIC would begin the campaign of defiance [see SAIC Agenda Book, Conference 9-11 July 1954, S.S. Singh Collection, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/72-defiance-campaign-1952>]

³²⁸ Luthuli 1953 Minutes of the NIC Sixth Annual Provincial Conference, 21/22 February 1953 quoted in Desai and Vahed (2010:388)

Although the ‘Indian’ and ‘black’ political organisations were working together against the apartheid regime, the discourse on ‘Indians’ as different and not ‘us’ continued and there were those who bought into the National Party’s arguments that ‘races’ should be separate, as illustrated in complaints in *Ilanga* published in 1952 regarding jobs held by ‘Indians’ that should be the ‘right’ of Africans:

Our complaint is about these Indians employed by the Railway who are responsible for loading Black people in long distance trains. Here are the reasons for our complaints about these Indians:

- (1) They don’t know isiZulu
- (2) They don’t know SeSotho
- (3) They don’t know Xhosa or SiMpondo

They fail to make any explanation because they speak ‘FANA KA LO’.

We urge the Railway management to employ Black people who know the other languages because that’s what the law says. It says nations should be together.³²⁹

And,

I need some opinion on this matter. When an African traditional healer applies for a license to run a chemist business, he is denied. He gets told that he must go and open it in rural areas but the Indians are granted licenses. Where have the Indians learned about these medicines as you see them with numerous chemists in town selling African medicines. They name their chemist businesses in our language and employ anyone to work there. I am not a political person but in such cases I wish the apartheid rules can favour us because our bread is being taken from us even through things that belong to us traditionally. Indians have a lot of businesses but because they want to take everything away from us, they are now taking even the smallest things.³³⁰

It is evident here that writers want the laws and ethos of apartheid to be enforced, and for ‘nations to be together’ as touted by the apartheid regime, in that jobs that service ‘black’ people should be filled only with ‘black’ employees. Once again ‘race groups’ are homogenised and it is assumed that if the ‘nation’ that the writer refers to is ‘black’ people, that a ‘black’ employee would be able to engage in all of the languages mentioned above. If the ‘nation’ refers to Zulu speaking people then this suggests a buy-in on the part of the writer to the notion of ethnic enclaves propagated by the apartheid state, where ‘black’ people were further subdivided into language groups and separate homelands created accordingly.

³²⁹ *Ilanga*, ‘A Complaint About the Railway’, 29 March 1952

³³⁰ *Ilanga*, ‘The Indian and Black Chemists’, 12 July 1952

The following excerpt from an article published in *Ilanga* in 1953 reflects a similar discourse of aligning with the ideologies of the apartheid state as reflected in the extracts immediately above. This article was written under the pseudonym of Busy Bee which was used by H.I.E. Dhlomo considered a remarkable intellectual and journalist of his time:

... the Indian has had long and almost complete monopoly of trading and business among Africans. Of recent years the rise of an African Middle and Trading class has created complications and bitterness. There is competition, pure and simple, but the African has the disadvantage of having to make a long leeway and of gaining the necessary experience ... There is a strong school of thought that contends that Africans should take advantage of and even actively support measures such as the Group Areas Act and similar laws because this would cripple the Indian and give Africans immense economic and trading advantage ... It is an infectious doctrine preached with fanaticism by certain influential Africans. The point is that these things have created differences and even antagonism between the two groups ... The aim is not to stir the dirty waters of racism and strife, but to bring out the facts so that those who fight for unity and liberation should not fail in their work.³³¹

Without quantifying the writer of the article argued further that “many” ‘Indians’ profited from Africans. Interestingly also, many so called ‘Indian’ merchants during this time were not necessarily of passenger Indian descent and so did not have business experience or knowledge passed down to them. Their lineage included people who had come to work in the sugar cane fields or coal mines as indentured labourers. This is the case of *Family 3* whose ascendants arrived to work in the coalmines of Dundee. Pravin in describing his family stated:

Pravin: You see, my maternal grandfather’s father ... came from India ... as an indentured labourer ... So he, through his trials and tribulations he established himself in the community that he lived in. And both families, both my mother’s family and my father’s family all through their growing up their emphasis was a lot on education. So it was educating the children so that they do not perpetuate the same cycle that they had come into.

Pravin refers here to Ashok Kaur the first person to arrive from India from *Family 3* who after completing his indenture on the coalmines opened an ‘eating house’ which provided well for him and his family. He expanded on his business enterprises by making and selling furniture. Eventually he became the ‘first Indian’ in Northern Natal to buy a Fargo lorry, which was used

³³¹ *Ilanga*, ‘Indo-African Race Relations’, 17 January 1953

to then transport goods to local areas.³³² Using his earnings he bought properties, built houses and rented them out. Ashok had seven sons, all of whom received an education and also expanded their business interests. Clearly, Ashok was not a Gujarati merchant and did not arrive in the colony of Natal as one. Through his hard work, enterprise and innovation he became a businessman with no formal education. Ashok then, did not fit the stereotype of the merchant who came to Natal with capital to exploit the ‘natives’. So although families were steeped in business, they did not necessarily arrive as businessmen. Hamamoto (1993:206) argues that the media discourse, aberrations and misrepresentation of facts, shapes and regulates people’s thoughts about racial inequality, racial stereotypes and the like, thus the media then, in the articles above further perpetuated erroneous stereotypes about wealthy passenger ‘Indians’ having an advantage over up and coming ‘black’ traders.

However another writer in *Ilanga* pointed out, contrary to the article mentioned earlier, by Busy Bee, how the discourse on ‘Indians’ have coloured the perceptions about them and detracted from the core problem that needed to be addressed which was the government and its discriminatory policies:

Through his industriousness and commercial astuteness, the Indian has used this opportunity to entrench himself economically. But the most important thing is that neither the Indians nor the Africans are responsible for this state of affairs. None of them is to blame. It is our policy that sets Indian against African. Fundamentally, that is the root cause of the trouble. Unfortunately, the ordinary man is often not aware of the subtle tactics of those in power. The uninformed African who comes into close and daily contact with the Indian and sees the latter given more privileges concludes that it is the Indian who obstructs his way. He is encouraged in his attitude by the irresponsible and racial speeches of White politicians who speak against the Indian and say he is an exploiter, and forgets that it is the very politicians who are responsible for discrimination and racialism, and who give the Indians freehold rights and deny these to the African and make him carry passes and live under demoralizing conditions in Cato Manor and other places. The Indian thus becomes a scapegoat to the uninitiated and politically immature ... It is the task of African leadership to educate Africans on these things. African masses must be warned against using force to solve their problems – and force against the wrong people who are not responsible for our policy. Instead of achieving anything, these acts of violence will be used against the

³³² Source: Kaur family documents

Africans themselves who will be called savages who are not yet fit for citizenship rights. Riots only react against the African himself.³³³

The lived experiences of the majority of ‘Indians’ in Durban however, was a far cry from the social discourse on ‘Indians’ as wealthy and taking advantage of their ‘higher status’ in the racial hierarchy, compared to that of ‘black’ people. For example, Jane, from *Family 1*, when asked about joining the fight against apartheid (as there were many people who argued that ‘Indian’ opposition was mostly made up of the elite ‘Indian’ politicians, and constructed ‘Indians’ as apathetic or supportive of the apartheid regime), stated:

Jane: You know what when you staying with poor people everybody just wants to like shield themselves. Nobody’s gonna say hey we must do this or do that. That’s how we lived in Chatsworth because er everybody was just leaving it to the big people [politicians] to do everything ...

Adding to the above, Jane when asked about Indian heritage passed on to her children she replies, “I was too busy struggling to live, to even think about all that”. These sentiments reflect the severity of the poverty felt by Jane and her family and many in the surrounding area of Chatsworth. Survival was paramount and thoughts of joining the resistance movement was not an easy option for most people.

During the joint resistance efforts, attempts were made by the government to create further distance between ‘blacks’ and ‘Indians’, with comments made to arouse suspicion of the motives of ‘Indians’ in the Defiance Campaign, such as the following reported on in *Ilanga* “Dr. Dönges stated that the Congress organisation is illegal ... He claimed that the Indians in this country are using the Blacks to fight for their rights ...³³⁴ However in a follow up article in the *Indian Opinion*, Jordan Ngubane derided the notion that ‘Indians’ were using Africans for their own gain, politically, stating:

In the first instance the Indian people are fighting clearly against racial oppression – an evil to which they are a victim like the African himself. Secondly, it is not the Indians who demanded an alliance with the African people; they were invited

³³³ *Ilanga*, ‘Cato Manor Riots’, 26 September 1953

³³⁴ *Ilanga*, ‘Waqala eNdiya Umzabalazo’, 4 October 1952

by our leaders to join us in the fight against a tyranny which would one day destroy them as a community as it was surely bent on destroying the African. To suggest that the Indian is doing underhand work to get the African to haul the coals out of the fire for him is thus utter rubbish. But it is not enough to see it as such. We must also take this charge as revealing the mind of those who make it. Then we shall realize that what the government now has in mind is to sow suspicion between the Indians and the Africans ... There is uncertainty over precisely what would happen if the Government decided to open conversations with one or the other of the parties to the resistance movement. On both the African and the Indian sides sections of opinion exist which would jump for such an opportunity ... It is true that African public opinion would make things very difficult for them. But then the force of this opinion has its limits - because the African does not have a single newspaper of his own which would present the facts of the situation clearly from week to week. The Government has the radio and (sic) very many of the papers owned by whitemen and read by the African today. I should like to advance it as a suggestion deserving serious consideration that it is about time we had a paper seriously and courageously espousing the cause of racial co-operation from the point of view of the non-white peoples ... In this country the English daily Press has, while not sympathising openly with the campaign at least taken up an attitude which, in the prevailing circumstances is realistic. Letters pour daily into white editorial offices asking: After all what is wrong with giving the non-European the franchise? Give it to them. We do not mind being ruled by men of colour as long as they are men of integrity! ... Its importance lies in the fact that the white democrat has been emboldened by the resistance movement to take an open stand against colour discrimination.³³⁵

Although the tensions between Africans and 'Indians' were rife during this time this did not stop the joint action against the discriminatory laws of the apartheid state by the NIC and the ANC. The campaign however climaxed with the arrest of those considered by the South African state to be terrorists. Ahmed Kathrada (2004:102) in his memoirs states:

In August [1952], the police arrested twenty leading activists, including Mandela, Sisulu, Dadoo, Nana Sita, Yusuf Cachalia, Ntatho Motlana and Molvi Cachalia, under the Suppression of Communism Act. I was caught in the net as well. We were charged with organising and leading the Defiance Campaign with the aim of 'bringing about change in the industrial and social structure of the country through unconstitutional and illegal methods'. On the first day of our trial, the court reverberated to the deafening chant of slogans and freedom songs and the magistrate found it impossible to proceed. The police admitted their inability to silence the crowd, which included a significant number of schoolchildren, organised by the Indian Youth Congress to demonstrate outside the court.

³³⁵ *Indian Opinion*, 'African Viewpoint - Defiance Campaign: New Problems', 26 September 1952

In 1953 Luthuli officially proclaimed the end of the Defiance Campaign (Kathrada, 2004:106). In spite of its successful attempt to stop the defiance campaign the NP however failed to drive a wedge between ‘Indian’ and ‘black’ freedom fighters, and at an ANC conference in 1953 Mandela stated:

In the past we talked of the African, Indian and Coloured struggles ... Today we talk of the struggle of the oppressed people which, though it is waged through their respective autonomous organizations, is gravitating towards one central command. (cited in Mandela, 1990:28)

The activity of the defiance campaign then led to the formation of the “multi-racial” Congress Alliance and the resultant drafting and acceptance of the Freedom Charter in 1955. The Freedom Charter represented the aspirations for a free South Africa inclusive of all ‘races’ and where everyone would be treated equally. In June 1955 approximately 2,844 people from various political movements adopted the Freedom Charter (1955) at Kliptown and undertook to propagate it widely to all those who would not otherwise have access to it. The Freedom Charter outlined the vision of a *future* South Africa, as the extract below reveals:

We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know: that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people ... Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws ... The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex ... All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside ... ALL SHALL BE EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW ... All people shall have the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security ... Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here: ‘THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE, THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY.’”

According to the Freedom Charter (1955) ‘Indians’ were viewed as belonging to *the nation* and were perceived as part of a future South Africa as envisioned by the Congress of the People. Albeit the language of the document reflected the existences of different ‘races’ that made up the South African nation, and identified them as such, as opposed to a single South African nation, ‘Indians’ were nevertheless still included in the discourse of the future.

During this time however the apartheid state was envisioning a different future, a future South Africa free of ‘Indians’, and were thus still discussing and debating plans for repatriation. And complaints over the South African governments treatment of ‘Indians’ were being discussed almost annually at the United Nations, as evidenced from the extracts from *Ilanga* below:

The United Nation is about to re-open overseas. All the nations who are members have already chosen their representatives. It seems that this country will be a serious issue because of the two accusations against it. The first accusation was the way this country treats Indians, and the second one is the issue of the struggle. We hear that our Ambassadors are planning to refuse to have the issues of this country discussed there. To confirm this, we also hear that in the Nationalist meeting held in Pretoria, Dr. Malan said that if the United Nations interferes in the affairs of this country, then this country has to come out of the United Nations for good.³³⁶

And,

The issue of the ill treatment of the Indians in SA came up as the South African government said they are not prepared to discuss anything with the Indian government concerning Indians in SA. Nehru promised that this will be discussed at the UN. The reason for this government to refuse to engage in talks is because of Nehru’s criticism of discrimination laws. The South African government has closed all the avenues for discussing anything with the Indian government concerning Indians in South Africa ...³³⁷

The South African government’s response to the United Nations requests then for intervention was a complete closing of ranks and a threat to sever ties. According to an NIC secretarial report published in 1961, the reaction of the government was as follows (Bhana and Pachai (eds), 1984:235):

1. That the treatment of Indians in South Africa and the policy of apartheid and the practice of racial discrimination are matters within the domestic jurisdiction of South Africa.
2. That the United Nations is not the legal successor of the League of Nations and that therefore the Union Government is under no legal obligations to account to the UN for its administration of South West Africa.

³³⁶ *Ilanga*, ‘The United Nations’, 4 October 1952

³³⁷ *Ilanga*, ‘Ubhici Endiya’, 24 September 1955

3. The intensification of its policy of apartheid and racial discrimination; the increased persecution of people of Indian origin; the virtual incorporation into the Union of South West Africa, and the extension to that territory of the whole policy of apartheid and baasskap.

Hence, as a result of its repatriation exercise failing dismally; to avoid accountability to India and the United Nations; and to 'show' the world that they were not mis-treating 'Indians', the South African government reluctantly officially recognised 'Indians' as a permanent part of the population in 1961, 101 years after the arrival of their ancestors, and declared them "citizens of the newly created Republic of South Africa" and all efforts to repatriate them ceased (Henning, 1989:32; see also Ginwala, 1977:10; Maasdorp and Pillay, 1977:95; Bhana and Pachai (eds), 1984:249; Bhana, 1997a:116; Ebr.-Vally, 2001:92).³³⁸

It was also in 1961 that a Department of Indian Affairs was instituted to oversee the administration of 'Indians' in the country which at this point in time numbered 477,125, which was 3 percent of the total South African population, of whom 94.5 percent had been born in the country (Brijlal, 1989:27). A body had to be created in keeping with the apartheid ideology of separate development and in this regard the South African Indian Council (SAIC) was eventually formed by the state in 1968 whose purpose was to report to the Government on all issues related to 'Indians' and serve as a medium via which 'Indians' could make representation to the government (Mbanjwa, 1976:x; Bhana and Pachai (eds), 1984:249-252, Padayachee, 1999:393). This council, however, was a powerless body and could not effect change on behalf of 'Indians'.

In 1979 when it was announced that the SAIC would be a fully elective body, the revived NIC argued for the total rejection of the body by 'Indians' (Bhana, 1997a:116). The purpose now was a joint fight against the apartheid state and not to collude with the state by buying into the powerless statutory bodies that it created. By allowing 'Indians' to vote for representatives on the SAIC the state created a semblance of inclusion in decision making affecting 'Indians' which in reality did not exist.

³³⁸As a result of international pressure around its discriminatory practices South Africa eventually left the Commonwealth in 1961 and became an independent Republic after a referendum by white voters in October 1960. As a result all ties to the British Empire were finally severed and the monarch was replaced by a State President (Christopher, 2009:105; Peberdy, 2009:109).

The SAIC was not in place for very long when in 1977 the government proposed the creation of three parliaments, for 'Indians', 'coloureds' and 'whites'. The Tri-cameral Parliament as it was termed was established in 1983 and was made up of a House of representatives with 178 members representing 'white' affairs; a House of Representatives with 85 members responsible for matters pertaining to 'coloured' people; and a House of Delegates with 45 members who would preside over the administration of the affairs of 'Indians' (Lötter, 1997:58). These 'affairs' related to all aspects of administration from education, to social services, healthcare, housing and arts and culture. As discussed in Chapter Three, 'black' people were excluded from this composition as the government argued that they had political rights in the homelands that were created for them by the state. The House of Assembly clearly had the power in parliament and held the majority of votes and could therefore defeat any motion brought by either the 'coloured' or 'Indian' representatives or a combination of the two. Power and control over 'race' and resource allocation still lay then with the 'white' minority (Lötter, 1997:59).

This creation of an 'Indian' parliament further entrenched the notions of a homogenous 'race group' with 'Indians' having to vote for their representatives and be presided over by an 'Indian' parliament responsible for 'Indian' matters. The Tri-cameral parliament came under fire from major political organisations including the NIC and the chief minister of KwaZulu³³⁹ Chief Gatsha Buthelezi who was vocal about his stance against it as reported in *Ilanga* in January 1983:

At Eshowe – The Zululand Premier Chief Gatsha Buthelezi has warned the Coloured and Indians that should they accept the draft constitution laws proposed by the Government of South Africa, they will have destroyed any comradeship with parties belonging to South African Black Alliance.³⁴⁰

And,

The KwaZulu Chief Minister, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, was right when he told the annual congress of the Labour Party at Eshowe early this week that 1983 would be the year of glory for the Indian and Coloured community if they rejected in

³³⁹ KwaZulu was a 'self-governing' homeland or bantustan created by the apartheid state (Maré, 1989:179).

