

THE CENTRE CANNOT HOLD:  
THE EXPERIENCES OF POST-APARTHEID MIGRANTS FROM  
SOUTH AFRICA TO AUSTRALIA

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to explore the migration experiences of a group of post-apartheid white South Africans to Australia. The work is grounded in relational psychoanalytic thinking while using the constructivist grounded theory method (GTM), as proposed by Charmaz (2006), to analyse the data. The combination of these two frames represents an extension of the GTM by including a focus on the co-creation of data, and provides a structured approach to psychoanalytic research.

13 participants were selected using purposive and theoretical sampling strategies. Primary data collection comprised conversational face-to-face interviews, followed by a written survey later, to elaborate on themes that had emerged through data analysis.

The results of the study confirmed many of the extant findings about the reasons why whites have left South Africa since 1994: high levels of crime and violence; anticipation of ‘declining standards’; and fears for the future of whites. In addition, by tracking the core conceptual category of ‘the centre cannot hold’ that developed from the application of the GTM, the role of defensive operations in all phases of the migration process emerged.

The role of manic defences, in particular, is highlighted: the way these function both as defence against anxiety and guilt, as well as repudiation of vulnerability. While manic defences were found to be especially salient in the actual process of leaving, they also formed part, in some cases, of the collection of ongoing defensive structures that assist in maintaining psychic equilibrium among this group of well-functioning migrants.

## **STUDENT DECLARATION**

I, Catherine Helen Hicks, declare that the PhD thesis entitled ‘The Centre Cannot Hold: The Experiences of Post-Apartheid Migrants from South Africa to Australia’ is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

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Catherine Hicks

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The Study

The idea for this study emerged from a piece of writing (Hicks, 2010) I did back in 2009, in which I tried to grapple with a range of complex and conflicted feelings about having migrated from South Africa after the formal end of apartheid in 1994. As I tussled with shame-filled realizations in particular – and probably, in retrospect, in an unconscious attempt to soothe feelings of being alone in this – I began to wonder whether other post-apartheid migrants felt the same way as I did.

So the seed for the present study began to germinate, and I set about the formal applications and approvals. I had in mind the working title ‘Migration as Flight from Shame’, but as I developed the proposal into something that would stand up to the scrutiny of the university Ethics Committee, I became aware of the headlock that a focus on shame had engendered. I had supposed I would find shame in the migration stories of my fellow expatriate South Africans: as I became more able to hold conflicting self-states together, I realised that *of course* others would have their own feelings about and experiences of migration from South Africa, and these may or may not involve shame. In addition, ‘flight’ could imply both ‘from’ as well as ‘towards’ something, or not even be a significant feature of others’ migration stories at all. With greater clarity then, I could begin the process of meeting my participants in a state of curiosity, interested in knowing what meaning they made of their migration stories.

For that is the aim of this study: to explore the experiences of migration by a group of white South Africans who moved to Australia after the dismantling of apartheid in 1994, with the hope that I might achieve a composite picture of what it means not only to be a migrant, but one who elects to take this step at a particular moment in history and under a very particular set of personal and social circumstances.

White South Africans enjoyed a privileged status under apartheid, and benefitted materially and psychologically as a result. The feelings that people have about this are increasingly being explored and documented in the literature<sup>1</sup>, with the work of the Apartheid Archive Project being particularly important in this regard<sup>2</sup>.

Although there have been a number of waves of white migration from South Africa since the 1950s (Louw & Mersham, 2001), generally in response to significant political events in the country, whites have left South Africa since 1994 in greater numbers than ever before (Politicsweb, 2012). There are many studies<sup>3</sup> that examine the manifest reasons that white South Africans cite for their decisions to emigrate. Underlying, more dissociated reasons for leaving have been less explored, however, and the ways in which the dimensions of being white shape the decision to leave, and how they impact on adjustment to the new country, represents a gap in the literature on migration from South Africa. This study is an attempt to elucidate these more and less dissociated feelings, *as well as* those experiences more readily available to conscious processing – for it is my belief that both intrapsychic and social/interpersonal dimensions are inherent in and essential to all human functioning.

## 1.2 The Method

In order to try to access both conscious and unconscious dimensions of migration, a qualitative study was considered essential: in fact, a quantitative study was never considered a possibility because of the fundamental clash in worldview between its demands for an objective and scientific stance, and my own, which is situated in the constructivist and relational realm. In

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<sup>1</sup> Selected examples of such studies are Ballard (2004a, 2004b), Bloom (2009), de Kock (2006, 2010), Hook (2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2014), Krog (2003, 2009), Lemanski (2004, 2006), Sonn (2010), Steyn (2001, 2005, 2012), Straker (2011a, 2011b), Truscott (2011, 2012, 2013), Vice (2011a – and all the commentaries on her paper in Vol 30(4) of the *South African Journal of Philosophy*).

<sup>2</sup> The Apartheid Archive Project is an international research initiative that aims to examine the nature of the experiences of racism of particularly 'ordinary' South Africans under the old apartheid order and their continuing effects on functioning in contemporary South Africa (<http://www.apartheidarchive.org/site/>).

<sup>3</sup> Selected examples of these are Bornman (2005); Brokensha (2003); Brink (2012); Crush (2013); Crush et al. (2012); Goldin (2001); Khawaja & Mason (2008); Lucas et al. (2006); Pernice et al. (2000); Politicsweb (2012); Schönfeldt-Aultman (2014); van Rooyen (2000).

addition, I believed that a psychoanalytic framework was best suited to the aim of my study not only because of its potential to illuminate more and less dissociated aspects of experience but also because, as Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006) have written, “To ensure a strong research design, researchers must choose a research paradigm that is congruent with their beliefs about the nature of reality” (p.2). Thus, it was of paramount importance that any methodology I selected or developed should be consistent with the fact that I am a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, particularly identified with Relational psychoanalytic thinking.

Most contemporary psychoanalytic approaches could be described as (small ‘r’) relational, in that they place “relationships themselves ... at the center of their developmental, motivational, and clinical theories” (Bass, 2009, p.238). Relational (big ‘R’) psychoanalysis is broader than this however, and while not a unified or singular theoretical position, it embraces object relations, interpersonal and feminist theories (Aron, 1996) – I will elaborate the central concepts and understandings in a later chapter.

In addition, I needed to find a way of making sense of the material that I hoped would emerge. I wanted this to be a disciplined and rigorous element of data analysis, rather than a loose collection of themes and ideas. The constructivist Grounded Theory Method (Charmaz, 2006) seemed to me to be well-suited to my aims because of the way it “places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants” (Charmaz, 2006, p.130), as well as the clear and detailed exposition of the steps involved in analysis that the approach proposes. Although I did not find any precedents in the literature that combined a psychoanalytic framework with a rigorous application of constructivist grounded theory, I believed such integration could be possible and that it could permit both a deep and thorough understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

### 1.3 The Researcher

If I had written this Introduction when I first started this thesis in 2009, I suspect it might well have been one of “the ‘I-am-a-white-scholar’ confession[s], followed by the predictable avowals of subjectivity, complicity and positionality” that de Kock (2006, p.176) has described.

Although I no longer feel mired in the guiltiness that is more about “buying myself exoneration” (Mitchell, 2000, p.732) than genuine acknowledgement, some statement about my subjectivity is warranted, I believe.

I migrated to Australia in 1999, at the age of 42. Almost all of my life, at that stage, was thus spent as a white, middle-class, English-speaking, avowedly left-wing South African. While I immigrated to Australia as the result of a tempting job offer and the promise of sponsorship, it is also true that the possibility of emigration had long been a topic of debate, and the job offer was a very welcome and convenient opportunity. This was not so much because of the fear of crime and violence – I lived in Port Elizabeth, which was less affected by serious crime than some other centres in South Africa. But I have two sons, and I certainly worried about their futures and anticipated that they would emigrate at some stage, leaving me behind. In addition, both my husband and I were in private practice, both in professional careers traditionally associated with Western ideals and privileged clients. Beginning in the late 1980s, we certainly wondered whether our comfortable and independent lifestyles were sustainable. The decision to leave was not without doubt, guilt and shame, however, and the experience of being a post-apartheid migrant here in Australia is not without these feelings and emotions either. In fact, as I noted earlier, conflict about shameful ‘not-me’ self-states was probably the major impetus for me in undertaking this study: I wanted to come to know more about these difficult feelings, and whether others like me were grappling in the same way.

## **1.4 The Participants**

From the foregoing, it is clear that I am absolutely of the same cohort as the participants in this study, and I would like to introduce them here. The need for confidentiality necessitates only brief and unidentifiable description, however. Thus, the resulting brevity and anonymity does not do justice to each person's contribution to this study – I wish there were some other way I could acknowledge and thank them. I present them here in the order in which we met.

### **Sally:**

Sally had come to Australia when she was 27, in 1997, and was 40 when we met. She is English-speaking, married with young children. She works part-time and we met at her home.

### **Susan:**

Susan was 39 when we met and 26 when she emigrated in 1997. English-speaking, she is also married, with young children, and works full-time. We met at her office.

### **Sandy:**

Sandy migrated to Australia in 2001, at the age of 39, and was 48 when we met at her office. She is married, has teenage children, and works full-time. She is English-speaking.

### **Terry:**

He migrated to Australia at the age of 41, in 2001, and was 50 when we met, at his place of work. He is English-speaking, married, has teenage children and works two jobs.

### **Steve:**

Steve was 46 when we met, having moved to Australia aged 36, in 2001. He is English-speaking, married and has one child. We met at his home-office where he works part-time.

### **Henry:**

He came to Australia in 1997 at the age of 32, so he was 46 when we met – at his office, where he works full-time. He is English-speaking, married, with teenage children.

**Jerry:**

English-speaking, Jerry was 59 when we met, having migrated at the age of 50, in 2002. We met at my office. He works full-time, and is married to:

**Linda:**

She was 49 when she migrated and 58 when we met – at my office. She is English-speaking. She and Jerry have grown-up children, as well as a grandchild. She had just resigned from her job when we met.

**Tina:**

She migrated in 1996, at the age of 29, making her 44 at the time of interview. I met her at her home. She is English-speaking, divorced and re-partnered, and has teenage children. She works full-time.

**Gina:**

Gina was 47 at the time I interviewed her, and had migrated to Australia in 2009, two years before we met. She is Afrikaans-speaking, married, with children in their twenties. She was studying for her equivalency exams in her profession when we met – at her home.

**Roger:**

Roger was 37 at the time of the interview, and had arrived in Australia 3 years before. He is single, has no children, and works full-time. He is Afrikaans-speaking and we met at his office.

**Carl:**

Carl had been in Australia for 8 years by the time we met, at my office, and was aged 47 at the time of the interview. He is Afrikaans-speaking, divorced, and has children in their twenties. He worked full-time in Australia, and migrated back to Africa (but not South Africa) a year after we met.

**Andre:**

Andre was aged 48 at the time of the interview and had been in Australia just under a year. Since he lives in another city in Australia, we spoke using Skype. He is Afrikaans-speaking, married, with young children. He works full-time.

**1.5 The Thesis**

I have attempted to structure the presentation of this thesis in a logical and sequential fashion. Although, as a Grounded Theory study, a comprehensive literature survey was not the first step in the research process, I have decided to present the literature at the outset since it seems a logical way of situating the study in the broad field of migration in general. Chapter 2 thus surveys the psychoanalytic literature on migration, presented in terms of the specific foci of the studies cited, while Chapter 3 has a specific focus on emigration from South Africa. After a brief outline of the history of South Africa, especially with reference to apartheid, I review a selection of the body of literature regarding emigration from South Africa. I discuss some of the major factors that have been identified as part of the migration decision, and explore the particular meanings of whiteness in the South African context.

Chapter 4 is the last of the literature review chapters, and surveys psychoanalytic research methods, of which the interview is the most common. It provides the backdrop for the methodological section of this work.

In Chapter 5, the first of three methodological chapters, I provide a detailed explanation of Relational psychoanalytic concepts and understandings, to ensure that the specific psychoanalytic frame of this study is properly described. I also introduce the concept of the manic defence, an important element in the findings of this study. In Chapter 6, I introduce the constructivist Grounded Theory Method (GTM). I also describe the selection of participants, the interviews, and the ethical thinking that guided my research process. In Chapter 7, I sharpen

the focus on the GTM by describing explicitly the various stages in data analysis, illustrated with examples.

Chapter 8, while it might be seen as the psychoanalytic reflexive counterpart of Chapter 7 in its detailing of analytic steps, is also the first of four Results chapters. This chapter uses extracts from my conversations with the participants to illustrate the co-created nature of the material, as well as to highlight the role my reflexive processing of the material played in my understanding of what emerged.

Chapter 9 presents and illustrates the manifest and well-documented reasons for leaving, as well as noting some of the more and less dissociated elements that also appear to have been implicated. In Chapter 10 I focus specifically on the actual leaving process – how significant this is not only in its own right and what it might represent, but also how it impacts ongoing adjustment. Chapter 11 deals with the immigration phase, the ways in which the participants have or have not settled, and both conscious and less conscious experiences and feelings associated with this phase of the migration process.

In Chapter 12, I discuss some of the methodological issues related to the study: the use of the GTM together with a psychoanalytic framework, and the use of countertransference both during data collection and analysis. I discuss the findings of the study in terms of the core conceptual category ‘the centre cannot hold’, and present possible theoretical interpretations of the major findings. Chapter 13 concludes the study with a summary of the findings, implications and limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

## 2. MIGRATION

### 2.1 Introduction

As noted in the foregoing Introduction, this study is situated within a psychoanalytic framework. Consequently, I have elected to confine my review of the general literature on migration<sup>4</sup> to those works which adopt a psychoanalytic approach. In keeping with the tenets of the Grounded Theory Method<sup>5</sup>, I conducted most of the literature review after data gathering and analysis. However, in order to provide the rationale for this study in the PhD application process, and to gain some understanding of migration in general, as theorised psychoanalytically, I read Akhtar (1999a) and Grinberg and Grinberg's (1989) seminal works, prior to the interviewing process. After data collection and analysis, I undertook a literature search using the keywords 'psychoanalysis' and 'migration'.

During this broad search, I observed that the number of books and papers on the topic was notably sparse prior to the publication of Grinberg and Grinberg's (1989) *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile*. Since then, the field has grown and my current survey of the topic yielded a significant number of references. Ainslie, Tummala-Narra, Harlem, Barbanel and Ruth (2013) have made a similar point, and proposed that the move away from classical psychoanalytic theory towards intersubjective approaches has contributed to this development, with contemporary analysts and researchers interested not only in intrapsychic phenomena but also in interpersonal, environmental and cultural aspects of human existence.

In order to select relevant material from the broad and relatively large body of psychoanalytic literature now available on the topic of migration, I drew upon the processes of thematic identification and clustering that I had used in my data analysis. I used the primary foci of the

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term 'migration' to mean the comprehensive experience of both 'emigration' (leaving the country of origin) and 'immigration' (arrival in the new country).

<sup>5</sup> Detailed explication of this follows in Chapter 6

theorists as organizing principle of the selection process, and this yielded five main themes: Loss and Mourning; Home; Separation-Individuation; Dissociation and Multiplicity; and Impact on Self Experience. This is not to suggest that these are discrete categories or theories, or that there is no overlap of themes or issues. On the contrary, most theorists that I survey here engage with similar themes and ideas, but there are differences in priority and emphasis, and I have utilised these as a way of organizing the information into a manageable pattern.

I should note here that I have not included the considerable body of work on exile, since the participants in this study were all voluntary migrants, whereas I understand exile to refer to those individuals who, because of immediate and certain danger, were forced to leave their countries of origin and who, for the same reasons, cannot physically return to the home countries.

## **2.2 Loss and Mourning**

The role of loss and mourning<sup>6</sup> in the migration experience is noted by almost every author surveyed in this chapter, but certain theorists place this aspect of the process at the centre of their theories. Grinberg and Grinberg (1984, 1989) for instance, noted that the first stage of the migratory process involves intense pain at the loss of all that has been left behind, and that mourning for the native country needs to be resolved as far as possible for successful integration to be achieved. For these authors, resolution implies the ability to learn to bear the pain of the losses incurred, as well as the ability to take up the challenges posed by the new place.

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<sup>6</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to present a history of the development of the concept of mourning, it may be noted here that, generally-speaking, earlier authors (pre-2000) writing about migration tend to use the term in its classical sense, that is, the reaction to and process of separating the self from the lost object, whether that be a person, a fatherland, an ideal, and so on (Freud, 1917; Klein, 1935). Those who represent more contemporary psychoanalytic frames tend to understand mourning as a process of containment of paradoxes rather than separation from objects, in which the task of the mourner is both to detach from and remain connected with what has been lost (Bassin, 2011).

In their view, the experience of loss evokes “paranoid, disorienting, and depressing anxieties [that] may alternate with one another, leaving the person prone to periods of total disorganization” (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p.97). As a means of protecting themselves from this pain, anxiety and sadness, the authors suggested that migrants make use of defensive mechanisms, in which they belittle their losses and denigrate all that is known and familiar, in order to negate feelings of anxiety and guilt. Alternatively, under other circumstances of migration, the new migrant may locate all the goodness and meaning in the country that has been left behind. Either way, Grinberg and Grinberg (1984, 1989) considered the loss and pain of migration to be so great that it represents “a potentially traumatic experience characterized by a series of partially traumatic events and at the same time represents a crisis situation” (1989, p.15). With this potential threat to the psychic survival of the individual, defence mechanisms have to be deployed to allow the new migrant to maintain a degree of equilibrium.

Little by little, as the new migrant works through the mourning process, these previously dissociated<sup>7</sup> feelings come to be recognized and experienced, and through the suffering that this entails, he or she may become more accessible to the new culture and to their integration therein. Grinberg and Grinberg (1984) emphasized that “the process of integration with the environment will depend on the capacity for tolerating change and loss, the capacity for being alone, the capacity for waiting. In sum, it will depend on the subject’s mental integrity” (1984, p.27).

Garza-Guerrero (1974) presented a similar view of the necessity for the working through of the mourning process so that acceptance of and integration into the new culture may develop. He suggested that the mourning of the lost culture is one of the fundamental elements of ‘culture shock’, which he defined as “a reactive process stemming from the impact of a new culture upon those who attempt to merge with it as a newcomer” (p.410). He sees culture shock as a

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<sup>7</sup> In the work of Grinberg and Grinberg (1974; 1989), the term dissociation seems to be allied to splitting: “Ego splitting ... a dissociation between inside and outside, subject and object, thinking and action, body and mind” (1974, p.36).

normal and inevitable aspect of any move from one culture to another, irrespective of the reasons for the move, and suggested that mourning is a prerequisite for its adequate resolution, noting that mourning, “with its adherence to the past and resistance to indiscriminately accepting the new culture, allows for a process of reorganization to take place. Mourning thus constitutes a healthy inhibiting force in the process of merging with the new culture” (p.422).

Ainslie (2009), while not using the term ‘culture shock’, also noted the profound sense of loss that migrants experience as they leave behind both their people and their environment, and the psychological difficulty of becoming immersed in a new culture. Representing as he does a contemporary intersubjective approach to psychoanalysis, Ainslie (2009; Ainslie et al., 2013) proposed that “cultural elements powerfully form and inform self- and object representations. Identity, in other words, is woven out of cultural elements just as it is out of familial elements. In fact, the two are indistinguishable” (2009, p.215). As a result, he noted, migrants experience the loss of the usual and familiar tastes, smells and rhythms of life just as importantly as they do the loss of interpersonal ties, and thus migration is an experience that activates mourning processes (Ainslie et al., 2013). This mourning process, Ainslie noted (1998), permits ongoing attachment to that which has been lost via “the immigrant’s engagement with the processes of mourning” (Ainslie, 1998, p. 283), since it is an engagement which permeates every aspect of immigrants’ adjustment to and management of their new circumstances.

Ainslie et al. (2013) proposed that the extent of the mourning process in migrants is so great that “immigrants are, in fact, perennial mourners” (p.666), and cite Volkan (2007) as the source for this characterisation. My reading of Volkan (1999, 2007) is not quite the same, however.

While he noted that people who leave behind their countries, loved ones and cultural environments inescapably go through a significant mourning process, it is my understanding that the transformation of migrants into ‘perennial mourners’ is only one possible outcome of the mourning process that Volkan (1999, 2007) proposed. He suggested that for some, mourning may have a healthy outcome if they are able to enrich their self-representation by a

selective incorporation of that which the lost object represented into their own expanded sense of self. For others, the outcome is less healthy and may lead to depression if their identification with the lost object is non-selective and thus contains irreconcilable elements. A third outcome

occurs when the mourner internalizes the mental representation of what was lost and turns it into an 'introject'. Although the introject is an active object representation of the lost person or thing, the mourner does not identify with it and thus becomes a 'perennial mourner' (Volkan, 1999, p.174).

In other words, Volkan (1999) is suggesting that, in the absence of healthy, selective identification with the lost object, resolution of the mourning process cannot take place. Rather, the introject becomes lodged in the perennial mourner's internal world, "sometimes felt by the mourner as a foreign body inside him or her" (p.174), and the mourner remains endlessly connected to and preoccupied with it.

Volkan suggested that some migrants, those whom he sees as the perennial mourners, externalize this 'introject' in the form of what he calls linking objects or phenomena. These may be literal objects, or may be phenomena such as a smell or an affect that is associated with that which has been lost. If used as a stepping-stone in the short term to maintain links with the past while adjusting to the present, Volkan (1999, 2007) sees these as helpful adjuncts to the mourning process, for he sees that such objects and phenomena may permit

both a distinction and a continuity between past, present, and future. The creative use of a linking object or phenomenon gives such a person time to work on his or her denial of what is lost, to accept changes, and to realize what may be gained (Volkan, 1999, p.176).

In noting how important it is for the migrant to develop the ability to make the temporal distinction and connection between past, present and future, Volkan (1999) referred to the concepts of normal and pathological mourning as proposed by Grinberg and Grinberg (1984, 1989). He noted that pathological mourning embraces a tendency to compress and conflate time, in which past and present are confused, while in normal mourning, there is both perspective and distinction between past and present.

In their discussion of normal and pathological mourning, Grinberg and Grinberg (1984, 1989) suggested that the mourning process may be complicated by the kind of guilt that the migrant experiences as a result of the suffering caused by the loss of objects and the loss of parts of the self projected onto those objects. Using Kleinian psychoanalytic terminology, these authors suggest that pathological mourning is characterised by melancholic feelings and results from ‘persecutory guilt’, where the main elements are resentment, despair, fear, and self-reproach. Normal mourning on the other hand, is associated with ‘depressive guilt’ about those objects and the parts of the self associated with the objects, which have been left behind or betrayed in the act of leaving. Their use of the term ‘depressive’ guilt is akin to the guilt associated with the depressive position in Kleinian theory, which involves feelings of concern for the damage done to an internal or external other. In the migrant, this manifests as “worry, sorrow, and an authentic reparatory tendency which enables the person to pass through the mourning process more effectively” (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p.68).

With a few notable exceptions (Akhtar, 1999a, 2011; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Ward & Styles, 2012), guilt<sup>8</sup> as an element of the migration experience is little theorised in the psychoanalytic migration literature. Ward and Styles (2012) tested Grinberg and Grinberg’s (1989) concepts of persecutory and depressive guilt in their study of women migrants to Australia. While they found that guilt was a pervasive, punishing and long-lasting outcome of migration for their participants, they did not find evidence for Grinberg and Grinberg’s (1989) typologies. Rather, Ward and Styles (2012) found that the guilt their participants felt was related to transgressions against the family (having left their parents in the homeland and depriving their own children of grandparents) and the impossibility of making reparation for this. Their study suggests that guilt as an outcome of migration is an area in need of further study, and to that end, it is hoped that the present study will offer some further insights.

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<sup>8</sup> Psychoanalytically, guilt is the affect associated with the realization that one has betrayed one’s own values, or caused harm to someone one cares about. It requires the capacity to bear the pain of knowing one has caused damage that cannot be fixed, in the sense that the past cannot be undone (Altman, 2005).

Returning to our focus on mourning and loss, Eng and Han (2000) proposed that

the experience of immigration itself is based on a structure of mourning. When one leaves one's country of origin – voluntarily or involuntarily – one must mourn a host of losses both concrete and abstract. These include homeland, family, language, identity, property, status in community – the list goes on (pp.679-680).

They extended Freud's theory of melancholia to the context of migration and suggested that it may be impossible for some migrants to mourn fully the losses inherent in the migration process because they cannot invest in some of the ideals of the new country and therefore cannot find closure or assimilate. They focused particularly on the experiences of Asian immigrants to America, and suggested that Asian immigrants and their children exist in a state of 'suspended assimilation', a state of racial melancholia not necessarily pathological, as Freud would have envisaged it, but involving an ongoing negotiation of the losses and the impossibility of assimilating the ideals and social structures of white society. Ainslie et al. (2013) have proposed a link between Eng and Han's (2000) concept of ongoing racial melancholia and the constant negotiation of ambivalence which it entails, and Volkan's (1999, 2007) perennial mourning.

Part of Volkan's (1999) view of mourning involves nostalgia and the function it serves in the migration process. He viewed nostalgia as both the affect which attaches to 'linking phenomena', as well as the possibility that it might function as a 'linking phenomenon' in itself, thereby providing a period of time for the new migrant to make adaptations to his or her new life. He noted that if such adaptations cannot be made, nostalgia will not be a healthy or creative solution in the long term, and he delineated a variety of 'pathological' forms of nostalgia.

Volkan's (1999) differentiation of nostalgia as either healthy or pathological, according to the function it serves for the new migrant, presages the way in which the concept of nostalgia has become a strongly contested site in contemporary psychoanalytic thinking. In general, the

difficulties and controversies surrounding the precise meaning of the word constellate around nostalgia being seen as a binary: either a beneficial mechanism, promoting healthy identification with the past, or a defensive process, which protects the individual from conflict-inducing versions of the past, as viewed from the present vantage point (Hicks, 2012).

There are a number of studies that distinguish between ‘normal’ and ‘pathological’ forms of nostalgia in migration (e.g. Akhtar, 1999b; Hage, 2010; Lijtmaer, 2001; Nikelly, 2004; Volkan, 1999; Werman, 1977), and all noted not only the usefulness but in fact the importance of nostalgia as an aspect of the mourning process that serves to cushion the new migrant, temporarily, from the pain of rupture with the past. It creates a “nascent future in which the old culture is integrated into the new culture and the past is regarded with pleasure because it enriches ego identity and assures a sense of continuity” (Nikelly, 2004, p.195). Eventually, as the mourning process subsides, nostalgia and the fantasies of ‘home’ that it frequently embraces, give way to a vision of the past that “is neither idealized nor renounced” (p.196).

### **2.3 Home**

Separation from home, or the home country, is regularly associated with the processes of loss and mourning (Ainslie et al., 2013), but there are certain studies which give home and the longing for home greater prominence, and so I turn briefly to these in this survey.

Tummala-Narra (2009) noted the centrality of the concept of home throughout human development and viewed both actual experiences and fantasies of home as constructed in interpersonal and relational contexts. For migrants, “ideas of home are continually constructed and deconstructed on a scale that not only includes these developmental shifts, but also involves change and upheaval in sociocultural environment and related identity transformations” (p.237). She suggested that the longing for home is an integral part of the migrant’s identity and that it is worked through via actual visits to the home country, as well as in the ways the migrant re-

creates elements of home in the new country. In her view, these actual and symbolic returns to the country of origin permit a sense of connection and continuity that enhances psychological adjustment.

Tummala-Narra (2009) noted that her perspective parallels Akhtar's (1999a) "notion of 'refueling', which occurs when an immigrant maintains ties to his or her cultural community and reconnects with the home country through visits, phone calls and emails" (p.239). Paris (1978) has also noted, in an earlier paper on migration, the importance of the migrant being able to return home at regular intervals for refuelling, so that "refuelled and revitalized after each return, the immigrant is ready to cope again with the challenges of his new environment" (p.52).

As Ainslie et al. (2013) have noted, the greater availability of communication technologies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may "attenuate the impact of loss" (p.666), and thus may have reduced the need for actual visits to the home country. At the same time though, the importance of the connection with the non-human environment, as I discuss below, may well offset the benefits of long-distance communication, and may contribute to the need for actual return.

Seiden (2009) took the psychoanalytic literature on migration to task regarding the importance of a non-pathological longing for home, suggesting that this literature regarded the longing for home as a form of neurosis, whereas he viewed it as "a state of mind that reflects belonging, safety, self-definition, comfort, and unquestioned acceptance" (p.198). This criticism is a surprising position for him to take, given that all the authors he cited (Akhtar, 1999a; Boulanger, 2004; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989), discussed the real and imagined sense of home as an integral and essential aspect, and emphasized that the longing for home only becomes pathological when it precludes the possibility of acceptance of the present context.

Indeed, much of the psychoanalytic literature on migration uses a similar definition of home to that which Seiden (2009) presented. Laub (2013) for instance, speaks of an 'emotional home',

“a relational home, a space where an inner truth can be safeguarded and protected, as well as shared with others who are receptive to it” (p.575). Brothers and Lewis (2012), using Winnicottian language, described home as a place of unquestioned going-on-being, where one has the certainty that the experiences one needs to sustain an ongoing sense of self are unquestionably available. Hage (2010) considered home as an affective construct and suggested that a central task in migration is that of home-building, which he defined as the building of the feeling of being ‘at home’ in a way that provides four key feelings: security, familiarity, community, and a sense of possibility or hope. He implicated the importance of nostalgia in home-building, suggesting that it may guide the process by fostering the kind of ‘homely feelings’ that serve as “part of the migrant’s settlement strategies rather than an attempt to escape the realities of the host country” (p.419).

Hage (2010) noted that home-building is not necessarily the same as house- or domestic space-building, but it might be. In this we may see a reference to the importance of the non-human environment in migration studies, where this aspect of migration is generally discussed both from the point of view of identity formation and the creation of a sense of home. Denford (1981) suggested that, unlike people, relationships, and social and political contexts, the geographical environment is much less vulnerable to change during times of absence from the home country, and thus may serve as a more reliable memory for a sense of belonging. This view, articulated also by Akhtar (1999a), Garza-Guerrero (1974), Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) and Volkan (1999), draws on the work of Searles (1960), who maintained that the struggle to become a genuinely human individual involves not only the development of meaningful interpersonal relationships but also meaningful relatedness with the nonhuman aspects of the environment.

Antokoletz (1993) suggested that the greater the degree of geographical difference between home and new country, the greater the degree of discontinuity in the migrant’s ongoing sense of self, while Ward and Styles (2007) found in their study that migrants maintain a strong,

emotionally-charged bond to non-human as well as human elements of their homeland, irrespective of satisfactory or unsatisfactory settlement. Akhtar, in his later (2011) publication on migration, devoted the entire first chapter to “the trauma of geographical dislocation”, and suggested that the significance of this aspect of migration has been under-researched in the literature to date. He proposed that the migrant’s sense of ‘reality-constancy’ may be severely threatened by environmental change, and that, working in unison, the four major factors of such change (separation from familiar topography, loss of personal possessions, differences in the way animals are related to in different cultures, and encounters with new physical objects) “mobilize the anxiety of adjustment and the ache of mourning, [and] also lead to subtle perceptual disturbances of the ego” (Akhtar, 2011. p.9). Akhtar has been, and remains, one of the most prolific theorists on the migration experience, and his separation-individuation model provides the stimulus for a great deal of psychoanalytic research on the topic. It is to this model that I now turn.

## **2.4 Separation-Individuation**

Akhtar (1995, 1999a) coined the term ‘third individuation’ to describe the core migratory process that he believes takes place in most adult migrants. He used this term to suggest that the migratory process resembles Mahler, Pine and Bergman’s (1975) concept of separation-individuation in childhood, as well as some of the features of Blos’ (1967) second-individuation process of adolescence. Fundamentally then, this view has as primary focus the impact that migration has on identity, that it is “an adult life reorganization of identity, a potential reworking of earlier consolidations in this regard” (Akhtar, 1995, p.1053).

Akhtar (1995, 1999a) proposed that the migration process mobilizes a mourning process, the outcome of which depends on a large number of variables. These include:

- 1) The circumstances of and reasons for migration – whether the migration is temporary or permanent; the degree of choice one had about leaving and the amount of time available to

- prepare; the availability of refuelling - whether extramural, as in actual visits home, or intramural, involving friends and family in the new country; and the reasons for leaving the home country, whether it was an 'escape from' something, or a 'flight towards' something.
- 2) Pre-immigration character – chronological age at migration; and the extent to which the individual has individuated prior to leaving; that is, the extent to which the individual has a consolidated and separate sense of self (Mahler et al., 1975).
  - 3) Nature of the country left – whether the migrant feels guilt about the reasons for leaving or toward the people left behind.
  - 4) Magnitude of cultural differences between homeland and adopted new society.
  - 5) Reception by the host population – including attitudes towards immigrants in general, as well as racial, ethnic and language attitudes.
  - 6) Experiences of efficacy in the new country – whether the migrant can continue in a similar role as in the home country, in order to maintain a sense of professional identity even while other aspects of self are being challenged.
  - 7) Birth of children – generally, having children in the new country provides hope and makes mourning easier.

These variables affect the mourning process involved in migration, according to Akhtar (1995, 1999a), and create intrapsychic turmoil and conflict, resembling childhood and adolescent individuation processes. This mourning process, in combination with the culture shock the new migrant experiences, causes “a serious shake-up of the individual’s identity” (Akhtar, 1999a, p.77) and results in identity changes in adult migrants, which he suggests usually proceed along four interconnected tracks:

- 1) From love or hate to ambivalence: in this track, splitting predominates and feelings of either idealization or devaluation colour the new migrant’s vision of the old and the new country, as well as the two ‘selves’ associated with each country. Over time, all being well, synthesis takes place and “a hyphenated identity” (Akhtar, 1999a, p.83) emerges, and a sense of ambivalence and emotional relativity towards each country develops.

2) From near or far to optimal distance: this track relates to both interpersonal and intrapsychic perspectives, and refers to the fluctuations that take place between the new migrant's sense of connection to both old and new countries and cultures. One of the possible positions is ethnocentric withdrawal, in which the individual clings to the old and tries to relate only to people and artefacts of the old country. The other possible position is counterphobic assimilation, in which the individual rapidly incorporates the new place and culture and totally renounces the old. Over time, if things proceed optimally, a "mending of the sense of being 'too near' or 'too far' from one or the other culture" (Akhtar, 1999a, p.88) may take place, leading to a more solid sense of identity.

3) From yesterday or tomorrow to today: in this track, fantasies of 'if only' and 'someday' predominate, with the migrant caught up in idealization of the past and fantasies of return to the home country at some time in the future: "With progressive de-idealization of lost objects, however, meaningful living in the present becomes possible" (Akhtar, 1999a, p.95).