³⁴⁰ *Ilanga*, 'The Proposed Draft Law: Chief Buthelezi's Warning', 6-8 January 1983 [The South African Black Alliance was initiated by Chief Buthelezi made up of Inkatha, the so called 'coloured' Labour Party and the 'Indian' Reform Parties, which accomplished little as it did not receive expected support (Mitchell, 2000:116)]

toto the National Party Governments constitutional plans. These constitutional proposals are a disgrace in the eyes of God who created man equal. It is for this reason, inter alia, that the Indian and Coloured community should reject them with disdain. It is correct to say, as Chief Buthelezi rightly pointed out at the Labour Party Congress, that the government has not asked the Indian and Coloured communities to renounce their South African citizenship. On the contrary the Government is moving heaven and earth to deprive Blacks of their South African citizenship. But, why in the name of God should Blacks forsake their citizenship in the land of their birth? It is sad, indeed, that some millions of black South Africans have been made foreigners in the land of their birth as a result of some weak-kneed Black leaders who have accepted pseudo homeland independence. If the Indian and Coloured communities accepted and swallowed these constitutional proposals holus-bolus it would spell disaster for South Africa. In fact the so-called new constitutional proposals do nothing at all to remove apartheid from the face of South Africa and for this reason they must be rejected with the contempt they deserve. Those who have ears must heed Chief Buthelezi's warning for he speaks as a leader with a vision. It must be remembered at all times that where there is no vision people perish.³⁴¹

This opposition to the Tri-cameral parliament brought again into prominence inter-racial political partnerships and ultimately resulted in the establishment of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in August 1983 (Maré, 1991:198). The NIC was a significant role player in the formation of this “non-racial” political alliance and the NIC together with the UDF began campaigns to urge ‘Indians’ and ‘coloureds’ not to vote for representatives to the House of Delegates or the House of Representatives (Govender and Naidoo, 2010:94).

Sharm Iyer however from *Family 2*, viewed the Tri-cameral parliament in a positive light in that,

Sharm: ... at least the government gave some Indians some positions, chairman ... and all that. At least it's something they did for the Indians ... JN Reddy all those people ... Rajbansi is still there. I am proud of him, he is still there, he is keeping it up.

While many viewed the ‘Indian’ politicians who participated in the tricameral system as sell-outs, there were those like Sharm who assumed the government were “at least” involving ‘Indians’ in the political structures of the country, even though ultimately this involvement as described above was only superficial. Farhana, from *Family 4*, had a similar notion of what it

³⁴¹ *Ilanga*, ‘Heed Buthelezi’s Words’, 6-8 January 1983

meant to be involved in the NP government structures as an ‘Indian’, as well as on the opposition:

Farhana: ... there were times when you had Rajbansi come into the political scene and they said he was a sell-out and there was the tricameral parliament ... I knew there was this, but the general impression that I got was that if the Indians get involved in politics, then they are the sell-outs. I got that impression, so I didn’t want to get too politically motivated but I knew there was a detention without trial thing happening and I didn’t get too involved in it but I use to read about it and I said that is scary. I don’t want that, my parents worked hard, I must study, get moving that way.

Mogie from *Family 5*, had a similar experience growing up, even though, in contrast to *Family 4* who arrived as merchants, Mogie’s grandfather was an indentured labourer and her father at one point, in 1974 when Mogie was 16 years old, still earned R60 a month with a wife and eight children to care for:

Mogie: ... my father couldn’t manage financially you know ... because with eight children he was still earning R60 a month only. It was very difficult for school, especially when we got into high school. Very difficult, we use to travel by bus. We use to leave like half past six in the morning ... just to get into town and then we finish school we must wait for a specific time to leave town to go home and by the time we get back to Baynesfield its already dark. It was very, very hard and especially being girls you know ... we were aware [of apartheid] but we weren’t fully involved. We stayed one step back, we didn’t want to get too involved because that is our parents ... you know, that is how they brought us up and that is how they wanted us to be. Not get too involved in politics and stuff like that.

KP: Did the teachers talk about apartheid in school, during school?

Mogie: Barely ... they didn’t want unnecessary trouble. They accepted where they were ...

Like Mogie, many of the interviewees revealed that they had no in depth or detailed knowledge of what was taking place in the country, for example that ‘Indians’ had only become a permanent population in 1961 and that prior to that plans were being put in place to repatriate them, and also of the nature of the Tri-cameral system which offered only superficial representation of ‘Indians’ in parliament. For example, in response to a question on what knowledge she had on the discriminatory apartheid legislation and if she was politically aware Jane stated:

Jane: Ja ja we knew that we weren't supposed to go here and you weren't supposed to go there and we couldn't do this and you couldn't do that. Ja, we knew the rules so you stick by the rules and nothing happened. You go in the train you can only sit right in the back, if you go in the double decker bus you only got four seats in the back, you can't go sit anywhere else ... downstairs or anywhere in the front ... The boer-ou did not want you near him. Like say suppose you over here and across there is the ground where they playing sports if one of them come past and see you looking he'll swear you and ask you why you looking at them.

The "boer-ou" that Jane refers to, is a racist term for an Afrikaner person. Interestingly as much as 'Indian' people and 'black' were homogenised so too were 'white' people. Here Jane clearly identifies all people classified as 'white' as Afrikaners in all likelihood because the regime was dominated by Afrikaners and promoted Afrikaner wellbeing and in turn 'white' well-being.

Similar sentiments regarding 'not knowing' or being fully aware of what was happening in the country was reflected in the responses of the next generation as well, as Jane's son Daniel, born in 1964, stated:

Daniel: ... if you are going to town, it was like you were going on an excursion. You dress up in your best clothes and you look forward to it. You will take a bus and you will go into town and ... the bus used to stop on the outskirts of town and then we would walk into town. It was a distance like. But it never dawned upon me at that stage that when you went into town, you would always see buses coming into the middle of town and the whites getting off. It never dawned upon me and only when I grew up that I started questioning you know. After I joined the police force, I use to ask myself 'why do our buses stop outside of the town and these people are right in the middle of town?' I never realised that that was the effect of apartheid, they didn't want you to get into town, that part of town. So it was just these things, and you know ... because when you sort of join the job market and you get into the bigger world then you start to see how the other half lives. Because you know if you don't know how the other half lives, you are content with what is going on, you just think it's the norm.

KP: And as a teenager how aware were you of what was happening in the country?

Daniel: I wasn't. As a teenager not ... still being in school, because I joined the police force at 18, so basically I was quite young when I joined the police force. So uh, I wasn't very ... uhm ... lets say, politically aware of the socio-economic circumstances. We did in school have, you know the boycotts when there were uprisings and we did join the boycott, there was towards the end of your schooling career some kind of political knowledge or political awareness. But other than that, we just accepted what was going on as people are just poor. We never thought that, you know what, they are poor because they are not being

given opportunities. Like I remember Amy [Daniel's sister] once, she went to find a job and she came back complaining bitterly. She said, why don't they say it's for whites only, because when she went for the job, this white woman gleefully told her, this job is for whites only, so it was just something like that.

Similarly Anusha from *Family 3* born in in 1956 and who was 54 old at the time of the interview stated that she attended St. Anthony's school, a catholic school in Durban which was run by 'white' nuns with only 'Indian' students'. When asked if she knew what was happening politically in the country she replied:

Anusha: I didn't. You didn't know about it so much. It wasn't spoken about in school and all that and I think I suppose as we grew older we became more aware. Otherwise, no.

KP: Did your parents mention anything to you?

Anusha: No. No-one mentioned anything.

Pravin, on the other hand, from *Family 3*, Anusha's son, born in 1979, had a different experience due to his grandfather's activities in the ANC when he was growing up. Pravin recalls his grandfather's interactions with people now regarded as the stalwarts in the ANC including Thabo Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Winnie Mandela, and Ismail and Fatima Meer. Pravin states:

... I mean Winnie Mandela came to our house in Merebank when I was a child and I have a picture of us, of her carrying me on her lap ... a lot of my paternal grandfather's life was about the betterment of society of the black society which meant Indian, African and coloured ... I was different from them (referring to his friends in school) ... I think was able to see far beyond the tip of my nose [because of my grandfather's influence].

Although Pravin does admit that although he knew about his grandfather's involvement with the ANC, his grandfather spent most of his time away from home involved in work, he was a school principal and involved in community and political activities, he was unaware of the details of apartheid, the depth of the discrimination and unjust legislation. So too was Prem, from *Family 2*, born in 1963, Prem when asked how aware she was of what was happening in the country politically, she replied:

Prem: ... no, no, not really up to date. We had television very late ... we did have a radio which we hardly listened to.

The interviews reveal that South Africans of Indian descent then, although seen as foreign and different and belonging to another homeland, did not view themselves as such. They were aware of the injustices and the rules of the day but were not aware of the extent of what was considered the 'Indian' problem in South Africa. The Tri-cameral parliament, for some, was seen as a victory in allowing 'Indian' representation in parliament. Despite viewing themselves as South African however, the discourse that had been perpetuated about 'Indians' as foreign and other continued even after their official inclusion in the population landscape of the country.

While strong alliances were forged at the level of politics and political leadership with the Defiance Campaign and the drafting of the Freedom Charter, it did not filter down to the masses, and in 1985, violence against 'Indians', reminiscent of 1949, occurred in Bhambayi.

6.6 Fear and Fire in the Townships

The violence began after the assassination of Victoria Mxenge, an attorney who played a role in the defense team of the UDF and NIC during the Treason Trial. Mxenge's husband Griffiths was also politically active and was found murdered in 1981 (Hughes, 1987:331). Following Victoria Mxenge's assassination on 1 August 1985 a similar scene to the 1949 riots played out, where 'Indians' were forced to flee their homes and were turned into refugees. Approximately 2,000 took refuge in nearby Phoenix as the following report reveals:

Inanda, where blacks and Indians had lived side by side for nearly 50 years, was torn again by outbreaks of arson and looting ... Two Indian-owned stores close to the Inanda police station had survived the ravages of the rioting last night but the remaining ten had been looted and burned. In two successive nights of terror at least 2000 Indians had evacuated their Inanda homes, fleeing from the threat of rampaging mobs who later looted the deserted houses and set fire to 30 of them ... The wholesale burning of Indian shops and homes was not thought to have been racially inspired, but indiscriminate work of black thugs bent on looting. Blacks had attacked blacks and had looted and burned homes and shops belonging to blacks.³⁴²

³⁴²*The Mercury*, 'Township Turmoil', 9 August 1985

Although the above report from *The Mercury* argues against a blatant attack on ‘Indians’ specifically, the vast majority of homes and businesses that were targeted belonged to ‘Indians’. In addition dissatisfaction regarding ‘Indian’ involvement in trade in African areas was expressed as the following two excerpts from articles published in *Ilanga* in May 1985 prior to the violent attacks, reveals:

An Indian who had had a shop in KwaMashu for many years was shot dead in his shop on Wednesday night before the holiday. The dead Indian is Mr Ebrahim Hanif Khan. When the *Ilanga* newspaper investigated this matter, it was told by the KwaMashu Mayor Mrs. Esther Africa that the shop that the man died in belonged to her husband Mr. Joe Africa who rented it out to the shot Indian.³⁴³

And,

Mr Buthelezi who is the Chairman of the KwaMashu traders said Mr Khan was trading illegally. He added that the Kwamashu Municipal Office had expressed many times that Mr Khan’s trading at Kwamashu was not an acceptable thing. Mr Buthelezi added that this Indian did not even pass through the screening committee but he traded through an agreement between him and Mr Africa. The office had warned Mr Africa many times to make some means for this Indian to leave.³⁴⁴

The Chairman of the KwaMashu traders reveals a firm stance against ‘illegal’ ‘Indian’ traders in African areas. This unhappiness with ‘Indians’ ‘penetrating’ African areas, especially regarding trade could possibly have prompted the ‘Indian’ trader’s violent death. It was this kind of violence that broke out in Inanda against ‘Indians’ in August. Such scenes were evident in the pictorials of looted and damaged buildings and fleeing ‘Indians’ published in the newspapers, such as the ones below extracted from the *The Mercury*:

³⁴³ *Ilanga*, ‘Indian Shot Dead in Shop at KwaMashu’, 20-22 May 1985

³⁴⁴ *Ilanga*, ‘Osekudalulekile ngeNdiya ebelihweba KwaMashu’, 23-25 May 1985



Shattered windowpanes and a trail of looted goods mark the path of a marauding mob of youths which smashed their way into this store, near Kwa Mashu, owned by Mr Lajeeth Rattan. The mob later looted two Indian homes nearby.

Image 6.5: *The Mercury*, 'Defiance and destruction in KwaMashu', 7 August 1985



Image 6.6: *The Mercury*, 'Fear and fire in the townships', 9 August 1985

The discourse around ‘fear’, ‘refugees’ and ‘fleeing’ in *The Mercury* as reflected in the extract below, is similar to the discourse during the 1949 ‘riots’:

Several Indian families living in Inanda were ferried out in a large pantechnicon following riots and stone throwing in the area ... Mr Ranjith Ramnarain, who owns a transport business in Phoenix, said he was at his depot yesterday when news about the unrest came through. “We all have families living in the Inanda area ... We first tried to reach our homes in cars and trucks, but had to turn around after mobs stoned us. We then took a pantechnicon and amid flying stones drove the families and took them out of the area ... I now want to know what we must do in a case of such an emergency. Our families have no police protection in the area. Earlier a bus full of Indian School children was also stoned in the area,” he said.³⁴⁵

Blame for the 1985 violence, much like in 1949, was assigned to various groups and many different reasons for the violence were given as seen in the extracts below:

The Azanian Students’ Movement yesterday blamed the violence between sections of the black and Indian communities at Inanda and Phoenix on ‘the Government’s divide-and-rule tactics which encourage black people to despise and kill one another.’ The movement’s publicity secretary, Mr Gomolemo Mokaie said in a statement: ‘We are oppressed as blacks, not as Shangaans, Sothos, Zulus or so-called coloureds and Indians.’ The movement hoped the ‘costly Natal lesson’ would unite blacks.³⁴⁶

And,

It is hoped, for the sake of the consciences of those Indians in the mixed group of black and Indian people who rowdily demonstrated recently at lunchtime in West, Field and Smith Streets and chanted in unison over and over again at the police and a passing truckload of soldiers ‘You are dead, you are dead’ that they are not among those Indians now seeking protection and getting a great deal of help from very-much-alive South African policemen and the army in the turbulence in various areas in Durban. Even if they themselves have not needed succor from the police and army, many of the fellow-Indians have. While it may be true that the present unrest may be attributed to no more than ‘hooliganism and thuggery’ there is no doubt that the unrest is part and parcel of the general foment that has been stirred up by the UDF, and other black-consciousness organisations in which Indian leadership is prominent. Don’t these people realize that by their actions they could be unleashing an explosive force which might, indeed has, resulted in a

³⁴⁵ *The Mercury*, ‘Violence Rocks Natal Townships’, 7 August 1985

³⁴⁶ *The Mercury*, “‘Divide and Rule’ Tactics Blamed”, 13 August 1985

backlash against themselves. Have they forgotten Cato Manor? Perhaps some of the older Indians could tell the youngsters who have had little experience of anything – something about those dreadful Cato Manor days. Perhaps those who are no longer wet behind the ears could inform our young Indian demonstrators-students-agitators in general which side their bread is buttered. My son, a white SAP member, has just spent 72 hours without a break – no sleep, two meals – in the townships helping to save Indians. He left home at 4am on Tuesday morning without personal kit or supplies and got his first break away from the action on Friday morning – this after two and a half months in Uitenhage saving lives there. Wake up, you people; you are playing with a fire in which you could get badly burned.³⁴⁷

And,

Daily while driving through the University of Durban-Westville I see groups of intrepid Indian youths demonstrating fearlessly against the state of emergency. Singing brave marching-songs – ‘We are not afraid to die ...’, threatening the Government with a terrifying ‘or else’. How Pretoria holds out against these Rambos is mind boggling. Oh, how the quaking Inanda refugees must be proud of them. One wonders why they bothered with the police with such raw power on campus. With the inevitable – realised by all but the Indians – upsurge of anti-Asian feeling perhaps these brave students could take a fearless stand between Asian and impi? When under threat call a student from Durban-Westville.³⁴⁸

‘Indians’ too then were perceived as being responsible for the violence against them, because of their participation in the freedom struggle. Despite this a full page advert was published in *Ilanga* by the NIC, which argued for a continued joint struggle between ‘black’ people and ‘Indian’ people:

For many years the Blacks and Indians have been living in peace but today those who promote discrimination are trying to separate us with an aim of protecting the government of the whites. Many Indians in this country see their future in the freedom of Black people. We also, believe in the free South Africa that practices democracy, where there will be equal rights for everyone. We, in the Natal Indian Congress (N.I.C.) have given our lives to accomplish this. Our leaders are being silenced, imprisoned, and are held in prison cells because of this. In our history, the Blacks and Indians fought together against discrimination under leaders such as Chief Albert Luthuli and Yusuf Dadoo. Under the leadership of Archie Gumede, George Sewpersadh, and Billy Nair, the Indians refused to participate in

³⁴⁷ *The Mercury*, ‘Letter to the Editor – And what of Cato Manor? from Liberal Realist’, 16 August 1985

³⁴⁸ *The Mercury*, ‘Letter to the Editor – The UDW rambos from Student Power’, 16 August 1985

the election of the tricameral parliament because the Blacks had no right to vote. Today the Indians continue to work together with Black people, the Coloured people and Whites who believe in democracy, to oppose discrimination.³⁴⁹

In addition to demonstrating their continued support for a joint struggle against apartheid, the above extract reveals a plea made on behalf of 'Indians' trying to legitimate their status as belonging and using their participation in the joint effort against oppression to justify their connection and ties to the country, to establish a commonality between 'Indians' and Africans, and ultimately to depict 'Indians' as insiders and not outsiders - insiders to the extent of belonging to the 'nation' but nevertheless still as a separate 'race'.

Although the violent scenes of 1949 and 1985 were similar it should be born in mind that the political situation was different. While both incidents occurred during apartheid, in 1949 the separate development legislation, which was the cornerstone of apartheid, such as the Group Areas Act had not been implemented.³⁵⁰ In addition, as argued earlier, the National Party used the 1949 violence as evidence that policies of separate development were necessary and ignored their part in the discourse around 'Indians' as foreign and in perpetuating their impermanence, which continued even after their 'official' inclusion into the population of South Africa as evident from the violence against them.