4) From yours or mine to ours: for a period of time, new migrants experience a split between what can be owned and what feels foreign. As they assimilate, they are able to feel part of the new place and culture.

Akhtar (1999a) noted that all of the tracks he delineated involve splitting of the self and object world, since he sees this as inherent in most migration experiences. He proposed that "mending of such splits in four dimensions – drives and affects, space, time, and social affiliation – is what leads to a psychic rebirth, the emergence of a new and hybrid identity" (Akhtar, 1999a, p.102).

Akhtar's (1999a) theory has received empirical support in the literature. In their study, Walsh and Shulman (2007) examined the extent to which splitting formed part of an adaptive defence to the trauma of migration, allowing time for adjustment and adaptation to the new country. To determine this they developed scales that attempted to operationalize this splitting, as well as scales that operationalized the tracks that Akhtar (1999a) proposed. Their results supported

Akhtar's (1999a) view that splitting is a necessary form of regression, allowing the ego time to adapt to a new reality. Their results also showed that early assimilation into the new culture led to prolonged psychological distress, and thus less favourable outcomes.

Lijtmaer's (2001) case study supported Akhtar's (1999a) separation-individuation theory of migration, and also underwrote the notion of refuelling and the employment of 'someday' and 'if only' fantasies. She noted the importance of splitting as adaptive defence and facilitator of the necessary mourning process involved in migration. Her findings echoed those of Antinucci (2004), who suggested that "knowledge of and mourning for what is lost represents the only path to the constitution of a complex and multicultural identity" (Antinucci, 2004, p.1172).

A number of other researchers have also theorised migration as a process of splitting and individuation. Pollock (1989), for instance, posited that the need for separation and individuation is a fundamental human imperative in the push towards self-definition, and that it takes place via a process of mourning-liberation, a process which is paralleled in the migration-adaptation experience. He noted that it is a process which, on the one hand causes grief and loss, and on the other hand, opens new possibilities by freeing the individual from early ties. Mirsky and Peretz (2006) also emphasized the way in which migration holds the possibility for psychological maturation by providing "a new setting, a new opportunity, and new objects in relation to which the immigrant can work through previously unresolved separation-individuation conflicts" (p.54).

Like Akhtar (1999a), Thorpe and Thorpe (2008) noted the way in which the new migrant utilises splitting as defence against chaos and pain, and an opportunity to buy time for the ego to regroup. Additionally, they included the individual's attachment style as an important determinant of outcome, postulating that "separating from the 'motherland' re-activates early attachment issues and affects the immigrant's ability to settle in the host country" (p.36).

Hollander (2006) focused on the migration experiences of adult women forced to flee their homes due to political repression, but also noted the parallel between the migration experience of separation and loss, and the infant's experience of attachment, separation and loss. She suggested that "if the crisis of exile is to be positively resolved, a working through of the splitting between idealization and devaluation of objects and parts of the self is required" (Hollander, 2006, p.66).

White (2013) and Wright (2009) theorize about the act of migration itself as a defensive manoeuvre, in a way that touches lightly on the way that I have theorised about migration in a previous study (Hicks, 2010). In that study, I wrote about the way in which migration may serve as an attempt to escape the shame of having been a beneficiary of apartheid. White (2013) used her work with migrants to Germany to explore the way in which some individuals who change countries use primitive defence mechanisms such as splitting to protect against the difficulties of everyday life and relationships in the new country. She suggested that these primitive defence mechanisms, while they permit the avoidance of conflict, anxiety and pain, also result in the avoidance of intimacy and closeness and in that sense, take the form of 'psychic retreats', following the work of Steiner (1993):

[Psychic retreats] ... prevent mourning, a sense of guilt and the pain of hurting and having been hurt as well as the helplessness that is sometimes part of life. But they allow the patient to feel safe and, for a certain time, free of anxiety. They provide an escape from inner and outer reality that might seem too threatening or painful (White, 2013, pp. 48-49).

While White (2013) believed Akhtar (1999a) to be correct in his formulation of splitting as a necessary and transient phenomenon facilitating adaptation and adjustment to the new country, she proposed that many of the migrants with whom she worked "have used the move from one country to another as a psychic retreat: they escape from a painful reality by moving away from their home country and try to live a life that is free of anxiety in the new country" (White, 2013, p.49). In a similar way, Wright (2009) suggested that some migrants may focus on the hopes and possibilities of life in a new country, but that migration may also involve "the fantasy of

escape to a better place, a way out of hardship, present difficulty or pain” (p.476). This use of the act of migration as escape or realization of fantasy echoes the work of Togashi (2007), which I will discuss in a later section of this chapter.

In his discussion of the ways in which identity changes during the migration process, Akhtar (1999a) cautioned that “it remains unclear whether the identity that does emerge as a result of the mourning-liberation process of immigration is a reasonably solid hybrid entity or a loose albeit well-functioning confederacy of diverse selves” (p.103). A number of researchers, especially those who adhere to a Relational and intersubjective frame, have espoused what we might term a ‘multiplicity’ model of migration, and this theme forms the next cluster in the present survey.

## **2.5 Dissociation and Multiplicity**

Over the last ten years, a number of studies have appeared which dispute the idea that integration or assimilation is a necessary or even possible outcome of the migration process. Boulanger (2004) suggested that, irrespective of the degree of choice in the decision to leave the country of origin, all migrants experience a loss of contextual continuity. She posited that elements of this loss are unconscious or unarticulated since they may be connected to aspects of self-experience that represent or were acquired in the old country. They thus become dissociated<sup>9</sup> elements of self-experience that become even further disowned by the expectation that assimilation into the new culture is the required and most healthy outcome. Boulanger (2004) believed that assimilation is an impossible task since it demands the disavowal or negation of former ways of being. Instead, she suggested that the postmodern view of the self as comprised of multiple self states offers a more helpful solution, one in which “different self-states holding different passports can coexist peacefully” (p.360). I discuss the concept of self-

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<sup>9</sup> From Boulanger’s use of the term, it is evident here that Relational psychoanalytic authors have a different understanding of the concept of dissociation than earlier authors such as Grinberg and Grinberg (1974; 1989). The Relational understanding of dissociation will be elaborated further in Chapter 5.

states in detail in Chapter 5, but note here that the term refers to sets of self-experience, each with its own developmental history and relational context but existing in varying degrees of awareness and negotiation with each other, which together comprise the sense of self.

Ipp (2013) described the sense of self discontinuity that the migrant experiences as a sense of always being 'other', "always *both part of and outside of their new environment* – located somewhere between there and here, then and now" (p.552, italics in original). This sense of existing 'somewhere between' contrasts with Akhtar's (1999a) theory of the shift towards 'optimal distance' and 'today' and extends his proposal of a 'confederacy of diverse selves'.

Lobban (2013) used Du Bois' (1903/1994) notion of 'double consciousness' to characterise the way in which many migrants experience a fracture in their self experience in the opposition of foreign 'outsider' selves versus 'insider' new country selves. As an antidote to this, she suggested that the extent to which a migrant may feel free to embrace a multiplicity of self experience depends on whether the host country is able to accept the 'otherness' that the migrant represents:

if the host country welcomed the immigrant's "foreign otherness", this would allow her to revel in a panoply of selves of all makes, shapes, and sizes, some grown at home and some grown in her host country, all mixed up in a glorious multicultural, multihued, hybrid "me-ness" (Lobban, 2013, p.559).

Harlem (2009) echoed the importance of the receptivity of the new environment, and Laub (2013) made a similar point when he noted the importance for the migrant of finding a space that can feel like home, and the way in which this is mediated by the extent to which one feels received and protected by others in that space. He suggested that forced assimilation, whether self-imposed or the result of societal pressure, is antithetical to the experience of a relational and emotional home, and is more likely to lead to an experience of brokenness and detachment.

As has been noted above, Akhtar (1999a) included the receptivity of the host country as one of the crucial factors affecting the psychological outcome of migration. In his later (2011) publication, he expanded his discussion of this aspect, noting that, in the United States especially, immigrants used to be more acceptable to the host country than newer waves of migrants currently are. He suggested that this may represent racial and ethnic bias, since more recent migrants tend to be darker-skinned Asian, Latin-American and Caribbean immigrants. Although this prejudice towards migrants of colour is significant and has been noted by a number of theorists (e.g. Ainslie et al., 2013; Bushra, 2009; Eng & Han, 2000; Harlem, 2009; Harris, 2012; Hollander, 2006; Stopford, 2009), it has been suggested that other prejudiced cultural, class and language attitudes pertain also to those who, being white, are what Akhtar (1999a) has called 'invisible immigrants' (Ainslie, 2011; Ainslie et al., 2013; Harlem, 2009; Lobban, 2006; 2013). One of the consequences of this, as Lobban (2006) described, is the frequency with which migrants dissociate these unacceptable and unwelcome self-states out of the need and desire to feel less 'other':

All immigrants to America who wish to assimilate must find a way to unlearn, disconnect from, or repudiate many aspects of their original mother culture. Yet this original mother culture is fundamental to the immigrant's sense of self and not easily sloughed off, so it is often preserved in some dissociated form (pp.74-75).

Bodnar (2004) too has noted the coexistence of multiculturalism and dissociative process. She proposed that the forced integration of self-states that derive from very different, sometimes even contradictory, experiences in different countries and cultures results in the frequency of dissociative processes she has observed in her work with multicultural individuals:

In normative multiplicity, the panoply of different voices and different selves come to life as integral actors in an individual personality. But in the space where multiple cultural identifications meet individual and family trauma, there exists a broad spectrum of psychic accommodations: from multiplicity to mildly dissociative disturbances to major dissociative phenomena (Bodnar, 2004, p.587).

In his work on migration, Harlem (2010) has explored the dissociative process and noted the way in which, in some cases, it may manifest as an 'exile' state of mind, where the "exile is not simply one who cannot (physically) return; she is someone who cannot "remember" other versions of herself, who cannot bridge the gaps between versions of self rooted in disparate times, physical spaces and relationships" (p.460). And in a similar way, Ipp (2010) has coined the term 'amputated self', "that part of my self left behind, severed and frozen in a place and space that could not travel with me as I struggled to achieve a new sense of comfort for myself in my adopted country" (p.376).

The theorists surveyed above, who have as their focus the themes of dissociation and multiplicity in the migration process, are writing, essentially, about the impact on self-experience occasioned by the migration process. Other views of this impact are evident in the migration literature, and these follow in the final section.

## **2.6 Impact on Self Experience**

Writings in the field of acculturation represent another way of looking at the impact of migration on self-experience, and the concept appears to be of sufficient significance that Akhtar (2011) chose to title his latest volume on migration, *Immigration and Acculturation*. Interestingly, though, he does not define the term acculturation in this volume; in fact, he barely references it in the body of the work, other than to use it to describe an 'acculturation gap' which he notes between people at different levels of the migration process – between parents born in the old country and children born in the new, for instance. From this, it would seem that he accepts it as a 'given' in the migration process. And yet, the literature suggests that the concept is in fact contested, with regard to definition of the term, and its objects and methods of study (Chirkov, 2009).

In his attempt to outline a modern conceptualisation of the term, Chirkov (2009) defined individual acculturation as

a process that ... involves a deliberate, reflective, and, for the most part, comparative cognitive activity of understanding the frame of references and meanings with regard to the world, others, and self that exist in one's 'home' cultural community and which one has discovered in a new cultural community. This process emerges within the context of interactions, both physical and symbolic, with the members of the 'home' and new cultural communities. Acculturation is an open-ended, continuous process that includes progresses, relapses, and turns which make it practically impossible to predict and control (p.94).

As Chirkov's (2009) definition implies, one of the significant points of conflict within the field of acculturation studies refers to the way in which, in earlier writings (Berry, 1997; Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936), positivistic and universalizing assumptions about acculturation as a phenomenon have predominated. Berry (1997), for instance, noted that, while there are many individual differences and variables that influence both process and outcomes, "for most acculturating individuals, after a period of time, some long-term positive adaptation to the new cultural context usually takes place" (p.13), and in general, he proposed that the factors, processes and outcomes, while differing in specific detail between certain cultures, have a universal quality.

Bhatia and Ram (2001) questioned the notion that all migrant groups go through the same universal acculturation process, since such an approach assumes that there are certain invariable properties of selfhood, and also assumes that culture is separable from the sense of self. This view is not consistent with many current understandings of self-development, which see self and the cultural context in which the self is formed as inextricably intertwined, and greatly variable because of a host of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Consequently, Bhatia and Ram (2001) opposed Berry's (1997) suggestion that integration (maintaining the cultural integrity of the old while seeking interaction with the new) is the optimal outcome, since this "overlooks the contested, negotiated and sometimes painful, rupturing experiences associated with 'living in

between' cultures" (p.14). They proposed that migration researchers need to see concepts of here and there, new and old, self and other, as constantly in a state of flux and in constant negotiation with each other.

Although acculturation is not traditionally linked with psychoanalysis, Bhatia and Ram's (2001) conceptualisation echoes psychoanalytic descriptions of migrant identity, especially among those theorists (Bodnar, 2004; Boulanger, 2004; Eng & Han 2000; Ipp, 2013; Lobban, 2013) who embrace what I have termed the 'multiplicity' view of the migrant's sense of self, as discussed above, as well as many of those theorists who situate themselves within other theoretical frameworks. Akhtar (1995), for instance, noted that "the hybrid identity that emerges ... is not a rocklike structure. Indeed, in certain psychosocial realms one or the other self-representation might continue to predominate" (p.1077), and as a result, the impact of migration on identity varies and is renegotiated throughout the lifespan.

A similar view of the interdependence of self and culture is echoed in the work of Ainslie (2011). He noted that "immigrants travel with their social context; they are part of an internalized world that substantively structures their psychological experience of themselves and others, including the world to which they have come" (Ainslie, 2011, p.562). As a consequence, many of the ways in which the migrant's sense of self is impacted by migration are related to the changes in the migrant's social situation that occur during and after the migration process. While Ainslie (2011) is particularly interested in the topic of social class, he noted that, following on from the work of Grinberg and Grinberg (1989), "the experience of immigration frequently entails both obvious and subtle narcissistic wounds" (Ainslie, 2011, p.565). In his discussion of this theme, Ainslie (2011) provided a number of examples of the narcissistic wounding<sup>10</sup> occasioned by the act of migration, such as the aura of defeat that frequently attaches to those who leave their country of origin, the devalued ways in which those

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<sup>10</sup> In psychoanalysis, narcissistic wounding refers to injuries to the sense of self, experienced through the inevitable disappointments encountered in relationships and in life in general, along with defensive attempts to prevent further pain and restore positive self-evaluation.

who are left behind sometimes view those who leave, and the way in which devalued others may serve as receptacles for unwanted parts of the self that are reactivated during the upheaval of the migration process.

Writing from a self-psychological perspective, Togashi (2007) presented the idea of narcissistic wounding as the way in which the thwarting or betrayal of one's central organizing beliefs or fantasies is experienced as injury to the sense of self. He proposed that the act of migration is often a reaction to such a betrayal or disappointment, and thus may represent an attempt to realize or restore these fantasies about the self. When this fails to eventuate – inevitably, the dreams do not come true, or not entirely – disruption or even trauma may result, leading to a sense of betrayal by both old and new country. “The betrayal violates the core sense of safety in the world in which he or she lives” (Togashi, 2007, p.187), and thus constitutes the primary impact of migration on the migrant's ongoing sense of self, an impact which he considers to be life-long.

The selection of literature in this chapter has focused on the psychoanalytic literature on migration in general. A review of the literature on migration from South Africa follows in the next chapter, together with relevant aspects of the South African history and context.

### 3. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

#### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss certain aspects of the South African context of the participants in this study. I will touch briefly on the history of South Africa, especially with reference to apartheid, and discuss the particular meanings of whiteness in this context. In addition, I review a selection of the body of literature regarding emigration from South Africa, and discuss some of the major factors that have been identified as part of the migration decision. In keeping with the Grounded Theory Method (outlined in Chapter 6), most of the literature review was conducted after collection and analysis of data. Thus, the works cited in this chapter have been selected mainly for their relevance to the data generated by this study.

Broadly-speaking, most of the literature that addresses the topic of emigration from South Africa dates from the years since the end of apartheid in 1994. This suggests that it is during this period that the issue has become sufficiently large and complex to warrant attention. The exodus is comprised predominantly of white<sup>11</sup> people, but it should be noted that, while the topic has been less examined and numbers are not known, people of other race groups have also emigrated (Forrest, Johnston & Poulsen, 2013; Louw & Mersham, 2001; Sonn, 2010). The focus of this study is on the migration experience of whites<sup>12</sup> from South Africa, therefore all the material in this chapter refers to that population group.

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<sup>11</sup> In South Africa, people were officially classified according to racial groups, and despite the development of a non-racial society in South Africa since 1994, the use of racially-based terms such as black, white, coloured and Indian continues (Maré, 2001). It is thus not possible to discuss South Africa without using these terms, but it should be noted that I do not intend to suggest that they reflect any essential characteristics of people or groups, nor to reinforce any idea of a legitimate racial differentiation or structure.

<sup>12</sup> In my survey of both the South African and international literature cited in this chapter, I noted that racial categorizations are regularly used as if they were collective nouns (e.g. whites, blacks). Even though, following convention, I use the terms in the same way, I acknowledge that much is evaded and elided in the process.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of people who have emigrated from South Africa, as Statistics South Africa stopped keeping records of this several years ago (Politicsweb, 2012). In 2006, the South African Institute of Race Relations analysed household surveys and reported that their data suggested that 841 000, representing almost one fifth of the white population, had left the country since 1994 (van Aardt, 2006). However, a number of problems with these surveys have been reported, and this figure is generally considered less reliable than figures ascertained by Politicsweb, an overseas-funded website which focuses on the news and politics of Southern Africa. Politicsweb (2012) used 2010 data from the main destination countries of South African emigrants and obtained a total number of at least 588 388 individuals. Politicsweb suggested that this number is likely to be higher in reality though, given that the data from Canada and New Zealand, two major destination countries for South Africans, dated from 2006. The most popular destination country for South Africans was, until 2009, the United Kingdom. That year saw Australia overtake the United Kingdom in terms of numbers of new arrivals (Politicsweb, 2012).

According to the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC, 2014), there were 157 630 South African-born people living in Australia at the end of June 2011, the latest census date. This is 31% more than reported in 2006, and represents 2.6% of Australia's overseas-born population and 0.7% of Australia's total population. The largest number of visas granted fell into the Skill Stream category, at 88%, suggesting that the majority of migrants from South Africa are highly skilled and educated, lending support to the concept of a 'brain drain' from South Africa, a topic much debated and discussed in the South African media (McDonald & Crush, 2002).

Forrest et al. (2013) analysed a number of Australian Government statistics and surveys dating from the early 1990s to 2008, and reported that the number of South African-born people in Australia increased by 175% between 1991 and 2008. Of these arrivals, 88% were English-speaking, 2% noted Afrikaans as home language, and less than 0.5% spoke a native South

African language as home language, of which 86% of this fraction spoke Zulu. Of the total number of new migrants, 73% had university degrees or diplomas or technical qualifications, and most were in the age group 25 – 44 at the time of arrival; 92% were married and 61% of these were childless.

With the number of whites reported to have migrated from South Africa since 1994 standing somewhere between half to one million, and thus representing 10 to 20% of the total white population of the country, it sheds some light on the reason for the increase in the number of studies<sup>13</sup> of white migration from South Africa noted earlier in this chapter. Before reviewing the relevant literature in this regard though, a brief outline of the history of apartheid in South Africa will provide a context.

### **3.2 History of Apartheid South Africa**

The architects of apartheid, the National Party, came to power in South Africa in 1948 on the twin platforms of Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid. “Afrikaners are white South Africans who speak Afrikaans ... [and who] are descended from Dutch, German, French and other European settlers who came to South Africa from the mid-seventeenth century on, many in search of political or religious freedom” (Griffiths & Prozesky, 2010, p.25). It was to a great extent the powerful desire of Afrikaans-speakers for self-determination, and their resentment of the preferential treatment of English-speakers under pro-British United Party rule, which drove many of the policies implemented under apartheid.

And yet, while it is true that the rise of Afrikaner nationalism cannot be separated from the history of apartheid, large numbers of English-speakers supported the National Party and all

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<sup>13</sup> Other than the studies specifically mentioned in this review, the following works should also be noted for their contribution to this subject area: Altschuler (2006a; 2006b); Brink (2012); Goldin (2001); Gray, Delaney and Durrheim (2005); Gubhaju and de Jong (2009); Meares (2007); Schönfeldt-Aultman (2004; 2013); Thompson, 2009; Visser (2007).

whites were privileged in comparison with the majority black population. In this study therefore, it is appropriate to name the role of Afrikaner nationalism in the development of apartheid, but this does not indemnify or minimise the role played by English-speaking whites in its maintenance and propagation.

Prior to 1948, in the British colony known as the Union of South Africa, legislation supporting racial segregation and white supremacy had long been in existence (Posel, 2001), but formal apartheid extended and entrenched the structures of racial classification with the passing of the Population Registration Act in 1950. The Act ensured that every South African was assigned to a racial category of either 'white' or 'non-white'. 'Non-whites' were subdivided into either 'Bantu' (black African) or 'coloured' (of mixed descent), and distinguished from Indians and Asians, who were also classified 'non-white' (Griffiths & Prozesky, 2010).

These racial classifications had far-reaching effects on every aspect of life in South Africa, and ensured white dominance and privilege over the black majority, a situation enforced by other apartheid laws such as:

- The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (1953), which ensured that amenities, services and transport were segregated according to race;
- The Bantu Education Act (1953), which legislated segregated schooling and inferior education for blacks with the promise that "there would be no place for Africans above the level of certain forms of labour" (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007, p.320);
- The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), which forbade marriage between whites and people of any other race category;
- The Immorality Amendment Act (1950), which prohibited unmarried sexual intercourse between whites and people of other races;
- The Group Areas Act (1950), which segregated urban areas and restricted ownership, residence and access according to racial classification, and thus frequently resulted in

forced removals of whole black and coloured communities to the outskirts of the cities into inferior and poorly serviced areas known as ‘townships’ (Ginsburg, 2011);

- The Native Laws Amendment Act (1952), commonly known as the Pass Laws Act, imposed strict influx controls by legislating that all black adults had to carry a pass book at all times. The pass book specified the employer of the person and was used to ‘prove’ that the holder was legally in a ‘white area’, or he would face arrest or deportation back to his ‘homeland’ (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007).

The ‘homelands’ were a later addition to apartheid policy, comprising the categorisation of black Africans into ethnic groups. Each of these ten groups was allocated a ‘homeland’, a quasi-independent nation-state, officially separate from South Africa and thus ‘supporting’ the National Party proposition of self-determination and separate development (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007). In effect though, it served to protect white interests and mollify fears of being over-run by a united black majority, by attempting to split the black population along ethnic lines and disperse them into bounded regions of the country.

Despite this, resistance movements grew and strengthened. The African National Congress (ANC) was formed in 1912 and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1959. Protest took the form initially of non-violent demonstrations, strikes and mass action, eventually becoming an armed struggle in 1961, when both the ANC and the PAC formed military wings after a large number of black youths were shot while protesting peacefully at Sharpeville in 1960 (Steyn, 2001). In 1960, the resistance organizations were banned and all government opponents were branded ‘communists’. Many leaders and followers of the resistance movements fled into exile, while in 1963, following the Rivonia trial, many of those leaders who had not fled, including Nelson Mandela, were jailed.

In 1976, a large number of black schoolchildren were shot in Soweto while protesting against the use of Afrikaans in schools. This resulted in both increasing government repression as well

as resistance to apartheid, and also saw an increase in international condemnation of apartheid and sanctions against the country. By 1990, after the imposition of States of Emergency and large-scale use of violence failed to quell the tide of resistance and opposition both within and outside the country, the National Party, under F.W. de Klerk, began to repeal apartheid legislation and unbanned resistance organizations. Mandela was released from prison, and negotiation with leaders of the black majority began. Although not always a smooth process, by the end of 1993 these negotiations resulted in agreement on the constitutional principles of the new South Africa. In April 1994, the first democratic elections in South Africa were held, with the ANC forming the new black majority government, with Mandela at the head (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007).

Initially, a mood of euphoria and optimism about the future prevailed among all race groups in South Africa, but this was short-lived, and the second half of the 1990s saw the start of what was to become the largest wave of white emigration from South Africa.

### **3.3 Migration from South Africa**

#### ***3.3.1 Clarifying the Terms***

I experience a dilemma in how to categorise the white South African migrants surveyed in this study. They are not refugees, although some may feel that way, and not exiles either, as noted in the previous chapter. Certainly, in most cases the decision to migrate is voluntary, but many would propose that their experience of the intensity and magnitude of the ‘push’ factors – mainly the level of crime in South Africa and the constant feelings of threat and danger – limited their freedom to choose. At the same time, most would note that their decision to leave was also motivated by lifestyle and economic prospects, thus moving the choice into territory which has come to be contested in the literature, as Palmary (2009) has noted in her outline of

how migration studies have leaned towards a classification of migrants into a hierarchical and even moral order:

The refugee is legitimised by their lack of agency and victim status and their comparison with the economic migrant. Leaving one's country of citizenship for economic reasons (regardless of how much one may not want to) is not accorded the same status (p.60).

Hence, while I use the term 'voluntary migrant' in my discussion, I acknowledge the fraught nature of this term in this context.

Similarly, the question of whether one should refer to the South African migrants who live overseas as a diaspora is also highly contested. "Traditionally, 'diaspora' refers to the dispersion of the Jews among the gentiles and their belief in an eventual return to the (lost) homeland" (Sommer, 2003, p.159). While many of the studies which discuss migration from South Africa use the term uncritically (e.g. Forrest et al., 2013; Louw & Mersham, 2001), it should be noted that for some, the issue is contentious. Schönfeldt-Aultman (2004) for instance, noted that he has struggled with the term "because of issues of white privilege, appropriation, and theoretical dilution (i.e. making the term "diaspora" theoretically useless by easy overuse of it)" (pp.31-32). And Jacobs (2006) suggested that, "to describe every kind of migrant identity, from the dispersion of the Jews to current global economic relocations, as 'diasporic' is, however, to be reductive and also to devalue the term" (p.115). After considering the various positions regarding the use of this term, I have decided not to use 'diaspora' to describe my population, since the controversies around the term are not germane to my discussion and adding the term would create more complexities than elucidations. The term does appear in my text however, in my references to the work of other authors, and so I note here the contested nature of such usage.

### *3.3.2 Overview*

The present study focuses on the experiences of South Africans who emigrated after 1994, the date of the first democratic elections in South Africa. Louw and Mersham (2001) have described this as the ‘fifth wave’ of Southern African migration. They suggested that, beginning in the 1950s and generally in response to significant political events in the country, the South African diaspora has coalesced out of five waves of migration, each larger in numbers than the preceding one.

The ‘fifth wave’ began in 1990, when the ANC was unbanned, and initially saw a slowing of emigration due to the optimism that the armed conflicts would cease and transition to a non-racial democracy would occur smoothly. By 1993, however, the mood of optimism began to wane as

the perception grew that post-apartheid South Africa would remain a race-based society and a society characterized by racial conflict. Migration accelerated once a shift was perceived towards a one-party dominant democracy where minority groups perceived themselves to have been rendered increasingly powerless (Louw & Mersham, 2001, p.313).

At the time of Louw and Mersham’s writing, in 2001, this wave was still ongoing, and indeed, the figures reported by Polticsweb (2012) suggest that this wave peaked in 2004, with the number of migrations from South Africa decreasing since then, although not to an insignificant level.

Lucas, Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti (2006) conducted a detailed analysis of South African migration to Australia and New Zealand since 1996 and concluded that the emigration of South Africans of all races is accelerating, agreeing with Louw and Mersham’s (2001) suggestion that the current ‘fifth wave’ of South African exodus is the largest yet. Lucas et al. (2006) suggested that the current emigration wave is closely associated with an emerging skills shortage crisis in South Africa, the so-called ‘brain drain’, referring to the large numbers of professional and

highly educated people leaving – a view with which Bornman (2005), Brink (2012), Crush, Chikanda and Pendleton (2012), Nduru (2006), Politicsweb (2012) and van Rooyen (2000) agree.

Van Rooyen (2000) suggested that “for many years, the profile of the typical South African emigrant was white, educated, English-speaking, and liberal in political orientation” (p.36). Citing newspaper sources, he reports that the profile of the average emigrant in the current situation remains predominantly white and educated, but that English- and Afrikaans-speakers are now equally represented. Bornman (2005) suggested that the majority of emigrants are Afrikaans-speaking in the current migration wave, and cited one conference paper presentation in support of this claim. Reference to the figures provided by receiving countries regarding language spoken at home, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, does not support these elevated numbers of Afrikaans-speakers, however, so it is difficult to know how to interpret this disparity, in order to try to gain a picture of exactly who is leaving.

Certainly, the sensationalist nature of van Rooyen’s (2000) book, purporting to tell the story of the current white exodus from South Africa, and his reliance on newspaper and magazine articles for his source material, make his claims suspect. In my view, van Rooyen (2000) is an unreliable source for my attempt to gain an overall picture of the nature and composition of the current wave of South African emigration. It would seem accurate though, that the majority of recent migrants from South Africa are highly educated: the figure of 73% with tertiary qualifications reported by Forrest et al. (2013), noted in the introduction to this chapter, confirms this picture, and my own sample of 13 migrants included 10 with tertiary qualifications – representing 76.9% – suggesting a representative sample in this regard. While this may have a great deal to do with the entrance criteria of the receiving countries, it nevertheless suggests a significant loss of skills for the home country.

### 3.4 Push and Pull Factors in Migration

The concept of 'push and pull factors' is frequently used when writing about migration from South Africa. Although this is a traditional model for studying motivation in migration, certain authors (e.g. Khawaja & Mason, 2008; Pernice, Trlin, Henderson & North, 2000) reference Kunz's (1973) work on push and pull factors. It should be noted that Kunz was writing specifically about refugees in his text, but his definition of the concept is useful, and not specific to refugees: "The 'push' factor of the old home environment provides the future migrant with causal motivations to leave the old country, and the 'pull' factor of the country of choice provides him with a purpose and a wish to migrate" (p.131). In my survey of the relevant literature on migration from South Africa, the 'push' factors are more significant in the decision to migrate than the pull factors from the destination country in most cases. Crush et al. (2012), for instance, in their survey of South African-born doctors in Canada, noted that

Most of the narratives place much greater emphasis on the intolerable situation in South Africa than on any strong 'pull' from Canada. Many give the impression that they ended up in Canada almost by accident or only intended to stay for a short while (p.936).

Pernice et al. (2000) reported similarly that their survey of South Africans in New Zealand showed that: "While the South Africans reported that the New Zealand lifestyle and culture were attractive, these 'pull' forces do not appear to have had as much weight in their decision to migrate as the 'push' forces" (p.27). In the present study, as will be reported later, it was a significant feature of most of the participants' migration decisions that they arrived in Australia 'sight unseen' and frequently by chance, stressing that their desire was to leave South Africa, more than a desire to be in Australia.

Given this, it is necessary to examine the 'push' factors most commonly cited as the reasons for leaving South Africa. Before proceeding though, it is important to note that in South Africa, another form of 'push and pull' exists as well – namely, the 'migration debate' taking place not

only in the minds of would-be migrants, but also in the everyday discourse amongst groups of people and in the media about whether to leave or to stay in South Africa.

Richman (2010), editor of the book entitled *Should I stay or should I go? To live in or leave South Africa*, noted in his Introduction not only the constant and ubiquitous nature of this debate, but also the “impassioned and polarised” (p.10) nature of the arguments. In this volume, he has attempted to present authors who engage in more reasoned deliberations of the topic than are usually found in the media. Andre Brink (2010), in this text, wrote of his decision to stay in South Africa: “There is an urgency and an immediacy about living in South Africa that lends it a sense of involvement and relevance and significance I cannot readily imagine elsewhere” (p.24). Bloom (2010), in the same volume, wrote: “If the fact of being born in South Africa is what I choose to make important about my own identity, if ‘South African’ is an adjective I consistently use to describe myself, I then need to live in the only country that offers me real self-knowledge” (p.31). Rogers (2010), on the other hand, wrote:

It’s a choice. Ultimately my decision regarding emigration is about survival ... it’s all very well to be prepared to die for your country. But if I am stopped one day ... and stabbed for my handbag, I am not dying *for* my country, I am dying *in* my country (pp78-79, italics in original).

### **3.5 Main Reasons for Leaving – The Push Factors**

Among those who choose the option to emigrate from South Africa, certain themes appear regularly as push factors. Brokensha (2003), in her study of what informs a group of white South Africans’ decisions to migrate, found that the intensity and severity of crime was a major factor, including the sense that “life is cheap” (p.60) in South Africa, and the likelihood of being killed during the course of even petty crime is felt to be high. Her respondents spoke of living with feelings of fear and anxiety, and a feeling of unsafety regarding their persons and their possessions. The second group of reasons for leaving (Brokensha, 2003) included the desire both to protect children from danger as well as to provide them with opportunities that were felt

to be lacking for them in South Africa because of lowered education standards, government corruption, unemployment, and fears of future decline. The third set of reasons referred to the fact that the respondents felt devalued and powerless in post-apartheid South Africa, mainly because of affirmative action policies in the workplace.

These three categories of reasons for leaving are cited in almost all the literature on migration from South Africa (e.g. Bornman, 2005; Brink, 2012; Goldin, 2001; Khawaja & Mason, 2008; Lucas et al., 2006; Pernice et al., 2000; Politicsweb, 2012; Schönfeldt-Aultman, 2014; van Rooyen, 2000). Crush et al. (2012), in their survey of 415 South African-born doctors in Canada, reported the same findings, with safety and security concerns rating highest, and concern for the future of the children rating second in importance. The researchers noted:

A sense of grievance and victimisation about issues such as ‘political corruption, the current government, affirmative action (reversed apartheid), criminal activity and the senseless killing of white people’ ... Another recurrent theme in the narratives is that South Africa is rapidly becoming Zimbabwe, ‘corrupt, unsafe and politically unstable’ (Crush et al., 2012, pp.935-936).

At this point, it would be useful to examine more closely the three factors most cited as reasons for the exodus of whites from South Africa: crime, fears for the future, and feelings of devaluation.

### ***3.5.1 Crime***

According to Crush (2013), “by asking people about their reasons for leaving South Africa one will inevitably get responses that focus on the threat to life and security in the country” (p.206). To what extent are these perceived threats supported by crime statistics from South Africa?

In 2007, the South African Institute for Security Studies undertook a representative, nationwide ‘Victims of Crime Survey’, in order to complement the statistics provided by the South African Police Services, since many crimes go unreported and official figures are thus misleading

(Pharoah, 2008). Previous surveys had been undertaken in 1998 and 2003, so that trends could be established. The results showed that 22% of respondents had been victims of crime in the year preceding the 2007 survey, slightly down from the 24.5% recorded in 1998, suggesting that “crime levels are, if not declining to more acceptable levels, at least stabilising” (Pharoah, 2008, p.3). As in the 1998 and 2003 surveys, robbery (on the street) and burglary (housebreaking) were the crimes most frequently experienced.