6.7 End of Apartheid

The discriminatory apartheid regime and their coercive tactics to silence opposition, did not go unnoticed and change, from various sectors of South African society, was being called for, including from religious leaders: "The senior rabbi of the largest Hebrew congregation in South Africa has joined other leaders of major religious groups in calling for negotiation between the Government and black leaders"³⁵¹ and, "The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Durban, the Most Rev Denis Hurley, said yesterday that church leaders would tell President Botha on August 19

³⁴⁹ *Ilanga*, 'Natal Indian Congress Advertorial: The Indians and Blacks are One', 5-7 September 1985

³⁵⁰ For a more detailed discussion see Hughes (1987:354)

³⁵¹ *The Mercury*, 'Rabbi Joins Call for Talks with Black Leaders', 3 August 1985

[1985] that black people had come to the end of their patience and were determined to push for full participation in the life of South Africa.”³⁵²

In addition, tertiary institutions such as the University of Natal expressed concerns about the state of affairs in the country and made urgent appeals for reform:

The principal of the University of Natal, Prof Peter Booysen, yesterday made a strong call for the Government ‘immediately to address the issue of the democratic rights of all the peoples of this land’. Prof Booysen said the present state of emergency would not have been necessary if the Government had fulfilled its responsibility ‘to preserve and promote the human and civil rights of all members of all communities’. The university’s Joint Academic Staff Association endorsed a resolution by the Students Representative Council, noting the imposition of the emergency [1985] and ‘registering our strongest protest against the present Government’s policies and course of action’. The students, supported by lecturers, committed themselves ‘to work responsibly and creatively for a non-racial, just and democratic South Africa’. Prof Booysen said in his statement – read to a meeting of more than 1000 students - that ‘a process of reconciliation and negotiation with all the recognised leaders of all communities’ was ‘a matter of grave urgency’. He went on: ‘The present situation is of such gravity that only extraordinary measures of a non-repressive kind will suffice to establish the conditions necessary for South Africans to find their way forward in peace. ‘I call on all these leaders to co-operate in attempting to bring the state of emergency to an end so that meaningful negotiation for significant reform can take place urgently.’³⁵³

Following from a combination of international pressure via sanctions and increasing militancy within South Africa against apartheid, in 1990 the African National Congress was unbanned and Nelson Mandela was released from prison. In 1986 however when the release of Nelson Mandela was still being talked about the NIC released a pamphlet stating:

Mandela’s Release. How will it affect us? In this time of violence, anger and pain in our country we must talk about the future of the Indian people. Do we go along with Mandela and the majority of Africans and Coloureds in South Africa or do we hide behind a falling Apartheid government? (quoted in Singh and Vawda, 1988:13)

³⁵² *The Mercury*, ‘Blacks are Fed Up - says Hurley’, 3 August 1985

³⁵³ *The Mercury*, ‘Varsity Plea for Democracy’, 1 August 1985

The NIC here continued to perpetuate the notion of ‘Indians’ or South Africans of Indian descent as a ‘race group’ amongst other ‘race groups’ in South Africa. Even though it advocated for a joint struggle of all ‘black’ people, it appears that ‘Indians’ were being appealed to as separate from other ‘races’. The reason for an appeal in this fashion could possibly be as a result that even though politicians believed that they were fighting as a single ‘black’ ‘race’ they were aware of the implications of apartheid ideology which had conditioned people to think of themselves as belonging to separate ‘race’ groups and in addition the apartheid government consistently reiterated that ‘Indians’ would not be guaranteed any security under a so-called ‘black’ government (Zegeye and Ahluwalia, 2002:408).

6.8 Conclusion

The period 1948 – 1994 represents not only the continued ‘othering’ of ‘Indians’ as foreign but also the deliberate separation of ‘races’ through the various pieces of legislation promulgated by the South African apartheid government. The data yielded in this research provides evidence to show that the xenophobic discourse around ‘Indians’ continued even after their inclusion as a permanent group in the Republic, exacerbated of course by the Population Registration Act, Group Areas Act, Separate Amenities Act and the various other pieces of legislation which aimed to segregate the ‘races’ in South Africa.

The official apartheid discourse of an ‘Indian’ ‘race group’ appeared to solidify the notion of ‘Indianness’ and an ‘Indian’ other both in social discourse and in the minds of the so-called ‘Indian’ people themselves. From the excerpts from the interviews with the families it is important to note the sense of ‘knowing’ that they were ‘Indian’. Through segregated education, housing, amenities and the like, ‘Indians’ were told in no uncertain terms *who* they were. This placed limits not only on their identity choices but also on how they were perceived by others. In other words they could not be identified as anything other than ‘Indian’, and the classification itself carried all the stereotypes of the foreign other perpetuated in the media and political discourse since the arrival of the very first immigrants from India in 1860.

Racial difference was so infused into society that ‘race’ thinking was a norm and was evident in almost every sphere. For instance, media coverage in the 1980s was also still very much ‘race’ based, for example, “Two Indians on Murder Charges.”³⁵⁴ This type of reporting, common in the extreme, placed significant emphasis on ‘race’ and encouraged the readership to make value judgments. As Omi and Winant (1986) argue, racial categories are made real by processes in society such as the political systems of the day and via the media, and as Jacobs and Manzi (2003:37) point out, “... discourses and rhetoric are effective tools to exert dominance.”

Dominance was constructed through a process legitimised by state laws and reified through the media and popular discourse. Lerner (1997:195) articulates further that this enforces a “group identity” where “Negative characteristics are arbitrarily selected and affixed to the group. Then these negative characteristics are ascribed to each member of the group ...” an example of which was that all ‘Indians’ were exploitative and inherently dishonest. By pitting one group against another, the apartheid government attempted to ensure that the oppressed made up of ‘black’, ‘coloured’ and ‘Indian’ people would not unite to effectively challenge the regime. It further added to this by creating subdivisions within the ‘black’ ‘race group’ by classifying them according to language and creating homelands based on ‘ethnicity’. ‘White’ people however who also originated from different countries, including most countries in Europe were lumped under one category of ‘white’ with no distinction created between the various ‘language’ groups. The institutionalised discrimination which included a wide range of laws to enforce the discriminatory ethos of the state including specific acts targeted at ‘Indians’ reinforced the belief of the ‘group’ as foreign prior to 1961 and as different and ‘other’, after.

From the interviews it is apparent that the generation growing up during apartheid was aware of the exclusionary laws but did not understand the deeper consequences. In addition, the interviewees were unaware that South Africans of Indian descent were only included as a permanent population group in 1961. So while appropriating the category ‘Indian’ as a racial classification, they did not consider themselves ‘foreign’ or as belonging to another homeland, as the government did.

³⁵⁴ *The Mercury*, ‘Two Indians on Murder Charges’, 24 August 1985

Hinkle and Brown (1990:48) contend that, “our sense of who we are stems in large part from our membership of affiliation to various social groups, which are said to form our social identity. This identity is thought to be maintained through evaluative comparisons between in-groups and relevant out-groups.” Apartheid fostered group sensibilities which forced people to fight for rights and resources and in turn against the restrictive, discriminatory regime as a collective, i.e. to identify as ‘Indians’ or as ‘black’ or in more minute terms as ‘Zulu’ or ‘Xhosa’, as noticeable from the 1985 violence that broke out in Inanda.

Even though they were officially given permanent status in 1961, South Africans of Indian descent, were still regarded very much in popular discourse as foreign, as shown above, and were viewed in general as a threat, as exploitative, as wealthy and ultimately as belonging elsewhere. The notions of ‘Indians’ as foreigners and as not belonging that had been perpetuated through the media and more especially political discourse over time became part of the perceptions people had regarding ‘Indians’. As Mamdani (2001:7) argues,

... identities both become reified and get turned into a basis of legal discrimination – between those who are said to belong and those who are said not to belong, between insiders entitled to rights and outsiders deprived of these rights ... Prevented from changing, [racial] identities become frozen.

Third, fourth and fifth generation South Africans of Indian descent, the majority of whom could only speak English and knew no other Indian language, were ‘perpetual foreigners’.³⁵⁵ The xenophobic discourse around ‘Indians’ was so pervasive and extreme that ‘Indians’ could not be viewed in a way other than as belonging elsewhere. The colonial government, the Union and subsequently the apartheid government prior to 1961 had made every attempt to politicise their status in South Africa as immigrants, laws were created around ‘Indians’ as immigrants, they were recorded in an immigrants register (as seen in the previous chapter) and there were still plans to repatriate them. After 101 years of being treated and touted as immigrants through the unrestrained xenophobic expressions of the state and through the media and legislation, that status could not be removed overnight. Accepting ‘Indians’ as South Africans on paper could not

³⁵⁵ This term has been used predominantly to describe third, fourth, and fifth generation Asian Americans, who despite being American citizens and having no other homeland beside the US are still regarded as foreign, i.e. more especially as Chinese or Japanese. Huynh et al (2011:133) argue that “The perpetual foreigner stereotype posits that members of ethnic minorities will always be seen as the “other” ... ” The stereotype also demands for hyphenated identities, perceptions of being culturally different and allowing for discrimination, and exclusion based on that.

remove the 'stigma' of being foreign that had been perpetuated for over a century. Almost 30 years after they became a permanent part of the social and political fabric of South African society, 'Indians' remained perpetual foreigners in the land of their birth.

- Chapter Seven -

“Undeserving Heirs”

1994-present

7.1 Introduction

South Africa finally became a democratic country in April 1994 after the first ‘free and fair’ general election took place. A commitment was made by the ANC led government to ‘non-racialism’ based on a Constitution, adopted in 1996, which was inclusive of all who lived in the country, thus accepting equal citizenship. In this chapter I contend that even though the democratic state acknowledges South Africans of Indian descent as part of the national discourse, it nevertheless still perpetuates the notion of essential ‘differences’ between ‘peoples’ which originated in colonialism, was entrenched further after the formation of the Union, and legitimised through various policies during apartheid.

I argue that the continuation of such ‘race’ classification in legislated and bureaucratic form, ensure racialisation and ‘race thinking’, which is evident in self-perceptions and the perceptions of ‘others’. The argument is demonstrated by examining the role of the South African state in the maintenance of racial categories which in turn allow ‘Indians’ to be stereotyped, homogenised and labeled as a separate and distinct group. This formal process ultimately results in the confirmed perception of them as ‘a people’ or ‘community’ with fixed and essentialised identities and ultimately ‘belonging’ to another country, to which they could *easily* ‘return’, as evidenced by calls to ‘go home’ echoed at various points in time during the post-1994 democratic era. Illustrations will be provided to reveal how, as a result of this perpetuation of difference based on ‘race’, similar processes of othering and anti-‘Indian’ sentiment, reminiscent of the political eras prior to democracy, persist in public and popular discourse in contemporary South African society, and is exposed at various junctures.

7.2 Maintaining Racial Categories in a Non-Racial Society

Throughout the 20 years since the advent of democracy the discourse on nation building has been permeated with both inclusion and difference. The narrative of the nation envisioned by the ANC was based on inclusive citizenship and not deliberately ‘race’. However ‘race’ features as a focal point around which South African society orbits and remains a marker of the ‘other’, as racial ontologies of apartheid continue to inform so-called ‘non-racial’ practices espoused by the democratic state.

For example, the democratic, ANC led government promulgated legislation such as the Employment Equity Act (EEA), which has as its basis affirmative action, to “redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups”.³⁵⁶ Designated groups, according to the Act, refers to “black people, women and people with disabilities”. However ‘black’ is further broken down into ‘Africans’, ‘Coloureds’, and ‘Indians’. Appointments to workplace positions then are based on physical external appearance and hinges, in the first instance, on self-classification. In order to obtain employment, people are compelled to classify themselves whether or not they identify with any one of the racial categories outlined in the EEA. It should be noted that there are no longer any *legal* definitions of each ‘race’ as the Population Registration Act has been rescinded. Classification then is left open to interpretation by the persons classifying, *but* ultimately classification can only occur within the confines of the phenotype of the person being classified, and no other variables are considered. According to Christopher (2009:107) “... the census enumerators were advised that a population group was: ‘A group with common characteristics (in terms of descent and history), particularly in relation to how they were (or would have been) classified before the 1994 elections’”. According to this definition then, people born post-1994 are also included under the umbrella of the ‘race’ categories defined according to the rescinded PRA, and thus still burdened by the yoke of the apartheid states ‘race’ classification.

³⁵⁶ The purpose of the Employment Equity Act (EEA), as laid out in Section 2 of the Act, is “ ... To achieve equity in the workplace by – (a) promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and (b) implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce.” (Republic of South Africa Department of Labour, 1998).

Apart from entry into employment, applications for everything from scholarships to entry into university which is based on a quota system for certain disciplines such as Health Sciences, are all based on 'race' and require a person to self-classify. Maré (2001b:96) refers to this constant requirement for classification as the "banality of race confirmation" which he argues is pivotal to the establishment and maintenance of 'race' thinking. According to Maré (2001b:77),

Race thinking refers not only to the manner in which we make sense of social relations, actions and events, but also to the way in which we perceive our own group membership and those of others, the way in which we share identities with some and are distinguished from others – the making of boundaries between 'us' and 'them' Race thinking (or racialism) shapes notions of significant 'similarity and difference' and thereby creates group boundaries, allocating people to those groups.

'Race' thinking then 'naturally' forms part of the daily consciousness in South Africa as it is supported and affirmed by policies, legislation and the media. This leads, as Maré (2001b:80) points out, to "banal racialism" which is ultimately about how we experience being in society. Thus "... the manner in which we attribute motives, read the news, tell jokes, construct and confirm stereotypes, explain what is happening to us and to those around us or within the society, are all influenced by race thinking ..." (Maré, 2003:20). The discourses available to society and offered by politicians and the media provide individuals with a model for how to interpret actions, behaviour and experiences of themselves and others (Burr, 1995:71). As Joel, from *Family 5* notes, "... the thing is, what the media shows you is what you are going to *know*". Schipper (1993:39) has argued that

During the twentieth century, a Western multinational "Otherness" industry has developed, allowing a relatively small but powerful group to decide the fate, content, form, presence, and absence of its Others - to decide whether, where, and how these Others are supposed to exist, to be seen, or to be ignored. According to the stereotyped images generated in this way, the designated Others play different roles - either positive or negative - in advertisements, literatures, film and the human sciences. Considerable scientific research has been devoted to the phenomenon of the Other during the past twenty years. The Other has been studied and classified in terms of appearance, gender, language, behavior and customs. When the results of these investigations are presented, one is told that *this* is what "they" look like, that *this* is their reality, or that *this* is how our ancestors or learned predecessors characterized "them".

The perpetuation of ‘race’-based categories in post-apartheid South Africa and the unproblematic usage of racial terms in the political arena, the media and social discourse have indeed contributed to the continuation of apartheid-esque ‘race’ thinking and racialisation. This argument can be illustrated with some well publicised cases since 1994 which provide examples of racist discourse in the media, continued stereotyping of South Africans of Indian descent, and perceptions of ‘Indians’ as foreign, ‘different’ and ultimately not ‘belonging’, which will be discussed further on in this chapter.

7.3 The Legacy of the Group Areas Act

In addition to the persistence of racial categories, the legacy of the old apartheid order, is also a *material* reality in many spheres of contemporary South African society. For example, the Group Areas Act, as discussed in Chapter Six, forever changed the spatial and, ultimately, the social landscape of South Africa. The different residential locations for each of the ‘races,’ in contemporary South African society, has been the virulent legacy of apartheid. Although the Group Areas Act has been rescinded most suburbs have retained its ‘old’ racial composition especially formerly ‘Indian’ and ‘black’ townships. In addition, a South African Human Rights Commission study which focused on desegregation in schools in 1998-1999 found that 15 schools that only had ‘white’ students during the apartheid regime had no ‘black’ students or a ‘token few’ (Vally and Dalamba, 1999:28 in Soudien, 2001:315). In turn these schools made deliberate attempts to maintain the ‘whiteness’ of the institution. This was best demonstrated in a statement made by one of the learners, “ ... [t]here is too much racial mixing. I do not like this. Go back to apartheid” (Vally and Dalamba, 1999:29 in Soudien, 2001:315). Aarti from *Family 3*, who was 19 years old at the time of the interview, in describing her schooling at a prestigious previously all ‘white’ school in a former ‘white’ residential area, stated:

Aarti: ... everyone stuck to their cultural group or whatever you want to call it. Like all the Indians would stick together ... We used to interact and laugh and have fun together in class and even at like break times and stuff. But you had your group and you stick to them like you know whenever you had to go out and stuff ...

The above account illustrates what Dolby (2001:9) referred to when she conducted a study on identity at a formerly all 'white' school in Durban (from 1991 to 1996), wherein she argued that it was a "... space in which the tensions inherent in contemporary South African society are played out." Not only does 'race' thinking involve the racialisation of space, people and events but also relates to how people view themselves and others as belonging to a 'group', thereby creating a distinction between 'us' and 'them'.³⁵⁷

South Africans then are deeply ingrained to view society, i.e. people, places, events and the like, in terms of 'race', as 'white', 'black', 'coloured' and 'Indian'. 'Indians' in South Africa are constructed, perceived and 'marketed' as a homogenous group with a single identity. In a website promoting KwaZulu-Natal to the tourist market, the following was discovered in 2006 on a tourism website,

And so it is that throughout our Kingdom - Durban Metro in particular - you'll be transported to exotic realms of fascination and delight. Walk in the incomparable footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi; marvel at the southern hemisphere's most ornate, gilded temple and largest mosque; rub shoulders in trinket-filled bazaars with traditionally-attired descendants of those first arrivals; savour the entire spectrum of intricately-prepared cuisine, including 'ascending food' that transforms the body into a vehicle for enlightenment; set your watch to the muezzin's call to prayer from a soaring minaret; discover the secrets of yoga and meditation from masters of knowledge with direct links to antiquity; allow imagination free rein in a space filled with sacred music and dance, or the avant-garde fusion of East-meets-Africa; move your body to the ultra-modern disco sounds of pumping 'Asian Underground' beats; mingle with glitterati at the local premiere of Bollywood's latest blockbuster - the India of yesterday, today and tomorrow stands at the forefront of our Zulu Kingdom! (KwaZulu-Natal Tourism: undated,a)

³⁵⁷ It should be acknowledged that Dolby (2001:48) in her ethnographic study at Fernwood a former 'white' school in Durban with predominantly 'white' staff and majority 'black' learners, discovered that although friendships between students of the same 'race' was mostly evident, some of the students she engaged with explained that they mixed with other students based on shared taste in music, fashion and sport, and not 'race'. She explains further however that these friendships were not sustained outside of school or across a range of different contexts within the school, similar to Aarti's experience indicated above. In addition, Dolby (2001:61) notes that 'race' was a major determinant in how these learners forged friendships but because of the aspect of taste she deduces that their identifications were more complex. See also Pillay (2013:114) who uses the example of 'hispters' to propose that, "Top-down and rigid identities are giving way to smaller subcultures ..." I would argue however that although such sub-cultures exist, as this research has revealed, it is an exception to the rule, as most South Africans due to their physical locations in society are unable to penetrate the barriers of 'race' to forge significant friendships based on other experiences.