Despite the slight decrease in levels of crime, the 2007 survey found that the majority of South Africans of all races perceive that crime has increased since 1998, and overall feelings of safety are lower than in 1998: “South Africans are most worried about burglary, murder and assault, with burglary and assault believed to be amongst the most common types of crimes” (Pharoah, 2008, p.14). With reference to the actual figures reported in the survey, burglary (in the form of housebreaking) is in fact the most common crime, at 7.2%, while assault rates represented 1.3% of crimes experienced, and murder 0.4%. The murder rate represents a decrease of 40% between 1994 and 2004, although South Africa still has the third highest murder rate in the world (Louw, 2007).

Pharoah’s (2008) report echoed the findings of Louw (2007), regarding the fact that people in South Africa perceive that crime is more prevalent than actual figures suggest, and that feelings of unsafety are correspondingly high: “South Africans feel less safe now than before, and substantially more insecure than people living in both developing and developed countries” (Louw, 2007, p.253).

Lemanski (2006) coined the phrase “fear (of crime plus)” to discuss the way in which many, predominantly white, South Africans have chosen either to emigrate from South Africa or to move within the country to altered residential environments such as gated and privatised communities. She suggested that these whites, previously sheltered by apartheid’s social and spatial laws, have become increasingly fearful, and that:

These fears are not solely linked to upsurges in the post-apartheid visibility and violent nature of crime, but are also based on broader fears regarding the future of western lifestyles and practices (economic, social, cultural and political) in the 'new' South Africa, as well as concerns about the viability of raising a family in this changing context (p.788),

hence the term 'fear(of crime plus)'.

In an earlier work, Lemanski (2004) proposed that the fear of crime experienced predominantly by whites in South Africa, but not exclusively, is in fact a fear of 'other'<sup>14</sup>, or 'difference'.

While not denying the reality and severity of crime in the country, she proposed that this 'fear of other' can be seen in perceptions of the causes of crime:

While whites see rising crime as representing the new (black) government's inability to rule (i.e. protect citizens), blacks attribute increased crime to unfinished democracy and African immigrants. Whites have long used fear of crime as a euphemism for fear of blacks; apartheid's *swart gevaar*<sup>15</sup> ... justified segregation, and post-apartheid uncertainty extends this to fear of "their" rule. For blacks, crime is not new, but upsurges are linked to the influx of Black African foreign ... [others] (p.109).

Lemanski (2004; 2006) described how this 'fear of other' and 'fear (of crime plus)' have led to the development of fortified homes, in the form of walls and electronic security, as well as the flourishing of gated communities – a residential area separated from its surroundings by walls and access controlled by gates and security guards. She noted that these 'fortified enclaves', while affording a perceived sense of protection, actually function to increase a sense of threat and danger existing on the outside, and entrench the segregationist practices of the apartheid era. Ballard (2005) called these gated communities 'bunkers for the psyche', and suggested that they are a response by predominantly white people to the feelings of unease generated not only by the fact of crime itself, but the way in which crime functions as "a metaphor for the threat experienced by whites to their way of life in a broader sense" (p.16). While he acknowledged that crime is an everyday reality in South Africa, and that it would be an oversimplification to

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<sup>14</sup> In using the term 'other', Lemanski draws on Edward Said's (1978) notion of 'other' as an invented concept, in which one social group constructs the identity of the 'other' social group only in relation to themselves rather than as a separate entity.

<sup>15</sup> *Swart gevaar* is Afrikaans for "black threat" and was a term used in apartheid South Africa to refer to the perceived threat posed to whites by the black majority population.

say that the fear of crime is simply a euphemism for apartheid-style racism, Ballard (2004a)

maintained that it would also be an oversimplification to ignore the fact that:

The fear of crime has the potential to convey other fears about social change and uncertainty ... Crime is seen as just one particularly bad aspect of a range of ways in which South African society is changing for the worst and is taken to be symptomatic of this deterioration (p.59).

In his study of the way in which the fear of crime is expressed in South Africa, Bremner (2004) used the Kleinian concept of the paranoid-schizoid position to describe Johannesburg, with its fortified homes and gated communities, as a post-apartheid city. He defined the paranoid-schizoid position as one in which “a human subject sees itself as persecuted by threatening and evil forces and protects itself by shutting out and projecting onto those forces all that is bad, malign or threatening” (p.456). Citing Klein, he described terror as a central element of the paranoid-schizoid position, and noted how, in order to escape feelings of intense fear and anxiety (terror) we project these feelings onto that which we perceive as not-me, or ‘other’. In South Africa, this ‘other’ was traditionally the black population, the ‘blackness’ of which allowed for fantasies that these dark others were wild savages, brutal, irrational, and uncivilized – all stereotypes ensconced in apartheid laws and practices. Now that apartheid has been dismantled and South Africa is in transition to a democratic, non-racial society, blackness can no longer function as the repository of white fears in the same way that it did. Bremner (2004) suggested that the new repository for white fear is the figure of ‘the criminal’, for the high level of violent crime that has characterised the post-apartheid period has meant that:

Crime has not only been the experience through which, for many, the transition has been lived, it has also become the imaginary through which it has been interpreted. Feelings of anxiety, impotence, loss, social decay, frustration and anger have been re-ordered through the rubric of crime. Crime has replaced race in the ordering of the city ... [and] provides a generative symbolism with which to talk about contemporary experiences perceived as alien, threatening, chaotic or bad – a black majority government, deteriorating social services, dysfunctional traffic lights, a disloyal domestic worker etc (p.461).

Bremner (2004) suggested that, in this way, white South Africans have found a way to contain the uncertainties of the present and the unknown-ness of the future.

### 3.5.2 *Fears for the Future*

As noted earlier in this chapter, the unknown-ness of and fear for the future constitutes the second of the strongest push factors in decisions to emigrate from South Africa. Fears about the future of South Africa are generally expressed, by white migrants, in terms of fears for the future of their children. This should not suggest that these migrants have no fears for themselves, however, since it is, of necessity, their own visions of the future that inform their predictions for the children. Nevertheless, it is understandable that these visions of the future will be expressed primarily through their fears of the impact on their offspring, since children are also psychological representatives of the self in future time, I would argue.

One of the areas of particular concern among white South Africans is a falling standard of education. It would seem, from the literature, that this concern is not unfounded. Crouch and Vinjevold (2006) reported, for instance, that, “South Africa’s learning achievement numbers fall below those of much poorer countries in Africa, based on international comparisons” (p.11). They suggested that the reason for this lies in the fact that the emphasis, in post-apartheid South Africa, has been on prioritising access to education ahead of quality, to make up for the inadequate educational provision for black students under apartheid. Maodzwa-Taruvinga and Cross (2012) reported that:

South African pupils came last in a list of 39 countries with a Maths mean score of 275 out of a possible 800 ... The trend was the same in science ... South Africa is outperformed by eight surrounding countries, many of which have a gross domestic product of one-tenth to one-fifth of South Africa’s (p.144).

It would seem that the bulk of these poor achievement figures are made up of black students. As Jansen (2006) noted, “*white and middle class schools* achieve at the upper-end of the performance spectrum; *black and rural schools* achieve at the lower end of the performance spectrum” (p.189, italics in original). In addition, SAPA (2014) reported that Jansen, Vice-chancellor of the University of the Free State, said that the school leaving matric pass rate is

“grossly misleading, [since] these pass rates are still calculated at a base of 30% in some subjects and 40% in others” (para.5), whereas an adequate standard of education would demand a pass mark of 50%. This casts some gloom over the education system in South Africa, despite the fact that the latest pass rate of the 2013 matrics is the highest in the history of post-1994 education in South Africa, at 78.2% (John, 2014).

A related area of concern is unemployment. While it is true that the unemployment rate in South Africa is high, it is also true that it is primarily black, impoverished and undereducated individuals who comprise the bulk of this figure (Alence, 2004). The current unemployment figures for South Africa show the overall unemployment rate at 25.27%, but among whites, the figure is considerably lower, at 7.3% (SSA, 2014). The perception among white South Africans is that affirmative action will prohibit white, especially male, children from being employed in the future (Crush et al., 2012), but actual figures do not support this fear: it is still white males who have the highest employment participation in the workplace (SSA, 2014).

Both of these concerns, the falling standard of education and the possibility of unemployment, seem to be related to the other area of pessimism among whites regarding the future of their children, namely corruption. It is true that South African society is still differentiated by race.

As Maré (2001) noted:

To meet with the requirements of the Employment Equity Act, to gain admission or be refused admission to universities, to claim travel allowances, to play in sports teams, to provide information for tax purposes, to ask the National Research Foundation for funding, to register births and so on, each requires statement of race belonging (p.82).

But it is one of the central arguments for the continuation of race-based policies that race-based affirmative action is needed to tackle the effects of past race discrimination, despite the ideal of democratic governance in South Africa to build a non-racial society (Maré, 2001).

What seems to happen frequently, however, is that these affirmative action principles are invoked to justify inappropriate promotion and employment of unqualified black staff. Jansen (2009) wrote about this in relation to universities in South Africa, where he sees a “growing tendency to appoint black academics as professors without any significant knowledge to profess ... Black nationalists are doing after apartheid exactly what Afrikaner nationalists did under apartheid: promoting people on the crude basis of colour” (p.149). And Mbembe (2006) suggested that:

A culture of corruption, impunity and non-accountability is fast becoming the norm. In the aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, public and private lives are conducted as if forgiveness was an inalienable right. Nobody being responsible for his or her conduct, everybody is presumed innocent until proven guilty (p.3).

While the literature suggests that a high level of corruption is indeed prevalent in South Africa<sup>16</sup>, many white South Africans, both within the country and abroad, note this tendency with alarm, and in some cases, use it to fuel their belief that there will be little or no future for whites in South Africa as a result of their perception that ‘reverse apartheid’ is now in operation. Some go further and seem to see themselves as the ‘victims’ of the policies of the new South Africa, fostering the belief that, to protect their children from the fate of becoming the ‘disadvantaged race’ in South Africa, emigration is the only option. Crush (2013), for instance, in his survey of 638 South Africans living in Canada, noted the prevalence of feelings of “what the respondents refer to as ‘reverse discrimination’ (that is, affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment or BEE). They represent themselves, and whites in general, as victims of these policies” (p.203).

It is not only disaffected, sometimes clearly racist, whites who decry the level of corruption in South Africa, it must be noted. Some authors (e.g. Evans, 2011; Schönfeldt-Aultman, 2013, 2014; Steyn, 2001, 2005) have presented their findings in a way that may be misconstrued as

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<sup>16</sup> The 2007 Victims of Crime Survey found that, of the 22% of the population who had experienced crime in the preceding year, 2.9% had experienced it in the form of corruption from various government sectors. It was the third highest form of crime after housebreaking and theft (Pharoah, 2008).

suggesting this to be the case. Noted anti-apartheid campaigner, Breyten Breytenbach, after his 2008 visit to South Africa, wrote that he found:

Recurring references to barbaric criminality, the plague of raping, theft, and fraud, the indecent enrichment of the few, manipulation, redeployment as a form of impunity, public office as an exercise in scavenging, the breakdown of essential services, entrenched and continuing racism, the lack of public morals or even common sense ... If a young South African were to ask me whether he should stay or leave, my bitter advice would be to go. For the foreseeable future now, if you want to live your life to the full and with some satisfaction and usefulness, and if you can stand the loss, if you can amputate yourself – then go (Breytenbach, 2008, p.44).

In general, there does seem to be a significant climate of pessimism and gloom over the future of South Africa among a significant section of the white population, both within South Africa and abroad. When white South Africans speak of their fears for the future, they are usually referring to a sense that ‘things are falling apart’ and a prediction that South Africa will ‘go the route of the rest of Africa’ (Evans, 2011), a route that leads to corruption, decline and chaos. The view that Africa is incapable of progressing has been dubbed “Afropessimism” by Olukoshi (1999, cited in Evans, 2011), and is a view, presented in certain sections of the media, that promotes a vision of the whole continent as a ‘basket-case’, through selective, overgeneralized, and racialized presentation of the news from Africa (Nothias, 2013). Meredith (2011), for instance, wrote: “After decades of mismanagement and corruption, most African states have become hollowed out. They are no longer instruments capable of serving the public good” (p.704). And Guest (2005), appealing to the notion that journalists report what is ‘true’, wrote: “the reason ... [journalists] report that Africa is plagued by war, famine and pestilence is that Africa is plagued by war, famine and pestilence. They will stop reporting this when it stops being true” (p.254).

What is overlooked in these accounts, as Dowden (2009) wrote, is that “Africa has many realities. ... Stories of war and disaster are not made up, but they are only a slice of the reality of Africa” (p.6). And it is this aspect of selective, skewed and even doctored reporting about

Africa and South Africa in particular, that Evans (2011) decried in her research into versions of South Africa represented in the online writings of South African expatriates. She noted that:

Although Internet forums do not necessarily provide a survey of trends in expatriate thinking, the high visibility of Afropessimism on blogs and on platforms such as YouTube is cause for concern. Firstly, because it indicates that events in South Africa are rapidly distancing it from world opinion, and secondly, because the country's future failure is increasingly being represented as a *fait accompli* (p.416).

Evans (2011) also noted the concern that these pessimistic and extreme views of South Africa are being promulgated in the general discourse of South Africans living abroad, and not only in online forums.

Crush's (2013) research into the reasons that his sample of 638 South Africans living in Canada gave for their migration from South Africa, supported Evans' (2011) concern that exaggerated and extreme views of South Africa, present and future, are generally part of an expatriate picture of the country. At the same time however, whether exaggerated or not, the views are strong enough to have persuaded large numbers of whites to emigrate, and contribute to their sense that, not only is the country on the decline, but that they are no longer welcome there – which constitutes the third of the main categories of reasons for leaving.

### ***3.5.3 Feelings of Devaluation***

While a negative impact on one's sense of self-esteem, in terms of ruptures in the sense of self and an accompanying sense of dislocation, is a common consequence of the migration experience in general (Akhtar, 1999), many white South African migrants report that feelings of this nature are influential factors in the decision to migrate. Louw and Mersham (2001), for instance, noted that many of their respondents believed "that they had become an 'unwelcome minority' ... that there was a growing sense of marginalization and second-classness" (p.321), and that the policy of affirmative action was, in essence, a form of racial re-ranking that saw blacks given preferential treatment. Similarly, Gray et al. (2005) reported their interviewees'

references to a “lack of appreciation, affirmative action and the stifling policies of the government” (p. 136). Crush (2013) noted that a large majority of his respondents felt that they were no longer welcome, and that they were the victims of affirmative action and black economic empowerment, a perception endorsed in Philips’ (2007) study of the sense of self in South Africa.

Wambagu (2005), in his survey of 40 white South African university students, noted that many young whites in South Africa, while clearly viewing apartheid as ‘wrong’, disclaim responsibility for the inequities and large-scale structural discrimination of apartheid by locating it in the arena of the ‘sins of the fathers’. Thus they are able to construct themselves as innocent victims of present affirmative action policies that are viewed as unjust and unfair because, in their de-racialized and de-historicized view, such policies are not based on education or merit. As a result, many plan to emigrate, with the assumption that, in countries overseas, “policies there are bound to be ‘rational, ethical and fair, focusing on the individual’s merit and expertise rather than his/her past histories” (Wambagu, 2005, p.67). He suggested that the focus on merit and expertise in overseas countries also includes the unspoken expectation that whiteness will be privileged in these countries. And to some extent, this expectation may well be met, at least in Australia, according to Green, Sonn and Matsebula (2007), Hage (1998) and Tascón (2008), who have all written about the way in which whites in Australia see themselves as the dominant race and discriminate against people of other races and ethnic groups.

Affirmative action in South Africa is part of the strategy for Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE). This initiative was launched by the South African government in 2003 to redress the inequalities that resulted from apartheid. According to the Strategy Document of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI, 2003):

The accumulation process under Apartheid confined the creation of wealth to a racial minority and imposed underdevelopment on black communities ... The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment strategy is a necessary

government intervention to address the systematic exclusion of the majority of South Africans from full participation in the economy (pp. 4-6).

The terms of this strategy encompass the policy of affirmative action, which states that:

“Employers must make sure designated groups (black people, women and people with disabilities) have equal opportunities in the workplace. Designated groups must be equally represented in all job categories and levels” (Zopedol, 2014). To monitor this, employers are required to meet criteria in the form of scorecards that demonstrate their progress in the areas of ownership, management control, employment equity, skills development, preferential procurement, enterprise development and socioeconomic development (DTI, 2003).

For many whites in South Africa and in expatriate communities, B-BBEE and the affirmative action policies that support it result in feelings of reverse discrimination and devaluation of their skills and potential to contribute (Brokensha, 2003), but the issue is a controversial one and draws heated debate. Crush (2013) for instance, is strong in his evaluation of his respondents’ feelings about affirmative action policies:

None of the over 600 respondents showed any sympathy with or appreciation for the rationale behind these corrective policies. Nor do they appear to recognise that their own educational and economic advantages, which make them attractive to Canada, might well have been at the expense of the black population which was severely victimised and discriminated against under apartheid. Insofar as apartheid is mentioned at all, the term is used primarily to describe the present, as in ‘reverse apartheid’. The use of the term in this manner clearly shows very little appreciation of what it was like to be black in South Africa before 1990. To equate the current situation of whites in South Africa (who have generally done extremely well economically since the end of apartheid) with the treatment of blacks under apartheid displays a profound ignorance of what apartheid was but is also highly misleading (p.204).

But others, apart from white residents and emigrants, have suggested that B-BBEE has implications that not only contribute to the ‘brain drain’ among skilled professionals of all racial groups (Nduru, 2004; Politicsweb, 2012), but also hampers the very transformation process it was designed to address:

Preferential procurement of goods and services from black- and female-owned enterprises is now the rule. But far from leading to a wider distribution of

wealth, most of these efforts seem to foster a culture of cronyism, clientelism<sup>17</sup> and corruption ... the project of 'transformation' cannot be confined to a largely managerial, bureaucratic or quantitative exercise with the primary concern of ensuring that adequate numbers of blacks find places in government, higher education, commerce and industry in general. We cannot afford to simply replicate the old Afrikaner model<sup>18</sup> of filling state corporations, civil service and the universities with incompetent citizens while using state patronage to promote dubious business ventures (Mbembe, 2007, p.7).

Steyn (2001), reporting the results of her survey of 54 white South Africans, suggested that the people who favour the narrative of white victimization – for which affirmative action is the lightning rod – inhabit a world of clear-cut dichotomies, and feel that their previous positions of power and privilege have been illogically inverted by the new order. Steyn (2001) represents one of a number of authors who suggest that the issues of crime, fears for the future, and feelings of devaluation, while real, also represent feelings of unease and a sense of dislocation in the new South Africa, prompting the decision to migrate. I discuss some of these propositions in the following section.

### **3.6 Other Reasons for Leaving**

Steyn (2001) suggested that most whites who emigrate from South Africa do so not only to find safety and predictability, but also to settle in a country that feels more affirming of white identity. She suggested that many whites no longer feel 'at home' in South Africa, and that the changes in the country since 1994 have left many feeling 'out of place'. Similarly, Ballard (2004b) suggested that one of the ways in which apartheid functioned was to provide a 'comfort zone' for whites in a segregated environment that promoted the primacy of their modern, European, first-world values. For some, the physical and metaphorical sense of safety that this provided has been eroded by the dismantling of apartheid, and the living environment no longer

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<sup>17</sup> Clientelism is the distribution of benefits to individuals or groups in exchange for electoral support (Larreguy, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> This refers to the fact that, when the National Party came to power in 1948, they instituted affirmative action policies in the civil service and other state bodies that saw Afrikaans-speaking people (Afrikaners) favoured for positions ahead of their English-speaking peers, to compensate for what was seen as previous marginalization and economic hardship (Russell, 2009).

supports a Eurocentric, privileged view of themselves. As a result, “home no longer feels very homely” (Ballard, 2004b, p.8), and while he acknowledged that emigration occurs for a multiplicity of reasons, nevertheless “for some, it might be argued, emigration is the ultimate response to the sense of dislocation they felt in South Africa” (p.9).

Bloom (2009) also referred to the sense of dislocation and unease among South Africans, whether they choose to stay in the country or leave. He wrote:

Shame at being the colonist; shame at being the colonised ... this double truth ...[is] the inherent and inviolable double-truth of life in post-apartheid South Africa ... it was here that I saw the strangeness of our situation, the source of our bewilderment, the reason for our dislocation and self-hatred and capacity for violence and desire to flee (p.218).

Whether one chooses to stay or to go, he proposed, ongoing unease about the past, the present and the future is part of the condition of being South African. To this formulation I would add the caveat: unless there are defence mechanisms in place which preclude the conscious awareness of these uneasy feelings. I will elaborate on this significant dimension in later sections of this study.

Griffiths and Prozesky (2010) have written from a similar point of view. They suggested that feelings of unease underpin the factors of crime and affirmative action commonly cited as the reasons for leaving, and proposed that:

The fall of apartheid ... swept away the home in which white South Africans thought they dwelt. The resulting existential homelessness, a product of the artificial, distorted dwelling born out of the colonial endeavour ... is a strongly motivating factor for many South Africans who leave the country (p.22).

Franchi and Swart (2003) examined the findings from their survey of 542 white undergraduate students in South Africa and concluded that the reasons their respondents gave for wanting to emigrate were underpinned by an unwillingness to align themselves with the demands of a new democratic order, by giving up the privileges they enjoyed, relative to the majority of South Africans. These authors went on to speculate that “The unwillingness or inability to locate the

self in relation to the New South Africa may also heighten identification with a colonial country of origin or an apartheid past, idealized through processes of nostalgic and evasive remembering” (p.232).

Similarly, Schönfeldt-Aultman (2014) referenced a sense of racial superiority among white South African migrants and proposed that, behind the articulated fears about crime and the future of the country, one way to think about the migration of many white South Africans refers to their loss of privilege and their resulting level of “(dis)comfort at black South Africans being perceived to have power over them” (p.55). He based this thesis on his analysis of contributions to a US-based newsletter for expatriate South Africans. Such contributions should be interpreted with some caution, however, for it has been noted that expatriate responses in public forums appear to be coloured by “perceived marginalisation, a skewed sense of political disempowerment, the urge to justify the decision to emigrate, and the traumatic effects of geographical displacement” (Evans, 2011, p.416).

Nevertheless, Schönfeldt-Aultman’s (2014) work is part of a larger body of literature on migration from South Africa that suggests that the surge in migration that has occurred since the dismantling of apartheid in 1994, and the transition to democracy that followed, must be related in some way to the political and social changes that have ensued, given the primacy of race in the construction of identity in South Africa. A discussion of whiteness in South Africa is thus warranted at this stage.

### **3.7 Whiteness in South Africa**

Whiteness as a field of study has grown into a large and integral part of academic pursuit, and has thus generated an extensive body of literature since the 1990s, when “the first wave of whiteness studies” (Steyn, 2007, p.421) appeared. The focus of these studies was the privilege

afforded to whites<sup>19</sup>, and the ways in which this was considered normal and therefore invisible. Later studies focused on particularizing whitenesses, noting the different ways in which whiteness came into being and was expressed in different contexts. The third and most recent wave has resulted in scholarship which challenges “the ways in which whiteness has been theorised from the centres of whiteness” (Steyn, 2007, p.421).

This is a very brief and therefore over-generalised outline of the large and complex field of whiteness studies: an excellent and comprehensive discussion of the field may be found in Steyn and Conway’s Introduction to the (2010) Special Edition of *Ethnicities*<sup>20</sup>. For the purposes of this study, the focus of this section is on the way in which whiteness both shapes and is performed by white South Africans. Even this delimited area includes a large body of work, however, a full survey of which is beyond the scope of this thesis. What follows is a select review of the relevant literature, and, as previously noted, selection is informed by the data collected and analysed in this study.

It has been suggested (Ahmed, 2004, para.2) that, if whites are to recognise how privilege works, they should start from black people’s experience of whiteness. For black South Africans, their experience of whiteness meant the consistent violation of their human rights, resulting, for some, in a view of whites as lacking in humanity. For example, Njabulo Ndebele (2000, in Ndebele 2007), former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, noted that “the ‘heart of whiteness’ will be hard put to reclaim its humanity without the restoration of dignity to the black body” (p.137). He proposed that:

while the terrible past out of which we are emerging resulted in an efficient and convenient system of managing the exploitation of both human and natural

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<sup>19</sup>In keeping with the conventions of whiteness studies, I continue to use the terms ‘white’ and ‘black’ as though these exist as discrete racial categories. Further, in referring to ‘black’, I include both coloured and Indian people as well. And in referring to ‘white’, I mean both English- and Afrikaans-speaking, unless specifically differentiated

<sup>20</sup> In this paper, Steyn notes that she prefers now to conceptualise whiteness in terms of ‘moments’ rather than ‘waves’, to emphasize that these are not necessarily sequential, “but rather continue to weave through the literature” (p.284).

resources, it also exacted a high toll on the collective morality of its beneficiaries (Ndebele, 1992, in 2007, p.45).

In a later interview (West, 2010), Ndebele noted that his views of whiteness had changed since his earlier writing, and that he now sees that there are many whitenesses, just as there are many blacknesses, and thus he would want to know the particular circumstances and contexts of a specific behavior before coming to a conclusion. He reported that he has been influenced by the work of Jonathan Jansen in this regard.

Jansen proposed that whiteness is borne as a burden<sup>21</sup> by black South Africans (2008), in the sense that the problems that currently beset South Africa are seen by many whites to be problems caused by blacks, which has resulted in the vilification of, and in some cases, violence towards, blacks. Nevertheless, Jansen carefully and generously analyses the motivations of what he sees to be the disempowered white youth who have perpetrated some of this violence, and takes some of the responsibility on himself and other teachers who, he says, have failed these youths by not disrupting the legacy of their pasts. In addition, he notes that it has been some of the interactions he has had with his white students who have transformed his own legacy of the past into a stance that sees “not white skin but common humanity” (Jansen, 2008, p.10).

Similar to Ndebele (1992), Ratele and Laubscher (2010) have noted the ways in which whites have themselves been damaged by the performance of whiteness. They described South Africa as a society “where race was positioned as the fulcrum on which power balances” (p.84) and noted that, despite the advent of democracy, “whiteness in South Africa seems to continue to determine privilege and desirability” (p.84). Their analysis leads them to suggest that whiteness

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<sup>21</sup> In 1899, Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem called *The White Man's Burden* in which he urged the US to ‘take up the white man's burden’, the ‘burden of empire’ in the Philippines. This racialized imperialism angered many and drew a number of responses, especially from African Americans. In using the term here, Jansen is referencing H. T. Johnson, who wrote a poem in response to Kipling called *The Black Man's Burden*, in which he suggested that the mistreatment of brown people in the Philippines mirrored the mistreatment of black people in the US (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5476/>).

involves violence, not only towards the black other but “a violence that turns in on itself, a woundedness from within whiteness, an *autoimmune disease* of sorts” (p.98, italics in original).

Many white South African authors adopt a critical stance towards the performance of whiteness in South Africa (Straker, 2011a), not only during apartheid but also as it currently exists. In many cases, this attitude reveals a position of self-judgement as well as reflecting their views of other whites. Steyn, for instance, prefaced her full-length (2001) study of the topic with the acknowledgement that “shame, guilt and anger seem to have accompanied me throughout my white life” (p.xiv). At the same time, she notes the importance for white authors to mark their insider positions within the field, even as they inevitably ‘other’ those whites whom they observe as if from the outside.

Steyn (2005) noted that one of the important differences between whiteness in South Africa and elsewhere in the world is that, in South Africa, whiteness has never been invisible: apartheid ideology ensured that every facet of life made whiteness marked and privileged: “What was taken for granted, however, was the ‘naturalness’ of being thus privileged” (Steyn, 2005, p.122). Since 1994 however, whites are subordinated politically (even though they retain economic power), and their privileged subjectivities now have to be reworked. Steyn (2001) suggested that, as a result of this massive change, whites in South Africa are dealing with feelings of displacement and dispossession, and that this results in strong feelings of loss: loss of home, of autonomy and control, of a sense of relevance, of guaranteed legitimacy, and loss of honour. She suggested that whites who are leaving the country do so “not only to find a different location that they perceive to be physically safe and economically predictable, but also to settle in a region more likely to remain culturally congruent and supportive of white identity” (p.156) as they know it.

Steyn’s (2001) research into white South Africans’ attempts, after 1994, to make sense of their new positioning, to rework their privileged subjectivities and cope with their feelings of loss,

highlights five broad narratives that her sample of 54 whites constructed about themselves and their whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa:

- 1) *Still colonial after all these years* is the most fundamentalist and assumes that nothing has changed, that whites are still in a position to determine the course of events for themselves and others. In many cases, a Eurocentric identity is claimed and unapologetically asserted, especially among English-speakers, as Salusbury (2003) has noted. In other instances, a sense of superiority rides under the mantle of humanitarianism. In this manifestation, whites appear as the rescuers, treating blacks as “perpetual children” (Steyn, 2001, p.61), who need the superior guidance of whites to advance, and who could do so much better if only they would do things in a ‘whitely way’. Bailey (2011) suggested that “Whitely do-gooding responses give us substance ... unreflective do-gooding, rescuing, controlling, fixing, and missionary responses ... allow us to restore our goodness (at least in our own minds) rather than understanding our complicity” (p.476). Similarly, Hook (2011a) has proposed that acts of charity by whites, often in the form of ‘giving something back’, may sometimes entrench subservient positions rather than promoting equality.
- 2) *This shouldn't happen to a white* reflects those who still see whites as superior, either explicitly or implicitly, and seethe at the injustice of the reversal and victimization they believe they experience. Verwey and Quayle (2012) reported on the explicit expression of this among the Afrikaner participants in their study, while Dolby (2001) examined how resentment coloured her high-school participants’ experience of their lives in post-apartheid South Africa.
- 3) *Don't think white it's all right* describes those who see themselves becoming part of a multicultural society and are pragmatic about this. Within this view, nonetheless, their whiteness is integral, and their insistence on the preservation of their heritage is a source of comfort about an uncertain future. Hermann (2010) epitomises this approach:

I am part of the white tribe of Africa ... I do not have two passports ...  
The fact that I have no alternative is my secret weapon for a future in

South Africa ... I reach out my hand to other South Africans to create a future here ... I am a Christian, an African, Afrikaner, South African, father and simply me. I want to be all of this. To take any of this away from me would be too high a price to pay and I will not allow it (pp 121-123).

- 4) *A whiter shade of white* reflects those who protest innocence about the racialized nature of South African society and believe themselves to be free of racialization<sup>22</sup>. Steyn (2001) noted that there is an evasive aspect to this, and Ansell (2006) has written about the advantages that 'colour-blindness' in this context can promote. Steyn (2001) noted also that this narrative sometimes appropriates being 'African' in a way that whitewashes the past. Coetzee (1998) was referring to this when she described how, for many Afrikaners, the Bushman woman Krotoä has become known affectionately as 'onse ma'.<sup>23</sup> And yet, Krotoä, because she was non-white and had three children with her white Danish partner, was banished to Robben Island for life and her place in the genealogy of many Afrikaners was disowned for nearly 300 years. Meister (2010) has made a psychoanalytic study of such appropriation, and described it as 'consuming the victim', which, he proposed, is an unconscious way of preserving triumph. In another study, Matthews (2011) noted the prevalence of claims of Africanness among white students and reported on the resistance that black students feel towards this.
- 5) *Under African skies* or *White but not quite* comprises three slightly different approaches: those who believe what is happening is right but do not know how to find a place for themselves within this; those who feel deeply guilty about being white<sup>24</sup> and avoid confronting this fact of their existence; and those who "do not deny their racialization but problematize their race" (Steyn, 2001, p.154).

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<sup>22</sup> I use this term in Butler's (1993) sense: racialization is the process by which race as a category is performed into existence by being repeated over a period of time.

<sup>23</sup> Our mother

<sup>24</sup> Žižek (2009) has written about this kind of white guilt: "Politically correct self-flagellation is an inverted form of clinging to one's superiority ... The positive form of the White Man's Burden (his responsibility for civilizing the colonized barbarians) is thus merely replaced by its negative form (the burden of the white man's guilt): if we can no longer be the benevolent masters of the Third World, we can at least be the privileged source of evil, patronizingly depriving others of responsibility for their fate" (p.114).

The paper by philosopher Samantha Vice (2010) seems to epitomize all three elements of this last category of white responses. The study is her attempt to explore the quandary of living as a white in post-apartheid South Africa. Vice (2010) asked how it is possible, given the ‘morally tangled’ legacy of apartheid, and the ongoing evidence of racial inequality in South Africa, for whites not only to live in, but live *well* in South Africa – by which she means: “What is the morally appropriate reaction to one’s situation of privilege?” (p.323). She suggested that it is impossible for whites who grew up with the privilege of whiteness ingrained in them to be free of their whitely<sup>25</sup> habits, and that one of the tasks of living morally in South Africa requires the acknowledgement of this, with all the discomfort this entails. She suggested that guilt (which in her definition is tied to ‘what one does’) is an appropriate feeling for white South Africans, for having been implicated in and benefitting from the oppression of others. In addition, she proposed, shame is an especially appropriate response, tied as it is to the sense of who one is: “One does not wish to be a person whose welfare is dependent upon harm to others. One does not wish to be a person with vicious traits that are helping, however passively, to sustain privilege and oppression” (p.329). Vice (2010) wondered at the absence of shame among white South Africans, finding it “unlikely that a white South African will be in a situation in which shame is not called for” (p.332).

But, as Truscott (2012) noted: “For a large portion of white South Africa, shame or guilt over the past are not features of their experience, at least not at a manifest or ‘conscious’ level; the time for shame and guilt, they say ... is over” (p.36). In what is perhaps evidence of this, the summary of Vice’s (2010) article, which appeared in a national newspaper in South Africa, evoked strong, and in some cases, violent reaction, especially from white readers. Vice (2011b) proposed that her suggestion that whites should feel shame offended white people’s need to think of themselves as fundamentally decent, and piqued their sense of entitlement to their success and comfort.

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<sup>25</sup> Vice cites Taylor in her definition of ‘whitely’: “Whiteness tends to involve a commitment to the centrality of white people and their perspectives” (Vice, 2010, p.324).

Of course, the acknowledgement of even some level of awareness and complicity, both in the apartheid system and in the post-apartheid era, is not without problem. For, as Eagle and Bowman (2013, citing Jolly, 2010) noted, there is a restricted and negatively-skewed range of positions for South African whites to occupy when talking about having grown up during apartheid: “persecutor, beneficiary and/or bystander” (p.285). And, as Hook (2011c) has observed, numerous strategies of evasion come into play for white South Africans when they are asked about the past: “The psychoanalytic lesson here ... is that the resistance to discomfiting or self-compromising memories, or indeed, to memories of culpability, knows no limits” (p.84).

It must also be true though, that not all white South Africans feel guilt or shame about the past, consciously or otherwise. And there are problems too, in mandating that certain feelings should or should not be felt by others. As Futter (2011) noted, “Even if one’s arguments are sound, it is not always right to state what is true, or prescribe what ought to be done” (p.420). In addition, as Hook (2011b) suggested, “This would seem to open the door to – indeed, it potentially invites – a type of affective posturing, whereby one aims to feel the right feelings, to exhibit adequate degrees of shame, guilt, and regret so as to attain a degree of redemption” (p.496). This is allied to Straker’s (2011a) idea of ‘promiscuous shame’, one facet of which, she suggested, might be owned “defensively or prematurely ... [and thus] might bypass a deeper exploration of our lack of insight and self-knowledge” (p.14). In addition, Straker (2011a) questioned whether “there is now a certain perverse status that attaches to being the shamed other who can acknowledge fault?” (p.14). Both Truscott (2012) and de Kock (2006) make a similar point when they allude to the many ‘confessional’ statements of complicity and positionality that have frequently come to preface whiteness studies.

Outside of academic and literary authors, however, difficulties in acknowledging shame and guilt have generally been noted among both resident and migrant South Africans. Steyn (2005), for instance, described the prevalence of ‘white talk’ as a discursive strategy that

functions to manipulate the contradictions of being white in post-apartheid South Africa, while maintaining privilege. She suggested that ‘white talk’ functions as a form of denial and defence and thus engenders a “premature moratorium on ‘white guilt’” (p.132). Crush (2013), in his survey of white South African migrants to Canada, also noted the prominence of ‘white talk’ among the respondents, and suggested that it functions to maintain the view, among expatriates, of South Africa as a “racial dystopia” (p.205), as well as masking an implicit hankering “after the certainties and privileges of the apartheid period” (Crush et al., 2012, p.936).

Evans (2011) made a similar point when she noted the apparent glee with which bad news about the situation in South Africa is reported overseas; she suggested that this operates “as a panacea for any form of residual doubt and/or guilt about having left” (p.411). In my earlier investigation into migration from South Africa (Hicks, 2010), I noted the apparent pleasure with which news of ‘declining standards’ in South Africa is greeted among expatriate South Africans in Australia, and wondered whether this was a projection serving to unite us in defending against shame. Most of these studies present their views of denial of guilt and shame as theoretical constructions<sup>26</sup>, however: to my knowledge, there are few studies which have explored the role of defensive operations among South African migrants through psychoanalytic analysis of data.

Barnard (2012) suggested that feelings of shame among white South Africans are likely to be complicated and intense, for “privileged persons are prone to cling, however guiltily, to their privileges, even if they cannot – or can no longer – simply enjoy them” (p.154). Altman (2004) has expressed a similar view, and questioned whether whites *are* ‘unwilling beneficiaries’:

Part of the guilt that attaches to holding a privileged position in a racist society may derive from a sense that we want and feel that we need our privileges and

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<sup>26</sup> Hook (2014), Straker (2011a; 2011b) and Truscott (2012) are notable exceptions.

comforts and would not give them up so easily if it came right down to it (p.442).

Other authors have explored the idea of guilt among white South Africans. Bloom (2009), for example, noted that the dominant psychological position among white South Africans is fear – from fears that are real as well as grounded in guilt for the years of oppression of black people and the fear that they will rise up and take revenge in some way. Lobban (2012) also noted the close tie between fear and guilt among white South Africans, suggesting that white fears of black vengeance and retribution originated in whites’ sense of culpability. She emphasized that this fear was not remorse, however, and that in fact, the fear of retribution precluded the possibility of genuine guilt and remorse: “They absolved themselves of current responsibility by imagining they would be paying for their sins down the road” (p.227). While Lobban (2012) was writing about the situation before 1994, Bloom’s (2009) thesis suggested that this is still the case. And, in my view, for a group of migrants who left South Africa shortly after 1994, this fear and guilt alliance might be extant, in the absence of mitigating intersubjective experiences within the country.

In making this suggestion, I am alluding to one of the ways in which white South African migrants, by removing themselves from the situation, might have resiled from working through their fears about the future and feelings about the past. In undertaking the present study, it is my hope that analysis of participant interviews might provide some clues about this.

For some of those who have not emigrated from South Africa, difficulties in working through an apartheid past have been likened to melancholia<sup>27</sup>. Like Steyn (2001), Truscott (2011, 2012, 2013), has noted the sense of displacement, alienation and loss that white South Africans<sup>28</sup> have experienced since the end of apartheid in 1994. He took his observations further than Steyn

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<sup>27</sup> Freud (1917) noted that both mourning and melancholia are reactions to loss, but that melancholia “is in some way related to an object loss which is withdrawn from consciousness, in contra-distinction to mourning, in which there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious” (p.245).

<sup>28</sup> Truscott focussed particularly on the experience of Afrikaners in his 2011 and 2012 studies.

(2001) however, into psychoanalytic discussion of the data, and described it as a ‘melancholic loss’: “Apartheid, for post-apartheid South Africans, cannot be anything but an unconscious loss, an unthinkable loss: how, indeed, does one mourn the loss of what has been officially declared a crime against humanity?” (Truscott, 2011, p.93). Straker (2011a), in her analysis of some of the narratives collected in the Apartheid Archive Project in South Africa, has noted the “emerging sadness, confusion and melancholia consequent to an experience of whiteness” (p.12). In addition, in an earlier (2004) paper, Straker drew from the work on racial melancholia by Eng and Han (2000) to theorize about feelings of shame and guilt among beneficiaries of whiteness in South Africa.

Based on his analysis of material in the Apartheid Archive Project, and his questioning of the way in which, in some studies, the concept of melancholia has been inaccurately over-simplified as ‘a loss which cannot be grieved’, Hook (2014) proposed that one of the responses to loss involves a “need for compensatory identifications *precisely not with the lost object itself*” (p.159, italics in original). In his view, this mechanism avoids the pain of loss by disavowing the significance of that which has been lost: in finding replacement attachments, the emptiness occasioned by the loss is short-circuited. While Hook (2014) has not addressed the issue of whites who migrate from post-apartheid South Africa, I believe that his concept of ‘compensatory identification’ may be usefully explored within this population. I will return to this in the discussion section of this study.

Writing, from a different point of view, about disavowal in the South African context, Straker (2011b) proposed that apartheid flourished because of the way in which, having been presented as ‘the natural order of things’, its effects on the victims were dissociated<sup>29</sup>. She suggested that, as children, white South Africans dissociated their complicity in the harm done by apartheid,

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<sup>29</sup> This is Stern’s (1997) use of the term, which refers to the way in which traumatic or overwhelming material is unconscious because it has never been formulated.

but that this knowledge was later disavowed<sup>30</sup>. In post-apartheid South Africa, in Straker's (2011a) view, "whiteness ... is no longer assured its privileged place. It has become unsettled" (p.12). Some authors (e.g. Hook, 2011a; Truscott, 2012; West, 2010) have suggested that this unsettledness offers the most hopeful way forward for whites, that it offers a way forward for living with the contradictions and complexities of being a white South African. In order for this to happen, though, whites would need to move away from defensive mechanisms such as dissociation and disavowal, and allow conflicting states of self to co-exist. In this study, my proposal to explore the experiences of white South African migrants using a psychoanalytic lens might offer a way to access these unconscious processes, where and if they might be present.

### **3.8 South Africans' Experiences of Migration**

One of the specific aims of this study is to investigate, using a psychoanalytic lens, the *experience* of their post-1994 migration from South Africa among the participants, in order to try to discover the layers of meaning that such an experience might hold and how it might impact their resulting sense of themselves.

In my survey of the literature on migration from South Africa, I noted a significant gap with regard to the *experience* of migration. There are a few psychoanalytic studies by South African migrants which refer to this aspect (Ipp, 2010a; 2010b; Lobban, 2006; 2013; Philips, 2007), but these authors are from the pre-1994 cohort and thus experienced a different migration context.

There are also a small number of studies that have analysed the experience of post-1994 migrants from the point of view of their psychological adjustment after the event. Forrest et al. (2013), for instance, found that South African migrants readily assimilate into the Australian community, while Khawaja and Mason (2008) found that, though there was evidence of some psychological distress (in the form of anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive behaviours,

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<sup>30</sup> Straker (2011b) follows Freud in describing disavowal as "knowing something to be true but still believing it is not" (p.646).

interpersonal sensitivity and somatisation) in their group of post-1994 South African migrants, this was generally low. These findings are interesting, and raise questions about what it is that makes migration, for South Africans, less traumatic or stressful than the migration literature discussed in Chapter 2 would suggest. But these two studies do not take the analysis of their findings any further, by utilising an approach focused on the meaning of these experiences.

Milton (2011), writing from a Jungian analytical perspective, is one of the small number who has approached migration via a consideration of experience and meaning-making. He described his initial experience of migration as one of “shear, dissonance, and conflict” (p.210), and then described how, even though not finding resolution of his conflicting ideas and experiences, he has come to make more sense of these feelings by realising the need to tolerate ambiguity. He noted how his original, South African, anti-apartheid ‘moral hermeneutic’ – his set of guiding moral principles – could not allow opposing opinions or beliefs. To make sense of his migration experience, he had to come to a “more ambiguous, hopefully more morally imaginative, more sharable reformulation” (p.219) of his moral hermeneutic.

Another study that has attempted to make meaning of the post-apartheid migration experience is by Griffiths and Prozesky (2010). They examined the phenomenon of white migration since 1994 in an attempt to “capture the existential and philosophical motivations for leaving” (p.29). In so doing, they make the proposition that these motivations, “because they are largely unacknowledged and unarticulated, are not resolved by emigration” (p.29). As noted earlier, these authors discuss the unease and sense of homelessness that many white South Africans experience in post-apartheid South Africa. They suggest that emigration does not bring about an escape from these experiences, and thus many South African migrants carry these feelings as part of their ongoing identity.

Having noted the dearth of literature about this meaning-making aspect of the migration experience of post-apartheid white South Africans, this study will attempt to explore this dimension in more detail, while taking into account the more commonly cited reasons for leaving. Since, as Griffiths and Prozesky (2010) have noted, many of the deeper and more layered aspects of the motivation for leaving are seldom consciously known and articulated, this study will utilise a psychoanalytic lens in order to try to access this aspect. I thus turn now to an examination of psychoanalytic research methods.

## 4. PSYCHOANALYTIC RESEARCH REVIEW

### 4.1 Introduction

As outlined previously, the idea for this study emerged from a piece of writing that I had undertaken to explore my own story of having migrated from South Africa to Australia after the dismantling of apartheid. Following this, it seemed a logical choice to collect the stories of other post-apartheid migrants to try to achieve a composite picture of what it might mean not only to be a migrant, but one who elects to take this step at a particular moment in history and under a very particular set of emotional and personal circumstances.

However, it soon became clear that the telling and collection of stories, worthy and interesting though that is, and a valuable source of anecdotal data gathering, would not be sufficient to generate deeper exploration of the potential meanings of such a profoundly affecting event. Some way of making sense of these meanings on a collective level needed to be found if this study was to be more than an assembly of ethnographic essays. I wanted to find a psychosocial research method that would take into account the social and cultural dynamics of the subculture<sup>31</sup> I have termed ‘the post-apartheid migrant’, the intrapsychic dimensions of the members of this group, as well as paying close attention to the reciprocal and mutually constitutive interactions of researcher and participant.

There proved to be no obvious, ready-made methodology that could satisfy these requirements. That the study would be qualitative in nature was certainly a given – a quantitative study was never considered as a possibility because of the fundamental clash in worldview between its

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<sup>31</sup> I have termed post-apartheid migrants a ‘subculture’, because of the unique aspect of their emigration from South Africa after the dismantling of apartheid (as outlined in Chapter 3), which differentiates them from both residents and other groups of migrants who emigrated in the years prior to 1994.

demands for an objective and scientific stance, and my own, which is situated in the constructivist and relational realm. But which qualitative research method to employ was a far more vexed question. As Mills et al. (2006) have written, “To ensure a strong research design, researchers must choose a research paradigm that is congruent with their beliefs about the nature of reality” (p.2). With this statement as starting point, it was of paramount importance that any methodology I selected should be consistent with the fact that I am a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, particularly identified with Relational psychoanalytic thinking. Even though this is not a clinical study, my approach to the research and to the writing of this study could not but express my theoretical underpinnings. Thus, the need for a Relational psychoanalytic research design presented the first challenge, and so I undertook a review of the literature on psychoanalytic research – even though the Grounded Theory Method suggests that the bulk of the literature review should take place after data collection and analysis. For this study, I needed to undertake this particular review at an early stage in the process, in order to help me find an important aspect of the methodology of this thesis – its psychoanalytic underpinnings.

#### **4.2 Psychoanalytic Research Methodologies**

Despite the long history of psychoanalysis, there is a considerable dearth of psychoanalytic methodology in the research field: “If you browse through a range of textbooks on qualitative approaches to research in psychology ... one rarely finds a chapter describing a ‘psychoanalytic approach’ to qualitative research” (Midgley, 2006, p.214). Cartwright (2004) also noted this lack: “the development of research methodology in psychoanalysis remains in its infancy ... Because the methodology is closely associated with the treatment setting, little progress has been made in developing other forms of research methodology using psychoanalytic principles” (p.210). Even the latest edition of the comprehensive *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* by Denzin and Lincoln (4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2011), 766 pages in length, contains no entry for ‘psychoanalysis’ in its Subject Index, let alone a chapter devoted to the topic.

While planning the design of my study back in 2009 and 2010, in my survey of the available literature on psychoanalytic research, I repeatedly found references to Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) *Doing Qualitative Research Differently*. It was frustrating that it was out-of-print at the time that I was constructing my research model, for it was apparent that their book was a notable exception to this neglect, and by all accounts seemed to offer a promising research model which they called the Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) method. And indeed, having been able to access the second edition, published in 2013, it would have been helpful to have read their work earlier. In particular, the fact that they incorporated aspects of a grounded theory approach into their method would have been helpful for me as I grappled to find a method that could help me to make sense of the mass of data that I planned to collect. Additionally, their insistence on the need for there to be room for participants to set their own agendas in the research interview would have provided an important confirmation for me of the hunch that I held in this regard.

At the same time, there are some essential differences between their model and that which eventually emerged for me, both from my readings and from interactions with the participants. The most notable of these relates to their object-relations framework, which leads to a focus on the intrapsychic world of the participant and the defences he or she employs to ward off anxiety – ‘the defended subject’ is their theoretical starting point (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). While I am in agreement that defences are important aspects to consider, especially when researching sensitive and anxiety-provoking topics, I see a much more active and creative manner of engagement for the participants in the research than the term ‘subjects’ would suggest. I am interested also in thinking about how my own very real impact and influence on the person and the situation might have played a role in the narrative that ensued, to a greater extent than Hollway and Jefferson's FANI method would suggest. In their preface to the second edition (2013), Hollway and Jefferson note that this has indeed been a criticism of their work, citing Thomsom's comment that “Analysis of the defended researcher is insufficiently developed.

They do mention the possibility that the researcher is also defended, but it certainly doesn't feel that way" (Thomson, 2010, in Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p.xi).

A further point of difference between their approach and mine relates to their insistence that interpretation not take place during the interviews but only during later data analysis, seeing as they do that interpretive work "is separate from the participant and has a different audience" (p.72). I shall say more at a later stage about my view of the need to include the participant in the interpretive process as a co-creator of meaning, but note here my agreement with Hoggett, Beedell, Jimenez, Mayo and Miller (2010) that "Researchers cannot but 'think into the encounter', and their thinking necessarily assumes the form of interpretations, a kind of 'thinking aloud' "(p.176).

For the most part, researchers working psychoanalytically in the field of psychosocial research tend to focus on the interview component of the research. Very few report in any detail how they utilise the data that they glean from the interviews in order to reach their findings. Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) FANI method is a notable exception, as is the work of Lucey, Melody and Walkerdine (2003), who reported on an overlapping three-tier method of data analysis. On the first level, the researchers looked at the manifest content of the participants' stories - the themes, events, characters and so on. The second level comprised an initial exploration of unconscious processes as revealed in images, metaphors, silences, disjunctions and the like, alongside the researcher's recorded emotional responses to the interview. The third level went beyond what was known and conscious at the time of the interview in the researcher, based on the premise "that our experience of the intra-psychic dynamic could tell us something important about this person's relationship to the wider social world" (p.281). Lucey et al. (2003) cited Parker's (1995) usage of the concept of 'unconscious to unconscious communication' in this regard. Although not clearly elucidated, it would seem that they refer here to a Kleinian understanding of the concept, in which it is implicit that the communication is

one-way – that is, from patient to analyst, or participant to researcher, and centred on the ideas of projection and projective identification.

First proposed by Freud (1958/1912), who wrote that “The analyst must bend his own unconscious like a receptive organ toward the transmitting unconscious of the patient” (p.115), the idea of ‘unconscious to unconscious communication’ is an important aspect of human relatedness in my understanding of the nature of reality, but my view would see this as a bidirectional communication, more akin to Ferenczi’s (1995) conception of a ‘dialogue of unconscious’. And thus, while Lucey et al.’s (2003) incorporation of this element of unconscious to unconscious communication represented an important point of resonance for me, I knew that my study would need to find a way of incorporating the mutuality of the research process into the findings, in order to present what I would view as a more complex and therefore richer understanding of the studied phenomenon. Additionally, I needed to find some methodological inspiration on how to make a meaningful whole out of the findings of the study – an aspect that Lucey et al. (2003) do not elaborate in sufficient detail, in my view.

Clarke (2002) is another who reports on his methods beyond the interview process. He proposed a research methodology, drawing primarily on the work of Hollway and Jefferson (2000), which utilized psychoanalytic tools and concepts to enhance traditional ethnographic research methods. In outlining his method, he proposed that the raw data gained from interviews with the participants be analyzed on two levels:

First, there is an analysis of the interaction between researcher and researched; this enables us to address the mutual construction of the research data, and to identify unconscious mechanisms at work in different patterns of response within the research environment. Second, there is an analysis of the substantive content of the interview; this enables the researcher to identify both common and different patterns of experience (p.176).

As a general outline, Clarke’s (2002) description of his goals in utilising his research method has much in common with what I hoped to achieve in my study. But the actual process of identifying patterns of experiences remains somewhat vague in his account, beyond a

description of the steps taken to identify themes and links. Like Lucey et al.'s (2003) study, Clarke (2002) did not actually outline how he put the material together into a cohesive and meaningful whole, and this represented a gap in the methodology for me, one which I found Charmaz's (2006) version of the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) much more helpful in addressing – of which I shall say more in a later chapter.

In addition, Clarke's (2002) method of analysis has as its final step the identification of “unconscious mechanisms such as projective identification both in the subject's response to the interviewer and in the material the subject describes. This allows analysis of the way in which research data are constructed by both researcher and respondents.” (p.176). I am in agreement that hypotheses about the nature of unconscious material are certainly a significant part of the psychoanalytic understanding of interaction and interview material. But I am wary of this suggestion that it is only in the participant's response to the interviewer that the action of the unconscious may be discerned, and I have difficulty in grasping how this could further the aim of understanding the co-created nature of the interaction. It makes more sense to me that the interviewer's responses should also be subject to a reflexive and analytic process that seeks to identify his or her unconscious contributions. This is a process that is a regular and necessary step within the Relational frame, to which I am drawn because of its ethical insistence on mutuality and reciprocity in examining the co-created nature of interaction, and thus it was clear that my research method in this study needed to express this, both in the interview processes and data analysis.

Stopford's (2006) study of African-Australian relationships provided an important and helpful precedent for the kind of study that I hoped to produce from my examination of the ways in which South African migrants construct and experience their migration from South Africa. Her grounding in a Relational psychoanalytic frame was a significant point of resonance, and her method of reflecting on and analyzing her data gelled with the way in which I hoped to be able to immerse myself in the stories that the participants in my study told. In particular, her

repeated readings of the data, each time focusing in on different elements of the interview, seemed to me both logically and intuitively fitting, and her emphasis on noting and commenting on her own experience of the material as part of the co-creation of the narratives resonated as a fundamental part of what I hoped to be able to do. I found it helpful to understand her method of selecting her participants, in the way that she drew upon existing social connections and networks, for I anticipated that I too would need to use such a directed and even somewhat personal process to identify participants who met the criteria for my study. And finally, her utilization of elements of a Grounded Theory approach to explore and manage her data, especially in the initial stages of her analysis, confirmed the hunch that I had that this particular research method held promise as a useful means with which to approach a large amount of data.

I was puzzled however at Stopford's (2006) decision to utilize Glaser and Strauss' (1967) model of Grounded Theory research as the basis of her analysis, since Barney Glaser in particular is firmly rooted in a positivist frame, and has been a vociferous critic of any attempts to introduce researcher subjectivity into the research process:

When I say that some data is interpreted, I mean the participant not only tells what is going on, but tells the researcher how to view it correctly—his/her way. I do not mean that they are mutually built up interpretations. Adding his or her interpretations would be an unwarranted intrusion of the researcher (Glaser, 2002, p.3).

In my view, the constructivist approach of Charmaz (2006) is far more suited to the spirit and aims of a Relational psychoanalytic frame.

In addition, while I was impressed with the measures Stopford (2006) took to engage her participants in a discussion of the way she had analysed their interviews, by providing them with a written account of what she had made of each of their stories and then engaging them in a discussion of these, this represented for me a greater focus on the individuals themselves in the analysis of individual stories than I wished to achieve. In my study, I wished to focus to a greater extent on the themes that emerged from all the stories taken together, rather than an

analysis of the individuals involved. Thus, it seemed to me that my post-analysis engagement with the participants needed to invite them to discuss all the themes that had emerged from the migration stories, rather than a narrow focus on their particular presentations. In this way, I hoped to achieve a model that would represent a composite picture of the emotions and experiences of a particular group of post-apartheid migrants from South Africa, a model whose components were formed via a specific research process and the construction of which was informed by the tenets of Relational psychoanalysis.

In the following chapter, I will outline the Relational psychoanalytic dimensions of my study. At this point, the considerable literature and formative influence of the psychoanalytic research interview needs to be examined.

### **4.3 The Psychoanalytic Research Interview**

As noted above, most of the literature on psychoanalytically-informed research pertains to the research interview. Cartwright (2004) attempted to address the gap in psychoanalytic research methodologies by presenting his project to develop a Psychoanalytic Research Interview. He proposed that associative material to a particular topic can be gained over the course of three or four interviews and that the data so gathered may be interpreted in a way that:

offers an opportunity to broaden the psychoanalytic lens and gain access to phenomena not encountered within the limits of the psychoanalytic treatment setting, while at the same time affording the analytic researcher a focus on very specific areas of interest (p.211).

While representing an ideal, his proposal that each participant should be interviewed three or four times is not practical in most research settings where a larger sample of participants is required, in order to gain a broader collection of experiences than a single case or a very small sample could provide. On the other hand, his insistence on the need to pay attention to the “context and the interactive nature of the interview process” (p.216) resonated with my thinking about the interview process, and while his grounding in an object-relations frame differs from

mine, his assumption that “the interviewer and interviewee co-construct a narrative around a particular focus in the interview” (p.217) represented an important point of resonance for me.

Kvale (1999, 2009) has written extensively on the topic of the interview. He suggested that the clinical psychoanalytic interview contains important pointers for psychoanalytic researchers, such as knowledge production through interpersonal relations, generalizations from case studies, and validation through communication and action. He particularly underscored the influence of the interpersonal interaction of the interview situation, hence his frequent use of the term “inter-view”, to denote that “[a]n interview is literally an *inter-view*, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (Kvale, 1999, p. 101).

An important aspect of the usefulness of the psychoanalytic approach, as he sees it, lies in the fact that “knowledge is built up over a considerable period of time, allowing deeper and more informed understanding” (Midgley, 2006, p.218). As Kvale (1999) noted:

A classical psychoanalysis would imply 5 hours of therapy a week over several years ... An emotional attachment of therapist and patient will arise over the many hundreds of hours of therapeutic interviews [and] this intensive personal therapeutic relationship may open to painful, hidden memories, and deeper levels of personality, which may be inaccessible through a brief research interview (p.103).

In truth though, unless one is writing a case study, the contact between researcher and research participant is usually very brief. There is little chance of developing the depth of knowledge of the interviewee which may allow the researcher to make an informed psychoanalytic interpretation in the way that Kvale envisions. Holmes (2013b) has noted this problem but suggested that:

a first psychoanalytic encounter has just as much potential to be analytic as any other: ‘there is no difference in the analytic process in the first meeting and the analytic process in any other meeting’ (Ogden, 1992: 226). Understood this way, there is potential for interpretation but that interpretation cannot include comparisons of present and past situations (Holmes, 2013b, p.1191).

It seems though, that Holmes, like Kvale, still accepts the singular role of the researcher in the interview setting, in the creation of meaning via interpretation. This notwithstanding his proposition that

the researcher/interviewer attempts to formulate interpretation-like responses in the research setting, based on a procedure of entering a daydreaming state of 'reverie', then scrutinizing this with a greater degree of conscious awareness, then attempting to incorporate it into a response (Holmes, 2013b, p.1194).

His suggestion goes some way towards tackling the thorny issues of interpretation and authority that dog psychoanalytic research, as Midgley (2006) noted: "What kind of position does the qualitative psychologist take if we claim to have knowledge about the inner world of our participants that they themselves do not have?" (p.226). But I find myself wondering why Holmes suggested that it is the researcher who should make 'interpretation-like' responses. Why would he not engage the participant in the clarification of meanings and intentions?

In posing this question, I have in mind Aron's (1996) conception of a shift from the traditional view of interpretation as taking place primarily *from* the analyst *to* the patient, towards a "view of interpretation as a bipersonal and reciprocal communication process, a mutual meaning-making process" (p.94). It seems to me a logical step to transpose this idea of 'mutual meaning-making' from the clinical situation to the research interview, but this view is not consensual in the literature concerning the psychoanalytic research interview.

Clarke (2002) for instance, is insistent on the need for the interviewer to confine psychoanalytic interpretation to the data analysis component of the project, on the grounds that most researchers are not trained in psychoanalysis. It seems though, that he has in mind the traditional conception of psychoanalysis as something that one *does to* the patient or interviewee, rather than a method of inquiry and meaning-making, for he wrote: "In the method I have described I have been very careful to avoid any suggestion that I would, or could, psychoanalyse the research subjects during the interview" (p.187). It would seem that this mystified, and perhaps even anxious, view of what psychoanalysis is, is still prevalent and

perhaps is part of what instigates the regular criticism of psychoanalytic methods as ‘top-down’ (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008).

Like Clarke, Hollway and Jefferson (2013) made the point that it is psychoanalytic clinicians who have, presumably, the knowledge and experience to interpret during the interview, whereas “researchers, not being therapists, will be careful not to interpret at the time the information is being provided by interviewees” (p.72). Kvale (1999) too pointed to the researcher’s lack of training in psychotherapy as reason to refrain from making interpretations during the interview process, while even Hoggett et al. (2010), who firmly advocate the need for interpretation during the interview process, refrained in their study:

from making countertransference-based interpretations, largely because some members of the team, particularly those who had not been trained as psychotherapists, felt cautious about using them. For researchers who have not themselves been through intensive psychotherapy or psychoanalysis, the use of the countertransference as data runs considerable risks (p.184).

There can be no doubt that a consideration of the possible risks and benefits to participants of any form of intervention needs to be carefully weighed and debated, and that the prime exhortation of ‘do no harm’ should guide all research processes. And it is certainly advantageous that a researcher who utilises a psychoanalytic method should be well-trained and qualified in this paradigm, preferably having had his or her own analysis if not an active clinician.

And yet, from the available literature (Cartwright, 2004; Clarke, 2002; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, 2013; Holmes, 2013a), it seems that these authors consider the inclusion of the researcher’s countertransference to be a valuable addition to the information that can be yielded by the use of psychoanalytic methods, as long as this does not take place during the interview process itself. It seems to me that these researchers take a greater ethical liberty by including their countertransference reactions only at the stage of data analysis, which precludes the participants from any engagement with or clarification of meaning, and removes from them the

right to agree or disagree with how their information is being understood. It seems possible to me that it is this kind of approach to the handling and ownership of data that has led to the critique of psychoanalysis as a ‘top-down’ process (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008), despite the fact that the approach appears to be rooted in a fear of doing harm by disclosing the reactions of the researcher. In my view, it may, paradoxically, open the way for equal if not greater harm to be done by including researcher reactions outside of the awareness and contribution of the participants.

Strømme, Gullestad, Stänicke and Killingmo (2010) seem to be making a similar point:

participants may be interested in contributions from a research interviewer provided they are presented as genuine comments to the participants, not as the researcher’s final interpretations. Participants may experience such comments as expressing a respectful attitude, giving them opportunities to reflect upon the researcher’s hypotheses (p.229).

In their study, Strømme et al. (2010) adopted a psychoanalytic interview approach that eschewed a question and answer format, focussing instead on an interaction in which the interviewer followed the material as presented by the participants on the given topic. The interviewer responded to this material with what they called “common clinical interventions in psychodynamic therapies, in some cases also including interpretations” (p.217), and, like Hoggett et al. (2010), posed their comments or questions in the form of “thinking aloud” (p.217). This allowed participants greater freedom in choosing whether to take up these prompts and elaborate further, or stay silent, or perhaps disagree. In this way, Strømme et al. (2010) introduced a more reflective component into the interview situation, which they believe allowed participant responses on the verbal level to include “not merely conscious processes easily revealed but also ‘preconscious’ processes, that is, content they have conscious access to but which they probably would not have included in their spontaneous utterances had they not been stimulated to reflect about it” (pp. 217-218). While I would not necessarily use the term ‘preconscious’ for this kind of interaction, since my Relational psychoanalytic frame inclines me to think in terms of greater or lesser degrees of dissociation and symbolization, I believe that

Strømme et al. (2010) make an important contribution in noting the potential for the researcher's thoughts, associations and intuitions to provide important stimulation for further elaboration, amplification, resonance or non-resonance in the research interaction in much the same way that this occurs in the clinical situation. It is this kind of interaction that is an element of what is meant by my understanding of the term 'co-creation of meaning'. Although not specifically psychoanalytic in their theoretical framework, Holstein and Gubrium (2003) suggested a very similar process of active and interpretive engagement in the interview process in order to "provide an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that address relevant issues" (p.75).

Strømme et al. (2010) are the only researchers I encountered in this review who suggested that what is accessed in the verbal component of the interview relates to 'preconscious' material, and that unconscious material is not available to verbal processing within the space of, in their case, four interviews. Precision of description and definition of terms is a striking element of the Strømme et al. (2010) study, and is an aspect that could contribute to a wider acceptance and understanding of psychoanalysis as a research method if it were more widely practised, in my view. I have noted above a number of studies (Clarke, 2002; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Lucey et al., 2003) that were somewhat vague about the specific steps that were undertaken, and which omitted to define their conceptual and theoretical standpoints in any detail. It seems to me that this creates an esoteric ambience around the understanding and workings of psychoanalysis that has perhaps contributed to the lack of wide acceptance of it as a viable research methodology. To that end, I shall say more about my understanding of 'the unconscious' and other concepts in the next chapter.

Cartwright (2004) is another who was not entirely clear and precise about each of the steps he envisaged in his research interview, but he did suggest that, within the interview itself, clarification, confrontation and tentative interpretation on the part of the interviewer can and should take place. He proposed that this should occur in the third or fourth interview, allowing

the participant's narrative to emerge freely during the first two sessions. He was not clear on whether he sees a place for the participant to question or confront, although he does say that: "Responses to these tentative interpretations are useful in testing various hypotheses present in the interviewer's mind, as well as in analyzing the defensive system of the interviewee" (p.225). This statement about the way in which he might treat his participants' responses implicitly suggests, to this reader in any event, that he maintains the position of the interviewer as the only holder of knowledge and understanding, and this is a view that I find problematic. Whether or not participants are familiar with psychoanalysis, they have much to contribute to the project by way of challenges or additions to our conceptions.

This is not to suggest that there is an equal positioning of subjectivities in the research situation however, nor that all parties are equally invested in the process or outcome of the interaction. Kvale (2006) has written eloquently on this topic, and while I am not in full agreement with all the points he made to support his argument, there is no doubting the truth of his observation that: "The interview is an instrument for providing the interviewer with descriptions, narratives, and texts, which the researcher then interprets and reports according to his or her research interests" (p.484).

It is certainly true that the interaction follows the topic and overall agenda as set by the researcher, and that the ultimate product, the findings, privileges the views and interpretations of the researcher. However, this does *not* mean that the participants are without power in the research situation, nor that they are incapable of questioning or challenging the researcher's comments and interpretations. While necessarily asymmetrical, mutual and respectful relationships can and should be formed in the research situation as much as anywhere else, for as Lempert (2007) noted, "Respondents are not always without power and researchers are not solely 'on the take'" (p.83).

And yet, if there is to be an authentic and genuinely mutual relationship, it requires, in my view, a situated way-of-being within the researcher rather than an application of techniques or ‘guiding principles’. Hall and Callery (2001), addressing the important contributions that reflexivity<sup>32</sup> and relationality bring to the GTM, described relationality as “rooted in caring and equity” (p.268) and then went on to say that, “During the grounded theory study, to develop trust and demonstrate caring, WH *used* empathy, affirmation, and self-disclosure “ (p.268, [my italics]). It seems contradictory to me though, that one might develop trust and demonstrate caring by *using* techniques, rather than trust and caring emerging in both researcher and participant from a way of being that reflects a genuine caring and interest in the other. Stern (2010) attempted to capture this when he wrote that:

Empathy is an interpretive process, not a direct apprehension of meaning, and it must be reciprocal ... the ongoing process must be reciprocal in at least the sense that therapist and patient intend to understand what the other means by what she says and by her conduct ... When empathy is reciprocal, it issues in mutuality, not in the grasp of one person by the other (p.31).

In the last decade or so, psychoanalytic research interviews that actively involve participants in interpretation and meaning-making processes have begun to appear, and represent a move towards genuinely mutual and reciprocal approaches to the research endeavour. For example, Jimenez and Walkerdine (2011) utilised a method which they called:

psychosocial interviewing, informed by relational psychoanalysis ... [T]his means we see the space of the interview as a space of creation in which a ‘third narrative’ is produced, which is different from that which either interviewer or interviewee would have produced alone (p.186).

They interviewed their participants over three one-hour interviews, and used the third interview especially to explore and discuss in a co-constructive way the material that had emerged in the first two interviews.