Not much changed in 2009,

And today, two intrinsic aspects of India's ancient spiritual wealth are joining equally unique dimensions of our Zulu Kingdom's natural beauty and indigenous culture to offer the rare and uplifting experiences attracting visitors from right round the globe. (KwaZulu-Natal Tourism: undated,b)

The words that are used to depict 'Indian' people in Durban appear to glamourise a 'community' and create a false impression of strong ties to India. The extract reads like Disney movie script with an animated olive-skinned male dressed in 'traditional attire', singing 'sacred' songs, dancing through the streets of Durban while selling his wares, and picking at 'intricately-prepared' food while the 'Indian' mothers slap his naughty hands away. This imagery contributes to the construction of South Africans of Indian descent as a homogenous group with deep roots in a land that is not South Africa. For example, the use of phrases such as "East-meets-Africa" once again implies a connection with India and thus with people from a different part of the world inhabiting South Africa. In addition these images promote a bounded view of culture for the tourist market, which in turn perpetuates racist discourse. Further, the extract immediately above suggests an amalgamation of immigrants or an immigrant culture with that of the *indigenous* people of South Africa, inferring then the South Africans of Indian descent are not indigenes.

This perception of 'Indians' as a separate community is entrenched in social and political discourse which has been clearly evident in the run up to general elections over the years since the first democratic elections of 1994, where the various political parties solicited the vote of 'Indians'.³⁵⁸ In addition the then ANC press liaison officer, Susan de Villiers, wrote in *The Mercury* in the month prior to the 1994 election, of the scare tactics of the National Party (NP) election campaign to get the 'Indian' electorate to vote for them stating that

... For a community which, like the Indian community in Natal, lives with a perception fuelled by nearly half a century of anti-ANC propaganda, fear mongering may be an effective if crude tactic ...³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ See for example, *The Mercury*, 'FW's Natal 'Roadshow' Kicks Off', 1 March 1994

³⁵⁹ *The Mercury*, 'Election Strategy Based on Terror', 3 March 1994

Further many images, similar to the one below of the then Democratic Party (DP) leader Tony Leon addressing ‘Indian’ voters in ‘Indian’ areas in April 1999 prior to the general elections of that year, surfaced throughout every election campaign for the major parties, i.e. the ANC, NP, and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The ‘Indian’ vote was always viewed as a ‘race’ vote and never approached by any of the political parties in terms of a class strategy. This too homogenises ‘Indians’ as separate and distinct community. What is interesting to note is that although South Africans of Indian descent as mentioned before are comprised of various religions including Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, it is most often the image of the politician with a Hindu symbol of the dot on their forehead or in a Hindu temple such as the one below, that appears in the media, further feeding the misconceptions of equating people of Indian descent to being Hindu³⁶⁰ (this may not necessarily be the intention of the politician but the media reportage and imagery creates and perpetuates this perception):



Image 7.1: *The Mercury*, ‘DP Opposes Racial Quotas’, 8 April 1999

³⁶⁰ The most recent public example of the conflation of ‘Indian’ and Hindu was expressed in November 2012 during the Hindu celebration of Diwali when a former beauty queen posted a comment on the social media platform *Facebook* which was considered anti-‘Indian’ as opposed to anti-Hindu. She stated, “To the Indians who call this celebrating, seriously this is f#cking (sic) ridiculous!! I hate you people letting off fireworks! So inconsiderate – you don’t deserve health, wealth, prosperity or any other of the things that Diwali is supposed to bring you.” (Phoenix Tabloid, ‘Pageant Beauty Apologises for Diwali Tirade’, 27 November 2012)

In addition there were also those from 'within' who called upon a 'collective' 'Indian' experience to denounce the National Party and to vote for the ANC as evident in the letters to the editor published in *The Mercury*, in April 1994:

Sir – Have we forgotten so quickly all the apartheid legislation? The Group Areas Act, the Population Registration Act, the Education acts, the Job Reservation acts, the Separate Amenities act, the immorality laws, the Mixed Marriages Act, the migration laws, the pass laws, Public Gathering Act, etc! Have you forgotten all the pain and suffering these wretched laws caused to our people? Just three years ago we could only drive through the golden mile, we were not allowed to put our feet in the water! How do you think we felt to see all these selfish whites enjoying themselves? Didn't you feel bad? Do you remember the pedestrian bridge at railway stations? It was separated, one side for whites and the other side for non-whites. They didn't want us to touch them! Do you remember we couldn't sit and eat with them? That we had to buy our food from a hatch-hole and eat outside? Have you forgotten that Papwa Sewgolum had to receive his prize outside in the rain when he won the SA Open? What about detention without a trial – the 90 days and the 180 days, the house arrests? What about the millions of innocent blacks who were thrown into prison for merely not having a "dompas"? I suppose it was all right for the white government to do that. It was all right for the white government to drive millions of people out of their lands! But wasn't this a Christian government which enacted such abominable laws and made us second class citizens in our land of birth? And yet today some of us are openly embracing the very enemy who had evicted us from our homes and dumped us in Chatsworth. We who struggle against such terrible odds to uplift ourselves are now waving NP flags and garlanding De Klerk! Shame on us! What would our forefathers who had suffered the indignities and hardships of apartheid say? If Mahatma Gandhi had been alive today, would he vote for the NP ... We are a peace-loving and law-abiding people. We don't want revenge. All we are asking you to do is not to vote for the Nats. Vote for the party which fought and struggled against apartheid. That's the least you can do in memory of all who had suffered and died under apartheid.³⁶¹

And,

Sir – This is an urgent appeal to my Indian brothers and sisters. With regard to the election the growing feeling among us is widespread uncertainty and fear. Rumours are flying around that the Africans will steal our jobs, homes and even our wives after April, and as a result many Indians are convincing themselves that by voting NP enough votes would be accumulated to defeat the ANC, but this is impossible! There are 16 million blacks, three million whites, two million coloureds and 643 000 Indian voters who will be voting. (These are approximate figures extracted from demographic statistics, 1993). According to many surveys

³⁶¹ *The Mercury*, 'Letter to the Editor – Have we Forgotten?', 7 April 1994

75% of the blacks will vote for the ANC so even if the NP gets every other vote from the remainder (which is definitely impossible) it will still be the losing party. This is a fact ... Remember that the election results will be announced in every suburb and this will be a glaring indication of where most of the Indian votes swayed ... If ever this happens then it will be a stigma the Indian community will have to live with forever! Can you afford to risk your children's and grandchildren's future by being on the wrong side of history in this crucial election? Let us secure our future by voting for the ANC – the party that is going to rule South Africa. Please remember that they do not need our vote and that by voting ANC we are not doing them a favour ... we are doing ourselves a favour! (Remember what happened to the Indians in Uganda after they joined the camp of the white oppressors in their elections.)³⁶²

These extracts reveal that the writers appropriate the racial label of 'Indian' and work within the already existing template of 'race' set by the state. As argued in the previous chapters, the dominant discourse is powerful as identity is formed and inextricably connected to the discourses present in society (Burr 1995:55). We become who we are as social beings as a result of the 'language' produced by the discourses in society (Burr, 1995:57). The influence and power of the official discourse of the democratic state is no different to that of the apartheid state in that both coded 'race' into the DNA of the apparatus of government through legislation and policy. As Alexander (2007:93) argues, "The state, or more generally, the ruling classes, in any society have the paradigmatic prerogative of setting the template on which social identities, including racial identities, are based. Subaltern groups and layers of such societies necessarily contest or accept these identities over time". A major discursive shift then, regarding 'race' in particular, did not occur in the transition from apartheid to democracy. Discourses which constitute people as racial subjects remain integral to the new dispensation and were left undisputed by the new democratic government and discourses on a common unified South African identity became subdued if not altogether muted.

Many argue (see for example Davies and Harré, 1990), that individuals have choices within the discursive narratives. However, regarding racial identity in South Africa, choices are limited if not non-existent. As Christopher (2002:401) notes, "Individuals find themselves firmly fixed as members in various groups of a particular dimension and substance." The official discourse of

³⁶² *The Mercury*, 'Letter to the Editor – Secure Your Future', 25 April 1994

the democratic state did little to quell the xenophobic anti-‘Indian’ sentiment that was so blatant in the political eras before, and the rhetoric of ‘Indians’ as ‘foreign’ and different did not subside.

7.4 The Nation is Under Siege from Foreigners

In March 1999, immediately prior to the general elections, Amos Maphumulo, former managing editor of the Durban based, isiZulu language, bi-weekly newspaper, *Ilanga*, wrote an editorial in which he argued that ‘Indians’ were primarily responsible for the violence in society and the oppression and exploitation of African people. Titling the article ‘The Nation is Under Siege from Foreigners’, Maphumulo argued that ‘Indians’ were guilty of instigating and perpetuating ‘black-on-black’ violence by providing firearms to African youth with the intention of annihilating the ‘black nation’.³⁶³ He further expressed hope that another Idi Amin would emerge, making reference to the Ugandan dictator who drove out Ugandans of Indian descent from Uganda in the 1970’s:

Indians are rich because of our money ... It is disgusting and annoying that during black-on-black violence, Indians were discretely giving firearms to black children so that they could fight among themselves and in that way destroy the nation ... How long are we going to remain slaves to other people? ... Perhaps, in this country, there will be a blessed woman who would give birth to Amin ...³⁶⁴

Although political parties distanced themselves from the editorial,³⁶⁵ especially the Inkatha Freedom Party who owned the newspaper, Maré (2001a:93) points out that what emerged as a result of this, was substantiation, by significant members of South African society that these perceptions were widespread and needed to be dealt with. For example Kaizer Nyatumba who was at the time editor of *The Independent on Saturday*, a newspaper in Durban wrote the following in response to the editorial and subsequent criticism of Maphumulo:

³⁶³ *Ilanga*, ‘The Nation is Under Siege from Foreigners’, 22-24 March

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ See *The Mercury*, ‘Editor Leaves Office After Racist Writing’, 26 March 1999 and *The Mercury*, ‘MD Slams Paper’s Racist Editorial’, 25 March 1999

Poor Amos Maphumulo. For having dared publicly to raise a concern shared by the majority of his readers and his people ... he did exercise his prerogative as editor to express a view which by and large articulates the concerns not only of the constituency he represents, but also of a growing number of Africans in KwaZulu-Natal in particular and in the country in general ... Mr Maphumulo was guilty of incitement and was way out of line in calling for the birth of a local Amin. However, this should not blind us to the fact that there are many Africans, not only among readers of *Ilanga*, who share the concerns he raised in his editorial ... We need to be honest with one another, to tackle the problem rather than to shoot the messenger ...³⁶⁶

Again the writer, draws on the existing notions of 'race' set by the state, and the differences between the many 'peoples' inhabiting South Africa becomes evident. In addition, the use of the words 'his people' is not only very vague in that it could refer to all people classified as 'black', only isiZulu speaking South Africans in KwaZulu-Natal, or IFP members, but also immediately creates a separation between 'Indian' people and the 'people' to which Amos Maphumulo 'belongs'.

Maphumulo did apologise for bringing "the paper into disrepute", and in his apology stated that he believed that he was "... stating a point held as valid by most of our readers"³⁶⁷ implying that he was reflecting the already existing perceptions and prejudice in society. Larson (2006:84-85) however explains that "News is not a mirror of society or the events that occur; nor can it be ... First news is a business that sells its audience to advertisers ... news is in the business of trying to appeal to the mainstream ... audience." In the case of *Ilanga*, the readership is largely isiZulu speaking 'black' working class people. In addition as Fowler (1991:4) argues, "... all meanings are socially constructed ... all discourse is a social product and a social practice ... News ... is analysed as a particular important example of the power of all language in the social construction of reality."

This perception of South Africans of Indian descent as foreign even though they had lived in South Africa for almost five to six generations did not dissipate even after the furore over the article broke out and was condemned by the ruling party as well as other prominent political

³⁶⁶ *The Mercury*, 'Brutal Honesty is the Only Way Forward', 7 April 1999

³⁶⁷ *The Mercury*, 'Editor Apologises but Takes Firm Stand', 30 March 1999

parties. For instance, Dr. Siphon Mzimela who was the Minister of Correctional Services in 2000, told the then Deputy Minister Valli Moosa to “go back to Bombay”.³⁶⁸ And in 2002 a similar incident, to what was caused by Amos Maphumulo occurred when Mbongeni Ngema, a popular South African playwright and musician, wrote a song titled ‘amaNdiya’, which was a song that incited racial hatred against ‘Indians’ in South Africa. The lyrics portrayed ‘Indians’ as racist and exploitative:

Oh brothers, Oh my fellow brothers. We need strong and brave men to confront Indians. Whites were far better than Indians ... Even Mandela has failed to convince them to change. They also keep coming from India ... they bribe you with roti and paku ... we are poor because all things have been taken by Indians.³⁶⁹

Harris (2002) contends that similar racist stories had been sung and told prior to the murders of Tutsis in Rwanda. She contends that amaNdiya does not only portray negative racial stereotypes, but also invokes prejudice through the “language” of xenophobia, arguing further that;

By presenting “Indians” as outsiders from India, the song raises questions about belonging within South Africa. This moves beyond race alone because it introduces concepts of citizenship and nationality. It implies that “Indians” are not South African and therefore have less legitimate claim to their citizenship than others (Harris, 2002).

Ngema however stated that he was just expressing the opinions of ‘black’ people at taxi and bus ranks, shebeens, soccer matches and “many other places”.³⁷⁰ Like Maphumulo, Ngema justified the lyrics:

Last night Ngema denied that his new song *Amandiya* had been designed to stir up race hate against Indians or cause a divide between Indians and Africans. He said the song merely highlighted a perception among Africans ... “All I have done is write a song which deals with what ordinary Africans are talking about ...”³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ *Sunday Tribune*, ‘Why are Indians Being Singled Out for Attack?’, 26 March 2000

³⁶⁹ *The Mercury*, ‘Ngema You Wrote the Script’, 27 May 2002 and *The Mercury*, ‘Ngema Won’t Apologise for Song’, 30 May 2002

³⁷⁰ *The Mercury*, ‘Ngema Won’t Apologise for Song’, 30 May 2002

³⁷¹ *The Mercury*, ‘“Racist” Song Highlights Perceptions, Says Playwright’, 27 May 2002

He added, “ ... I believe it is my role as an artist ... to mirror society and highlight the plight of the people. The leadership relies on us artists to voice out issues where there is perceived oversight.”³⁷² Maphumulo too shared a similar view that it was the role of the media to express existing prejudices when he stated:

In our daily lives as journalists, and particularly as editors, we always find ourselves in a position to be custodians of general public’s [sic] feelings, thoughts, and ideas. There are other times I am sure that many of my colleagues all over the world find that they have to run stories, publish pictures or state opinions that are not palatable but are reflective of the society we live in or are simply a popular view.³⁷³

By arguing that they “reflect” what is happening in society both Ngema and Maphumulo are calling on the existence of the racial categories already present in society and state policy which allows for such views to exist *and* for others to share these views. This also raises the question of what the role of the media and entertainment is in society, i.e should it merely “mirror” or should it raise issues about society in a way that questions the status quo rather than reinforcing existing ideologies? Nyamnjoh (2006:64) argues that “ ... the media do not simply carry information to the public as a neutral vehicle reflecting the workings of society. They produce and/or reproduce certain ideologies and discourses that support specific relations of power in accordance with hierarchies of race, nationality, culture, class or gender ...” In addition Larson (2006:15) explains that “Entertainment does not just tell stories; it tells particular stories in a way that privileges some people and points of view over others.” The particular negative imagery of ‘Indians’ used in this song was not created by Ngema but is “historically constituted”, in that it is derived from a legacy of stereotypes against ‘Indians’ as exploitative merchants and traders as illustrated in previous chapters. At the time the song was written the majority of ‘Indians’ were still working class, and not in a position of ownership of business where they had power to oppress or exploit. The song therefore expresses an irrational ‘fear’. As argued in previous chapters, throughout the various political eras ‘Indians’ were targeted as scapegoats for the social ills of the time, viewed as economic threats and seen ultimately as being social evils. Ngema’s lyrics in contemporary South African society allude to South Africans of Indian descent as being foreign and immigrant and thus unworthy of enjoying the rights and benefits of the land.