Hoggett et al. (2010) speak of their method as adopting a ‘dialogic stance’, an approach greatly facilitated by their opportunity to have at least six interviews with each of their participants and

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<sup>32</sup> Reflexivity is the process in which “researchers engage in explicit self-aware meta-analysis” (Finlay, 2002, p.209).

permitting in this way a build-up of trust and relatedness over a period of 18 months. While this might represent a less common temporal form of psychosocial research, it is nevertheless notable that their experience with their research led them to the view that “the validity of the psycho-social method to some extent hangs on the capacity of the researcher to share his or her thinking with the interviewees and involve them in a joint process of sense-making” (p.173). Although they started out with the intention of confining interpretation to the data analysis component of the work, they found that this became untenable and in fact, was more likely to lead to ‘wild analysis’ than a close collaboration in the co-creation of meaning during the interview process. Like Jimenez and Walkerdine (2011), Hoggett et al. (2010) noted the appearance of a ‘third narrative’ that could emerge in this way, belonging neither to each partner in the dialogue uniquely, but a joint production that emerged from the interaction between them.

The Jimenez and Walkerdine (2011) and Hoggett et al. (2010) studies both noted the influence of the work of Stopford (2004) on the necessary incorporation of Relational psychoanalytic principles into their research designs. Stopford (2006) noted that “research interviews can be more than vehicles for inquiring into others’ experiences; they are also an important site for intersubjective negotiation and interaction between the interviewer and participants” (p.97). Consequently, in her study, she used an approach based on the Relational psychoanalytic approach to the co-construction of meaning, which meant engaging with the participants in the moment about what they had said, and introducing her own perspectives, rather than confining this to the data analysis component of the work. This reflected her understanding that:

what happens in a conversation or dialogue – what is discussed as well as what isn’t – is reflective of the subjectivities of the two people involved. My approach abandons any claim to neutrality. Rather, I try to facilitate a conversational space where underlying questions, fantasies, thoughts and so on may emerge during the conversation (pp. 97-98).

I find much to resonate with Stopford’s (2006) Relational psychoanalytic thinking, in the way that it informs both her interview method as well as her methods of data analysis. And like Stopford, even while I insist on mutuality in the co-creation of meaning, I am mindful of the

need to be aware of the power dynamics inherent not only in the clinical situation – my primary site of engagement – but in the research situation as well. I will say more about power dynamics in the section on ethical considerations in a later chapter, but first I need to situate the study in terms of Relational methodological considerations. The chapter which follows will thus explain in some detail the application of Relational psychoanalytic thinking to this study.

## 5. THE RELATIONAL PSYCHOANALYTIC FRAME

### 5.1 Introduction

The term psychoanalysis is often employed as if it is universally agreed upon, when in fact there are multiple interpretations of it. I am in agreement with Strømme et al. (2010) that the specific psychoanalytic frame that informs the study should be explicitly named and described and thus I propose to explain Relational concepts in some depth in this chapter. I will also introduce the concept of the ‘manic defence’. Although not originally or uniquely a Relational psychoanalytic concept, I include it here as preparation for the theoretical framework in which the findings of this study are situated.

### 5.2 A Two-Person Psychology

The fundamental premise of relational thinking is its identification as a two-person psychology. As such, it is a given that the therapist or researcher can never be an impartial or objective observer, standing aside from that which is being observed. Rather, whatever is happening is constantly being shaped by the interaction and personal characteristics of the two people involved<sup>33</sup>. In this study, this meant that I could not position myself as an independent observer who was merely receiving the information from each participant, about which I could then postulate meanings and interpretations independent of my own contribution, and without negotiation of these meanings taking place with each participant. Instead I was an active and engaged participant in the interview process itself, and each participant and I would together arrive at a narrative that represented more than each of us individually could produce. Some of the researchers noted previously (Hoggett et al., 2010; Jimenez & Walkerdine, 2011) have referred to this as the co-creation of a ‘third’ narrative, along the lines of ‘thirdness’ that

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<sup>33</sup> Aron and Starr (2013) have suggested that the dialectical nature of the Relational idea of a two-person psychology might be better captured if it were termed ‘contextual’, ‘dialectical’ or ‘field theory’ (p.48).

Benjamin (2004) has postulated in her explication of the term ‘intersubjectivity’, which I have termed ‘Type 2’ and which I will elaborate in Section 5.4.

### **5.3 Intersubjectivity Type 1**

“The term intersubjectivity has been used in a variety of ways by philosophers and by psychoanalysts” (Aron, 1996, p.66), but this study uses the term in two specific ways. The first of these is associated with Stolorow and his colleagues, and refers to the way in which any two people in an interaction are inescapably related in a process of mutual affect regulation and unconscious influence. In their view, “it is not so much a theory as it is a sensibility” (Orange, Atwood & Stolorow, 1997, p.9), which regards all experience as contextually and mutually constituted: any psychological phenomenon cannot be understood outside of the context or field in which it occurs (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992). In their thinking, this intersubjective field refers not only to the current interaction between any two people, but refers also to the intersubjective conditions in which particular configurations of subjectivity arise:

Recurring patterns of intersubjective transaction within the developmental system give rise to principles ... that unconsciously organize subsequent emotional and relational experiences ... [and] [t]hese intersubjectively derived, prereflective organizing principles are the basic building blocks of personality development, and their totality constitutes one’s character (Stolorow, 2013, p. 383).

This view of intersubjectivity is inherent in my approach to this study and constitutive of my sensibility towards each interview process. As I viewed myself to be an active and engaged participant-observer in the process, I made no attempt to appear as a ‘blank screen’ or an unresponsive receiver of information.

Intersubjectivity also informed how I thought about the fact that the participants and I are of the same cohort. It would have been enticing to assume that, because a) we shared the history of having grown up in South Africa; b) we knew the shared geography and landscape of the

country; c) we understood each other's languages; and d) we all left South Africa after the dismantling of apartheid after the first democratic elections in 1994, that we therefore must share understandings of our history, our experiences, even of our points of view. And sometimes, this was indeed the case. It frequently happened that the participants and I would complete each other's sentences, or continue a thread of conversation based on an implicit 'knowing' of what the other meant, because of our shared histories.

But the intersubjective nature of my interactions with the participants in this study also meant that there were inevitable misattunements arising from the fact that, despite a shared heritage, there were also essential differences between us. In this way, in some cases and at some times, the situations and experiences that we co-created were predicated on misunderstandings and differences. This introduces Benjamin's version of intersubjective relating.

#### **5.4 Intersubjectivity Type 2**

Jessica Benjamin has written and theorised extensively about intersubjectivity as "a relationship of mutual recognition – a relation in which each person experiences the other as a 'like subject', another mind who can be 'felt with', yet has a distinct, separate center of feeling and perception" (Benjamin, 2004, p.5). In other words, intersubjective relating is the capacity of a 'self' to achieve a relationship to an outside other without having to submit to or demand an inauthentic version of self or other.

Benjamin (2004) sees this as an ongoing developmental process, starting in infancy and continuing through the life span, in which mutual recognition is neither simply achieved nor consistently maintained. Rather, it inheres in a constant state of dialectic tension between recognition and negation. It requires ongoing recognition of the otherness of 'the other', and the negotiation of this difference, as well as recognition of aspects of sameness of 'the other'. To achieve this requires respect and activity on the part of both participants in the interaction;

respect for the subjectivity of the other even when different to ourselves or a negation of our own positions; and activity to accommodate and repair the inevitable breakdowns that occur.

Importantly, breakdown does not arise simply out of an act of negation, for:

negation is vital to recognition at all times. It is when the tension or dialectic between negation and recognition collapses that we see breakdown. Breakdown means unassimilable difference. It feels impossible to recognize the other because her “interpretation” of our actions and intentions, or even her very existence, is too alien (too negating) to our own sense of self (Benjamin, 2000, p.44).

At such times, the most common way in which the breakdown comes to be expressed is in the complementarity of “doer-done to” positioning (Benjamin, 2000), in which one feels either the shame of being the one who has hurt or damaged the other, or the self-pity of being the one who has been hurt – and each partner moves alternately between these two positions. Repair of this breakdown requires the capacity to acknowledge our participation in both sides of the complementarity in order to achieve a position which is neither entirely one nor the other – the position of thirdness (Benjamin, 2004). The capacity to negotiate and create such a position of thirdness is a crucial component of the capacity to live shared lives with others, in which there is inevitable movement between states of pleasure and displeasure, a sense of belonging and a sense of alienation, feelings of shame and feelings of acceptance – in fact, all the dimensions of subjectivity.

In this study, just as in the clinical situation, it is important to emphasize that the importance that an intersubjective view of reality places on recognition and mutuality does not mean an equal positioning of analyst and patient, or researcher and participant. Rather, it means that both parties participate in the process, and in negotiating and co-creating the interaction, they mutually influence and regulate each other both consciously and unconsciously. In this way, both parties generate the data, but, in much the same way as Aron (1996) proposed for the clinical situation, it is “asymmetrical inasmuch as there are clear differences between patient and analyst regarding the purpose for which they are meeting, in their functions and responsibilities, and in the consequences for the two parties” (p.99). In this study this meant

that, while I made no attempt to be noncommittal or objective, I attempted at all times to be sensitive and attuned to the participants in my listening stance. At the same time, as I have discussed previously, it was inevitable that my subjectivity was ‘in the mix’ and, indeed, I relied upon this to further the project of both data generation and data analysis. Thus I turn now to the concept of countertransference.

## 5.5 Countertransference

Relational writers differ greatly in their use of and understanding of the term countertransference. In fact, some eschew the use of the term altogether. Aron (1996) for instance, prefers to speak of the analyst’s (or in this case researcher’s) *subjectivity* because a) it does not suggest a pathological or undesirable intrusion into the situation; b) it implies a bidirectional although not equal interaction with the participant’s subjectivity; and c) it implies a “continuous, ongoing flow of influence, in contrast to countertransference, which implies an occasional or intermittent event” (p.70). Even those authors who use the term countertransference are insistent on the connotation of it being a continuous aspect of the interpersonal field, so that “countertransference becomes the normal state of affairs rather than an episodic phenomenon” (Safran & Muran, 2003, p.39). Additionally, many Relational authors highlight the need to use the combination term transference-countertransference, to emphasize the bipersonal nature of the phenomenon, “with transference and countertransference seen as a unity and each creating, defining, and breathing life into the other” (Bass, 2001, pp.687-688).

Many of the psychoanalytically-inclined researchers whose work I consulted use countertransference as an important tool in the analysis and interpretation of data, but confine it to the analysis stage of the research and limit their understanding of their own reactions to various forms of projective identification. Specifically, in the way that projective identification seems to be understood by these researchers (Clarke, 2002; Holmes, 2013a; Jervis, 2009; Marks

& Marks-Monnich, 2003) to mean participants' unconscious transfer of their (usually unbearable) feelings and emotions onto the researcher, who then experiences these as 'not-me' and concludes that this must be an element of the participant's intrapsychic conflicts, is problematic in my view. Not only does this minimise, and often ignore, the role of the researcher in the interaction, but sometimes also leads to interpretations that I would consider to be beyond the scope of what can or should be concluded from a single or small number of interactions. Clarke (2002), for instance, in his study examines "projective identification as an evacuation, as an attempt to control the object, regulate the environment and to invade the recipient's mind" (p.183). While these might come to be understood as part of an interaction, in my Relational psychoanalytic view this would be work that needs to take place in a clinical situation, over a long period of time, and with due consideration of the ways in which real and current interaction between patient and therapist contributes to this.

In addition, while I agree that projective identification is one kind of transference-countertransference phenomenon, and that its manifestation in the interview material may be important and useful data, in my view it would be a mistake to assume that this is the only way in which researcher and participant communicate unconsciously in the relational field. Gabbard (1995) for instance, suggested that the action of countertransference may also be discerned in the way that enactments appear in the analytic relationship, and Seligman (1999), drawing upon the findings from infant observation studies, suggested that empathy, mirroring, identification and internalization are all countertransference reactions that emerge in the intersubjective field.

In this study, I use the term countertransference to mean my subjective experience within the intersubjective field with each participant. This is similar to the way that Aron (1996) spoke of the analyst's subjectivity, in the sense that I viewed each participant and myself as engaged in a bidirectional process, each influencing and being influenced by each other, but in an asymmetrical manner appropriate to the purpose for which we were meeting. In this study, the purpose of our meeting was to hear the participants' migration stories, and to allow these to

emerge in a way that remained faithful to their subjective experience. That meant that I endeavoured to bracket that part of my countertransference that represented my thoughts, hopes and opinions as much as I felt was appropriate to the situation and, importantly, insofar as I was able to be conscious of these. I take as given that there were elements of my subjectivity present in my interactions with the participants that were unconscious. And while some of these became apparent to me upon later reflection and study of the transcripts, there must also be many of which I continue to be unaware.

At times I felt it appropriate and necessary to disclose those aspects of my countertransference that I believed would benefit the participant and the process. In general, I was inclined to be more open about myself (my background, personal experiences and so on) than I would be in a therapeutic context, for while there are some similarities between the therapeutic and the research situation, the two are also significantly different. It felt especially important in the research context that I not present myself as a mysterious other who deflected questions or expressed no opinions while expecting the participants to be open and disclosing to me about their stories and histories. At the same time, though, I tried to be attentive to the ways in which the interview unfolded from that point, so that I could reflect on the usefulness or otherwise of my intervention. By observing ‘what happens next’ (Meares, 2001), as clinician or researcher one is afforded the opportunity to discern whether the ‘spontaneous’ intervention one has made is appropriate or ill-fitting, whether it has emerged from the intersubjective matrix or whether it is more an intrusion of the researcher than a joint understanding of something which may be true for the participant but which has not yet been thought or symbolized.

Additionally, I was conscious of the fact that I was engaged in a research process, in which there were certain aspects of the migration experience that I wanted to explore, and which I wanted to invite the participants to explore. While I was aware of the body of literature (Cartwright, 2004; Clarke, 2002; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, 2013; Holmes, 2013b, Strømme et al., 2010) that advocates that the interview should be entirely unstructured, other than the setting

of the initial topic, so as to replicate the free association method of psychoanalysis as closely as possible, I also held the view that my countertransference, my thoughts and ideas, and indeed my biases, would inevitably become part of the intersubjective field and that I would do better to try to identify these as far as I consciously could, and openly bring them into the mix. I was mindful that this needed to happen in an appropriate way, however, and only to a very limited extent, so as not to impose my agenda on the participants in a coercive or dominant fashion. In this way I hoped that each participant would be relatively free to follow his or her particular experience according to a psychoanalytic process of association, rather than a directed or structured format.

In describing the process as one of association I am not, however, subscribing to the view that ‘free association’ is the “fundamental rule” (Holmes, 2013b, p.1188) of psychoanalysis, as a number of researchers suggest (Cartwright, 2004; Clarke, 2002; Holmes, 2013b; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Their use of the concept seems to be based on a classical approach to psychoanalysis in which free associations are seen “as determined by unconscious dynamic conflict, which, in the absence of interference from the analyst or resistance from within, will spontaneously unfold” (Aron, 1996, p.50). In my Relational psychoanalytic view, this is not possible to achieve because of the way in which people are always interacting with each other, and thus influencing what does or does not emerge.

## **5.6 Interview as Conversation**

In adopting a view of the interview as conversation, I think of it in the sense that Goldner (1994) suggested when she wrote: “I like the metaphor of the interview as a kind of ‘performative text’ that takes shape according to the emergent qualities of a conversation that has, shall we say, a mind of its own” (p.590). I understand this to suggest that an authentic engagement is one in which neither of the parties knows in advance what will emerge in the course of the interaction, but trusts that the process of engagement with each other will proceed in a meaningful and

generative fashion. Stern's (2010) view of the interview as conversation expands on the way meaning emerges. He suggested that:

the focus is on developing a sense of the other's meanings ... The process of conversation is therefore inevitably and continuously interpretive; and the interpretations are motivated, to whatever extent each participant can manage, by the attempt to see the object of the dialogue the way the other is seeing it (p.27).

The characterization of conversation as interpretive implies the exploration of implicit or related meanings, for, as Stern (2010) went on to say, "true conversation can include the attempt to discuss meanings that one member of the conversation believes are either unconscious or implicit in what the other says" (p.30). It was with this understanding in mind that I introduced the research topic to each participant with the invitation to "Tell me the story of your migration to Australia", and in most cases, explicitly suggested that we would have a conversation about this. With each participant, this broad invitation to engage with me on the topic of their migration to Australia prompted a flowing narrative that we then discussed, elaborated and questioned.

Within my Relational psychoanalytic frame, I view such 'discussion, elaboration and questioning', as part of interpretation. As Bromberg (1998) proposed,

An interpretation is not seen as containing a 'reality' that is more accurate than the patient's own, but rather as a formulation coming from the analyst's experience of the patient, to which the patient will have some response that becomes, in turn, more grist for the mill ... the analytic process is not the raw material for a 'correct' formulation of content (pp159-160).

I have already noted, in Chapter 4, the way in which I differ from those authors who believe that interpretation should not form part of the interview process. My approach differs also with the way in which some authors make use of their interpretations in data analysis: I have noted the way in which some interpretations of projective identification (Clarke, 2002) produce 'information' that does not appear to be well-grounded in the data, and contributes to the perception of the psychoanalyst as an authority figure who imposes his or her views on the

subject, and who only interprets according to pre-existing theoretical beliefs: Parker (2015), for instance, alluded to this when he noted, among some researchers, “the use of psychoanalysis as a kind of grid that will trap the text and confirm the assumptions of the analyst” (p.79). Making genetic interpretations seems to me to be another potential problem in this regard: Hollway and Jefferson (2013) for instance, described what they saw as a “mother-daughter transference and countertransference” (p.47) in one of their case studies. In the research situation, I believe it is advisable to stay close to the here-and-now interaction rather than making interpretations based on possible family-of-origin dynamics.

During the interviews, my belief in the importance of intersubjective engagement did not mean that I proceeded without taking cognizance of the fact that, just as I would always be mindful of the impact of my subjectivity on my patients in the clinical situation, I needed to be attentive to the way in which I probed or interpreted or challenged each participant. My clinical sensibility and ethical responsibility as a researcher attunes me to the possibility that I might cause undue distress to a participant, and in this study, this was especially foregrounded, as we were discussing what were often sensitive and emotive issues. In most cases, I felt that the participants were robust enough to tolerate my questions and comments, and where I was unsure, I erred on the side of caution. There were times, however, where the conversation, as a collaborative attempt to understand, broke down and what emerged were the kinds of engagement that I define as enactments.

## **5.7 Enactments**

“[W]hile there is a shared recognition of the importance of enactments, basic theoretical and technical disagreements about enactments persist” (Ivey, 2008, p.20), and thus it is important that I define what I mean when I use the term. In my view, enactments are interactions in which both parties are locked into a way of relating that is grounded in unconscious processes for both of them, mutually constructed and enacted, or lived out between them instead of being

verbalised and understood. Bromberg's (2011) definition resonates with my understanding in this regard: "An enactment is a dyadic event in which therapist and patient are linked through a dissociated mode of relating, each in a "not-me" state of his own that is affectively responsive to the other" (p.151). It is probably true that most enactments pass by unrecognised, since they are situations out of conscious awareness. But if the interaction is later able to be thought about and understood, something may come to be known about unconscious elements of each party that were not previously in awareness, the 'not-me' states that had been dissociated. As Bass (2003) wrote, "Enactments often rest on mistakes, slips, and blind spots that serve as doors through which the analyst and the patient are transported into realms of personal encounter and self-experience that might otherwise remain inaccessible" (p.661).

When formulating some part of an interaction as an enactment, I believe it to be important to hold in mind that such a formulation may not be the only possible understanding of the interaction, but that does not mean that 'anything goes' (Stern 2010) or that this represents 'wild analysis' (Schafer, 1985). Rather, I would view it as useful only if it is a plausible construction of reality grounded in careful analysis of countertransference, close attention to context, and tested against the principle of 'what happens next' (Meares, 2001).

### **5.8 Self-States, Multiplicity and Dissociation**

In my discussion of enactments, I refer to not-me states and dissociation, and I will clarify what I mean by these terms. Bromberg (2011) defined self-states as "highly individualized modules of being, each configured by its own organization of cognitions, beliefs, dominant affect and mood, access to memory, skills, behaviours, values, actions and regulatory physiology" (p.73).

In Relational psychoanalytic thinking, the idea of self has shifted from the conception of a unitary structure towards an understanding of self as a "multiply organized, associationally linked network of parallel, coexistent, at times conflictual, systems of meaning attribution and understanding" (Davies, 1998, p.195). Bucci (2013) explained it very clearly:

we are all populations of multiple self-states, held together to varying degrees within a common skin and a common mind, sometimes called "self-identity", "core identity", or just the "self" ... What we call the "self" (or the multiple selves that populate it) is inherently relational – developed in a relational context, incorporating different schemas of relationships that have been internalized (pp 423-424).

Although always shifting in relationship to one another, with varying degrees of prominence at different times, over time and with repeated exposure, the patterns and components of each self-state become regular and predictable to us, and together constitute our sense of self.

Even when self-states are dissociated, or ‘not-me’, they remain part of the associative-dissociative matrix and exist in associative tension with the other self-states. Thus, they may become available to consciousness under certain circumstances and within certain intersubjective fields. This kind of dissociation needs to be distinguished from the “crippling fragmentation of experience that accompanies traumatic dissociation in its most extreme forms” (Davies, 1998, p.196). In the present context, I am referring to the kind of dissociation that acts as a protective mechanism against the conflict, shame or other painful experience that is part of everyone’s life to some degree or other. To protect against overwhelming affect:

Self-states move from being separate but collaborative to being inhospitable and even adversarial, sequestered from one another as islands of “truth,” each functioning as an insulated version of reality that protectively defines what is “me” at a given moment and forcing other self-states that are inharmonious with its truth to become “not-me” (Bromberg, 2011, pp. 69-70).

At the same time, even while in this sequestered state, they are part of the multiplicity that is ‘the self’.

Some (e.g. Strømme et al., 2010) might posit that the material accessed through psychoanalytic understanding and interpretation, or indeed, the ‘not-me’ self-states that manifested in the interview material, exist in the preconscious rather than the dynamic unconscious, and I would not disagree with this conceptualisation. I think the difference lies more in the way ‘the

unconscious' is understood than any material difference, and thus I turn to my understanding of this.

## **5.9 'The Unconscious'**

Most Relational theorists do not make a distinction between 'the unconscious' and 'the preconscious', for they generally focus more on unconscious processes and their manifestations than on 'the unconscious' as a structure. As such, Relational psychoanalysis notes that elements of 'the unconscious' may be more or less accessible to consciousness, depending on different levels of dissociation and symbolization, associated with different self-states. Mitchell and Harris (2004) suggest that:

the relational unconscious ... is composed of dissociated self or other configurations or fragments of interactive experiences with others that have been disclaimed or remain unsymbolized ... The unconscious is located contextually, interpersonally, intrapsychically, and in the social constructions of our landscapes (p.183).

It is in this sense that I use the term in this study, in the way that it has informed my interpretive practice both during the interviews as well as in the analysis and presentation of the data. It also undergirds my understanding of the manic defence, which I will now present, as this concept provides a meaningful and useful way to conceptualize the findings that emerged from the data analysis.

## **5.10 The Manic Defence**

In his paper "Mourning and Melancholia", Freud (1917) noted that, in some cases, melancholia changes into mania, "a state which is the opposite of it in its symptoms ... [although] the *content* of mania is no different from that of melancholia" (p.254, italics added). He suggested that both mania and melancholia involve the evasion of grief over the loss of an object, but in melancholia the unconscious identification with the lost object suggests that "the ego has

succumbed to [it]" (p.254). This results in "a lowering of self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment" (p.244).

In mania, on the other hand, the ego has "mastered [the loss], or pushed it aside" (Freud, 1917, p.254). This amounts to a sense of triumph, but "what the ego has surmounted and what it is triumphing over remain hidden from it" (p.254). In "taking flight" (Freud, 1917, p.257) from external reality in this way, "a fantasied unconscious internal object world replaces an actual external one, omnipotence replaces helplessness, immortality substitutes for the uncompromising realities of the passage of time and death, triumph replaces despair, contempt substitutes for love" (Ogden, 2005, p.40).

Klein (1935) linked the manic defence – defences, in fact, since it assumes a number of forms – to the depressive position. This position entails the experience of anxiety because of co-existing feelings of both love and hate towards a needed, whole and separate object (Hinshelwood, 1989). On the one hand, the object is loved and needed; on the other hand, there is fear and guilt that the object has been damaged by one's real or imagined hatred and aggression. This ambivalence, and the anxiety it arouses, mobilizes genuine reparation, which means "controlling destructiveness and ... repairing and restoring damage done" (Segal, 1964/1973, p.92). As such, reparation is the source of generous and altruistic feelings towards others, as well as "the powerhouse for mature energy and creativity in the external world" (Hinshelwood, 1989, p.415).

The ambivalence and its accompanying anxiety also mobilize the manic defences, however, in situations where the level of anxiety and despair are intolerable. Klein (1935) suggested that the general mechanism of these defences comprises the attempt to master one's internal objects "while at the same time existence of this internal world is being depreciated and denied" (p.162). In this state, as Ogden (1986) wrote, "subjectivity, historicity, the experience of

psychic reality, and the capacity for mature symbol formation are all greatly compromised” (p.85).

Ogden (1986) explained that the manic defence is:

an in-between phenomenon, incorporating elements of the psychic organization of both the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. It is a defence against depressive anxiety (the fear of the loss of an object that is experienced as whole and separate), but employs modes of defence that are characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position (e.g. splitting, denial, projection, introjection, idealization, projective identification, and omnipotent thinking) (p.84).

So, for example, denial operates against feelings of dependence on and vulnerability towards a needed object that has been or may be lost; splitting of the ego and the object defends against ambivalence that cannot be tolerated. In such ways, manic defences “are primarily directed against the experience of psychic reality” (Segal, 1964/1973, p.83) and, importantly, as Klein (1935) noted, “the ego may then go on to deny a great deal of external reality” (p.161).

Klein (1935) proposed that omnipotence is a foremost characteristic of the manic defences, and that it operates through denial. The consequent “relation to objects is characterized by a triad of feelings – control, triumph and contempt [and] [t]hese feelings are directly related to and defensive against ... feelings of valuing the object and depending on it, and fear of loss and guilt” (Segal, 1964/1973, p.83).

In a later contribution, Klein (1940) added to her conception of the manic defence by noting a kind of reparation that is in effect a form of manic defence:

An essential feature of manic reparation is that it has to be done without acknowledgement of guilt, and therefore under special conditions. For instance, manic reparation is never done in relation to primary objects or internal objects, but always in relation to more remote objects; secondly, the object ... must never be experienced as having been damaged by oneself; thirdly, the object must be felt as inferior, dependent and, at depth, contemptible. There can be no true love or esteem for the object or objects that are being repaired as this would threaten the return of true depressive feelings (Segal, 1964/1973, pp 95-96).

Winnicott (1935) concurred with many of Klein's (1935) postulations about the manic defence, as well as adding certain characteristics. He emphasised the "[d]enial of the *sensations* of depression – namely, the heaviness, the sadness – by specifically opposite sensations, lightness, humorousness" (p.132, italics in original), and also posited the idea of the manic defence as reassurance, as affirmation of life, "a denial of deadness, a defence against depressive 'death inside' ideas" (p.131).

In emphasising this reassuring quality, Winnicott (1935) was highlighting that a "degree of manic defence ... is employed by all in everyday life" (p.131). Phillips (1988) has suggested that this was Winnicott's attempt to depathologize the concept, to humanize Klein's portrayal of it. While Klein (1935) had noted that there were "slightly hypomanic states which occur in normal persons" (p.146), later authors went further and emphasised the quotidian nature of the defences: Ogden (1986), for example, wrote that "[t]he manic defence is by no means used only by manic-depressive patients any more than projection is a defence utilized exclusively by paranoid patients" (p.85). And Mitchell and Black (1995) observed that we all go in and out of the need for manic defences according to the fluctuations of normal life: that the experiences of loss, rejection and frustration precipitate inevitable retreats into these defensive positions. My allegiance lies with these views of the non-pathological nature of the manic defences.

In the course of my reading about manic defences, it became apparent that Klein's (1935; 1940) formulation has led to two different emphases in the work of later commentators. Certain authors (Altman, 2005; Segal, 1964/1973) highlight that part of the formulation which refers to the way in which the defences are against the experience of depressive anxiety and guilt. Other authors highlight the way in which the manic defence is a "repudiation of vulnerability" (Aron & Starr, 2013, p.123), a denial of dependence and its potentially painful consequences (Hinshelwood, 1989; Ogden, 1986; Peltz, 2005).

Goldman (2005) noted something similar, and suggested that this difference in emphasis leads to different interpretations. In his view, avoidance of depressive anxiety and guilt speaks *causally* to a lack of care and concern, while anxiety about feeling dependent speaks of an *effect* of a lack of concern and provision. While I do not see the difference to be quite so clear cut as ‘cause’ versus ‘effect’ in the way that Goldman (2005) proposed, I agree that an emphasis on the avoidance of the anxiety associated with guilt would have consequences for the way in which individuals are able to respond to the painful events and situations of their lives, both past and present. Further, it is my view that painful and unworked experiences of loss, abandonment and other trauma surely impact an individual’s sense of safety and vulnerability, and in that sense may constitute an effect.

It seems to me that both aspects of the concept of the manic defence are germane, and that to highlight one over the other would result in a loss of depth and complexity in the phenomenon. In this study therefore, I propose to use both dimensions of the concept in my later theoretical understanding of the experience of white migration from post-apartheid South Africa.

### **5.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have described in detail those elements of Relational psychoanalytic thinking that are relevant to this study, and noted how they differ, in some instances, from the ways in which concepts with the same name are used in other forms of psychoanalysis. In a later chapter I will provide examples from my data to illustrate how these tenets of Relational psychoanalysis informed my approach to both data collection (via interviews) and during analysis (which was based on the Grounded Theory Method). Before reaching that stage of the study though, a detailed exposition of the steps taken in both data collection and analysis needs to be presented. This follows in the next chapter.

## 6. METHODOLOGY

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the project I began in Chapter 5, of detailing the steps involved in both data collection and management in this study. In what follows, I describe the selection of participants, how the interviews took place and were transcribed, and then move on to an outline of the constructivist version of the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) I used to analyse the data. Finally, I discuss the ethical thinking that guided my research process.

As noted previously, my review of the psychoanalytic methodology literature revealed a deficiency in many of the studies cited, concerning the detail reported about the research process. This is also a frequent criticism of projects which purport to use a GTM (Bryant, 2002; Charmaz, 2006; Fassinger, 2005; Suddaby, 2006). In this chapter and the following one, I hope to provide as thorough an account as possible, in line with the advice of Wolcott (2009) to “Satisfy readers with sufficient detail about *how you obtained the data you actually used* ... [and] provide adequate detail about how you proceeded with your *analysis*” (pp. 86-87, italics in original).

### 6.2 Ethics Approval

I began this study at Macquarie University in Sydney, and their Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) required very few changes to the protocol that I submitted. However, one significant change involved the racial make-up of my sample. When I conceived the study, it had been my intention to confine my research to white South African migrants, since I believed that there would be specific feelings about their migration from South Africa, after the dismantling of apartheid, for this particular group. The Macquarie HREC felt that I needed to

include participants from racial groups other than white in the sample, however, to ensure a more representative sample. I complied with this request and conducted three interviews with participants of Indian descent, and two with so-called coloured participants.

At the start of the process of writing the dissertation, I transferred to Victoria University in Melbourne as a result of the breakdown of the research relationship with my former supervisor, based on irreconcilable differences in our research paradigms. Since data collection was complete at this stage, the HREC at Victoria accepted the Ethics Approval from Macquarie. After realising the way in which the inclusion of participants other than white would complicate the study far beyond the scope of this dissertation, given the complexities of the issue of race in South Africa, in consultation with my supervisors I decided to omit these participants from the study. The final sample of this study thus comprises 13 white South African migrants, and it is to the selection of these participants that I now turn.

### **6.3 Selection of Participants**

Purposive sampling was used to select an initial group of participants for this study. According to Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), this means that “participants are selected according to predetermined criteria relevant to a particular research objective” (p.61). For this study, these criteria required participants to 1) have been born and raised in South Africa; 2) have migrated from South Africa to Australia after 1994; 3) have been aged 21 or over at the time of migration; and 4) not be personally known by me. Participants were recruited by means of an advertisement (see Appendix B) which I sent out via email to friends and colleagues, asking them to forward this to anyone whom they thought suitable. I also placed a copy of it on the noticeboard of a specialist South African food store. In the advertisement, I outlined the aim of the study and the criteria for inclusion, and asked interested parties to contact me by phone or email.

As is common in qualitative research, I did not know at the outset how many participants I would need for the study. As Bowen (2008) noted, sample size “is important only as it relates to judging the extent to which issues of saturation have been carefully considered” (p.140) and is thus very difficult to predict ahead of time. Based on my reading of the literature, however, and using Guest et al.’s (2006) research that showed that data saturation is likely to be reached after 12 interviews, I applied to the Ethics Committee for permission to interview 25 people in total, believing that would be more than adequate.

I received 24 responses to this initial advertisement. I spoke to each of these prospective participants by telephone and asked a number of initial screening and demographic questions (see Appendix C), as well as having a conversation with each one to gain some idea of their migration stories, in order to develop a short list of suitable participants. From this short list of 18 people, arranged in order of date of contact, I selected the first participant, Sally. Even before we had met, she sent out the advertisement to a number of her friends and colleagues and I found the second participant, Susan, in this way.

After these first two interviews, I analysed the transcripts and identified certain early themes. Based on this, I selected the next two participants, Sandy and Terry, for the way in which our initial conversations suggested they would be likely to expand on the themes that were beginning to emerge. After analysing these next two interviews, I was able to move beyond the identification of themes and started to develop higher order groupings of themes, the substantive or focused codes.

From that point, my method of selecting participants from the short list for inclusion was based on the process of theoretical sampling, in which people are selected for the ways in which they are likely to extend and develop the significant ideas which are emerging. Using this sampling technique, I completed another six interviews, making a total of 10 at this point. By that stage,

the focused codes had become ever more honed and developed, becoming what are known in the GTM as categories.

My ongoing analysis of the interviews revealed that there were still gaps in the categories.