³⁷² *The Mercury*, ‘Condemnation for Ngema’s “Racist” Song’, 29 May 2002

³⁷³ *Ilanga*, ‘The Nation is Under Siege from Foreigners’, 22-24 March

Academic and columnist for *The Mercury* Devi Rajab in recalling her childhood experiences and her relationships with people of different ‘races’ including her ‘black’ adopted brother, stated in response to the song that, “In many respects, Mr Ngema, I don’t feel like that Indian you describe. I feel like a South African. Perhaps it was this feeling I experienced when I went to India for the first time in my life. I looked around and thought “my goodness, there are so many Indians around and I’m not one of them.”³⁷⁴

The most recent claims of ‘Indians’ not being ‘indigenous’ to South Africa, were made in 2013, by the Mazibuye African Forum’s, Phumlani Mfeka. Mfeka, via social media outlets such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* and also through the press claimed that South Africa is an African country “... belonging to its indigenous African people.”³⁷⁵ In an open letter to the Mayor of Newcastle, Abdul Rehman, a South African of Indian descent who brought a case of *crimen injuria* against a Road Traffic Inspectorate officer for a racial slur,³⁷⁶ Mfeka stated

... Who do you think you are, asking an African whether he knows who you are in his native land? ... Africans in this province do not regard Indians as their brethren and thus the ticking time bomb of a deadly confrontation between the two communities is inevitable and shall be exacerbated by the antagonistic attitude that Indians such as yourself and Vivian Reddy have. The traffic official was absolutely correct in reminding you that India is your home, and you should perhaps begin to embrace India as your home as we Africans embrace South Africa as our home, which we are more than willing to fight and die for ... Now if you choose to further pursue this issue in the manner in which you have threatened, I would like to advise you to do so cognisant of the fact that we as Africans see these shenanigans of yours and have made a note ...³⁷⁷

What is of most significant concern in Mfeka’s letter is the threats of a violent uprising against ‘Indians’ in KwaZulu-Natal, who are seen as not deserving of ‘African’ resources. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, similar sentiments have been expressed about foreign African migrants who, in the eyes of their aggressors, do not have a ‘legitimate’ claim to South Africa or its wealth and supplies. Mfeka who claims to have a large ‘following’ appears to be on a deliberate campaign to ‘rid’ South Africa of ‘Indians’. He has since posted similar comments on

³⁷⁴ *The Mercury*, ‘Let’s Have a Common South African Identity’, 17 June 2002

³⁷⁵ *City Press*, ‘City Press Debate – Are We Strangers in a Strange Land?’, 26 May 2013

³⁷⁶ *Post*, ‘All is Forgiven, 5-9 June 2013

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

his *Facebook* page and on *Twitter*³⁷⁸ and released a statement wherein he calls for “ ... Indians to be completely excluded from BEE, Affirmative Action as well as Employment Equity unconditionally, with immediate effect ...”³⁷⁹ He further claims that the Mazibuye African Forum, which he represents, “... is an African consciousness and pressure movement advocating for socio-economic justice for indigenous Africans in South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal.”³⁸⁰ Once more, this highlights issues on *who* has rights to the land, and should be the sole heirs of its resources. Although it cannot be determined to what extent this organisation speaks for the ‘people’, or the extent to which they can carry out the threats made, what is worrying is that there is a history of ‘otherness’, and perceptions of foreignness, of ‘Indians’ which has resulted in a violent outcome. In October 2013 the *The Witness* reported that the Mazibuye African Forum “which has campaigned against Indian business people” led a protest in Phoenix, a township created for ‘Indian’ occupation during apartheid, and “hundreds of protestors” were shot at by security guards, injuring 18.³⁸¹ This incident reveals the dangerous and divisive conclusion to extremist and racist othering drawing on the racial categories still being enforced by the state.

7.5 Creating Boundaries – The Dangers of Stereotyping

Larson (2006:17) notes that stereotypes in wider society like entertainment, or sport, have political ramifications and should not be brushed aside as just “fiction”. In post-apartheid South Africa stereotyping of ‘Indians’ have gone unchallenged as people are part of the polity as citizens, but are still treated by the state as ‘blocks’ of citizens so difference between ‘race’ groups and knowing the ‘other’ through harmful stereotypes persist. While the constitution maintains that South Africans are equal, legislation states that they are different.

³⁷⁸ *City Press*, ‘Trolling for Land’, 2 June, 2013

³⁷⁹ Mazibuye African Forum. (2013). Retrieved 10 August, 2013, from <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mazibuye-African-Forum/398300423610818?sk=info>

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ *The Witness*, ‘Guards Fire on Police and Protestors’, 10 October 2013

Hamamoto (1993:206) refers to the dominant ideology and stereotypes expressed in the media as “controlling images” of others, which describe the extent of the influence of these images in society. These images in the form of both news and entertainment impart knowledge about society to its audience through the repetitive portrayal of people in particular ways. It is these practices that contribute to the process of how we “... see others and ourselves in certain ways. We learn who and what to value and who and what to dismiss. This seeing influences how we treat each other” (Larson, 2006:14). Hall (1997b) refers to this as the “politics of representation” in that meaning is constructed through the medium of representation. Meanings then are produced in society by individuals who have the power to construct specific meaning for specific actions, events, things and people.

The narrative of ‘Indians’ presented in the stereotypical ways of pre-democratic South Africa are displayed in various forms in contemporary South African society, as a result of the perpetuation of racial categories, including through sport, entertainment and everyday ‘joking’. This is the case when it comes to the so called accent of South Africans of Indian descent, which is often mocked in television adverts, by public figures and even in so called ‘Indian’ community theatre. Even though there are linguistic divisions within the ‘Indian’ community, ‘Indians’ in Durban, speak English predominantly. In other words, the language groupings still exist even though the majority of the people who include themselves within these groupings do not speak those particular languages. Those who are multi-lingual, speak languages such as Telegu, Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati, and Urdu but these vernacular languages are slowly fading away with each passing generation. Prior to apartheid, the indentured labourers that arrived did not have sufficient knowledge of English. Mesthrie (1992) notes that the language shift to English as the first language of the majority of South Africans of Indian descent occurred in the 1960s however learning the language in a segregated society was not ideal. Due to the apartheid system of separate development there was little or no contact between ‘Indians’ and first language English speakers. In addition prior to 1961, ‘Indians’ were not meant to become a ‘permanent’ part of the population which rendered their need to have a deeper understanding of English unnecessary (Wiebesiek, 2007:6).

Indeed although English is spoken almost exclusively, ‘Indians’ in Durban however have become synonymous with the infamous Durban ‘Indian’ accent. It is an accent that includes the intonation and phonemic remnants of the original Indian mother-tongue languages. As a result English phonemes are pronounced with strong inflections. Even though an accent is often influenced by the pronunciation and intonation patterns of the first language, the ‘Indian’ accent has prevailed because segregation resulted in exposure, whether at school, in communities, or to family who spoke or pronounced English with similar intonations. This accent has been used to sell a variety of products, from insurance to internet service providers, and also mimicked by comedians such as Kevin Perkins aka Michael Naicker. Kevin Perkins is a South African comedian and in the process of introducing his character or alter ego, he constructs the ‘Indian’ male based on various stereotypes, and in so doing continues to perpetuate such stereotypes and further entrench difference,

I always used to joke that Michael Naicker is the Indian counterpart to Michael Knight from that old TV show Knight Rider ... The character I have created was born out of my life experiences. Mike Naicker is a working class Indian male. He loves fast cars, big sound systems, gambling, hot food and hot women. He fancies himself as a bit of a gangster and a ladies’ man and is very cocky and assertive. He loves nothing better than ‘sticking it to the man’ and spends more than he should on modifications to his car. But that’s the kind of guy he is - image is everything.³⁸²

Key to Kevin Perkins comedy is the ‘Indian’ accent that he portrays. The fact that this accent is viewed as humorous suggests that it deviates from the norm or ‘standard’ English, in other words, the way English ‘should’ be spoken. Larson (2006:13) reminds us that,

... entertainment is also a source of knowledge about the world. Therefore, its content is an important influence on how people think about race. Even when entertainment messages do not have explicit or intentional political agendas, they show power relationships. Entertainment media permeate, reproduce, and influence culture and should not be ignored as apolitical or irrelevant.

The ‘mocking’ of the ‘Indian’ accent in addition to the assumption that it is not ‘pure’ English is also an expression of beliefs about *who* ‘Indians’ are. As Preston (2004:40) concludes, “Attitudes

³⁸² Kevin Perkins (undated), ‘Press Release’, Retrieved 13 March, 2009, from <http://www.barnyardtheatre.co.za/show.aspx?sid=404>

towards languages and their varieties seem to be tied to attitudes towards groups of people.” As Daniel from *Family 1* has experienced,

Daniel: ... You can't just say hey I am trying to treat this guy as a fellow person, it's always in the back of your mind that if somebody tells you that somebody has done something, the first thing you will ask is who did that? You know, like what race is he? As soon as you mention the race then you stereotype him, and they say ok ja, “These people are inclined to do those things” ... You always want to stereotype me. I can never be an independent individual person. It can never be that something is just done by a guy, no he is an *Indian* guy. Whatever he did, he is an *Indian* doing it. And on the sports field, the whites they always have this thing of downgrading Indians by trying to speak like an Indian, you know they try to incite you, they try to ... to me, whenever they do that, its them saying ‘hey you are not the equal of me here, you are just an Indian playing here because you are not very good’ ... I've always experienced this ...

Larson (2006:83) argues that “Stereotypes ignore individual differences by creating a generic image of a group that is applied to all of its members”. By mocking the ‘Indian’ accent it demeans South Africans of Indian descent and trivialises them. According to Trudgill (1975:67) “... it is difficult to belittle a speaker's language without belittling the speaker as well ... language can be socially symbolic ... to reject a speaker's language is to appear to reject not just him, but also all those like him who he identifies with and values”, even though ‘Indian’ people do not speak a different language it's the variety of English spoken by them which is denigrated. This attitude then toward the South African ‘Indian’ accent, the mocking, mimicking, and jesting can be viewed as a manifestation of prejudice and dominance (Wiebesiek, 2007:14). Wiebesiek (2007:15) argues that,

... Varieties of English which are stigmatised and thought to be ‘bad’ English are often those varieties associated with non-white speakers of English, specifically Black, Indian and Coloured South Africans, the previously disadvantaged sections of the population. In this way, racial discrimination continues on the level of language attitudes since language attitudes both reflect and maintain the prejudice that has been leveled at these groups of South Africans in the past.

This has continued into the present then because ‘race’ categories of the past persist today. Wiebesiek (2007:19) argues that it is a misconception that ‘proper’ English is as a result of education and intelligence or that of a higher quality mental functioning or reasoning. In

addition it is further incorrect to suggest that a different variety of English is as a result of poor cognitive functioning or that of an uneducated person or people. This however is in fact what appears to allow the 'Indian accent' to be used as vehicle or tool to evoke laughter and to mock, as it is seen as an inferior quality of English spoken by an inferior 'race' of people thus invoking apartheid reasoning of the superiority of some 'races' over others. Not only does it strengthen false beliefs of superiority it also leads to those being stereotyped to view themselves as inferior. As Hacking (2007:288) notes, "We have become all too aware of the evil effects of stereotypes. The stereotypes of American slaves became essential properties not only in the eyes of the masters, but were also experienced by the victims as true of themselves."

Pravin from *Family 3* spoke passionately about stereotyping in the media stating,

Pravin: ... Those [adverts] irritate me. Because people perpetuate a stereotype that makes other people believe that this is the way we are. And by interaction we know that that is not true ... So those stereotypical kinds of labelling does anger me to an extent, but it also informs as to the layness of people's understanding of other people ... But it irks me, especially in today's society, that that type of labelling exists when it shouldn't.

For Pravin, these adverts portray notions of 'Indians' and, *who they are*, in very negative ways. Viewers of these adverts are presented with images of 'Indians' in the same manner repetitively which then creates a belief in society about who *they* are, how *they* behave, and how *they* speak.

South Africans of Indian descent however also seem to consent that the variety of English spoken as well as the accent, is inferior or incorrect and different and this is demonstrated by self-deprecating practices of teasing and humour especially in community theatre productions (see for example Hansen, 2000:256). As Hall (1996a:14) argues, "Foucault ... highlighted problems of self-understanding, of the way that a kind of 'double-bind' works in contemporary culture which makes us individually responsible for social processes, and which also implicates us in the reproduction of relations of domination".

The negative consequences of stereotyping therefore is the maintenance of otherness. The stereotyping of 'Indians' based on accent delineates them further as separate and different. As

discussed previously ‘accent’ has been used as a marker differentiating foreign African migrants from South Africans and has resulted as mentioned in Chapter One in extreme exclusion and violence.

7.6 Earned Citizenship

The year 2010 marked the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first Indian immigrants to the shores of South Africa. The government, to acknowledge this event, set aside funds for the ‘Indian community’ to ‘celebrate’ this occasion. As a result, various committees were set up and applications for this funding were made by religious organisations, ‘community’ groups and the like. This celebration however raised more questions about ‘who’ should be remembering, and served as yet another opportunity to differentiate ‘Indians’ as other.

In a speech given to the National Assembly on behalf of the political party, the Congress of the People (COPE) Mosiuoa Lekota stated, “Today they are an integral part of the social fabric of our nation and every person of Indian origin, I know, is a proud South African not by privilege but through a right that has been earned over a century and a half.”³⁸³ Lekota, while acknowledging South Africans of Indian descent as citizens nevertheless still claims that *their* citizenship was “earned”, and there is a recognisable ‘they’. The notion of ‘earning’ citizenship is a flawed perspective on rights to the land and resources of the country. When the Indians first arrived in Natal they were given the opportunity to settle in the colony once their indenture had come to an end, and to buy a piece of ‘crown land’ turning some of them from immigrant labourers to property owners. Citizenship then, if awarded through ‘hard work’, and some type of meritorious performance, to earn it, implies then that it is *this* that determines who forms part of the citizenry and who can be denied it, and from whom it can be ‘taken away’.

In a speech given by President Zuma on the anniversary of the arrival of the indentured Indians he stated:

³⁸³Speech by Hon M Lekota on 150 Year Celebration of Arrival of Indentured Labourers of Indian Origin, National Assembly, 16 November 2010

Their odyssey from slave to full and equal South African citizens is intertwined with the struggle for freedom and democracy in South Africa ... The Indian community makes up less than three percent of South Africa's population, but played a prominent role in the struggle against apartheid and has left a strong cultural imprint ... We are delighted that while they are distinctly Indian, they remain proudly South African.³⁸⁴ ... South Africa has been enriched by the beauty of their cultures, the wisdom of their religions, and the generosity of their peoples.³⁸⁵

Zuma once again while attempting to include 'Indians' in the national discourse stresses and affirms 'difference' by accentuating that "they" are "distinctly Indian". This language of othering perpetuates racism, racial silos, stereotypes, 'race' thinking and racialisation and the continued language of difference that is given legitimacy in the media. For instance, when the celebrations were covered by magazine programmes or news outlets catering to various demographics, 'Indians' in each of these segments were portrayed as 'a people'. For example, a presenter on *Pasella*, an Afrikaans magazine programme in its coverage of the 150 year celebrations, remarked on the "beauty of *these people* [emphasis added]".³⁸⁶ This type of nuanced 'othering' behaviour is recurrent throughout South African society in every day interactions and forms just one of the multiple layers of racial othering.

'Indian' presence in South Africa for 150 years seemed to only be of concern to the few self-appointed leaders who rallied the 'community' to commemorate this event. However, this did not garner any major support from the rest of South Africa. What was not problematised by the so-called leaders of the 'Indian' community was the acceptance of being 'othered' in this way. As Hall (1994:394-395) notes discourses are steeped in history, indeed when people acknowledge and accept 'who they are' as told by history they are not the originators of that discourse but are merely appropriating stances that have been immersed in pre-existing discourses in society.

³⁸⁴AFP. (15 November 2010). 'S.Africa's Zuma Lauds 150th Anniversary of Indians' Arrival'. Retrieved 17 November, 2010, from http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20101115/wl_africa_afp/safricaindiahistoryanniversaryzuma

³⁸⁵ SAPA. (15 November 2010). 'Zuma Pays Tribute to Indian Community'. Retrieved 17 November, 2010, from <http://www.iol.co.za/news/special-features/the-zuma-era/zuma-pays-tribute-to-indian-community-1.810451>

³⁸⁶ *Pasella* screened on SABC2, 17 November 2010

7.7 'They Are of Their Apartheid Pasts',³⁸⁷

'Race' in South Africa then, is a significant source of identification, and differences based on 'race' are viewed and accepted as 'natural'. Although South Africans of Indian descent may have longer generational histories in the country as opposed to other citizens they are nevertheless viewed only in terms of the racial label afforded to them, 'Indian'. As discussed earlier in this chapter, people in South Africa have been conditioned to view themselves and others according to racial labels. There is little reservation or hesitation when asked to self-classify on official forms and documentation. Even attempts to raise children without knowledge of 'race groups' (for however long that can be possible) is greeted with shock that the child does not know "who she is".³⁸⁸ According to Rockquemore and Brunσμα (2002:59),

Families provide a social context in which individuals develop a sense of self, values, and beliefs. Parent-child interactions are ongoing, intense, and deeply integral to the interactional processes of identification, modeling, and role-playing. Children learn within the family context who they are in relation to themselves, their family, and others in society. The socialisation process, by definition, serves the purpose of transmitting norms and values from one generation to the next ... socialisation extends itself to encompass the norms and values of the unique racial group, as well as interweaving the racial group membership into the child's understanding of who he or she is ...

However, the family is not the sole arbiter of identity, as relationships in society also serve to establish within the individual, ideas of self. For instance, teachers and peers too play a crucial role in a child's understanding of themselves. As Elizabeth discovered when three and a half year old Bella arrived home stating that "six new Indian children joined the pre-school today". When asked by her mum, what had made her describe the children as 'Indian', she replied that she had overheard the teachers discussing the new arrivals. How a person 'becomes who they are' as social beings, is therefore influenced by their relationships with significant role players. This

³⁸⁷ Quote from Soudien (2001:34)

³⁸⁸ This is a personal account given to me by an 'Indian' mother, Elizabeth, who attempted to raise her child Bella 'colour-blind' for as long as she possibly could. The child's grandmother however was livid when Bella expressed confusion at being referred to as 'Indian' by her grandmother. According to three and half year old Bella's reasoning and world knowledge, Indians lived in India. The grandmother then promptly told Elizabeth to "tell the child what she is". The grandmother then accepts the category unquestioningly as 'natural'.

influence is evident in the self-descriptions of the born-free and raised-free generation as ‘Indian’.

The older family members are viewed as bearers of culture and tradition, but what exactly has been passed down to the raised free and born free South Africans of Indian descent? The generation of young people interviewed for this thesis are all fifth and sixth generation South Africans of Indian descent, ranging in age from 16 to 26. All of them grew up without the experience of apartheid and for the majority of them India has no historical validity. They view India as, as Edward from *Family 1* stated, “just another country”. Aarti, from *Family 3* who was three years old at the advent of democracy in South Africa, states too that she feels no special connection to India:

Aarti: ... its far down the line, it doesn't really impact me. It does but I don't really feel it and I guess, we don't even appreciate what our ancestors did for us. It was a pretty big leap to leave your country and come into you know a foreign land, just to give us a better education or whatever they did. And here we are living like you know, it never happened.