From the shortlist of remaining participants, it did not seem likely that I would find further material that could amplify these areas, and so I placed my advertisement on the online business network LinkedIn. I received a total of 13 expressions of interest from this source, and selected three of these for inclusion in the study. Following analysis of these interviews, I judged that the point of theoretical saturation of the categories had been reached, using Guest et al.'s (2006) definition of theoretical saturation as “the point in data collection and analysis when new information produces little or no change to the codebook” (p.65). I thus concluded the interview process with a sample of 13 participants. While I have introduced each participant in the Introduction to this study, the demographics of this sample may be seen in the following table:

*Table 1: The Participants*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Years in Australia</b>	<b>Home Language</b>	<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Relationship Status</b>	<b>Political Affiliation<sup>34</sup></b>
Sally	F	40	14	English	Postgraduate	Married	Left of centre
Susan	F	39	14	English	Postgraduate	Married	Left wing
Sandy	F	48	10	English	Postgraduate	Married	Left wing
Terry	M	50	10	English	Year 12	Married	Right of centre
Steve	M	46	10	English	Diploma	Married	Centre
Henry	M	46	14	English	Graduate	Married	Left of centre
Jerry	M	59	9	English	Graduate	Married	Left of centre
Linda	F	58	9	English	Year 12	Married	Centre
Tina	F	44	15	English	Graduate	Divorced	Left of centre
Gina	F	47	2	Afrikaans	Postgraduate	Married	Right of centre
Roger	M	37	3	Afrikaans	Graduate	Single	Right of centre
Carl	M	47	8	Afrikaans	Year 12	Divorced	Right wing
Andre	M	48	1	Afrikaans	Postgraduate	Married	Right wing

<sup>34</sup> Self-reported affiliation: this could be envisaged as a 5-point scale, with left and right wings at the extreme, and the other 3 points in between. I included this element in the demographic questionnaire to try to ensure a diversity of political views.

## 6.4 The Interviews

The interviews with the 13 participants took place over a period of one year, which allowed time for reflection and analysis in between each interview, as required by the GTM (Charmaz, 2006). Since Andre lives in another part of Australia, we spoke using Skype, after having completed the consent paperwork by mail. With the rest, we met in person in Sydney. Locations varied between the participants' own homes, their places of work, and my office. After going through the consent process and completing the documentation of this, each participant was interviewed for an hour to an hour and a half, and the conversations were recorded. At the end of each interview, each participant was asked if they still consented to my use of their interview material, and all agreed to this. I contacted each of the participants by telephone one month after each meeting to ask how they were and to check whether they were experiencing any adverse effects as a result of the interview.

Prior to the start of the interview process, according to the requirements of the university HREC, I developed a list of guiding questions (see Appendix D) which I intended to hold in mind, and if need be refer to, in the first few interviews. After my experience of the first interview, I noted how disruptive to the process it was to keep this list foregrounded in my mind. Thus I asked only the first question in all subsequent interviews: *'Can you tell me the story of your migration from South Africa to Australia'?* I believed that this was the most helpful way for me to elicit the stories that would speak to the research aim of this study – namely, the exploration of the experiences of migration by a group of white South Africans who moved to Australia after the dismantling of apartheid in 1994. While the areas of interest that I hoped to explore were certainly in mind, especially as my concurrent analysis of the data informed the direction of the research, I believed that these areas of interest would necessarily emerge in the course of the interview, and that an invitation to tell the story would be a more authentic and spontaneous way to proceed than a deliberate intrusion into the process.

Before meeting with each participant, I wrote a memo to capture my thoughts and feelings about the interview and the person prior to our engagement. At the end of each interview, I again engaged in a reflexive process and wrote a memo to explore my experiences of the interaction, to note the countertransference that was in awareness, and to remind myself of any aspects that I thought might be relevant to the material that I had recorded. Within days of each interview, I then listened to the recording of our conversations and made notes about the thoughts and feelings that I had had in the moment, so far as I could remember them, as well as noting current reactions.

I transcribed the first five interviews myself, and while I found it helpful to be so immersed in the material, it took almost 20 hours for me to transcribe each interview. I made the decision to use a professional transcription service for the subsequent eight interviews, and paid for this out of my research funding. After receiving each transcription from the professional service, I went through it slowly and carefully while listening to the recording I had made, to check for accuracy and to include emotional indicators, pauses, mis-sayings, hesitations and the like, which the transcription service tended not to include. In this way, I found that I was able to immerse myself in the data in much the same way that my own transcriptions had permitted, and I could make notes about what emerged during this reflexive process.

After each interview had been transcribed and reflected upon, I coded the material, using highlights and comments in Word. As I proceeded through the interviews and the codes became the more substantive categories, I kept a handwritten list of the categories alongside as I went through each document. In essence then, I coded the data manually, rather than using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). After data collection was complete and my analysis had moved to the development of the higher-order categories, I then used NVIVO 9 to help organize the material from the interviews into more accessible and manageable form.

Once I had developed a list of focused codes, I wanted to include the participants in comment and discussion of these. I believed that this could be appropriately accomplished by sending these major themes to the participants in the form of a survey. I contacted each participant by telephone, to see if they were still willing to be part of a follow-up process. All agreed and I sent the second consent form (in Appendix A) and the survey (Appendix E), together with a self-addressed stamped envelope, to each participant. Nine of the participants sent their responses back to me, and I included this material into the theory that was developing.

In the next chapter, I describe the analysis process in detail, but before doing so, I introduce here the constructivist Grounded Theory Method (GTM) on which collection and analysis of the data were based.

## **6.5 Grounded Theory**

I identified the GTM as the most helpful framework for both gathering and making sense of the data, not only because of the structure that the method offers, but also because of the flexibility that more recent versions of the GTM accommodates: flexibility was important to me because of the need to incorporate psychoanalytic processes into the methodology.

The history and development of the GTM have been well documented elsewhere (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), but, as currently used in qualitative research, it consists of three main strands: 1) the original, or classic approach, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), in which a “neutral observer discovers data in a unitary external world” (Charmaz, 2011, p.365), according to a set of procedural steps; 2) Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) development of this, the axial coding model, which focuses on conditions and dimensions of a phenomenon rather than participant meanings; and 3) the postmodern approaches exemplified in the work of Clarke (2005) and Charmaz (2006). Clarke (2005) has extended grounded theory through developing situational maps and

analyses to focus “empirically on the situation as a whole ... [and to examine] distinctions made there from the perspectives of different actors” (p.66).

Charmaz (2006) developed the GTM in line with her symbolic interactionist perspective, which assumes that “individuals are active, creative, and reflective, and that social life consists of processes” (p.189). Her constructivist approach is thus fundamentally interactive and interpretive, and as such, was considered well-suited to the aims and tenets of the current study. Additionally, because Charmaz (2011) is explicit in noting that researchers from a variety of theoretical backgrounds can use this approach effectively, as well as noting that the GTM accommodates a variety of data collection methods, I felt that this method would make an appropriate partner for the Relational psychoanalytic framework that informs my subjectivity.

In the GTM, the phenomenon being researched determines the method of data collection. In the present study, since I wished to know about people’s experiences of and feelings about migration, data collection comprised interviews. In Charmaz’s (2006) version of the GTM, the raw data obtained in each interview is analysed into small units of meaning known as codes, and through this process of coding, the direction of the analysis begins to take shape. Data collection and data analysis is reciprocal and concurrent, with each stage of the analysis influencing further data collection. Codes become more focused and substantive through this process and lead to the development of ‘categories’. These focused codes and later categories are developed via the process known as theoretical sampling, an iterative process which enables the researcher to “*predict* where and how you can find needed data to fill gaps and to saturate categories ... [which] emerge from your grounded comparative analysis of earlier data” (Charmaz, 2006, p.103, italics in original). Relationships between the categories are explored by referring back to the data already collected, as well as to the new data being obtained. The process is thus one of a constant back-and-forth interplay between analysis and data collection.

This constant comparative process is accompanied and enhanced by the writing of memos, in which ideas, connections, hunches and questions are expressed, which in turn shape further data collection and analysis. Once fresh data no longer reveals new insights or connections, and all new data can be fitted into existing categories, categories are said to be ‘saturated’ and no new data needs to be collected. At this point, the most salient and generative categories may be organized into theoretical concepts and a theoretical construction/s proposed, in conjunction with the material gathered in the literature review.

The literature review forms part of the theoretical framing of the study, and thus, for the most part, is undertaken after data collection and analysis is complete. Earlier versions of the GTM (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) suggested that no review of the literature should take place prior to engagement with the data, to prevent any colouring of the data by earlier information, and thus enhancing ‘objectivity’. Charmaz (2006) has noted the impossibility of the notion of an objective position, since “research and writing are inherently ideological activities” (p.163). In addition, she notes that some survey of the relevant literature usually needs to have taken place prior to the execution of the study, in order to support the research proposal. Nevertheless, she advocates letting this prior knowledge “lie fallow” (p.166) until data analysis is complete. At this later stage, the data obtained in the course of the study, as well as the theoretical framework that has begun to emerge through the increasingly abstract coding process, guide the selection of literature.

From the constructivist viewpoint, theoretical constructions emphasize understanding, rather than the objectives of explanation and prediction for which positivist approaches aim (Charmaz, 2006). Proponents of a constructivist approach “view theoretical understanding as abstract and interpretive ... [and] assume emergent, multiple realities; indeterminacy; facts and values as inextricably linked; truth as provisional; and social life as processual” (pp 126-127).

Nevertheless, theoretical constructions do reflect the organizing principles and frames of their authors, including which categories are considered most salient and generative, which concepts

are selected for inclusion, and how the overall thrust of the argument presents the findings and conclusions of the study. This is not at all antithetical to a constructivist approach to the GTM, and Charmaz's (2006) explication of her approach has the location of the study in a meaningful theoretical framework as an important aspect of the process.

In the present study, the principles of Relational psychoanalysis (as explicated in Chapter 5) have formed the scaffolding for the entire project, as well as being part of the theoretical framework underpinning my understanding and discussion of the results. Consequently, the findings of this study are situated within a theoretical construction that relies on both theory-building as conceived by the GTM, as well as psychoanalytic interpretations and constructs.

One of the implications of a method that partners the well-established GTM with a psychoanalytic approach is the requirement for particular attention to the ethical dimensions of the study. A detailed discussion of this follows in the next section.

## **6.6 Ethical and Quality Considerations**

As suggested by the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (2007), all research ethics may be encompassed by four fundamental principles: *Integrity, Respect for Persons, Beneficence* and *Justice*. In addition though, qualitative studies have considerations that attach to the quality and integrity of the work, and these are often closely related to the ethical dimensions of the study. I wished thus to address both ethical and quality principles in my research approach, and to this end, I found Lincoln's (1995) paper on "Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research" useful. She uses the term "quality-cum-ethical criteria" (p.280) to emphasize that considerations of ethics and quality are closely connected in qualitative research, and since this accorded with my own stance in the present study, I merged relevant criteria as identified by Lincoln (1995) with the four fundamental principles identified above. I also paid particular attention to the question of *Power*, especially as it might relate to the fact that this is a psychoanalytic study: my review of the literature on psychoanalytic

research (Chapter 4 of this thesis) had alerted me to the misgivings that some authors had named, especially regarding the matter of psychoanalytic interpretation, and it was thus vital to me that I attend to this dimension.

### ***6.6.1 Integrity***

Integrity refers to a respect for truth: as Lincoln (1995) noted, however, no text can lay claim to universal or complete truth. But it may be authentic and honest if it makes clear the position or standpoint of the author. In the present study, I regarded it as not only inevitable but necessary that my subjectivity be transparent, both to the participants in the study as well as in the description and report of the methods and findings. At the same time, I was cognizant of the need to ensure that the study did not devolve into a catalogue of my struggles and torments, as van Heugten (2004) has cautioned, and that “the benefits of insider knowledge are best managed when a distinctive tension between an insider and outsider perspective is able to be maintained” (p.207). The way I utilised my countertransference facilitated this, as I will outline later. At the same time, it did not eliminate the possibility that my ‘insider’ position in the cohort under investigation may well have blinded me in certain ways.

Ghassan Hage (2006) defined an ‘insider’ as “someone who ‘belongs’ and is mentally and bodily attuned to a specific socio-cultural space ... [and] who identifies with the ‘order of things’ within such a space ... [while] the outsider feels culturally ‘out of place’” (p.342). I have made no attempt to minimize or disguise the fact that I am an ‘insider’ in this study, one of the cohort under investigation, with all the attendant complex thoughts and feelings that result from being a post-apartheid migrant. As such, I am imbricated in the generation and reporting of data in both conscious and unconscious ways and can in no way claim a hierarchical position of unbiased authority. At the same time, I have tried to be aware of my ‘blind spots’, in the form of possible intersubjective conjunctions and disjunctions (van Heugten, 2004) as a result

of my embeddedness within the cohort, and have tried to report these wherever I have been conscious of them.

### ***6.6.2 Respect for Persons***

As part of the consideration of the principle of *Integrity*, I knew that I would want to quote from the interview material at length, so that the truth of the reporting would be clearly evident, rather than relying on small selected fragments of text. I believed that this would add to the validity of the study, as well as being respectful of the material that each participant contributed. This meant that *Respect for Persons* around the issue of confidentiality was a complex dimension of this study. Because I chose to allow the participants' voices to be heard in extended and mostly unaltered form, other than changing specifically identifying details, this would necessarily mean that, since "the contextual identifiers in individuals' life stories" (Kaiser, 2009, p.1635) remain in place, the participants would be identifiable to themselves, and perhaps to close family members and friends as well, via the process known as deductive disclosure (Kaiser, 2009).

To address this to some degree, I changed identifying details. Consequently, the only names appearing in the study are pseudonyms. In addition, I changed names of spouses and children, town and place names, places of residence both in South Africa and in Australia. I omitted references to details of professional or work history: where it was essential to their stories to make some mention of the ways in which their work represented themselves, or had been a crucial part of their migration story, I tried to ensure that I kept only the substance of the information rather than the detail.

Other fundamental issues of confidentiality were more easily addressed, such as the protection of information by storing all voice recordings and transcripts under password protection on my computer, and the fact that only my supervisors and I had access to this material. Only I had access to the real identities and contact details of the participants, and this information was stored separately from the interview material, and only in hard copy format.

An additional element of the principle of *Respect for Persons* is the way in which autonomy is protected via processes of ‘consent’. The ethics approval that I obtained for this study stipulated that I provide as much information as possible to each participant in the consent form that they needed to sign before each interview could take place. At the end of the interview, each participant was asked if they still agreed to be part of the study, given what had emerged from our conversations, and if so, they signed the consent form again. The second round of data gathering, in which I collected together all the emerging themes into survey form and asked for their comments, also had an attached consent form.

In the consent forms (included in Appendix A), I explained that the aim of the study was to investigate the nature of the experiences and emotions experienced by people who migrated from South Africa to Australia after the dismantling of apartheid in 1994. I outlined that they would be asked to tell their migration stories and that I would then analyse these and include extracts in the study. In the second round, I asked them to comment on their resonance or otherwise with the themes that had emerged from the research to date, as outlined in the survey which I enclosed. I explained how their confidentiality would be protected and also clarified the voluntary nature of their participation and freedom to withdraw. I noted the possibility of distress and outlined the options available to them if they felt they had been adversely affected in any way.

Hollway and Jefferson (2013) have noted the problems inherent in limiting ethical considerations of ‘informed consent’ to a conscious, cognitive process that occurs prior to an interaction. They noted that qualitative research generally elicits material which goes “beyond rationalization and opinion, which conveys emotional significance and does not avoid potentially distressing issues” (p.81), and that it is impossible to inform participants about this in a meaningful way, prior to the experience. In my view, the step of asking for re-consent after the interview process goes some way towards addressing this, but I also take heed of Hollway and Jefferson’s (2013) suggestion that:

the central criterion on which the ethics of participation in this kind of research ... should revolve, [is] around the criterion of guarding against harm ... [via an] emphasis on the researcher's responsibility for creating a safe context, in which issues of honesty, sympathy and respect ... [are] central (p.82).

This touches on the principle of *Beneficence*, to which I now turn.

### **6.6.3 *Beneficence***

My sensitivity to the principle of *Beneficence* was enhanced by Lincoln's (1995) quality-cum-ethical criterion of 'Critical Subjectivity/Reflexivity'. She defined this as the capacity for high-level awareness, for the purposes of understanding subtle differences in the personal and psychological states of others, as well as in the emotional and psychological states of self, before, during and after the research experience.

My training and practice as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist helped in this regard, in my role as researcher in this study. Just as I do in my clinical work, I attended closely to the shifting nuances of verbal, emotional and somatic expression in both the participants and myself, using my self-experience as information to illuminate how this might contribute to my understanding of the participant and our co-created interaction. This empathic attunement to both myself and each participant that this self-reflexive practice requires, served to ensure that I could pay attention to that dimension of *Beneficence*, that the Australian Code of Ethics (2007) defines as the need to minimise possible harm to participants in the course of their involvement in the study. It enabled me to be sensitive to the psychological and affective state of each participant, so that I could gauge when it would be appropriate to probe further and when this might be detrimental to their wellbeing. Importantly, this did not mean that I took any sign of distress as a possible risk of harm, for a certain amount of distress is to be expected when talking of such a momentous and painful experience as migration. Rather, it enabled me to differentiate between important and necessary affect states and the emergence of deeper, more fragile self-states. In addition, it assisted me, during the telephone call that I made to each participant, to follow up with them on their experience of the interview, to evaluate whether there had been any adverse

effects that had emerged for them as a result of having participated in the study, over and above what they consciously reported. This follow-up was a requirement of the Ethics Approval I had obtained, as was the statement in the Consent Form that each participant read and signed that, while some distress was to be expected, if they felt worried about their reactions in any way after the interview, they were free to contact me to discuss possible options. None of the participants reported any adverse effects, nor did I discern anything untoward on an emotional and intuitive level.

Both Haverkamp (2005) and Bowker (2011) have noted that the question of ‘the participant’s good’ is a neglected one in psychosocial research, where the focus has primarily been on the avoidance of harm. To maximize the potential for good, Haverkamp (2005) suggested an approach which combines not only the foundational principles of ethical conduct of research, but also an emphasis on “a pattern of ethical behavior” (p.149) on the part of the researcher, together with an ‘ethics of care’ in which researchers “attend to people on their own terms, consider their needs, and recognize the interpersonal character of research” (p.149). In a similar vein, Bowker (2011) suggested that researchers consider what would be a ‘best-case scenario’ outcome for participants, and proposed that an approach that views participants as ‘subjects’ rather than ‘objects’ of study is most likely to lead to “participant-benefits like empowerment, self-narration, recognition, or even old-fashioned human communication” (p.330).

In the present study, it was my hope that the experience of having participated in the study would be a meaningful and generative one for the participants, in addition to the way in which I benefitted from their willingness to be part of the study. Their responses to my invitation, in the follow-up survey form, to express their thoughts and feelings about their experience of our conversation, conveyed that this had indeed been the case, at least for those who returned the surveys.

#### **6.6.4 Justice**

The principle of *Justice* asks researchers to think about who ought to receive the benefits and bear the burdens of the research endeavour. This study has as its specific aim the understanding of the meanings, both conscious and unconscious, that a group of post-apartheid migrants from South Africa to Australia make about their experience of migration. As such, it is hoped that it will benefit this particular group of participants to have had the opportunity to examine this complex and significant dimension of their lives. In the interviews and discussions with participants via telephone after the interview, all noted that they had felt personally enriched by the experience, in terms of a greater degree of self-understanding and reflection. Most also reported feeling proud of having been able to be useful to me in my research endeavour, and were pleased to have been associated with postgraduate study. Many noted that the experience of having been selected to be part of the study imparted feelings of usefulness and purpose, and many participants made reference to this during the interview process.

A further dimension of the principle of *Justice* relates to Lincoln's (1995) discussion of the role of 'voice' in qualitative research. This criterion reflects the need for research to demonstrate "activeness, a committed stance on the part of the researcher, and a certain openness to multiple voices and interpretations of the work" (Lincoln, 1995, p.282). As it relates to texts consulted in the course of this research, I have frequently chosen to use direct quotations rather than précis, to ensure that the voices of the original authors join with mine to create a polyphonic text. Further, I have tried to ensure that I represent a range of authors on the various topics, as the voices are not always harmonious but also display disagreement and multiple points of view.

Most importantly though, and forming part of the need for *Justice* in acknowledging contributions to the study, it was an important consideration of my research approach that the centrality of the participants in this study not be underestimated or minimized. The contributions of the participants not only in the generating of the data but in the role that they

played in shaping my subjectivity as researcher needed to be acknowledged. To this end, I encouraged the participants to engage with me in a dialogic fashion during the interview process, as well as inviting them to comment on elements of the data analysis during a follow-up survey process. The need to acknowledge the input of the participants was also part of the motivation for including lengthy excerpts from the interviews, rather than fragments, so that the voices of the participants could be heard as co-creators of the meanings generated in our conversations. This brings into consideration questions of power in the research relationship.

### ***6.6.5 Power***

As Boser (2007) has noted, considerations of power usually focus on the notion of power as dominance, and thus its potential for harm. The intersubjective stance which characterises my approach to this study is premised on the fundamental belief that, while the relationship is predicated on acknowledgement of and respect for sameness and difference, negation of this will happen from time to time, however unwittingly. Another way to think about this is the way in which power as a form of dominance may be enacted across roles and time periods between individuals, for, as Hollway and Jefferson (2013) explained, “power ... [is] inherent in all social relations (however equalised)” (p.79).

In most research relationships, and certainly in the present study, there is a structural disparity that exists simply because of the nature of the inquiry: as Kvale (2006) discussed, the interaction follows the topic and overall agenda as set by the researcher, and the findings privilege the views and interpretations of the researcher. This does not mean however, that power is always skewed towards the researcher. Kadianaki (in press) addressed the notion that power constantly shifts between the individuals in any interaction, at different times and across different contexts. To this end, in the present study I have attempted to remain aware of the operation of power throughout my engagement with the participants, as well as in the reflexive

processes that followed. The shifting nature of the experience of power was frequently very apparent and played an integral role, at times, in my understanding of the data.

In my conversation with Andre, for example, we had the following interchange as I was pressing him to tell me more about his perception that white Afrikaner culture became devalued after 1994:

*Cathy: How do you feel about that? When you say this, do you experience a feeling, an emotion? What's that like for you to realise this?*

*Andre: It's a bit of a grudge, but I must say and I told you at our initial interview, a large part of our move was also a pull from Australia, not only a push from South Africa.*

His firm tone of voice and his reminder that he had already mentioned this in our initial telephone conversation left me feeling as though I had been reprimanded, and that he was very much in control of the interview at this point. I was aware of feeling 'put in my place' in the moment, and when I reflected on this later, I noted that he was powerfully warning me off from delving into his emotional experience of having his culture devalued. While this suggested to me, in conjunction with other cues in the narrative, that this had been a traumatic experience for him and that he was invested in defending against any emergence of his feelings about this, I also felt him to be exercising his power to determine what he would or would not explore.

Similarly, in my conversation with Henry, when I invited him to expand on his fantasy of going back to South Africa one day, he was in no way compliant with this and was quite clear in moving the conversation on to the topic that he wished to explore:

*Cathy: So when you say there's a fantasy of going back – and I understand that it exists at the level of fantasy...*

*Henry: Yeah.*

*Cathy: ...but within that, so what might that look like? What could you foresee? What would you be looking for?*

*Henry: Um ... You know, I don't know if I can add anything to that because, as I say, it's really just a very peripheral notion.*

While I did not experience this as a reprimand, it was nevertheless quite clear that Henry had an agenda for our conversation, just as I did, and that he was not experiencing me as an authority figure to be 'obeyed'. At other times though, he was quite happy to go along with my invitation to say more or explore further, thus illustrating Sin's (2007) point that "power relations between researcher and researched can often be reversed even in the course of a single interview" (p.479).

There were times when I noted myself being overly directive in pushing my agenda to the fore and thus dominating the interaction in ways that were not helpful to the spontaneous emergence of ideas and feelings. I will illustrate some of these in a later chapter. There were other times too, when the participant experienced me as 'more powerful', for reasons that were beyond my control but inherent in the context, as Kadianaki (in press) has proposed. In my interview with Tina for instance, she seemed to construct me at times as someone who would be critical of her and her story, and then she would apologise as if this had indeed happened:

*Tina: I hate it when they say it, Aussie. It's not Aussie. It's not – that's what sort of gets to me; everyone in South Africa refers to it as Aussie. Like the – what's the word I want – the pet name. Believe me, it's not Aussie. I get so – even my dad says to me, what's your number in Aussie? Oh, it kills me.*

*Cathy: It feels too sweet, too kind?*

*Tina: Too sweet – because there's nothing kind about it. Sorry, I'm really being...*

*Cathy: No – you...*

*Tina: ...like a real bitch about it. But I do, I loathe it.*

*Cathy: You're entitled to your opinion. No need to apologise.*

*Tina: Yeah, so I'm sorry. I'm not having a go at you or anyone in particular. But it's good for me because it offloads.*

Tina is filled with resentment and despair about being in Australia, and feels particularly victimised by the happiness and adaptation of many of the South African migrants she meets. I suspect that she may have unconsciously located me in this camp, and that she does indeed vent her anger 'on me' for this, and then possibly feels guilty and apologetic about it afterwards, irrespective of what I actually say.

For my part, the reality is that I was delighted when she contacted me to be part of the study as she was the only person I encountered who was able to be so open about her anger and despair. I suspected, based on my own experience as well as other conversations I have had with South African migrants, that many of us feel like this at times, even if we seldom voice it. So from my perspective, I approached the interview with Tina from the position of “studying sideways” (Plesner, 2011), thinking that we would have an interaction in which:

[b]oth the researcher and research participant bring interests to the table that both sides are familiar with, and although these interests may sometimes conflict, the terms of the negotiation are not foreign to the participants, and their conditions are, in principle, equal (p.471).

The fact that this did not entirely play out as I had expected, not only with Tina but at different times with each of the participants, served as reminder to me that I needed, as Rhodes (1994) suggested, to be sensitive to the fact that power issues would be operating at all times and therefore not an obstacle to be overcome but an inevitability to be negotiated in an ongoing way.

## **6.7 Summary**

In this chapter, I have discussed a number of the diverse but nevertheless integral features of my approach to the present study: a) I have explored the ethical considerations in detail, starting with the need for Ethics Approval from the University HREC and finishing with the various ethical considerations that formed part of my planning for and conduct of the research; b) I have discussed the selection of participants and presented the demographics of the final group; c) I have described the interview process and my working with this data; and d) I have described the constructivist Grounded Theory Method which I used, together with my Relational psychoanalytic approach (as outlined in Chapter 5), to analyse the material.

In the chapter which follows, I will outline in detail the coding practice of the GTM which led to the emergence of the core categories and concepts of the present study.

## 7. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA: CODING

### 7.1 Introduction

This is the third chapter devoted to methodology and its accompanying considerations. In the first, Chapter 5, my psychoanalytic approach to the study as a whole, and to the interview and reflexive components in particular, were discussed. In the second, Chapter 6, I outlined the ethical considerations which guided the research process, the selection of participants and the conduct and transcription of the interviews. I also introduced the Grounded Theory Method (GTM). In this chapter, I provide a detailed description of the steps involved<sup>35</sup> in the analysis of the data obtained in the interview and reflexive processes, using Charmaz's (2006) GTM, integrated with a Relational psychoanalytic frame.

### 7.2 Initial Coding

Charmaz (2006) provides explicit description of the coding process, but even using her guidelines, I realised after I had coded the first two interviews that I was simply reproducing what the participants had said, often in large chunks of text. As an example, from the interview with Sally:

*It was more a personal thing about not wanting to raise children in South Africa. There was still lots of violence, um ... a sense of insecurity about the future, and a worry about safety*

Didn't want to raise kids in SA because of violence and worry about safety in future

I returned to Charmaz's (2006) explication and took more careful note of her suggestion that "[c]oding is the first step in moving beyond concrete statements in the data to making analytic interpretations" (p.43). She suggested that the initial coding process may take place on a line-by-line or even word-by-word basis, and that such an approach may act as a safeguard against the researcher imposing his or her preconceived ideas on the data. At the same time though, she

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<sup>35</sup> I am indebted to my colleague and PhD study-mate Jacqui Winship, whose chapter on coding in her (2013) study provided much of the model for this chapter.

proposed that the codes already move beyond the literal statements by starting to “develop abstract ideas for interpreting each segment of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p.45). I realized that I had been too cautious about interpreting the participant’s words and that I needed to *use* the words to try to find the underlying concerns and feelings. With this in mind, the same extract was coded as:

<i>It was more a personal thing about not wanting to raise children in South Africa. There was still lots of violence, um ... a sense of insecurity about the future, and a worry about safety</i>	Raising children Context of violence Insecure future Worrying about safety
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As I re-coded each of these first two interviews using this method, I began to see how the system was beginning to illuminate ideas and concepts in the data that were outside of what I might have predicted. It enabled me to develop succinct codes that I could then use to cross-check and compare with later interviews, as well as highlighting gaps in the data that I needed to try to explore in each interview that followed. In addition, it was the catalyst for the insight into how my Relational psychoanalytic frame not only could but should be integrated into the data analysis from this earliest stage.

### **7.3 Integration of the Relational Psychoanalytic Frame**

In my view, Charmaz (2006) paves the way for the integration of a psychoanalytic approach to the GTM with her exhortation not to “dismiss your own ideas if they do not mirror the data [for] your ideas may rest on covert meanings and actions that have not entirely surfaced yet” (p.54). As I have noted in Chapter 4, there is a considerable dearth of psychoanalytic methodology in the research field. Attention to the researcher’s subjectivity in the form of reflexive activity is becoming increasingly common in qualitative research, and there are an increasing number of studies which utilize selected aspects of the GTM together with a psychoanalytic approach (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Stopford, 2006), but I have been unable to find a study in my survey of the literature that fully incorporates a psychoanalytic frame into a thorough usage of

the GTM. The title of Anderson’s (2006) study, “Well-suited partners: psychoanalytic research and grounded theory” held promise, but closer investigation revealed what I see as an intrinsic mistrust of psychoanalytic data in its own right by incorporating the need for triangulation with independent data to ‘prove’ validity. More problematically, in my view, she uses the classic form of the GTM which explicitly eschews interpretation.

As a result of my views about the co-created nature of experience, which I have discussed in detail in Chapter 5, I wanted to find a way to code and interpret not only each participant’s subjective experience but also the way in which the intersubjective nature of our interaction was *creating* that experience. This did not mean that I viewed the participant only as a ‘defended subject’ (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) who was reacting *to* me, but rather that *all* the material emerging between us was data about the topic under investigation. This data included the manifest content of our conversations as well as the unconscious material accessible through analysis of countertransference aspects. I thus included my own observations and hunches, explicit and implicit, and often in the form of my countertransference reactions, into the codes. Because they had emerged from the intersubjective field between each participant and me, I considered them to be ideas that could be tested against the data in the current as well as later interviews, just as I did with the codes emerging from each participant’s comments.

To illustrate with an example, in Sally’s interview, we had difficulty with ‘regret’:

<p><i>S: Even though ... it provided me with fantastic opportunities professionally, and then now to have, to be able to raise my family in this country ... From when I ...</i></p> <p><i>From my own family point of view, it probably wasn't the best choice. Yeah ...</i></p> <p><i>C: When you say from your own family, you mean your family of origin?</i></p> <p><i>S: my family of origin, yes absolutely</i></p> <p><i>C: are you ..... Are you expressing regret?</i></p> <p><i>S: no, no!</i></p>	<p>Opportunity</p> <p>Raising children</p> <p>Context of safety</p> <p>Leaving family behind</p> <p>Sacrifice</p> <p>?Regret</p> <p>Denial of regret</p>
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The interaction reproduced in this extract occurred early on in our interview, and I had a strong sense that Sally was grappling with feelings of regret – in my reflexive process while listening to the transcript, I wrote: “*It was almost as though she had said it and I hadn’t quite heard, so I needed to ask her to repeat it – and then she denied it! – I felt taken aback*”. While doing the initial coding, I debated whether this represented my being insensitive and pushing her too hard, or whether in fact I had been ‘too sensitive’, and had picked up something that she was not yet ready to bring into consciousness. Hence I coded it with a query, incorporating my psychoanalytic lens with Charmaz’s (2006) advice to note down moments when “your codes define another view of a process, action or belief than your respondent(s) hold” (p.54). Later in the interview, we had the following interaction around the word ‘regret’:

<i>C: So there’s grief</i>	Grief
<i>S: Yeah</i>	
<i>C: there’s regret, some regret ...</i>	?Regret
<i>S: (sounding uncertain) hm...</i>	Feeling confronted?
<i>C: some regret of ‘should I have left, should I have done it like that’?</i>	?Regret
<i>S: I don’t know if it’s regret ... Regret’s a hard word ...</i>	Regretting is hard
<i>C: Ok ... Which word feels better?</i>	
<i>S: (pause) I’m not sure ... It would be a bit of a milder one, I’d have to think what that would be</i>	Wish to tone down regret
<i>C: Ok</i>	Lost for words

In my reflexive notes, I wrote: “*I’m feeling regret now! I’m worried that I’m pushing her too hard*”. Again I decided to hold that feeling and wait to see whether it was relevant to the data or not. A little later in the interview, ‘regret’ appeared again, and both Sally and I were able to note how the feeling had pushed its way into her awareness. I reflected whether I had ‘pushed the word into her’, whether I had been too powerful, but noted from the context of our discussion that Sally had no difficulty in disagreeing with me when she did not resonate with what I said, and so I felt comfortable to remove the question mark from ‘regret’ and allow it to be manifest, as in the following extract:

*S: It's a helluva big responsibility to say that you can increase your parents' longevity or whatever, but I think, but I think yeah, my presence would have certainly made an impact on their quality of life. So ... But, yeah, there's not much I can do about that now (voice breaks with tears and rueful laugh)*

*C: So ... is some of that feeling – would it, would ... guilt be too strong?*

*S: I don't use the word guilt, necessarily. It's not ... It doesn't sit well with me, it's not the kind of word I would use to describe that feeling*

*C: Ok, what's the word?*

*S: I thought... You know, what came to mind is regret, and then I thought well, that's not the right word, I just said it's the wrong word! ... It should be more ... Yeah (pause) ... Um, I feel bad? Guilt's too strong ...there's something about just feeling bad ...and maybe being ... Yeah, regretful is the word that comes to mind (rueful laugh)*

Feeling responsible  
 The death of them'  
 Could have helped  
 Too late for tears

?Guilt  
 Denial of guilt  
 Un-usable word

Regret  
 Regret is wrong  
 Feeling bad  
 Guilt is too strong  
 Feeling regretful

Using the line-by-line coding technique was enormously time-consuming, but it was so clearly bringing material embedded in the data to the surface that it felt inherently right, and so I performed this initial form of coding on each of the 13 interviews. At the same time, I had noted after coding the second interview that certain threads were coming through, threads which I suspected were pointing to at least some of the directions that the analysis might take. This influenced my selection of the following two participants in the sense that my initial telephone conversations with them had indicated that they might be likely to cover these areas, and I wanted to explore these themes further. At this point I was moving towards the second phase of coding, which Charmaz (2006) calls focused coding.

#### **7.4 Focused Coding and Memo-Writing**

As I went through the initial line-by-line coding of the early interviews, I noted that certain codes were emerging more frequently and significantly than others and that these were beginning to indicate particular analytic directions. By the time I had completed the initial coding of the third and fourth interviews, I had identified a list of codes which covered larger sections of the data and which served to capture ideas and feelings in a more synthesized way

than the initial units of meaning had done. Together with other codes that emerged from the analysis of succeeding interviews, these became the substantive, or focused, codes.

To help with my thinking and conceptualizing about these larger units of meaning, the focused codes, as I proceeded through interviewing and analysis I used the technique of writing memos which the GTM advocates. As Charmaz (2006) explained, “[m]emos catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallize questions and directions for you to pursue” (p.72). The use of memos also helped to capture the reflexive process that is common to all interpretive approaches, and in the present study, integrated the way in which my particular reflexive process is informed by the tenets of Relational psychoanalytic thinking. For instance, after analysis of the first four interviews, I noted that each of these participants had spoken of ‘Home’ in one way or another, but these ways of thinking about ‘Home’ were complex, even contradictory. So I wrote the following memo to try to capture a sense of this:

#### *HOME*

*Is this a linking thread? Everyone talks about it differently – is ‘home’ here in Australia or back in South Africa? I hear it when they talk of family, and going back on visits – but then they vary between talking about ‘going back’ and ‘going home’ (cf Susan) ... it’s nostalgic sometimes, there’s a yearning and a longing, but also a rebellion, a refusal to look back (cf Terry) ... something about ‘mine or mine no longer’...?*

*What’s familiar, or known – that’s Home – and it’s knowing the language, the givens, feeling ‘at home’ (cf Terry here too – working in the garden). Where they’re known, where they belong. The culture – Australia is bland/Africa is vibrant; there’s something innate about black people ... Interesting how they all speak in racialized terms when talking of ‘Home’ – colour is in our blood, we all locate ourselves in some way via our attitudes to or memories of black people – it’s almost as though we can claim these bits now that we’re far away ... “absence makes the heart grow fonder”?*

*But also – quick to invoke the spectre of violence, no future, things fall apart in Africa – South Africa will go the way of the rest of Africa – so ‘Home’ is fragile, can’t hold – and the sense of ‘Home’ is fragile ...*

*Does it mean they’re ‘homeless’ now? Do they mean ‘displaced’? ... Need to listen for this ...*

Following this, 'Home' became one of the focused codes, and I went back through each interview, coding the material now in terms of this focused code and others like it. As I went through each interview again, I could add to what I felt 'Home' embraced, and compare statements that seemed to represent 'Home' within individual interviews, as well as across interviews. As I moved into choosing participants for successive interviews, I had in mind these various focused codes and thus selected participants whom I felt would be likely to resonate with these strong emergent threads.

Selection of the participants thus took place via the process known as theoretical sampling. Many of the focused codes were able to be developed into categories, while others were discarded after failing to stand up to the test of iterative checking and comparison. Certain new codes emerged and proved to be substantive and significant enough to warrant becoming categories. In this iterative way, from initial codes, to focused codes, to categories, the analysis of the material grew and took identifiable shape.

## **7.5 Categorizing**

Charmaz (2006) defined categorizing as the process of raising "the conceptual level of the analysis from description to a more abstract theoretical level" (p.186). Categories are those focused codes which are of overarching significance and which subsume "several codes into an analytic concept" (p.186). The most significant categories become the concepts of the theory which is developed. By the time I had completed and analyzed 10 interviews, I was well into the stage of categorizing: the dominant focused codes had developed to the point of being significant and substantive enough to facilitate the movement to a more abstract than descriptive level, to become categories, in other words, and relationships between these categories were becoming clearer.

There were still gaps in the data, however, and since I felt I had exhausted the potential of the existing pool of possible participants to add to the data, I embarked on another round of advertising and participant selection. Some of the areas that I needed to develop further included the cultural differences I had noted between English-speaking participants and the single Afrikaans-speaking person I had interviewed thus far. I wondered also, based on my meeting with Jerry, whether compulsory military service played a role, perhaps in creating a background of trauma that contextualized the decision to migrate, and thus I wanted to interview men who had completed military service. In the event, this did not turn out to be a significant and widespread phenomenon and so did not become one of the categories, but it was only through further data collection and analysis that I could exclude this. I noted from my interview with Gina that being a recent migrant seemed to indicate higher levels of despair, sadness and sense of displacement, and so I selected participants who were relatively recent arrivals. In this way, I used the ongoing process of theoretical sampling to flesh out my categories, as well as continuing to return to the existing data to start to pull codes together into ever-more abstract categories.

The following diagram may serve to illustrate the process of building categories as I have described it above, using, by way of example, some of the initial codes that referred to 'race'. In all the interviews there were references to 'race', in many different forms. This delivered a very large number of initial codes, each slightly different from each other but ultimately falling within one of five initial codes. Focused coding distilled these into three strong and prominent areas, and increasing integration led to the focused codes being subsumed into the category 'White South African'. By seeing and developing the relationships between this and other categories, the more abstract conceptual category 'Identity' came into being. Further analysis and development of 'Identity', and constant return to and checking against the data, led to 'Identity' becoming one of the cornerstones of the overarching core conceptual category, 'The centre cannot hold':

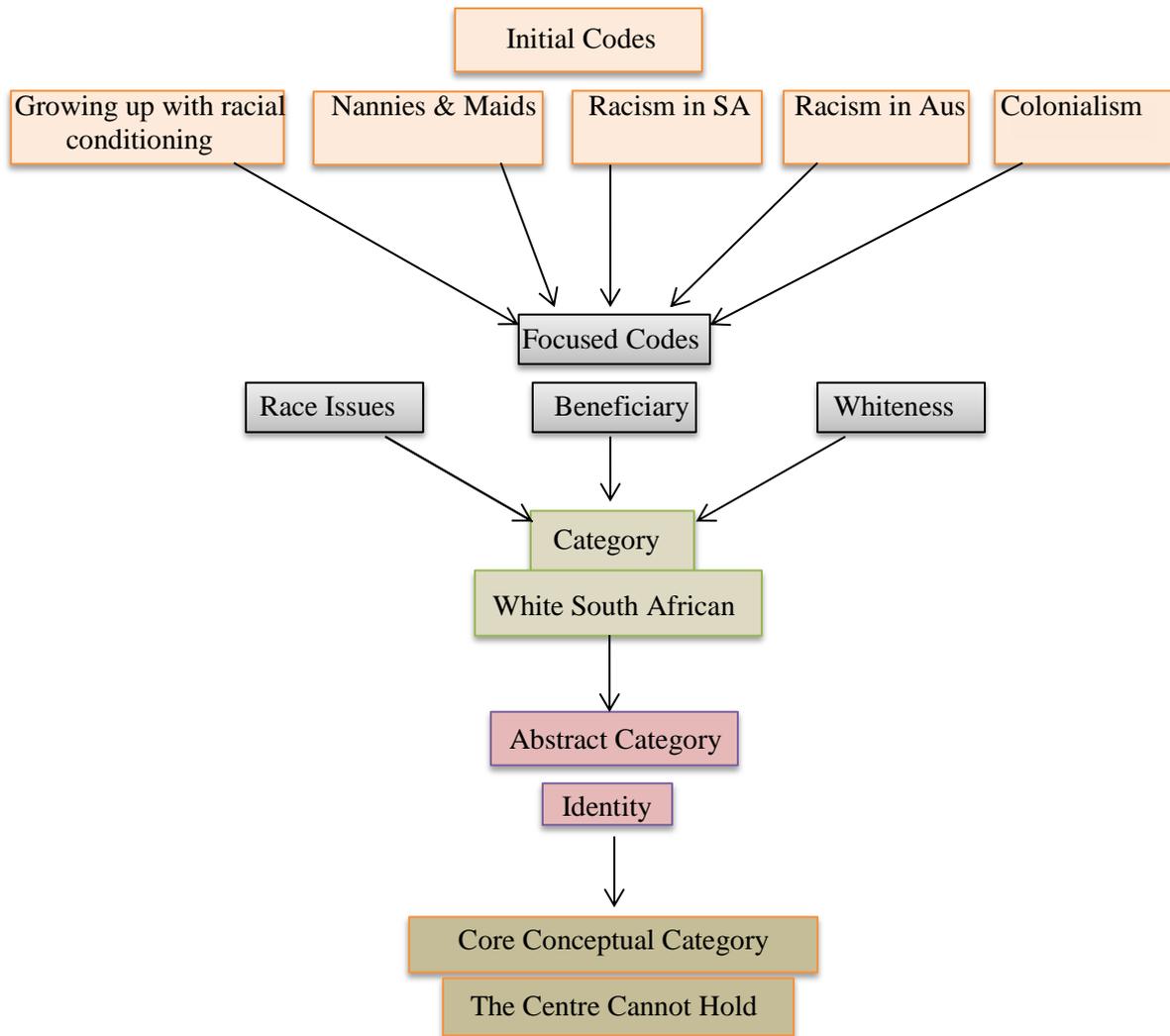


Figure 1: From Initial Codes to Core Conceptual Category

## 7.6 Member Reflections and Saturation

By the time I had completed and analyzed 13 interviews, no new data or fresh insights were emerging from the analysis: the last three interviews, while they served to amplify the areas that I had identified as being incomplete, nevertheless yielded information which could be fitted within existing codes and categories. Thus, using Guest et al.'s (2006) definition of the term 'theoretical saturation' as "the point in data collection and analysis when new information produces little or no change to the codebook" (p.65), I judged the point of saturation of the categories to have been reached. The fact that Guest et al.'s (2006) research had found that 12

interviews generally allowed a point of saturation to be reached in the large number of studies which they analyzed served to support what I found in my research.

In keeping with my Relational psychoanalytic views about co-creation of the data, it felt fitting for me at this stage to take the focused codes and categories back to the participants for their reflection and comment. This was not, however, to try to demonstrate validity, as a term like ‘member checks’ would imply. Member checking refers to the process of “taking ideas back to research participants for their confirmation” (Charmaz, 2006, p.111), but has been widely criticized in the literature on interpretive inquiry because it relies on

the foundational assumption of a fixed truth or reality against which the account can be measured ... [and since] there is no universal fixed reality, and because understanding is co-created through dialogue and experience, there is no static truth to which the results of an interview can be compared (Angen, 2000, p.383).

Rather, I wished to continue to involve the participants in the creation of the data by inviting them to give their thoughts and comments about the themes which had emerged. In addition, most of the participants had expressed an interest in hearing about what emerged from the analysis, and thus I felt it appropriate to make this available to them. In this study then, as advocated by Tracy (2010), the member reflections were “less a *test* of research findings as they are an opportunity for *collaboration* and reflexive *elaboration*” (p.844, italics in original).

I chose to do this in the form of a survey (attached in Appendix E), in which I listed the major focused codes and categories and invited the participants to write their reflections in the generous spaces provided (I have condensed these spaces in Appendix E for practical reasons).

All agreed to participate in this round of data-gathering, but only nine returned the surveys.

While a small number reiterated the ways in which they had talked about these themes in the face-to-face interview, a significant number of participants disavowed or inverted the responses they made to sensitive topics such as *shame*, *guilt*, *regret*, *beneficiary*, *privilege*, *displacement*, *dispossession* and *race issues*.

In my reflexive process about this, I wondered why this might have happened. While Angen (2000) noted that this is one of the problems with member checking, that participants may have changed their minds in the meantime, I speculated whether the shift from the interactional and intersubjective engagement of meeting in person, to the more-distanced, even ‘objective’, process of a written survey, might have played a role. At first, I wished that I had chosen to re-interview the participants rather than use the survey format, so that we could engage in dialogue about the themes. On the other hand, the survey delivered new insights about the existing focused codes and categories – especially those that were disavowed and inverted – in a way which elaborated and complicated the material, and thus contributed to my project to create rich data via ‘thick description’ of my material, in which the researcher accounts for “the complex specificity and circumstantiality” (Tracy, 2010, p.843) of the data.

## **7.7 CAQDAS**

Once all the interviews and surveys had been coded and categorized, I transferred the material into computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). The huge volume of data generated meant that I needed a way to collect, store and access the material more efficiently than a large collection of marked-up Word documents permitted, and so I chose the QSR NVIVO 9 software package.

The use of CAQDAS, while increasingly common, has attracted considerable debate in the literature, for its critics have suggested that the ‘easy’ way that it segments and classifies material has led to a loss of creativity and genuine analytic process (Richards, 2005). As Bong (2007) has noted however, coding is a means, not an end in itself, and whether one uses CAQDAS or the ‘cut-and-paste’ functions in a word-processing program, the final result will be dependent on the quality of the analysis and not on the codes themselves. My decision to use the software to store and retrieve material proved a useful one and greatly facilitated an efficient way of handling the data.

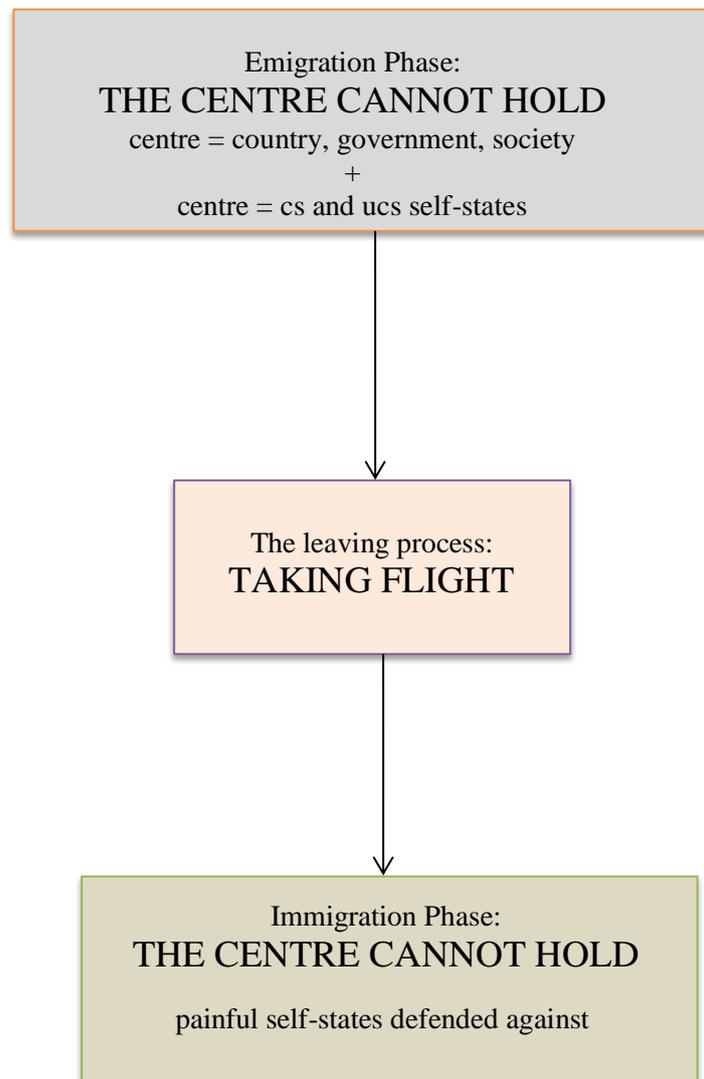
## 7.8 Theoretical Rendering

In the classic GTM proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), they argue that a theory emerges from the data and thus is discovered, apparently independent of the shaping effects of the researcher. The constructivist version of the GTM, as proposed by Charmaz (2006), suggests that, because we “are part of the world we study and the data we collect” (p.10), theories are not only constructed (rather than discovered) but that “any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it” (p.10, italics in original). The construction of the ‘theory’ takes place via the process of theoretical coding, which follows the categories that have been distilled and looks at the possible relationships between them. These possible relationships represent an integration of all the data and “not only conceptualize how your substantive codes are related, but also move your analytic story in a theoretical direction” (Charmaz, 2006, p.63). The ongoing process of writing memos to capture ideas and relationships as the analysis progresses is also part of the theoretical rendering of the material, and helps to identify the thrust and shape of the core concepts.

Following on from this, and given the Relational psychoanalytic frame in which I think and function, the theoretical rendering of the material which I have developed represents my subjective engagement with this particular group of participants on what it means to have migrated from South Africa to Australia after the dismantling of apartheid. It also embraces the literature that I have studied along the way, the major review of which took place after data collection and analysis, as has been discussed in Chapter 6. And finally, it reflects the resonance that I noticed between my theory construction and the concept of the manic defence.

I will discuss the overall theoretical construction that has emerged from this study in the Discussion chapter of this thesis, but offer the following diagram at this point to illustrate all the steps detailed in the current section of the work. Although the identification of a core conceptual category to serve as unifying concept is not mandatory in constructivist GTM

studies, in the present study ‘The Centre Cannot Hold’ was identified as the core conceptual category of this study. It can be traced back to the initial codes, where it entered the analysis via its association with participants’ use of the term ‘Things Fall Apart’, which is the first half of the line in the poem “The Second Coming” by W.B. Yeats (see Appendix F).



*Figure 2: The Core Conceptual Category Runs Through the Findings*

## **7.9 Summary**

In this chapter, I have given a step-by-step description and demonstration of each of the stages involved in data analysis. And since ongoing data collection and analysis usually run concurrently in the GTM, my exposition has also included description of ongoing participant selection, as well as my reflexive processing through the work. This concludes that part of the thesis concerned with methodological issues and I turn now to the presentation of the findings. As is common in Grounded Theory studies, I will occasionally refer to the literature in the course of the presentation of the results, but will focus on allowing the participants' words to speak for themselves, saving discussion for the final chapters of this thesis.

## **8. EXPLORING THE INTERACTIONS: INTERSUBJECTIVITY, COUNTERTRANSFERENCE AND INTERPRETATION**

### **8.1 Introduction**

As I noted in Chapter 5, Relational psychoanalysis takes as fundamental premise the notion of a two-person psychology, which claims that whatever is happening is constantly being shaped by the interaction and personal characteristics of the two people involved. This frame has informed both data collection (in the form of face-to-face interviews and a later written survey) and data analysis (comprising both researcher reflexivity and the use of the constructivist version of the GTM) in this study. Therefore, illustration of the various ways in which this manifested forms an important component of the presentation of the findings of the study.

While I will include some discussion of the findings in this and the three Results chapters that follow, as is common in psychosocial research, theoretical discussion will be limited, for I am persuaded by de Kock's (2006) argument for the foregrounding of primary research data over one's own theory-based conclusions:

This is always a question of balance: how much weight one accords one's primary research data, and how much one's own conclusions ... My feeling is that ... a study of the particularities of everyday practice would be better served by ... one which foregrounds the immediate testimonies and evidence of the everyday, and which devotes relatively less space to overarching critical reinterpretations of them ... Implicit in such "narrative scholarship" would be a thicker description of the subjects and a deep form of listening to their stories, their self-characterisation and their self-fashioned senses of identity. Critically, the "writing up" of the subjects and their stories would require a high degree of observational diligence, a keen sense of negative capability and less of the critical hubris that, in my view, is sometimes a characteristic of cultural analysis in the constructivist mould (p.185).

Consequently, in order to foreground the immediate evidence of the interactions, most of the extracts in these four Results chapters are fairly lengthy. In addition, I hope that this will allow the reader to gain a full and transparent sense of my presence in the interview material, and of

the context of the extract. In doing so, I hope to address what has been a regular criticism (Potter & Hepburn, 2005) of qualitative research, that the interviewer is 'absent' or 'invisible' in reported text, and that extracts are too brief, not allowing readers to understand the selection in their contexts.

## 8.2 The Co-created Nature of the Material

As I noted in Chapter 5, I made no attempt to appear neutral or unresponsive, for I viewed myself as an active and engaged participant-observer in the process. In the interaction with Henry, for example:

*Henry: I still feel very close to South Africa. I'd like to always maintain a connection there. But I guess I feel like we've moved on. We've stepped out of ... that as well, yeah.*

*Cathy<sup>36</sup>: Stepped out of there: the place has moved on, you have moved on...*

*Henry: Yeah.*

*Cathy: Hm ... so much is different. But perhaps not necessarily feeling absolutely – well, you say you're not feeling identified with where you've landed.*

*Henry: No.*

*Cathy: You say you don't feel Australian; you don't have roots here...*

*Henry: No.*

*Cathy: ... this is not your place/space/origin thing, which is – there is just something about – there is a parallel which in a way – I'm inviting you to consider – something around – so you have left this place...*

*Henry: Hmm.*

*Cathy: ... South Africa, for another one. Something – but it's kind of – and it's been good...*

*Henry: Yeah.*

*Cathy: ...you're making your life here, you've got kids here – I'm sure they're well settled; they, well, probably consider themselves as Australian?*

*Henry: Most definitely.*

*Cathy: Yeah. This is what they know.*

*Henry: Particularly my two sons identify very strongly with being Australian, yeah.*

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<sup>36</sup> I have chosen to use my name, rather than the impersonal "Interviewer" in all the excerpts from the interviews.

*Cathy: There is sort of a parallel with how you left, in a way, it seems to me. A stepping out of something but not necessarily a clearly-formed idea into what.*

*Henry: Yeah.*

*Cathy: In a way it seems you still sit with that.*

*Henry: I think so. I guess that ambivalence is still there. Yeah, I think that we definitely carry that ambivalence. For sure!*

In this extract from my interaction with Henry, I was ‘thinking aloud’ as I tried to express to him the thoughts that were coming to me as I listened to his story. Many of my comments referred to information that Henry himself had provided in the course of our meeting (the fact that he does not feel identified with being in Australia); some were based on information that I had gleaned from prior interviews with other participants (e.g. the fact that children born here tend to consider themselves Australian). And some of my comments arose from thoughts that were forming at the edges of my consciousness as I listened to Henry, thoughts that I would view as countertransferential in the sense that they emerged from my interaction with this particular individual, in combination with my own subjectivity: for instance, my theoretical underpinnings incline me to the belief that we tend to repeat patterns of behaviour throughout our lives, and I would thus inevitably seek to note these repetitive patterns, both in the clinical and the research situation. In this instance, this led me to note the repetitive quality of the way in which Henry made his decision to migrate (without feeling ‘identified’ with his decision) and the way in which he lives his life here in Australia (without feeling ‘identified’ with where he has landed).

A different interviewer, with a different frame of reference, would very likely have picked up other equally valid but different ways of hearing the material, and thus a different meaning would have emerged between them. In our interaction, though, it seems that our particular process of ‘thinking together’ allowed Henry to find the word ‘ambivalence’ to express how he felt. Even within his sentence, we may see how the word gradually emerged as a reality for him – it moved from “*I think so*”, to “*I guess*”, to “*yeah*”, to “*definitely*”, to “*for sure!*” Prior to

this moment, the word 'ambivalence' had not been expressed by either of us. Nor had a sense of his ambivalence formed itself as a consciously articulated hypothesis in my mind, despite the fact that most of his story up until this point had been riddled with doubts and reconsiderations. It seems to me that our mutual understanding of Henry's migration story, one with a strong thread of ambivalence running through it, emerged from the intersubjective field that we both created.

The following extract, from my interview with Susan, also demonstrates how we co-created a new understanding of what she had found missing in her new life in Australia:

*Susan: So I think, I mean I always will probably maintain ties with Africa, even if I take my kids in 5 years' time, I think it's important for them to have a connection with it, 'cos it's the culture, that ... yeah you know, one misses that. And there was a period, I think it was after I had my son, when you're probably a bit more vulnerable, that I really wanted that, that soul, that energy ... I think it's probably just ... I don't know what's the word to use ... (laughs). But just having had a baby I wanted ..... (trails off)*

*Cathy: I wonder if there was also something ... mmm the thought is just coming to me ... as you've been talking, the thought that I've been having is of just how strongly attached you sound to the land, the culture ... um ... the African-ness, the ...*

*Susan: Yeah yeah*

*Cathy: You know, what it is to be 'from there'*

*Susan: Yeah*

*Cathy: Um ... very attached, very familiar, very comfortable ... there's quite a lot of longing in your voice, actually,*

*Susan: Yeah yeah*

*Cathy: When you talk about those elements ...*

*Susan: Yes.*

*Cathy: Now then, you talk about it coming particularly to the fore after you had your child, and I wonder if there is something ... about actually wanting to be in a place where you feel attached?*

*Susan: Yeah, when you have a baby.*

*Cathy: Yes, like you belong, when you've had a baby. You used the word 'connection' ... And it sounds as though you don't have that with family ...*

*Susan: Mm*

*Cathy: I wonder if that's what you're sort of playing with here ...?*

Susan: *Yeah yeah*

Cathy: *Or grappling with ...?*

Susan: *Actually, I hadn't really thought of it like that ... But I guess that maybe there was part of that, wanting to feel ... the village, I suppose, you know ...*

Cathy: *Oh right, maybe held by the community, or the place ...?*

Susan: *Yeah yeah*

Cathy: *If not by the family, then perhaps by the place that you come from?*

Susan: *Yes, exactly, yeah. I think there's something quite mothering about Africa, you know. They talk about mother Africa, but I think there is something, you actually can't explain it in words, but I think there's something quite ... warm!*

From this point onwards, Susan's thoughts turned to the ways in which she conceives of Africa and the sense of warmth and 'holding' that it contains for her. The fact that she picked up and 'ran with' the material that emerged through our interaction at this point suggests to me that our collaboration here has been a fruitful one for her and resonates with her experience of loss in having migrated. By observing 'what happened next' (Mearns, 2001), it seems to me that we were able to come to a joint understanding of something which is true for Susan but which had not yet been thought or symbolized by her ("*I hadn't really thought of it like that*").

It is also possible to see in this extract how I tried to go 'beneath the surface' in the comments that I made in response to what I was both hearing and feeling: in noting the longing that I heard in her voice, and resonating with it from my own experience, I was inviting Susan to reflect on the emotional component of her experience. In response, she agreed that she felt an attachment and a longing after her son was born, and in confirmation of a greater degree of emotional connectedness after this moment she went on to elaborate a longing to be mothered and its associated warmth; the metaphor of 'mother Africa' came to mind for her. In this way, I believe that the psychoanalytic frame of our particular interview process allowed Susan to access deeper, less conscious material than might have become available to her for reflection outside of this intersubjective exchange.

### 8.3 Intersubjectivity: Sameness and Difference

The fact that I am a white South African migrant constituted an immediate area of ‘likeness’ between me and the participants, in the way that Benjamin (2004) has conceived it. In the interviews, this regularly meant that the participants could talk about past events in a way that took my understanding for granted. In my conversation with Jerry, for instance, he said:

*Jerry: But um, for me, a friend of mine left – we had worked together; we were working in an infrastructure ... um, provided infrastructure into the townships. And this was in the lead-up to the elections so that was – it was quite a turbulent time. We ended up in quite a nasty situation; we were actually held hostage in a school in Umfolozi. And the guys were toyi-toying outside because they felt that we hadn't provide ... they wanted a different ... more water provided to their area than was going to be provided in terms of the project we were working on, and we weren't employing enough labourers, in their opinion.*

Without any pause to check that I had understood, he referred to the lead-up to the elections being quite a turbulent time, suggesting that he assumed that I knew which elections he meant, and why he would describe it as a turbulent time. He spoke of the townships without further elaboration, again ‘knowing’ that I would know that he meant residential areas set aside for black people on the outskirts of towns and cities. Further, he went on to talk about “*the guys toyi-toying outside*” with the same expectation that I would know that it is a protest dance and that “the guys” would have been black Africans. While my migration story was not part of our conversation, my South African accent would have been an immediate signifier to him that I was an ‘insider’ and that certain things could simply exist as ‘givens’ between us. Although I did not check this with him at the time – indeed, I did not even register his usage of these terms as anything worth commenting on at the time – I doubt that there would have been any conscious choice for him in his use of words. Our interaction at this level is representative of subsymbolic communication (Bucci, 2001), the kind of unconscious communication that takes place all the time and which “appears as part of a total impression rather than as discrete elements” (p.48).

Of course, there were also many differences between the participants and me. In most cases, this did not result in misunderstanding, but occasionally we co-created situations in which we missed each other's meanings. Carl, for instance, was one of the Afrikaans-speaking participants. We spoke together in English, and he would have been able to hear from my accent that I am English-speaking, but he would have assumed, correctly, that I can understand Afrikaans, having grown up in South Africa. Hence, his conversation with me was peppered with Afrikaans terms and phrases that he no doubt took for granted I would comprehend. Indeed, it felt to me at the time as though he used these terms not only on the assumption that I would understand, but that these could, unconsciously, represent a point of emotional contact between us. And for the most part this was the case, except for one notable exchange. At this point, Carl had excused himself to go to the bathroom, and when he returned we had the following interchange:

*Carl: Cathy! I forgot what I was wearing! Did you see what I was wearing? Can you read Afrikaans (points to his t-shirt)?*

*Cathy: Jammer ... om van jou kak te hoor<sup>37</sup> (I laugh – we both laugh)*

*Carl: Isn't that appropriate!*

*Cathy: Actually, I didn't realise – I saw ... but you know the funny thing is ... I saw, but I only saw the top line of what you were ... of your shirt, and because I've been living here so long now, it didn't occur to me to read it in Afrikaans! I read it in English, it said "Jammer"*

*Carl: Jammer!*

*Cathy: So I thought, oh well, it's a make of shirt no doubt*

*Carl: (laughing loudly)*

*Cathy: And it's only now that you mention it that I actually realise "Hang on a minute ..."*

*Carl: There's a message ...*

*Cathy: And I look further and then I see, oh, this is actually Afrikaans – so, isn't that interesting?*

*Carl: There couldn't be a more appropriate shirt ...*

*Cathy: Well, yeah ... it's the story, hey ... So ... (pause) What were we talking about?*

*Carl: We paused at the military. That's okay, we'll just leave it there.*

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<sup>37</sup> "Sorry to hear about the shit in your life".

*Cathy: We paused at the military and I absolutely get that that's a difficult area for you to talk about. I'm not here to press you to talk about anything that you don't want to talk about. It's very interesting to me though that I have not yet met a South African man - and I've spoken to a number now - who will talk about anything about that. So interesting ... I don't know how to understand it. I wonder if that's a legacy in a way, that you were told that you can't talk?*

*Carl: Exactly.*

As apparent in the extract above, Carl had started to talk about his experiences in the armed forces in South Africa, and the pain and trauma of his memories of this time were quite evident as he spoke. It was at this moment that he excused himself to go to the bathroom, where he remained for almost three minutes. I was aware at the time that it was a significant moment for him to interrupt our conversation, and reflected, while he was out of the room, on what it might mean that he had to 'cut' the conversation at that point. And so, on an emotional level, I was situated in what I was imagining to be his state of traumatic memory, and was thus quite unprepared for the excited mood in which he re-entered the room. We were, literally and metaphorically, speaking different languages at that moment.

The misattunement between us was expressed on many different levels. This incident happened towards the end of our time together, and although he had been using Afrikaans phrases freely throughout our conversation, it was the first time that he made reference to the fact that he was aware that I was not Afrikaans-speaking and felt a need to check with me if I could read Afrikaans. I would postulate that, unconsciously, he may have become dysregulated by the emergence of his traumatic memories, and perhaps he sensed also that there had been some rupture in the flow of our interaction. Once I read the writing on his T-shirt, in Afrikaans, we could share a moment of laughter at the irony of the way in which his shirt was a message that represented our purpose in meeting – since much of his migration story was a very sad story, it meant that much of the time was spent in him telling me about “the shit in his life”. And yet, while I was attentive to him, there was also some ‘jamming’ of the message going on, on both

our parts: on the literal level, I had only seen the top line of his shirt while he was seated, and had read it in English as 'jammer' and thought it to be the make of the shirt. But I think also that I had not realised the depths of his pain and despair about being in Australia and how he had failed in all his attempts to make a life here, and so had only read the 'top line', his confident and self-assured presentation of himself. And on his part, perhaps his instinct was to 'jam' the intrusion of his very painful memories of his time in the military by leaving to go to the bathroom, and also, to note that he felt 'jammed' from talking about these experiences by the code of secrecy that pertained to his undercover operations. Interestingly, however, after our interaction at this point, he went on to talk at length about his experiences in the military. When I reflected afterwards, I wondered whether my reference to the other participants who had difficulty in talking about their experiences in the military had led him to feel less isolated and shamed by his memories of the operations of which he had been part. I wondered also if I had felt ashamed of 'missing the message' and whether this shared shame experience, occurring as subsymbolic communication, had allowed us to link again sufficiently for him to be able to continue his painful story. In other words, perhaps a recovered sense of 'aliveness' may have helped to restore the connection not only between us in the moment, but also between certain conflictual intrapsychic self-states.

#### **8.4 Managing my Countertransference**

In this study I felt it was important that my subjectivity should not impose inappropriately on our interactions. This meant that I endeavoured to bracket that part of my countertransference that represented my thoughts, feelings, hopes and opinions as much as I felt was appropriate to the situation, and insofar as I was able to be conscious of these. By way of illustration, this is an excerpt from my meeting with Linda:

*Linda: So one of the things I found very difficult about coming here was taking my dirty, stained pillows and putting them in the bin, because nobody in their right mind would want them - whereas there were thousands of people who would love a pillow just for*

*the sake of a pillow, in South Africa. I used to find that quite hard, just putting those things in the bin, when I'd think of how many people would want them.*

*Cathy: Mm mm. (long pause) So ... hmm ... how have you made that transition here, then? So that element of seeing a need, and being part of that, being part of the community liaison - fitting in with a grouping. How does that translate for you here? Has it?*

I had a strong countertransference response to Linda's suggestion that she would have given her "dirty stained pillows that nobody in their right mind would want" to impoverished people back in South Africa. Although she did not say so explicitly, based on my own experiences in apartheid South Africa, where white employers frequently passed on old clothes and household items to their black domestic workers, I assumed that this was what she meant, and felt shocked and angry. As I realised in my later reflexive processing, she may not have meant this at all. But I did not think of this at the time. All I heard was the fact that these were 'dirty and stained' things that 'nobody in their right mind would want'. And then, based on my own awareness of having been guilty of just such dubious charity, I suspect that I unconsciously shifted into a not-me self-state in which I dissociated my complicity in such practices. From that place then, I believe that I took up a judgemental position about Linda.

This processing of my countertransference only occurred later, however. At the time, all I knew was that my reactions were strong – too strong to allow me to invite her, in an empathic way, to reflect on what she had said. It was thus a conscious decision on my part to bracket my response by remaining silent for a few moments, apart from a few contemplative "mm's", before continuing with a somewhat related but earlier point that she had made. In addition, I had sensed that Linda was in a somewhat fragile space with regard to her attempts to settle and find her place in Australia. While I could not, at that moment, point to specific words or actions that had led me to form this impression, my countertransference at the level of the subsymbolic had cued me to be less probing of her and her motives than I might have been with someone whom I sensed was more robust psychologically. And indeed, as the interview progressed, it became clear that Linda was indeed in a somewhat fragile state. Thus, following the principle

which I noted earlier, that ‘what happens next’ allows us to gauge the impact of our words and behaviours, I felt that my decision to bracket my subjectivity was an attuned and appropriate response under these circumstances. In addition, following that same principle with regard to my own involvement, my later processing of what I think happened for me in that moment also confirmed that it was appropriate for me not to try to probe further, given how unaware I was of my own dissociated feelings.