Her statement is ambivalent, while acknowledging the significance and sacrifice of the decision of her ancestors to come to South Africa she nevertheless still does not consider it imperative to ‘know’ about the past. As Sabheeha from *Family 4*, states, “I don't feel like my roots are in India, I feel like they are here so I don't feel much connection there.” Their relationship with India then is as a place where distant ancestors arrived from and not as a meaningful ‘motherland’.

Daniel from *Family 1* states that,

Daniel: I am just rediscovering being Indian now because I come from a mixed family in the past and I hated what I have come from you know. Not knowing, being in this confused world, I would like them [his children] to just find their own way.

Edward, Daniel's 16 year old son adds,

Edward: Mmmm, I'll be honest with you I never really hear much stuff so. They don't really talk to me about the ancestors or anything ... don't really go in depth with that ... erm it's not really as important ... er well I guess it's kind of interesting to know where you came from ... but it doesn't really affect me because this is modern times now, that's the old years ...

Despite any conscious effort by his family to 'teach' or socialise him into a racial identity, 16 year old Edward, nevertheless unproblematically accepts the category 'Indian' stating "I'm an Indian, and there are other [race] groups like whites ... I classify myself as Indian". As a child born into a free society, his appropriation of the label is telling in terms of the cogency of apartheid legislation in a democratic country. Edward resides in Chatsworth, a township created for 'Indian' occupation as a result of the GAA, he attends a school in Chatsworth which comprises of predominantly 'Indian' teachers and learners. His spare time involves "hanging out" with his friends from school in the area in which they live "watching TV or playing with the playstation" stating further "We stay here. We don't ever go out of Chatsworth". There is no safe public transport for him or his friends to be able to socialise outside of Chatsworth. They do not have relationships with people other than their own 'race'. He 'knows' that he is 'Indian' because he is told that by his family, his teachers, the media, and his government. Jenkins (quoted in Goldschmidt 2003:206) argues that the label becomes appropriated by the individuals so labeled and their "own senses of identity [are] mediated by the labels which had been ascribed to them." Edward, like his peers, appear to be 'Indian' by experience, scripted into a reality already created for them, living in a present that has been imposed on by the past. Although not denying agency, agency is confined to the script and can be viewed relative to the constraints posed by society.

Being referred to as born 'free' or raised 'free' then is not *entirely* true. What is true is that children like Edward born post-1994 are no longer bound by apartheid legislation but these children who emerged toward the latter days or in the ashes of apartheid are still trapped by the legacy of these acts and confined in racial cages, not completely free. The legacy of apartheid hounds and envelops this young generation and it is and will continue to be challenging for them to escape the label 'Indian' as they are surrounded by reminders of 'who' they are.

People in South Africa draw on the classifications already made available to them. For Bella's grandmother, letting her granddaughter know 'what' she was, as Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002:40) note, meant making it possible for 'others' to situate her in society and for her to situate herself in society. Even though these understandings are problematic, they are accepted by people in the everyday course of their lives. Identity then, as Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002:40) discuss " ... is the direct result of mutual identification through social interaction ..."

Understanding identity using the social constructionist, symbolic interactionist framework implies that identities are legitimised when others identify you as you identify yourself. What this means then is that an individual cannot or only with difficulty attribute to him or herself an identity that is not 'accepted' in society (Rockquemore and Brunnsma, 2002:40), in other words perception of self is reliant on perception of others. For instance, an 'Indian' person cannot choose to identify only as 'South African' as both legally and socially he or she is perceived in more minute terms, as 'Indian'. Daniel from *Family 1* contends with this restriction:

Daniel: I am South African I don't want to tell people I am Indian. I want to tell people 'I am South African' because I am South African ... The moment you are classified as Indian, you are associated with India. When they ask me my race and they always want to know my race, I thought that would change now [in the new South Africa] I say South African of Indian descent. Because there is nothing else I can put there ... because Indian really implies that you are from a special country. They don't call whites Europeans, so they belong here ... Indians, you don't belong here ... We need to change that ... they need to make it neutral, I don't know how they are going to do it ... They call us Indians, we say 'No man we are not Indians, sorry' ... What you see as an Indian is a South African of Indian decent. If you want an Indian, there is one billion. You go and read their passports and it says Indian. If you read my passport it says South African ... I am a South African ... I am not Indian, why do you call me an Indian, I am not from India? I have never been to India, I don't even know what it is like ... at the end of day now, we are still in a country where being Indian is not very good for your health, and they can just turn on you on a dime ...

It can be argued that Daniel wants to *choose* how he identifies himself, which is not possible in South African society, as he has already been marked as 'Indian'. Through a complex matrix of "rules, assumptions and laws" these racial categories are preserved (Rockquemore and Brunnsma, 2002:11). These classifications then reify the reductionist images constructed through political

and social discourse perpetuating categorisation, hierarchy and difference. Fanon (1986:114-115) argued a similar point when he expressed, “I shouted a greeting to the world and the world slashed away my joy. I was told to stay within my bounds, to go back to where I belonged.”

The physical appearance of an ‘Indian’ person provides the immediate connection to their ‘race’ by others. Rockquemore and Brunnsma, 2002:56) argue that

Appearance provides the first, albeit socially constructed, information about an individual to others in the context of face-to-face interaction. People’s appearance helps define their identity and allows them an embodied means to express their self-identification. It is in this process that identities are negotiated and either validated or contested.

I argue that appearance traps individuals into a prescribed identity that is socially constructed and enforced by the official discourse. A person can never truly identify as anything other than what society says he or she is because of their appearance and the pre-identification markers that go along with it. Appearance, on its own, closes off any engagement on ‘who’ the ‘other’ is. In South Africa the lines are clear, you are who you *look like* you are. Stone (1962:103) maintains that appearance “sets the stage for, permits, sustains, and delimits the possibilities of discourse by underwriting the possibilities for meaningful discussion.” As Daniel, from *Family 1* expressed this point,

Daniel: I realised now that if you look Indian, you are not going to be accepted as anything else in this country, you know what I mean? If you try to be something else, then you are blocked, if you look Indian then you might as well *be* Indian then ... So for all intents and purposes, I am Indian ... For me I grew up in a mixed up world, I didn’t know what I wanted to be. I tried to be nice to other people and friendly with them, but they don’t accept that if you are Indian. They want to put me in a box so I am just going to have to be Indian ... So now I actually am *learning* to be an Indian, let’s just put it that way ... I want to be South African and I want to be accepted as South African, but the more I try to do that the more they make me feel like an Indian ...

Daniel, argues that he is marked as an ‘Indian’ even though he identifies as South African. Classifying oneself as ‘Indian’ not only implies appropriating a racial label but also membership, voluntarily or not, to a ‘race group’. “Subjective definitions imprison individuals in spheres of

prescribed action and expectation”, notes Cerulo (1997:338). This marked judgment originates with the state and filters through society through media and popular discourse. As Sartre (1965:69) states, “The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew: that is the simple truth from which we must start ... for it is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew”. Daniel then, in the absence of any other options, has now resigned himself, to “I am who you say I am”. Farhana from *Family 4*, similarly states,

Farhana: ... Indian South African, I see it as somebody born of Indian origin in South Africa ... we are called Indians because we have been classified as Indians and because we are of Indian origin ... I am a South African but I am an Indian because the whites called me an Indian, an Asiatic ...

South Africans of Indian descent are in awkward position in contemporary South African society. It appears impossible to identify as anything other than the label presented to such people yet when a claim to an acceptance of the label is made, they are viewed as claiming to be Indian and belonging elsewhere. Although the category ‘Indian’ is accepted in everyday social interactions, it serves as an instrument signifying exclusivity, exclusion and difference.

The interviewees in the research undertaken and presented here, firmly assert a South African identity and, although acknowledging their ancestry, place no value on India as another ‘home’. As Abdul from *Family 4*, who was 78 years old at the time of the interview reveals,

Abdul: ... India is there, it’s a dot on the map man. I mean look I will be very honest with you, if I had to choose between India and Pakistan and somewhere else, I would not go to India, I would not go to Pakistan also. I would probably go to one of the Middle East countries.

KP: So when you think of home, what do you think of?

Abdul: South Africa. All my life I have lived here ... my son was born here. He is of the African soil.

In addition, Abdul’s niece Farhana, echoed a similar sentiment in expressing a connection to the Middle East and Saudia Arabia as opposed to India, stating “ ... I am a Muslim I would like to go to a Saudi country [if I had to leave South Africa].” Interestingly the interviews with *Family 4*, reveal that an identification with Islam prevails over any other identification, with Abdul stating further, “I am Muslim, South African of Indian origin”. Deepa, from *Family 3*, who was

80 years old at the time of the interview stated, “I like South Africa ... this is what I consider home. India is a place of holiday (laughs)”. Jane from *Family 1* similarly stated that she did not think of India as a motherland or homeland stating, “I’m a South African ... this is the only thing I know ...” In addition, Prem from *Family 2* who has extended family in India, although stating that she views India as a motherland, argues, “I just look at it [Indian] as a race, you know what I mean? No deeper into it”, implying then that she does not attach any ancestral value to the label ‘Indian’ in South Africa. Mogie from *Family 5* echoes these sentiments by stating that it is *only* because her grandfather arrived from India that she feels that she “owe(s) a little bit” of who she is to his homeland. Pravin from *Family 3*, states too, “... I am not Indian, I know I am not Indian. I am only Indian by classification.” A sentiment similar to Edward who stated “I just consider it to be like any other race ... I’m South African.”

There is no compelling desire then to visit India as a ‘motherland’ but more of a curiosity to visit where ‘distant’ ancestors arrived from. In addition those who do have a fascination have only an imagined idea of what India is and many have come back to South Africa disappointed after a visit. As Hansen (2012:207) discovered in his anthropological study in Chatsworth, “After returning to South Africa, Mr Pillay felt strange about his visit to the village and expressed very mixed feelings about India, although his wife found the country beautiful and harmonious. For both of them, though, India was ‘disturbingly unknown’; it made them feel very alien and South African, and also made them realise how inauthentic their own embodied sense of Indianness was”. Further, as my own research has uncovered, some South Africans of Indian descent also have an image of India as poverty stricken and backward; for example, Pravin from *Family 3* recalls how his sister once commented that she was “ ... ever so grateful to her ancestors for having come to South Africa because she doesn’t see herself wearing a sari every day and covering her head and working in the poppy fields.” This one dimensional image of India can be attributed to the stories passed down of ‘what it was like’ in India when the indentured labourers left and what life would have been like had they chosen not to leave India.

In addition a letter to the editor of the *Sunday Tribune Herald*, exposes how people from India are viewed a ‘foreigners’ in South Africa by South Africans of Indian descent, with no affinity to

them as hailing from the ‘mother country’. In other words, there is no ‘patriotic’ duty to citizens of India. The letter in itself expresses quite xenophobic sentiments:

Your article in the Herald with regard to a foreign priest facing charges of rape is very sad ... Decisions need to be taken about stopping these foreigners from coming into our country and stealing the jobs of our local priests ... A strong committee needs to be formed to liaise with Home Affairs to restrict work permits. Most importantly, jobs for local priests must be encouraged.³⁸⁹

The government of India too does not view South Africans of Indian descent as Indian but as South African. In an investigation undertaken by a High Level Committee (HLC) in 2000, and published in 2001, by the Indian government on its ‘diaspora’³⁹⁰ throughout the world, the following was revealed about the South African diaspora:

The HLC found ample evidence in South Africa to corroborate the fact that the PIOs³⁹¹ in this country are South Africans, first and foremost. The fact that they look like us, very often eat the same kind of food, and have many of the cultural values that we cherish, does not make them little more Indian than South African. A century and a half of existence in an alien land, and four or five generations of acculturation in a dominant White society, has diluted their Indianness ... During the tallying operations for the 1990 census, as many as 94.93% of the ISAs [Indian South Africans] had declared English as their ‘home language’. Among all the Indian languages, it is only Gujarati that is still generally spoken, and that too among themselves, by persons whose ancestors had come from Gujarat. But it is said that many children of Gujarati families are known to resent having to spend time at Sunday Schools learning a language that they consider of little use to them in their daily lives. Interestingly, a little over 39% of the community had declared in 1999 that their religion was Hindu. But then it was a form of Hinduism that was being practiced by people who had rid themselves of traditions and customs like *jaati*, *gotra* and *sutra*, *kutum*, endogamy and dowry. The ruthless ironing out of mutual difference during the indenture years, when their ancestors had been forced into co-existing with people from whom caste or tradition would have kept them apart in their earlier Indian environment, had resulted in forging for their descendants a new identity ... Inter-caste marriages are quite common among Hindus and Muslims, though not inter-communal ones between the two

³⁸⁹ *Tribune Herald*, ‘Letter to the Editor – Keep Foreigners Out and Use Local Priests’, 29 May 2011

³⁹⁰ According the Indian government’s Ministry of External Affairs, “The Indian diaspora is a generic term to describe the people who migrated from territories that are currently within the borders of the Republic of India. It also refers to their descendants” (Ministry of External Affairs, 2004).

³⁹¹ PIO refers to Person of Indian Origin and according to Landy et al (2003:204) refers to “a citizen of any country other than Bangladesh, Pakistan or Sri Lanka, if he at any time held Indian passport, or he either his parent or any of his grand-parents was a citizen of India, or the person is spouse of an Indian citizen”.

communities ... Our classical dance and music continue to evince widespread interest in them ... At the same time, Bollywood stars are quite popular ... But unlike the PIOs in North America and Western Europe, there is no interest in South Africa in acquiring dual citizenship ... Many ISAs would be interested in visiting India, if only to trace their roots ... The Committee found ample evidence of the cardinal truth that the PIOs in South Africa are a class by themselves, totally different from their counterparts in other countries. Unlike the large number of persons in the Diasporas in North America and the UK, the PIOs in South Africa are not generally prosperous. Unlike the situation in the Caribbean or Mauritius, here they have to contend with the rights and expectations of an indigenous population that does not easily condone any kind of superior social status of immigrants ... (Ministry of External Affairs, 2001:84-87)

The HLC report is telling in its use of the words ‘our’ and ‘them’. It reveals that South Africans of Indian descent are not considered Indian nationals or that they at all ‘belong’ to India. The only links mentioned are those of ancestral and religious ties, and an affinity to India’s popular culture. In addition the report painstakingly provides the differences between Indians and South Africans of Indian descent, even to the point of expressing the different way that Hinduism is practiced in South Africa. The committee report concludes by encouraging PIOs in South Africa to ‘realign’ themselves with the ‘black’ majority and to contribute to efforts to alleviate poverty and other social issues and states further that “ ... they should be seen to be doing so”³⁹² implying that ‘Indians’ have to actively participate in the creation of a ‘new’ state to secure their place and be seen more as citizens instead of foreigners or ‘immigrants’. At no point in the report does the Indian government lay any claim to ‘Indians’ in South Africa as belonging to India.

It should be noted that ties to popular culture emanating from India is logical as religion also features prominently in Indian popular culture such as in the movies and music. Hindu worship songs are also exported from India hence the interest, amongst certain South Africans of Indian descent, in religious music and the like emanating from India. Muslims classified as ‘Indian’ in South Africa however, like Abdul and Farhana from *Family 4*, as discussed earlier, do not have strong connections to India and don’t see any meaningful ties with India especially since many people who arrived in South Africa initially as labourers or merchants came from what is referred to as the subcontinent and not necessarily what is landmarked and bordered off as India today.

³⁹² Ibid. pg 88

Brij Maharaj an academic at the University of KwaZulu-Natal responded in a letter to the editor of the *Sunday Times Extra* to a critique, by an editor of the *Tribune* in India, of the poor turnout of South Africans of Indian descent to support the visit of the Indian Prime Minister in 2006. He stated in the letter,

The criticism (Sunday Times Extra, October 8) by the associate editor of The Tribune in Chandigarh, AJ Philip, that South Africans of Indian descent were indifferent to the recent visit of Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh (architect of Indian neo-liberalism), requires a riposte. As a journalist, Philip clearly made no attempt to understand the social, economic and political dynamics in South Africa. The poor turnout at the Durban events is an indictment of the organisers and South African government advisers, who are clearly out of touch with the communities they purport to represent. There ought to be an investigation into the huge public costs incurred. The overwhelming majority of South Africans have no direct links with India, except as an abstract, spiritual motherland. Their ambition is just to be fully fledged South African citizens, and they owe no allegiance to India. When the Indian government introduced the notion of dual passport (rejected by South Africans) at the turn of this century, the intention was to attract those with dollars, pounds and euros to invest in India. There was no interest in the descendants of indentured labourers in countries like Malaysia, Fiji, Trinidad, Surinam, Mauritius and South Africa (who possibly remind India of its less sophisticated past). Philip is also labouring under a serious misapprehension: Manmohan Singh did not come to South Africa to visit the Indian masses in Chatsworth, Phoenix or Lenasia, nor was his intention to meet the African masses in Inanda, Umlazi or Alex. He came to meet and support the new elites, and reporter Taschica Pillay aptly summed it up: “The four-day visit was aimed at boosting economic ties between the countries.” ...³⁹³

Similarly the people interviewed for this study revealed their South Africanness and ties to South Africa rather than invoking an Indian identity or as having a homeland other than South Africa. Many respect India as an ancestral land, but none look at it as a place to settle. Sharm from *Family 2*, a third generation South African of Indian descent, 76 years old at the time of the interview, explained that he would not want to leave after having travelled around the world, stating “South Africa is the best place in the world. There are shacks in India and Greece, and Rome is filthy.” Being ‘Indian’ for Sharm, is tied to culture and, for him specifically cultural attire: “I dress up when I go to church with my long kurtas ... sometimes I put on a lungi or dhoti

³⁹³ *Sunday Times Extra*, ‘Letter to the Editor – Manmohan Singh Came to Meet and Support New Elites’, 15 October 2006

it's called here ...³⁹⁴ "I won't leave [South Africa]" he adds, stating "I would rather die in my own country ... we were born and brought up here and we are part of our country ..." Similarly Pravin from *Family 4* who was 31 years old at the time of the interview stated that 'Indian' meant "nothing" to him adding,

Pravin: I don't identify with anything er being Indian but the only thing I can identify with as being Indian, is the culture ... So for me Indian is just a culture ... because I am South African ... this for me is home. This is where I was born, this is where I was brought up ... I belong here ... and I will not leave here for India most definitely not ... There is no relationship to there [India] at all for me except for the physical relationship now with my mother's family because she does have family there. But even she views herself as being South African rather than Indian ... For me it's not the motherland, my motherland is here. I am part of this soil and will always be part of this soil. So there is no connection for me to India except for the tourist stuff that I want to do, and the shopping (laughs) ... But there is no attachment to it ... I am South African, proudly South African ...

Joel however, states that

Joel: ... it does not have a cultural meaning to me because ... I don't think we are Indians, we just ... we are South Africans ... I mean it's so diverse and so different, you are a South African person of Indian descent ... I don't really know much about India, only what I see on TV ... I mean there must have been a reason for them coming here, I mean God allowed it ... I think He had a plan for people and these people were meant to be here for a specific reason.

According to Daniel from *Family 1*, a fourth generation South African of Indian descent, he would not leave South Africa: "I am attached to this place ... I am attached to everything here". Anusha from *Family 3*, 54 years old at the time of the interview stated, "My roots are here, Indian African not an India Indian ... I feel no connection at all to India ... this is home ... home is here".

It is important to note, however, that apart from Daniel, none of the participants in this study challenge the label of 'Indian'. Despite having claimed 'South Africanness' they do not find the category 'Indian' problematic, i.e. it is accepted by them as a racial classification.

³⁹⁴ Kurtas and lungis are part of the traditional dress worn in India.

One such example of the general acceptance of the classification in society is the acceptance of media, whether print, radio or television, which are geared toward providing news and entertainment to an 'Indian' audience. A former chief editor of the *Sunday Tribune Herald*,³⁹⁵ Alan Dunn, stated that "A publication must be relevant to its readers. It must have information that appeals to its readers, speaks to its readers, and, can be used by its readers" (quoted in Maharaj, 2005:6). The *Sunday Tribune Herald* therefore supposedly provides information that is relevant to 'Indians' and of interest to 'Indians'. There are no stories that are aligned with the issues affecting or are thought to be of interest to people in South Africa broadly. The newspaper supplement is presented as closed off and providing information to a small nucleus. Fowler et al (1979:157) outline three 'communities', which a newspaper is focused on,

- a. The community constituted by the act of communication, those who produce the paper and those who read it.
- b. There is also the community which the newspaper transmits or creates; the world that it records, the images of social relations and events in its pages, and the community implied by its content.
- c. Finally there is what we can call the real world, the world of people and actions, which are recorded, accurately or inaccurately or ignored by the paper concerned.

This implies then that not only is the newspaper geared toward a particular group of people, it is also responsible for 'creating' a community through the medium of the newspaper, through the information it publishes and disseminates to the broader public. An image of 'Indians' is portrayed to the "real world". The *Sunday Tribune Herald* is but one example of media products that have been established with the purpose of targeting an 'Indian' market. Other examples include, *Indigo* a glossy magazine, the *Sunday Times Extra* (supplement to a nationally syndicated newspaper), *Lotus FM* a national radio station owned by the public broadcaster the SABC, and *Eastern Mosaic* a magazine programme broadcast weekly on Sunday mornings on SABC television. All of these media outlets not only claim to represent the 'community' but also contain within its programme and content issues that it believes are of concern to South Africans of Indian descent. Media such as this, as long as it is in existence, will continue to shape and 'create' the community which it 'represents' to the rest of the country and to itself. Drawing on content from India, as if it is the only content from the rest of the world that would be of interest to South Africans of Indian descent, provides a limited view of people and presents an

³⁹⁵ Supplement to the *Sunday Tribune*, originated during apartheid to provide news about 'Indians' to 'Indians'.

essentialised notion of 'Indian' identity. This too unwittingly perpetuates stereotypes of 'Indians' and of what 'they' are like, which then preserves already existing identity borders. The racial silos created by instruments such as the media operate against the creation of an 'inclusive' South Africa, and further fixes difference.

7.8 Conclusion

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, South Africa has been called a land of immigrants. However, as this chapter demonstrates it is mostly South Africans of Indian descent who are told, at various junctures, to go "home". What is most apparent post-1994 is the efficacy of the apartheid racial categories which has led to continued 'race' thinking and racialisation in a supposedly 'non-racial' society and which informs everyday thinking and discourse. The legacy of apartheid legislation apart from the PRA, such as the GAA, are still very much intact, with a minority of people having the resources to relocate to areas that were once deemed 'white' only. South Africans remain trapped physically, in the case of those victims of the GAA, and mentally in a stronghold based on 'race'. This maintenance of the racial classifications of the apartheid government by the democratically elected ANC, who are stewards of the constitution which proclaims that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, serves to preserve 'race' thinking and ultimately racial hierarchies. The change in political power in South Africa then did not alter the psyche of 'race' thinking that is still profoundly engrafted in South African society, as the racial discourse is also entrenched firmly in legislation. In addition the legacy of the apartheid legislation is still evident in South African society through racialised spaces, residential areas, educational institutions and the like.

I have argued in this chapter that constructions and representations of South Africans of Indian descent are based on stereotypes as reflected in the media, political and public discourse. The continuation of anti-'Indian' sentiment throughout the years in a democratic society is revealing and perturbing. While the majority of 'Indians' themselves identify as South African they nevertheless unproblematically appropriate the classification 'Indian' as a 'natural' description of

‘who’ they are. In addition, due to legislation that still categorises them as such, they are viewed as ‘Indians’ by fellow South African citizens.

The fact that in 2013, almost 20 years into democracy, discussions of ‘afro-indo’ relations still persist, is a testament to the destructive nature of ‘race’ classifications. The violent anti-‘Indian’ sentiment most recently expressed by Phumlani Mfeka, and discussed in this chapter, with threats of an ‘uprising’ against ‘Indians’ by him and ‘his followers’, raises issues of the consequences and dangers of fixing identities, and of viewing people as ‘other’, who are not ‘us’, who exploit ‘us’ and drain ‘our’ resources, and who are not ‘indigenous’ to the land but immigrants. When such xenophobic outbursts are left unchecked by government then words can easily evolve into an uncontrolled violent outcome, as was the case of the xenophobic violence against foreign African migrants, and South African citizens who ‘appeared’ or were regarded as foreign in 2008, and which are ongoing in South African society. Daniel from *Family 1* in discussing such racist utterances from former ANC Youth League president Julius Malema who is known for his divisive methods, as well as the former Mayor of Durban Obed Mlaba (discussed in Chapter One), states,

Daniel: ... then you have a man like Julius Malema, I assumed first that he was trying to stir the pot, which was good. You cannot leave things as they are because there are so much of changes still to be made in the country. But when he starts talking about killing people, that is where I have a problem because nobody should talk about killing people ... And the moment we start talking about killing people, then you are crossing the line ... and soon the whole of South Africa, will become involved in a race war. It seems far-fetched now but it’s not ... When I heard what the mayor had to say, I was totally shocked, because you know, Obed Mlaba to me, you know being a mayor of the city, I didn’t think that he had that much power, I just assumed that he was just the figure head there, like some kind of manager ... To me it was like he was angry with the Indians, because he wanted to push his private agenda forward and he was angry that they were stopping it, so much so that it became personal for him. And he was trying to foment violence but because the government prevented that, because we live in a more mature society now, so they were able to overcome that and then he had to lie his way out of it and he had to be like restrained. But the problem is when no one is restraining, Julius Malema starting this nonsense, he is being restrained. What if when he starts again and right up the chain no one wants to restrain him? Then the people down there know that he has been sanctioned and they can do what they feel like ...

Nechama Brodie, in writing a response to Mfeka's claims, in the *City Press* equated the language used by Mfeka about 'Indians' to that used by Hitler about the Jews:

... "The more I debated with them the more familiar I became with their argumentative tactics." "I have been researching [them] for the past 4 years, so I'm super knowledgeable about them and their tactics." The first quote ... is from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, published in 1925. The second is from last month, and was written by a man who goes by the name Phumlani Mfeka. Hitler was writing about the Jews, Mfeka about Indians. But the idiom is uncannily similar.³⁹⁶

Racial myths about 'Indians' as wealthy merchants, exploitative and oppressive persist, and are further perpetuated in public discourse through the guise of entertainment and information dissemination. Larson (2006:81) writes:

Exclusion, stereotyping and themes that mask racism and celebrate a dominant ideology are found in the news as well as entertainment communication. News stories need not concern issues, campaigns, or government activities to be politically important. All news that includes minorities conveys messages to readers and viewers that help them develop, reinforce, or challenge assumptions about race.

The racial category 'Indian' in South Africa is more than a racial description but also a language of describing some South African citizens as belonging to another nation. According to Nyamnjoh (2006:38),

Although xenophobia and its ills seem to infect just about all societies experiencing rapid social change, not every foreigner, outsider or stranger is a target. Instead, nationals, citizens or locals are very careful in choosing who qualifies to be treated as the inferior and undeserving "Other", and such choices depend on the hierarchies of humanity informed by race, nationality, culture, class and gender.

I have argued that notions of Indianness relies on the perpetuation of racial categories which has over time become 'natural'. Political analyst Kiru Naidoo aptly pointed out that "The more President Mandela speaks about the rainbow nation, the greater the perception that one needs to

³⁹⁶ *City Press*, 'Trolling for Land', 2 June 2013

be pigeon-holed into one of the colours in the rainbow to have any identity at all.”³⁹⁷ Despite constant efforts by academics and the like to show that ‘race’ has no basis in biology it seems to have little or no effect in erasing from the psyche that ‘race’ and characteristics assigned to each ‘race’, and inevitably racial hierarchy, exist. The racial categories unreflectively absorbed by the democratic government create a complete otherness in contrast to self, they exclude rather than include and unrepentantly confer an identity onto individuals. ‘Who’ a person is then, is ultimately defined by the state, although census reports have claimed that “... membership of a population group is now based on self-perception and self-classification, not on a legal definition” (Statistics South Africa, 2005:v). However, it is impossible for a South African citizen to classify as something other than one of the four ‘major’ ‘race groups’ in South Africa. Ultimately, classification, as during apartheid, is based on physical characteristics. The ultimate danger of classification then is that it becomes the essential characteristic of ‘a people’, which under certain circumstances results in ethnic/racial cleansing catastrophes and violence toward others who are not ‘us’ as witnessed at various points in time throughout history and indeed presently. 150 years then, after their ancestors arrived in the country, South Africans of Indian descent are still perceived as belonging elsewhere, as step-children of the land and undeserving heirs to its resources.

³⁹⁷ *The Mercury*, ‘Indian Apathy is Alarming – Are There Leaders with Personality and Charisma to Win Support from the Minority Group?’, 8 March 1999

- Chapter Eight -

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The overarching question that informed this study is: “How have the perceptions of ‘Indians’ as foreigners, by fellow South African citizens, changed or fundamentally remained the same since the first arrival of indentured labourers from India in 1860, and what impact has this had on the identity formation of these South African citizens?”

In an attempt to provide an answer to the question it was imperative for the research and its analysis to be appropriately periodised. The logic that informed the periodisation of the last 150 years is a concern with demarcating critical historical moments by considering the major political events that have had a significant impact on the question that informed this thesis. As a result the constructions and perceptions of ‘Indians’ were explored from the period of indenture under colonialism (1860-1910), through to the formation of Union (1910-1948), into apartheid (1948-1994) and ultimately through to democracy (1994-present). This detailed sojourn through time allowed for a deeper understanding of the origins of contemporary ideas as well as examining the agency of ‘Indians’ themselves in the process of identity formation by exploring the various ways that the socio-political discourse, in each of the political eras contributed to the establishment and maintenance of the perceptions of ‘Indians’ in South Africa as ‘foreign’ and ‘other’. The historical analysis undertaken in this thesis was critical because, as Baldwin (1998:723) explains,

History ... does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and it's literally present in all that we do ... since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations.

The findings reveal that for the period 1860-1910, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, a language of xenophobia towards indentured labourers and others from India was prevalent and blatant in the media and politics and ultimately enacted via legislation. These racial discourses served to maintain inequality in colonial society. The arrival of the indentured labourers signaled a new era of racialisation and the creation of a category which had not existed before in the region. Although bound by the state imposed label of 'coolie', the self-definitions of the indentured labourers differed from the dominant discourse and appeals were made via the Coolie Commission to be referred to as Indian immigrants. Despite the category change in official documentation these immigrants and their descendants, were nevertheless regarded as 'coolies' and labeled as such in the media and in socio-political discourse, and 50 years after the first arrival of the indentured labourers they were still deemed to be 'foreign', 'strange', 'alien' and ultimately a 'menace' to colonial society.

The formation of the Union in 1910 did little to remedy this situation and between 1910 and 1948, a solution to the 'Indian Question' (excluding integration) was still paramount on the state's agenda. As a result numerous pieces of anti-'Indian' legislation were passed, as in the decades before, to persuade 'Indians' to return to India or emigrate to India as by about 1920, 80 percent of 'Indian' people residing in the Union had been born there (Gell, 1951:432). The 'Indian Question' however was complex and the Union government could not find a single solution. Various methods were implemented to rid the Union of the 'Indian' 'race'. These methods included the introduction of the three pound tax, voluntary repatriation, non-recognition of Hindu and Muslim marriages, and immigration policies which attempted to stop further arrivals from India. By the end of this political era, no solution to the 'Indian Question' had been found, and 'Indians', the majority of whom were born in the country, were still perceived of as a blight on the social fabric of the Union. The media during this period, although taking on a more liberal stance toward 'Indians' as opposed to the prior 50 years, still revealed xenophobic rhetoric in its publications, sometimes subtly and in some cases overtly. The ideological content of the media perpetuated notions of racial hierarchy and difference.

By the time the National Party took office and apartheid as a policy of government was officially instituted in 1949, 'Indians' were still not considered citizens of the country and repatriation was

still an option for the state. It was only in 1961 that 'Indians' became a permanent part of the population when all attempts to repatriate them had failed, and because the apartheid government wanted to avoid greater international involvement in South African affairs. In addition, separate development legislation, underpinned by the Population Registration Act as discussed in Chapter Six, was responsible for determining, where this 'group' called 'Indian' could live, which schools they could go to, who they could marry, and also what 'culture' they should adopt, and as such then *cemented* already existing notions of a 'community'. *The Mercury*, although claiming to offer 'balanced' reporting, certainly displayed right wing political stances on particular subject matters, such as 'Indian' 'penetration' into 'white' areas. The perceptions of 'Indians' as immigrants and 'other', which had been politicised from the time of the first arrival of indentured labourers 101 years earlier, endured despite 'Indians' being given official status as a permanent 'population group'.

Democracy however brought with it hope for a more inclusive South Africa with the ANC-dominated parliament adopting a constitution based on shared citizenship. The basis of the policies that followed however represented the antithesis of inclusion by entrenching existing notions of difference through the perpetuation of 'race' categories that were previously reproduced and legitimised by the now repealed Population Registration Act. Despite the demise of the Population Registration Act, government legislation and politicians continue to use racial categories to define and describe South Africans. Affirmative Action programmes have centred on differences between groups. *Human beings*, therefore, are allocated group identities based on their physical appearance. The idea that 'race' is a fixed and inherited identity remains widely accepted and reflected in the law. Affirmative Action policies therefore place people into essentialist, homogenous categories, and fail to consider class, urban/rural, religious, language, and age divisions amongst them. The continuation of such classification perpetuates racialisation and 'race' thinking and creates essential versions of the 'other' as discussed in the previous chapter. 'Race' then continues to be the signifier of difference creating and perpetuating division in South African society. As Bentley et al (2008:9) argue, "There may be no country in the world as obsessed with race as South Africa."

Anti-‘Indian’ sentiment resonant with apartheid and the political eras before it, therefore, still exist as ‘Indians’ are perceived as ‘a people’ belonging to or essentially associated with another country. In addition post-1994 reveals much more nuanced and subtle forms of othering in the media and society, as discussed in Chapter Seven. However blatant xenophobic discourse against South Africans of Indian descent are indeed still apparent, with the latest expressions centering around notions of autochthony which imply that ‘Indians’ are not indigenes of South Africa and hence should have no claim to its resources. As the findings of this research have demonstrated, South Africans of Indian descent have been referred to at various points in history as ‘coolie’, ‘Asiatics’, ‘Indians’ and ‘Asians’,³⁹⁸ and these classifications all point to people who are ‘inherently’ not South African or *of* Africa.

Evident too in the data and the analysis thereof are the consequences of notions of difference perpetuated by the focus of the state, in each of the political eras, on racial categories which then inform and/or confirm the (mis)conceptions people have of ‘self’ and ‘other’. As Hacking (2007:305) argues, “It is taken for granted ... that to understand some kind of person, one must first classify. That is sort of prior imperative.” The perceptions of ‘Indians’ as foreign and ‘different’ therefore have endured more than it has altered in the psyche of fellow South Africans through each of the political dispensations because the dominant racial discourse has persisted throughout the various periods albeit through varying mechanisms and diverse narratives justifying it at different times. I argue that the categories persist in everyday discourse and practices because it has been implemented in state law.³⁹⁹ Categories, no matter what their intent or purpose, cannot exist without hierarchies, and ultimately discrimination. As Maré (2011:617) explains, “‘Race’, when applied to human beings, can never be a neutral descriptive term but carries the historical baggage of exploitation, domination and dehumanization.” As Chapter Seven reveals, the South Africans of Indian descent interviewed in this study, from the various generations assert a strong South African identity, but nevertheless uncritically accept the label ‘Indian’ as a ‘race’ classification with some pointing to its ties to ‘culture’. The fact that South Africans are products of “an experiment in human engineering” (Gorra, 1997:67), are largely

³⁹⁸ Many documents or official forms in contemporary South Africa provide the applicant with the ‘choice’ of Asian, while excluding the category ‘Indian’. The categories Indian and Asian are thus used interchangeably.

³⁹⁹ While the absence of racial classification will not immediately erase ‘race’ thinking, however, as I argue later on in this chapter, not doing so has repercussions for a society which will continue down a path of violent ‘othering’ which as Alexander (2007:92) argues has “genocidal potential”.

ignored and this is chiefly because ‘race thinking’, exacerbated by state emphasis on ‘race’ classification, has become so embedded in the national psyche and continues to be passed down to each generation.⁴⁰⁰

Appiah (1986:35-36) reminds us that “ ... there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask race to do for us. The evil that is done is done by the concept.” This implies that the label *itself* is the obstacle that needs to be overcome. Rejection of the label or resistance to it, as noted with the example of Daniel discussed in the previous chapter, is futile as legally and socially he is marked as ‘Indian’ and in some cases ‘Asian’. It is coded into labour legislation and for statistical purposes and thus individuals are compelled to identify as a particular ‘race’. In January 2000, the then editor of the *Daily News*, Vasantha Angamuthu, questioned the role of ‘race’ in a new South Africa, and inquired as to why her choice of claiming a South African identity could not be accepted as final,

I am an Indian ... not by choice. I am an Indian, kicking and screaming at the irony of now being told that is who I am by the very people who railed against the comb test, the pencil test, whites only beaches and Afrikaans as a compulsory teaching subject in our schools. I am an Indian only because some people have decided that this is what I am. They have stamped this identity on my forehead with an uncaring, thought-less, self-preserving assumption of authority and superiority. It was first done in those long, dark years of National Party fascism and it is now being done at a time of African Renaissance.⁴⁰¹

A *South African* community then does not exist, except in rhetoric, but what is apparent however is a country comprising a number of ‘communities’. The ‘Indian community’ is one such branch whose basis as a community, as this research indicates, was established and promoted by the state, chiefly through various administrative and census undertakings to count and quantify this ‘community’. But also accepted by politicians who used it as a vehicle to gain rights and privileges and thereafter accepted uncritically by those so labelled. In addition to this, inhabiting a shared geographic space, as well as having common ancestry, the community thus appears logical to the ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, as this spatial legacy of apartheid contributes to notions

⁴⁰⁰ Jansen (2009:171) identifies this process as “knowledge in the blood” i.e. knowledge of how the world should be viewed that has been ingrained in people and “transmitted faithfully” to the following generation.

⁴⁰¹ *Daily News*, ‘Why Can’t I Just be South African?’, January 2000

of the self as a racial subject. As demonstrated in Chapter Seven, 'Indians' are also marketed by the state as a homogenous community with a strong connection to India, and also viewed as a separate voting block with unique needs in distinction from that of the rest of South Africa. No thought is given to the different class structures of South Africans of Indian descent or any other variables such as religion, education and the like which reveal internal variations and commonalities with fellow South Africans. In addition they are perceived as passive receptacles of media marketing and voter campaigning.

Images that are presented of 'Indians' such as those discussed in Chapter Seven present the 'outside', i.e. other South Africans as well as the international community, with a fixed, stereotyped image of South Africans of Indian descent. For instance, the images of South African women of Indian descent presented in tourist forums and the like are those of women in traditional Indian attire, wearing saris, heavy makeup and intricate jewelry. As Radhakrishnan (2003:537) points out, this detailed attire and elaborate cosmetics applied to the face of women, which practices originated in South India, "... has become a symbol of India not only in South Africa, but also all over the world." It is these representations of South Africans of Indian descent too which make them "unwelcome" in South African space because they are deemed to have "anomalous identities and attachments" (Appadurai, 2006:44). This is how *they* are 'imagined' to be. However, South Africans of Indian descent are too far removed from India by distance and time, considering the arrival of the first immigrants was over 150 years ago, to even imagine it as a 'homeland', as this research has revealed. The participants in this project claim a South African identity; however they cannot escape the racial label of 'Indian' with all the other distorted images and stereotypes that go along with it.

Although Groenewald and Smedley (1977:1) maintain that, "South Africa ... is a country which has been founded on immigrants", and Christopher (2001:17) adds that South Africa's population is exceedingly complex in its origin, it appears that 'Indians' in South Africa do not seem to have shed the status of 'immigrants' unlike many of the other 'population groups' in the country. This nativist discourse raises questions on "... who qualifies for legitimate inclusion ... into the social body" (McDonald et al, 2005:12). Marshall (quoted in Lister, 1997:14) defines citizenship as "... a *status* bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who

possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed". South Africans of Indian descent, who possess all the civil and political rights and privileges of citizens as defined by Marshall, are nevertheless not *seen* as deserving, hence the calls to "go home" or "you are not wanted", and the like, as discussed in previous chapters. Citizenship then, as Fanon (1967:119) reminds us,

... instead of being the-all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people ... [is] only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been ...

Citizenship therefore does not assume inclusivity or include all people as equal and deserving. Citizenship is complex and involves acceptance in society of people as citizens. The "meaningful enjoyment of citizenship" that Gouws (2005:150) speaks of however is lacking as some are viewed as "more authentically members of the nation than others" (Chipkin, 2007:10) and having more legitimate rights to state power than others.

8.2 Towards a *Future Non-Racial South Africa*

To obtain a society that is equal, fair and just implies that all South Africans live out the principles enshrined in the Freedom Charter and legitimised in the Constitution. However, drawing on the findings of the research reported on here, it appears that at present the nation appears to be fixed in a vicious cycle of othering, using the same divisive ideas as applied in the past with new motives and intentions. As the Bible cautions, "... no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the wine would burst the wineskins, and the wine and the skins would both be lost. New wine calls for *new* [emphasis added] wineskins" (Mark 2:22, *NLT*).⁴⁰² So too do measures to make right, the wrongs of the past. Redress measures cannot be successful and cause no harm by using old methods which benefit a few, thus creating an elite who further buy into the superiority discourse, to the detriment of the vast majority who *live* the legacy of apartheid daily. If not undergirded by the principles of the Constitution, all redress measures will lead to

⁴⁰² Scripture quotation taken from the New Living Translation version.

further division and strife in South Africa, i.e. not forging a new non-racial identity as envisioned by the Constitution but rather further entrenching separation which could lead, and have already led to violent expressions of othering, such as in the attacks on African migrants in May 2008, and which continue unabated and under-reported throughout South Africa.

This kind of citizenship is based on the destruction of ‘others’ who are not ‘us’, undeserving of ‘our’ land and resources. The nation-building process can ill afford difference based on ‘race’ and essential notions of the ‘other’ or beliefs that there exist levels of worthiness to be called ‘citizen’. As Alexander (2007:92) argues “racialised identities ... [have] genocidal potential” with survival of the self depending on the complete annihilation of ‘other’. As this research has shown the discourse around ‘indigenous’ Africans as belonging and deserving while ‘Indians’ are constructed as belonging to India, unworthy and morally reprehensible, representing everything that ‘Africans’ are not, are apparent in contemporary South African society. These claims to “‘real’ indigeneity” (Seidman, 1999:435), rest on the inherent essence of *who* people are and *where* they belong. As Seidman (1999:435) observes, it is a “... democratic fiction that all citizens are individuals with equal status ...”, as presently there exists an intolerance of ‘others’ who are not ‘us’, where ‘others’ are perceived as a threat. This notion of autochthony is not just specific to new immigrants as the evidence presented in this thesis suggests but also to fifth and sixth generation South Africans of Indian descent.

Autochthony, as Yuval-Davis (2011:100) deduces, is an “elastic” concept continually evolving to include new and different groups of people in a variety of ways. For instance, other South Africans who appear to be excluded from this discourse could easily be regarded as foreign to Africa or South Africa with similar reasons available to be given to justify this approach. This is not unlikely an occurrence: during the 2008 xenophobic violence against African migrants, it was reported that some South Africans were detained and sometimes deported because the police officer was a Sotho speaking South African and the arrestee was Zulu speaking (Sichone, 2001:3). In addition, citizens of South Africa are regularly arrested on suspicion of being ‘illegal’ and are detained and have thereafter to convince authorities of their status as South Africans (Nyamnjoh, 2006:51). This begs the question, when does the definition of who the ‘other’ is and who is ‘indigenous’ become final? As Appadurai (2006:42-43) warns us, ‘minorities’ at any

given time, are created by circumstance and that “ ...every case of internal violence against minorities also has its own realist sociology of rising expectations, cruel markets, corrupt state agencies, arrogant interventions from the outside, and deep histories of internal hate and suspicion waiting to be mobilized.” This implies that who ‘they’ are is unknown and always changing, and this is the *true* menace to society and to the ideals and principles that underpin the constitution.

These questions of citizenship and belonging are at the forefront of the struggles South Africa presently faces against xenophobia. This nativist discourse with claims of indigeneity does not only bode terribly for South Africans of Indian descent but also as demonstrated, all those who are foreign, especially foreign African migrants, where the marker of ‘race’ is not skin colour but accent or immunization marks and who are thus seen to be different and not in keeping with the essence of indigenes of South Africa. Claims made in the name of indigeneity, culture, ethnicity or ‘race’, are all claims to maintain difference and exclusivity.

Gilroy (2004:45) insists that in order to abolish the dichotomous positions of ‘us’ and ‘them’, the way forward would be to reject all forms of harmful, essentialised, fixed othering, arguing,

Repudiation of those dualistic pairings – black/white, settler/native, colonizer/colonized – has become an urgent political and moral task. Like the related work of repairing the damage they have so evidently done, it can be accomplished via a concept of relation. This idea refers historians and critics of racism to the complex, tangled, profane and sometimes inconvenient forms of inter-dependency. It supplies a productive starting point for the work Fanon described as ‘disalienation’, by which he meant the unmasking of racialised bodies and their restoration to properly human modes of being in the world.

8.3 In Search of a Common Humanity

The findings of this research reveal that the stress on ‘race’ classification and categorisation by the state through the various political eras has contributed to the “dualistic pairings” evident in contemporary South African society. Drawing on Gilroy’s position of reducing the distance

between oppositional identities by focusing on people as human beings as opposed to attributing to them group identities I would argue, may well be the basis of a political movement to bring about social change. This idea ultimately coalesces with the principles on which the Constitution is founded.

As Sen (2006:xiii) argues,

Central to leading a human life, therefore, are the responsibilities of choice and reasoning. In contrast, violence is promoted by the cultivation of a sense of inevitability about some allegedly unique – often belligerent – identity that we are supposed to have and which apparently makes extensive demands on us (sometimes of a most disagreeable kind). The imposition of an allegedly unique identity is often a crucial component of the “martial art” of fomenting sectarian confrontation ... Our shared humanity gets savagely challenged when the manifold divisions in the world are unified into one allegedly dominant system of classification – in terms of religion, or community, or culture, or nation, or civilisation (treating each as uniquely powerful in the context of that particular approach to war and peace).

The concept of a *common humanity* needs to be embraced in South Africa as opposed to focusing on *group survival*. Ahmed Bawa, well known academic, demonstrated this approach when he proclaimed, and attempted to reclaim, his identity as *human* over and above ‘Indian’ or South African, stating, “Who are these people who are attempting to construct me? Or reconstruct me?” And why are they trying to construct me? Why can’t they see that I am a human being living in South Africa ...”⁴⁰³ Appealing too for the creation of a “human society” was author Nadine Gordimer (2010:558) who questioned “What kind of fossil would I be, unearthed from the cave of bones that was apartheid, if my essential sense of self were to be as White? Being White as a state determining my existence is simply not operative.” She then further appealed for the establishment of what has never before been in existence, i.e. that of a “truly human society” and suggests a “community of purpose” (Gordimer, 2010:563) implying a common South African *community* assisting one another. Appiah (2006) refers, similarly, to a cosmopolitan approach where allegiances exist with people who are not kin or friends but stressing commonality with all as human beings. He argues further that these loyalties should not merely be located in the mind with no action but should be exercised through respect of people irrespective of their religion,

⁴⁰³ *Natal Witness*, ‘It’s Hard to Reconstruct an Internationalist’, 3 March 2001

beliefs or practices which are meaningful to them without imagining a uniform world where beliefs and practices are the same. Sen (2006:xiv) notes that,

The hope of harmony in the contemporary world lies to a great extent in a clearer understanding of the pluralities of human identity, and in the appreciation that they cut across each other and work against a sharp separation along one single hardened line of impenetrable division.

Yuval-Davis (2011:195) posits that such actions of political projects of acceptance and ‘belonging’ should be driven by “love and care” to humanity.

But how do such socio-political projects move from the sphere of vision to action and who should drive this process? Steve Biko, in a television interview in 1977 (see Labtekwon, 2012) suggested that people had to *learn* how to live in a society that was different to one centred around racial division and hierarchy, stating:

We see a completely non-racial society. We don’t believe for instance in the so called guarantees for minority rights, because guaranteeing minority rights implies a recognition of portions of the community on a race basis. We believe that in our country there shall be no minority, there shall be no majority, these are just people, and those people will have the same status before the law and they will have the same political rights before the law. So in a sense it will be a completely non-racial, egalitarian society ... We believe that it is the duty of the vanguard political movement which brings about change to educate people’s outlooks. I mean in the same way ... that they have always lived in a racially divided society they have got to learn to live in a non-racial society. They have got many things to learn, and all these must be brought to them and explained to the people by the vanguard movement which is leading the revolution ...

Although Biko was responding to a question from the interviewer on whether ‘black’ people would not seek revenge after years of domination, the essence of Biko’s reply is applicable to all South Africans: in other words, South Africans should *learn* how to live in a society that is truly non-racial, one which does not maintain the duality of insider and outsider through acknowledgement of ‘race’ groups. Biko stressed further that this course of action should be led by the “vanguard movement”, in this case the ANC. This is especially so because, as this

research has indicated, ‘race’ thinking is exacerbated by the institutionalisation of ‘race’ into law in whatever *form* and for whatever reason. As Mamdani (2001b:87) contends,

The racialization of the Tutsi/Hutu was not simply an intellectual construct, one which later and more enlightened generations of intellectuals could deconstruct and discard at will. More to the point, racialization was also an institutional construct. Racial ideology was embedded in institutions, which in turn undergirded racial privilege and reproduced racial ideology. It is this political-institutional fact that intellectuals alone would not be able to alter. Rather, it would take a political-social movement to be dismantled.

Although this appears as a mammoth exercise, complicated in structure and in execution, in South Africa the “dismantling” should begin where *it* began, with the bureaucratic state administration which culminated in legislation that entrenched ‘race’ classification. The state advocated ‘races’, racial hierarchy and racism throughout the various political eras covered in this thesis, and the current democratic state, while outlawing the latter nevertheless maintains and legislates racial categories, allowing it to be used in every sphere of society. As Lorde (1984:112) warned, “*For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.*” Lasting measures of change to *correct* the injustices of the past can never be brought about using the same ‘tools’ that apartheid meant for an opposing purpose. The state then needs to drive this process, if it is to succeed, by abolishing all the ‘tools’ of apartheid and the intricate system which allows for discrimination and all forms of ‘othering’.⁴⁰⁴

But how can the state be motivated to act? What is required is impetus from a determined academia influencing civil society and in turn the state. As argued in Chapter Six, it was the intelligentsia of the day which provided ‘evidence’ to show differences between people and thus influenced the policies of apartheid. It was also voices from academia which put pressure on the apartheid state in the late 1980s to rethink the policies of apartheid. I would argue then that it is also academia via tertiary institutions, research centres and the like which can ultimately

⁴⁰⁴ A counter argument to the one put forward is that ‘new’ forms of division can arise in a society which no longer acknowledges official racial categories. In addition while I have argued for a way forward it is acknowledged that this process cannot happen in a short space of time and will not be without its challenges.

cultivate critical debate in public forums to enable people to question the narrative of difference presented to them. As Foucault (1988:10) indicates,

My role – and that is too emphatic a word – is to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed.

For academics this involves not *just* teaching and publishing in academic ivory towers but to impart a culture of practice and community engagement, in addition to theorising (Lerner, 1997:92). As sociologists we are *called* to serve our community, as farfetched as this ideal may seem in academic institutions driven by productivity units and career progression, and it is imperative that academics actively pursue a public sociology, as advocated for by Burawoy (2005) and discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, to foster the growth of more informed social actors. As Morrison (cited in Giroux, 2011:117) cautions:

If the university does not take seriously and rigorously its role as guardian of wider civic freedoms, as interrogator of more and more complex ethical problems, as servant and preserver of deeper democratic practices, then some other regime or ménage of regimes will do it for us, in spite of us, and without us.

In addition, the media in South Africa who purport to be the watchdogs of democracy but as this research has shown, are also guilty of falling into trap of mindless othering, also need to be involved in any socio-political projects of social change. In order for the media to truly act, as they maintain, as guardians and defenders of democracy and the Constitution then calling the government to account on fundamental issues of non-racialism that undergird democracy in South Africa should be paramount. It is clear that the media in South Africa have relentlessly pursued, challenged, and brought to light activities that have threatened the basis of democracy in South Africa, and it should be with this same fervor that pursuit of bringing the state to account for a truly non-racial South African society should be followed.

8.4 Conclusion

In 1996, the then Deputy President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki delivered a speech titled 'I am an African' on behalf of the ANC on the passing of the new Constitution of South Africa. The speech drew on the history of the origin of the inhabitants of the country, with Mbeki claiming his identity as African being 'born' out of all the experiences of the ancestors of the land, the speech stated: "... I come of those who were transported from India and China, whose being resided in the fact, solely, that they were able to provide physical labour, who taught me that we could both *be at home and be foreign* ..." ⁴⁰⁵ This however is exactly the dilemma faced by South Africans of Indian descent today. In a land that they call home, they are stigmatised as belonging to a place that is not South Africa. It is telling that 150 years after the first indentured labourers arrived in South Africa, it is nevertheless *still* necessary for 'Indians' to stress their belonging to South Africa as a homeland.

The following words from James Baldwin (quoted in Ford, 2007:42) is apt: "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced". So too, an acknowledgement of the destructive nature of 'race' classification and the subsequent othering that results from this need to be 'faced', if the people of South Africa are to experience a society that is truly non-racial, a society where racial identities are non-existent, where people see each other as human beings and thus hierarchy is demolished and discrimination based on 'race' is obsolete, where 'race' is no longer a "basis upon which human beings are distinguished and ranked" (Gilroy, 2000:37). South Africans of Indian descent will continue to be regarded as 'other' and as foreign, and the scourge of xenophobia towards foreign African migrants will not be eradicated as long as 'race' classification, and the resultant systematic othering of people, remains unchallenged.

⁴⁰⁵ Mbeki, T (8 May 1996). 'Statement of Deputy President TM Mbeki, on behalf of the ANC, on the occasion of the adoption by the Constitutional Assembly of The Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill 1996'. Retrieved 10 August, 2011 from http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/orders/new2002_mbeki.htm

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