My experience of the first interview, with Sally, was particularly helpful in sensitising me to the need to be as mindful as possible of the operation of my agenda in conducting the research. While I knew that I needed to identify my preconceived ideas and concepts so as to minimise their possible intrusion into the interviews, it was this experience that really showed me what that could mean.

The suggestion of my former supervisor that I use preliminary concepts about the study to form a loosely-structured interview guide seemed a constructive way to use the conscious elements of my positioning on the topic. There was additional pressure for an interview guide from the Human Research Ethics Committee, whose approval for my study was needed before I could proceed. I believed it would allow me to introduce topics that the participant had not mentioned explicitly but which I wanted to invite into the discussion. The timing of these questions needed to be sensitive and appropriate, however, and I knew I needed to be aware of why I chose that particular moment to introduce a new topic – if not always possible in the moment, then as part of my post-interview reflexive process. Hence, I approached the first interview, with Sally, with the questions of my interview guide in mind, sure that I would be able to exercise the necessary attunement and restraint.

I was unaware, however, of the extent of my anxiety as I went into this first interview process. In addition, Sally was extremely emotional throughout our meeting because of a recent bereavement, and this, I realised afterwards, further dysregulated me in the sense that I had

some difficulty in staying emotionally calm and steady in the face of her distress and my own anxiety. It was only when I later listened to the transcript of the interview that I became conscious of this, however, and became aware of the many occasions where I was overly active with her and drew far too heavily on the questions in the interview guide to help me through long pauses, or to change the subject at times when I was too anxious to use my reactions as constructive countertransference clues. The following excerpt illustrates my anxious immersion in my own agenda and my consequent loss of an appropriate listening stance.

*Sally: So yeah, that really saddens me. You know, for us, having the Jewish holidays, Shabbat and all of that, together, 'cos that would happen ... Whereas here, there's no opportunity for that.*

*Cathy: Mm*

*Sally: So those are the things that you question sometimes, like 'was it worth it'?*

*Cathy: Mm*

*Sally: But I think in the end I would say yes, in terms of the same thing that I started off saying, about having a future for my kids, having a safe environment, having opportunities for them, educational opportunities for them.*

*Cathy: So do you keep ..... So in terms of that, the safe environment and you know, what's the future going to hold, and the educational opportunities ...*

*Sally: Yeah, yeah*

*Cathy: And so on ... Do you keep up with the news from South Africa, about what's happening on those fronts and the crime levels and that sort of thing?*

Much of Sally's migration story up until this point had centered around her grappling with the question of "was it worth it"?, and when I reflected on this later, it became apparent that, even though this was some 14 years later, she was still in many ways unsure of the answer to that question. Although there are places in the interview where I sense that I was attuned to this internal struggle, in this extract it is clear that I was not sufficiently regulated to be able to hold the ambivalence – just as, I think, she was unable to name and hold the ambivalence – and thus I accepted far too quickly her assertion that the safety of her children has outweighed the many significant losses she has sustained as a result of migrating. In a move that perhaps alleviated anxiety for both of us at this point, I jumped onto a 'new' topic identified in my interview guide.

New, but not entirely unrelated, I would say now as I reflect on the material, since I am alluding to the maintenance of links with the old country, which has been a difficult part of Sally's migration story. But this was not a connection I was able to make on a conscious level in the moment. At that moment, my sense is that I was anxiously preoccupied with my internal question of "Ok, what next"? and leapt onto the question about the news from home as though finding a life raft.

In this way, having a set of possible interview questions became in itself a distraction. My reflexive process after the interview revealed this and led to a greater sensitization on my part about the way in which questions can subvert, rather than facilitate, the process.

My approach to the use of my countertransference in the form of interpretations during the interviews was predicated on my belief that the participants are adults, subjects (in Benjamin's sense of the word) in their own right, and therefore capable of achieving a relationship with an other without having to submit to or demand an inauthentic version of self or other. This does not mean that I ignored the operation of inherent power dynamics, of course, as I outlined in Chapter 6, but rather that I did not approach the participants as though they were incapable of knowing their own minds, or unable to resist my offerings if these did not feel fitting. This extract from the interview with Andre illustrates my thinking about this. In this extract, he is talking about the way that he experiences his connections with other South Africans here in Australia:

*Andre: I think people reach out more and take the trouble to look up other South Africans, invite them to church or you meet somebody at church and they invite you over for coffee. I think people here - not that there is a laager mentality, but people go to more trouble than they would have in South Africa.*

*Cathy: How do you understand that? Why do you think there is that difference?*

*Andre: I think it's probably the tribal feeling again, that we are all immigrants in a new country, it's hard to settle in. They make new friends here so they take the trouble to invite new people, newcomers into the circle.*

*Cathy: When you say it's not a laager mentality, what is it then? How would you describe it?*

*Is it ... no, I don't know ... can you tell me your words for that?*

*Andre: I don't know. I have known immigrants in South Africa, they form their own ... not clique, but group. They have the same traditions, the same culture, the same values. If you have the same values and same background and it's easier to make friends with people that think and are the same as you.*

*Cathy: So you are talking about a kind of a cultural grouping, rather than – when you use that word laager mentality – a feeling of being under siege or threatened?*

*Andre: Maybe laager is a strong word to use.*

*Cathy: Such an important word in the South African context ...*

*Andre: I used that word to try and express that it is not. I don't experience it as a closed group. It's just people with the same interests and we laugh at the same jokes.*

*Cathy: Ok. You share a history, a lot of which doesn't have to be explained because you all speak the same language not only the literal language but you have got the same fabric behind you – yes?*

*Andre: That's right.*

When I heard Andre say 'not that there is a laager mentality', I was curious both about his introduction of the term itself, as well as his introduction of it in the negative. His later use of the word 'circle'<sup>38</sup> deepened my curiosity about it as a potential metaphor for something, and so I asked him to explore further, to 'tell me his words' for what he meant. He explained that he was intending to imply a cultural grouping, and when I continued to probe around the word laager, he was very clear in telling me that he was not talking about a closed circle but rather about a group with common interests. As was the case with most participants most of the time, he knew what he meant and could claim his own knowledge. I did not presume to know better than he what he meant here – especially in the absence of any other indicators in this interview – by considering this to be resistance or denial; rather, I felt that I had come to a clearer understanding of his experience in this regard.

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<sup>38</sup> A laager is a circle of wagons used to defend against an enemy.

## 8.5 Enactments

There were times however, when I did not manage my countertransference effectively, such that enactments, as I defined them in Chapter 5, ensued. As the following example from my conversation with Steve illustrates, reflexive processing after the interview enabled an understanding of something that might otherwise have remained inaccessible, even while I also consider it to be a mistake on my part.

*Cathy: I was asking how an awareness of what had happened - you know, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique - how that actually played a role in your decision to leave.*

*Steve: Well I think I was old enough to see the changes that happened after independence. So in '79, well it was actually '80 that we had the elections in what was then Zimbabwe Rhodesia, and I would have been 13. And it being a cohesive, very vital country - good economy, the facilities - and seeing the slow - (pause - laughs) ... yeah, it's interesting you bring up that early - an underlying psychological thing that I think I've always had. Never being part of a country or living somewhere where things are progressing - in other words you see things being built - there is - it's being bettered. Like here, I still can't get my head around a new library being built, a new playground being built; something being bettered, maintained. Something being knocked down and something better - what do you call that...*

*Cathy: Well, it is intended to be better - whether it actually turns out that way...*

*Steve: Yeah, yeah.*

*Cathy: ...who knows, yes.*

*Steve: But I went through I think my most impressionable years getting used to the fact that the electricity was starting to fail, or the water was not as clean as it was, or the school was starting to fall apart, or the roads started to get potholes, telephones didn't work like they used to. Things that we took for granted in a way. So it became a - I think it affected the psychology - my parents are a good example I think - the cynicism, and in some ways, embarrassingly, overt racism. So, what do you blame for this? Well, we're going to hate them because they're bloody useless. Which is not - it's not all that. It's all history and - but again, that um ... underlying emotion of not being - you know, are we going to move to another place? Is this right? Being unstable I think is something I experienced as well - you don't - you're not aware of it at the time - it has a huge effect on your psyche. So, yes, what we had experienced up there was big in the - yes, it definitely had an effect on the decision that we made, yeah.*

It was only during my reading and reflection on the transcripts of our interview that I noticed how hostile my comment was. In the notes I was writing during this reflexive step in the analysis, I wrote:

*I almost attack him with my thought here! What's going on?? Ok, my part of this ... I'm not sure if he should be in the study, so I'm a bit resistant ... But ... he was very pushy that he wanted to be in the study – he really pushed hard – I did feel coerced into including him ... my shame and guilt at seeing how bullying I am of him may be blinding me to something – I'm taking all the “blame” for what I'm “doing” to him ... I know this part of me, to feel “it's all my fault” when I feel someone's more powerful than me and I've got something to lose ... what have I got to lose here? Yes! I see it now – I'm worried that HREC will jump on me for including him in the study even though I'd said all participants would have to be born and raised in SA ... Ok, I've ‘othered’ him, he doesn't belong, I should ‘push him out’ of the study ... Aha! Ok ... this is the point of contact I think ... he's talking about the way in which his family was “pushed out” of Zambia and Zimbabwe, and his decision to leave SA ... maybe he feels pushed out of SA?! And then he suddenly attributes the feelings to his parents – “what do you blame for this? We hate them, they're bloody useless ...” Ok, he's quoting, but he's saying “we” ... Maybe that's his unconscious part then, quite a lot like mine – feeling bullied, feeling pushed, becoming hostile ... which is how it's played out with us here ... Ok, so I think this could be an enactment!*

After this reflexive process, I felt able to understand a dimension of my psyche that had become dissociated – my anxiety about being chastised for including a participant who did not meet the criteria and my resulting displaced hostility towards Steve – which I believe now was the ‘not-me’ state that I had dissociated. And thinking about Steve's part of the ‘drama’, I could then think about the possibility of a displaced hostility about feeling as though he was being coerced into leaving – ‘displacing’ himself – how unstable it all feels for him, and how he hates ‘them’ for it – which could be his dissociated ‘not-me’ state. In this unpacking of what had happened between us, I was able to come to a deeper understanding, which might otherwise have remained inaccessible, and I could incorporate this into this study of the meanings of what it is to have migrated from South Africa to Australia after the dismantling of apartheid – the sense of having been ‘pushed out’ of the home country.

While I felt that my analysis of the data was enriched through such psychoanalytic processing of the material, and that certain dissociative elements belonging both to me and to the participants were thus able to become part of the material, I am also mindful that, given the ‘more and less’ nature of dissociation, there must also still be many instances where I have not picked up enactments of not-me states. In addition, I am aware that other analysts of the material might come to different conclusions – that while the interpretation in this instance feels fitting to me, it cannot be considered ‘the truth’ of what happened.

## **8.6 Summary**

In this, the first of the Results chapters in this study, I have attempted to document the various ways in which my grounding in a Relational psychoanalytic frame permeated both data collection and analysis. I have illustrated the ways in which the participants and I co-created meanings and interpretations, and the ways in which issues of sameness and difference between us influenced our communication. I have shown some of the helpful and less helpful ways in which my countertransference was part of the mix, insofar as it is consciously available, and how, from certain dissociated, not-me states, this resulted in enactments. In the following chapters, I will present the findings pertaining to each phase of the migration process. While I do not, in these chapters, detail the reflexive steps that I went through to arrive at each understanding, it should be understood that the processes as I have outlined them above were an integral part of the analysis of the data, together with the constructivist version of the GTM.

## **9. THE CENTRE CANNOT HOLD: AN UNSETTLED SELF IN AN UNSETTLED COUNTRY**

### **9.1 Introduction**

During data collection, the participants were asked, at the start of our conversation, to tell the story of their migration to Australia, wherever that story needed to start. In each case, the migration story began back in South Africa with an account of the idea of leaving, and then proceeded to outline the ways in which the idea became a reality. This chapter presents the findings relating to this stage of the migration process – the emigration component.

As noted previously, my coding and analysis of the data revealed a core conceptual category which I have expressed as ‘the centre cannot hold’. In the emigration stage of the migration process, push factors dominated the participants’ experiences, and manifested in the sense of the country as a centre that would be unable to hold. The country was in transition and all that had been known and familiar was now unsettled. It was perceived that things would increasingly fall apart and that there would be no place in the new South Africa for the participants and their children.

The participants’ fears and experiences at this stage also revealed a sense of self as a centre unable to hold. Their very going-on-being felt unsafe and threatened, and many felt that their sense of self-continuity had been disrupted, leaving them feeling unintegrated and unsettled. Feeling devalued in various ways was a significant factor, and while many aspects of this experience were conscious, there were also other dimensions that were more and less dissociated. The core conceptual category of ‘the centre cannot hold’ thus also refers to the way in which the self as a centre of experience could not hold numerous discomfiting experiences of vulnerability and loss in awareness. The material which follows will elaborate these findings.

## 9.2 The Idea of Leaving

As was noted in Chapter 3, the ‘migration debate’ is a common feature of life in South Africa, and many participants referred to their debate of this question in the lead-up to the first democratic elections of 1994. Jerry’s response is typical:

*Cathy: So tell me the story of your migrating to Australia – and you can start wherever you like, wherever that feels appropriate.*

*Jerry: It's always hard to begin, I think, because you're never quite sure when the first kernel starts to actually take root. I mean, most of our generation always spoke about leaving: 'Do we stay? Do we go'? Because it was all quite ... quite a lot of turmoil. So it's hard to say when the exact - when the seed split and started to grow.*

Born in 1951, Jerry represents the generation of South Africans that witnessed all five of the waves of migration from South Africa, beginning in the 1950s, that Louw and Mersham (2001) have described, hence his reference to “*our generation*”. Migration was always ‘in the air’ for this group. For some of the younger participants, migration was ‘in the air’ too, but prior to it becoming their own debate, they experienced their parents grappling with the question of whether to stay or leave. Henry, born in 1963, spoke of this:

*Henry: I think the story of migration, for me, began a while before we migrated. I guess it wasn't a story that had a specific beginning but it was just part of my experience, part of growing up in South Africa with my family... we grew up in an environment where there was often talk about going somewhere else ... so we grew up in that kind of environment where there was both a commitment to sort of being – to living in South Africa, but at the same time having one eye on the exit door as well. So those are my earliest memories of that.*

Sandy, too, born in 1961, described this sense of growing up in an environment where the idea of migration was part of the context of being South African:

*Sandy: Well, I think that the idea of – like, the idea of migration, has always somewhere been in my consciousness from a very early age. And particularly to Australia, because my mother, she had a brother who migrated in the sixties, just after Sharpeville, and he came to Australia. And a lot of my first cousins have migrated over. When I was*

*growing up, they – for various reasons ... well some of it was political, and some of it was just personal you know, living in America or Israel or England. And so the notion of people leaving was always somewhere in my consciousness.*

Even so, in many cases the struggle of the parents around the decision of whether to leave or not did not immediately translate into the participants' own desire to emigrate. On the contrary, Mandela's release from prison signalled, for many, a spirit of optimism and hope for the future of South Africa. Sandy referred to this:

*Sandy: In the '80s, I didn't ever think I would emigrate. I thought it would be something – um, I would always stay in South Africa. And then certainly, once Mandela was released and things changed, there was no – you know, I thought I would stay, there wasn't any thought that I would leave.*

As time passed though, the majority of participants came to feel that the potential of the new South Africa was not being fulfilled in accordance with their expectations, and their thoughts turned to leaving – albeit not without a considerable degree of ambivalence and emotional wrestling with the decision, as Steve described:

*Steve: We always had a pad of paper in the house for that year – that year of awful tears and the drama of preparing ourselves to move. And there was the 'for' and 'against' column, and what South Africa provided us – positivity – and what Australia would provide for us. And there wasn't much difference between it.*

Among this group of participants, even those who had never before contemplated emigration noted certain factors about the new South Africa which brought the option into view:

*Roger: I think the first time it really came to my mind that there are options out there is when a very good friend of mine moved to Houston, and that's in 2003. So 2003 I went and visited them and it was the first time, really, I was aware that here's this wonderful friend of mine living in Houston. They drive around, they don't have security bars and they have better working hours and they just live - they have something that I don't have. They have something that I can't have in South Africa any more, in the sense of security and freedom - and just more sanity in a certain extent.*

For Roger, like most of the participants in this study, issues of safety, security and orderliness represented some of the push factors which contributed to his eventual decision to emigrate. I will present these factors in more detail at this point.

### **9.3 The Centre Cannot Hold: South Africa**

During the emigration phase of their migration experience, all but one of the participants held the conviction that post-apartheid South Africa was falling apart in ways that affected all aspects of their lives. I will present the exceptional or ‘deviant’<sup>39</sup> case of Sandy at a later stage, and will focus here on the majority view, which was that the country was now in incapable and corrupt hands. The problems were laid at the door of the black majority government, both explicitly and implicitly. While all agreed that apartheid was evil, and that democracy was a necessary and important stage for South Africa to reach, most felt that the new South Africa was not in fact a genuinely free and democratic country. In addition, they felt that the very fabric of society - as they had known it - was at risk, and that South Africa was on its way to the chaos and collapse that they generally ascribed to the rest of Africa.

For almost all the participants in this study, South Africa had become a centre that could not hold. Differentiated from their sense of themselves as unable to manage the changes that had manifested, it was their belief that the country itself would not survive as a viable place to live in the future. A number of themes that contributed to this perception emerged from the data.

#### ***9.3.1 “Violence every day”***

In their primary focus on the high level of crime and violence in South Africa, the participants in this study confirmed Crush’s (2013) assertion that migrants from South Africa inevitably

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<sup>39</sup> Exceptional or ‘deviant’ cases are those that do not accord with the dominant pattern or theoretical construction.

reference threats to life and security when naming the reasons they left. Jerry's comment – used as the heading for this section – is typical of the feeling that exists within this group. They have a sense that crime and violence have become quotidian experiences in South Africa since the early 1990s, and that it is an inescapable fact of life in post-apartheid South Africa. Most of the participants had personal experiences of crime to recount:

*Susan: I think, you know, living with crime and that kind of thing ... I've been exposed to the crime, my father's been exposed to crime, he was held up a few years ago and pistol-whipped, I was held up when I was sixteen ... so you know, I've had experience with exposure to crime and I think that's obviously also part of it.*

*Andre: We had a break-in or two, and after we got the visa to come to Australia we were the victims of an armed robbery – but by then the decision had already been made.*

Those who had not themselves been victims of crime inevitably knew of family and friends who had. In some cases, this served to reinforce or affirm their decision to leave:

*Sally: There were a lot of car hijackings, that sort of thing, just before I emigrated, that was when it was really rife. Um ... And you know, breaking into homes and I do remember living with my dad and being in the house that we lived in and having the alarm on, you know, always having the alarm on and being anxious to a degree ... And in the years that I've been away, there have been incidents that have occurred to my family of origin ... And some of my extended family. And does it affirm my leaving? Yes, it does! You know, obviously!*

Even as they named the high crime levels as the prominent factor in their decision to leave, it was not uncommon for participants to describe their experiences in ways that minimise and normalise the way in which crime pervades life in South Africa:

*Tina: I remember lying down one afternoon, and the dog started going ballistic - and there was some- a man in the kitchen, you know. The dog, thank God, scared him away. You know, little things like that ...*

Some were more extreme in describing the intensity of their feelings about crime, however:

*Gina: How much people don't want to talk about it, or you know, it's a bit of a label maybe that they don't want to use, it's a genocide that's going on there. It's nothing else but a genocide and it won't stop until there is nothing left. That's the African way.*

*Cathy: It's a strong word, 'genocide'.*

*Gina: Yes it's a genocide; people are getting slaughtered and the government doesn't care, because firstly those are not vulnerable people, they're people with money who can protect themselves ... But where there is a systematic eradication of a certain group of people, you're going to be very foolhardy indeed to stick around and wait for the bullets so you can dodge. It's genocide. People don't want to say that, they think it's a strong word, it's got political overtones ...but it's what it is.*

It should be noted that, in her discussion of crime in South Africa, Gina did not make explicit her perception that this is crime against whites, perpetrated by black people. Instead, she suggested that the targets are people with money. Nevertheless, her use of the term 'genocide' implied a racial element, since it is a term usually used to refer to the extermination of a national, racial, political, religious or cultural group. In addition, the racial distinction was apparent in her use of the term "*the African way*". In her interview, Gina went on to give examples to illustrate her contention, and in all of these the targets were white and the perpetrators black, and the government – a black majority government – was seen to be uncaring of the fate of these whites. I asked her to elaborate on her perception:

*Cathy: So why do you think that's happening? What makes...I mean – because, taking your comment 'African people are fond of children'. So when you say it is a systematic, planned extermination of a group of people, why? How do you see that?*

*Gina: I think due to political and historical circumstances, the white people were seen as the haves, and the black people as the have nots. So now that the protection of the white people by the government has been removed - because we're all equal now - and those systems of protection of the rural areas which were in operation during the apartheid government have been removed or dismantled - because they were seen as racist - I think it's just left those people vulnerable.*

In fact, most of the participants in this study tended not to be specific about their perception that the majority of crime in South Africa is perpetrated by black people against whites - although, when invited to elaborate on their perceptions, the racialized nature of these frequently became

evident, as Gina's did in the example above. Generally speaking, however, most exhibited a great deal of caution around using racial terms throughout the conversation, irrespective of subject matter. Susan's comment may imply that one of the reasons for this is a fear of being seen as racist:

*Susan: So I think, you know, one can't underestimate the violence, the fear and that ... how much that impacts on you. I don't think that's being racist, I think that's being realistic.*

Rather than use the term 'blacks' or 'black people', most participants spoke of 'Africans' in our interviews. Their usage of this term was very mixed though – sometimes they spoke with warmth about Africans and African-ness, and sometimes they used the term possessively, to describe themselves, as I will illustrate later. And regularly, they used the term to intimate chaos, corruption, savagery and disaster. This was especially evident when talking about the future of South Africa.

### ***9.3.2 "It's vibrant, it's noisy, it's chaos – and it's Africa"***

The perception of the new South Africa as a centre that cannot hold was frequently presented by these participants with reference to the rest of Africa – as Susan said: *"This has never worked in Africa"*. She was referring here to the possibility of a stable political future for the post-colonial countries in Africa. The perception that African countries fall apart under black rule, and the prediction that South Africa would go the same route, was a regular aspect of the participants' reasons for emigration:

*Terry: I was following Zimbabwe's progress, and at 20 years it started going pretty pear-shaped and at 40 it's pretty much a basket case. So I always thought South Africa would take longer, but there was no doubt in my mind that it would follow a similar path and who's to say when.*

*Steve: What I'd experienced north of South Africa as a kid, and seeing what had happened in post-independence Zim, Zambia, Mozambique - that was our influence.*

Although not widespread among these participants, some demonstrated an awareness of the incongruities of the colonial past – and yet, at the same time, maintained the sort of view that has been dubbed Afropessimism (Evans, 2011):

*Jerry: But in the older South Africa, what happened is - there were two South Africas: there was the very colonial, the ordered leafy suburbs that dwelt alongside the other - the townships - that nobody ever saw. And I struggled with that sometimes, when I started working in the townships, because I'd drive from my beautiful leafy suburb, and just over the hill out of sight, there was cheek-by-jowl squatters and chaos. But you could always come back, out of that, to the ordered world and settle down for a while. But I realised that, with time, that's all going to meld into one. There's not - the vibrancy and the chaos will take over - as it should; that's the natural progression of things. It will get there.*

The sense of ‘things falling apart’ referred to a number of aspects of life in post-apartheid South Africa. Many, especially those with children, referenced the education system. Susan’s view was typical:

*Susan: I think you don't know about the standard of education or things like that. Having children ... you know, I believe the schools are good and like ... but I just ... there's part of me ... I feel like there's an uncertainty around that, there's no guarantee that things are gonna stay ... you know, that way, and university I know, the standard's really lowered now, like, when I was there now, everyone passed matric, you know, that kind of thing, they've really lowered the standard of education there, like I know that for a fact, and that concerns me.*

Roger also noted the problems in the education system in South Africa, but felt that it was the lack of education on the part of those in government that was a direct cause of things falling apart:

*Roger: You have people taking decisions - I don't know if I should say - but take the current president of the country, he hasn't finished school! How can you have someone that didn't even finish their own schooling be the leader of a country? You need education! Suddenly he's the president of the country because he was a freedom fighter! I do understand the whole freedom fighting and all those kind of things and the atrocities of the past - I have no problem with that and I don't say that - I'm not trying to say that anything was right. But the fact is to have a good - it's like a business - a good country,*

*a good business; you need a good leader and good leadership. There's so many examples of a lack of leadership leads to things falling apart. So I just found that the people taking decisions had no knowledge whatsoever. They didn't have the background; they didn't have the understanding to see the consequences of their decisions.*

It was not uncommon for the participants in this study, like Roger in this case, to decry many aspects of the current situation in South Africa, with little or no reference to the past. While he acknowledged past atrocities, Roger made no link between what he saw as the educational shortcomings of the current leaders and the inferior education that was provided for people of colour under apartheid.

Andre, too, while he noted affirmative action as part of the reason for instability and decline in South Africa, made no link between this and the inequalities of the past:

*Andre: The future that I saw was that the children would have to go overseas.*

*Cathy: Why?*

*Andre: To get a proper university education, to get a proper future for themselves. I didn't see any future for my kids in South Africa ... My vision of the future for children is, specifically my two, I can't see that there is a bright future for the two of them ... Afrikaner culture is pushed off the plate. It's not even ... In the 1970s it was the middle of the universe as far as we were concerned, and now with affirmative action, the centre of the plate is Africanisation, and the whites and Afrikaners will fall by the wayside, Afrikaners first and then the whites.*

The issue of corruption was seen as one of the dominant contributors to the view of South Africa as a country falling apart, and was seen as endemic to Africa. Speaking of the feeding scheme she established in the townships, Linda noted the impact of perceived corruption:

*Linda: After a year I'd sort of let it go, but I know that towards that time we were hearing that the Bakers' bread would stop off - load off half here - before it went to the townships. That's Africa, isn't it?*

Jerry noted the disillusionment he felt at the level of corruption he encountered:

*Jerry: After '94, I started to become increasingly disillusioned, when I actually just saw the - some of the level of corruption that was going on. The influence sometimes that was put on me, personally, to award contracts for political reasons rather than - you know, this was public money and my role was to make sure it was properly spent. And I would get sometimes veiled threats to say, you will award it to my friend who has supported me, or ...*

And Gina indicated her frustration and helplessness:

*Gina: You're not going to achieve anything there, so either you see it every day and you torture yourself, or you leave ... because it's not going to change. It's just the African nature that the ones in power will grab and look after themselves, and their cronies ... You can see it sliding, and you can see it declining. You're not doing anything - because you can't do anything, but you can't stomach it. You can't face that poverty and suffering on a daily ... If there's a little glimmer of hope, a little glimmer you can say okay we're getting there. We're achieving something, slowly but surely, you know, a lot needs to be done but we're making progress, we can mark our progress, we're achieving something - but we're not! Have we eradicated poverty in any way? Have we improved the education system, the much criticised apartheid education system? Have we maintained the stuff we've got? Wouldn't you think that the first, first principle would be 'look, what we've inherited isn't perfect, it's not the way we want it, but we'll do our level best to maintain that and to improve on it'? No, you trash it and you replace it with something worse?! That makes you angry. That really makes you feel defeated.*

With the strong sense in place that post-apartheid South Africa was on its way to ruin, participants felt that there would be no place for themselves or their children in the future. They felt that the country, the geographical and political centre, was both unwilling and unable to hold them safely and securely, and in the manner to which they had become accustomed. Their whiteness was seen as an intrinsic element of this, as the following section demonstrates.

### 9.3.3 *“I think, being white, that the colour of your skin really is a problem”*

Both implicitly and explicitly, the participants’ belief that there would be no future for them or their children in South Africa was associated with their being white people in a country that was perceived to be skewed towards the interests of black people:

*Tina: I wanted to give my child a better future. Everyone was saying, oh, there's no future for a white child in South Africa - which in a way has come true because people say that to me now. I've got friends there that have got sons who are 17, and they say what are their children going to do? When I was there I was with this friend and he was saying to me that like if you're young, and black, and male in South Africa, you've got everything for you. Now he's got twin sons who are 17, and he says he doesn't know what his kids are going to do.*

Even when they displayed some awareness of the historical context that has motivated initiatives for affirmative action and black empowerment in South Africa, it was nevertheless evident in many cases that they did not see themselves as having been beneficiaries of the apartheid system. Rather, they felt that they were victims of an unjust order. Andre, for instance, displaced responsibility onto previous generations:

*Andre: My children would keep on paying for the misdeeds of my parents and my grandparents for ever and a day and I didn't see any future for the kids really. That was my main reason for coming to Australia.*

Carl felt that both his whiteness and his record of having been in the military, and active in the fight against the black resistance movements, were unfairly held against him:

*Carl: I'd done very well. They loved what I'd done but obviously the ruling party carried more weight for the fellow comrades than what a boerseun<sup>40</sup> would carry. So I felt annoyed at that. That was the first time that it crossed my mind that yeah, I need to leave. The guys in the civil service wouldn't take me because that was the first department which was completely transformed to Black Economic Empowerment. They saw where I'd been - undercover - so there was no way a boertjie<sup>41</sup> who had fought against them was going to be employed. So I was just stranded. I said to my wife, 'it's not a case that I'm*

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<sup>40</sup> Afrikaans boy

<sup>41</sup> Afrikaner

*not good enough, it's just a case it's a different environment we're playing in now. It's not going to be good enough ever. I can't transform myself into a black man, an Indian man or a coloured man. It's as simple as that'.*

Even Sandy, who evidenced a greater ability than any of the other participants to hold conflictual aspects of her experience in awareness, remembered a comment that blacks might be more entitled to a future in South Africa than whites:

*Sandy: I grew up in Boksburg, I was Jewish, South African, white, so the feeling of marginalization wasn't an unfamiliar feeling. It was just a different group of marginalized things. So in that complex way yes, one does belong to South Africa, but there's also that marginalization of South Africa. I remember when I was in high school, my brother always used to say 'You know if we were black, we'd have much more of a future here and we'd belong'. Like he was sort of saying, 'I wish I was black, you know, there'd be a nice future for us here'.*

What makes her exceptional in this group however, is the absence of projection and splitting of her experience. She laid no blame at the door of the country or the government for the fear and anxiety that she later came to experience and which prompted her to leave. While fully aware of the complexity of South Africa, Sandy located 'the centre cannot hold' in the situatedness of her self within the environment, rather than seeing only the country as the locus of instability.

#### **9.4 The Centre Cannot Hold: The Self**

In describing the experiences that led to her decision to emigrate, Sandy noted her own propensity towards anxiety, and the way in which this became exacerbated by the escalation of crime and violence in South Africa. She was the exceptional or 'deviant' case in this group, however, in the clarity with which she saw this as her own lack of wherewithal to hold steady in the face of external threat, especially after the birth of her first child and the responsibility that she carried for his wellbeing:

*Sandy: What happened was, after I had my first son – that was in 1996, I was living in Johannesburg, and my level of anxiety, personal anxiety, just became very, very high.*

*So I was, I mean I think I've always been a bit of an anxious person, but I just remember feeling incredibly vulnerable. Like, I had post-natal depression, but in addition to that, there was this terrible fear of... of ... for safety. And I remember some nights standing up and while everyone was asleep, I'd be waiting at the window, looking out the window, out of this barred window, just on guard, sort of thing ... and, so there was this increased anxiety around having ... once I had a child, I sort of felt, if I was so vulnerable, and I felt so scared, how was I gonna protect him?*

For all the participants, the sense of the self as a centre that cannot hold was prevalent in the period prior to their emigration. Many spoke of feelings of danger and threat, and of their longing for a sense of safety, security, and freedom. Importantly though, and unlike Sandy, the sense of a self under threat was causally related to their location within a geographical and political centre that could not hold, rather than seeing it as an interaction between an unsettled self and an unsettled environment. Henry, for instance, also associated the onset of extreme anxiety with the birth of his first child, but related this only to the prevailing mood and atmosphere within the country, rather than adding his own dynamics about having a child into the construction of his experience:

*Henry: My eldest daughter was born in 1995; so what's that, a year after Mandela was released – and I think that was really the first time we started thinking about it. I can't remember any specific incident but it was a period where we felt very paranoid. I think there was a kind of - it was a period of darkness – it was a great period of sort of upheaval, and change, and unknown stuff. I don't know if that coincided with increased crime or a sense of it. But I just remember having my daughter, and I was working in the city and just feeling really worried about her safety, and having to go through the whole process of putting up fences and – I guess just feeling really unsafe.*

Like Henry, Tina also associated her desire to emigrate with the birth of her first child, and the coincidence of this with an experience of crime. But she, too, did not consider that her own possible fears and doubts about the responsibility of being a parent may have contributed to her sense of vulnerability:

*Tina: Well, we were never going to leave Africa, ever. I'll never forget - like staying was something - we'll never, ever leave. Then I had a baby, I had my first son - and my*

*husband was hijacked. It was actually quite freaky because there I was inside bathing the baby - and we just decided, no.*

For some, even the idea of having children in South Africa was felt to be impossible. Again though, there was no association between these fears and their own apprehensiveness about themselves as parents, even though this is a common affect to experience at the thought of raising children. Sally, for instance, thought primarily in terms of what the country would be able to provide for her and her future children:

*Sally: I didn't really think, long-term, that there would be a future for a young family in South Africa. At the time, I was anxious about the state of the country and the future that the country could provide for my children or for me.*

Her sense of her self as a centre that could hold seemed dependent on how the country could provide for her after the advent of democracy in 1994:

*Sally: There was a sense of uncertainty about how things would pan out, and that made me uncomfortable. So ... So even though I was very happy that now there was gonna be equal opportunities and there were, you know - black people weren't gonna be oppressed and that they were to have an opportunity to vote, it still ... Um ... That was great for them, I suppose, but what did it mean for me? Do you know what I'm saying - what was the spin-off for me?*

Some of the participants described how the anxiety and stress of living in post-apartheid South Africa was impacting their physical and mental health, and their fears that they would not be able to hold in this regard. In each case, though, they did not discuss how their inherent resilience, or lack thereof, factored into their experiences. Roger, referring to his attempts to lodge documents with government departments, explained:

*Roger: A simple thing that you should do once, you end up doing eight times. Now to do something eight times takes time. You need to re-do, you need to copy the documentation, prepare the application, all the things get signatures - those kind of things. So you end up spending 10 times the amount of time on something that should be simple and straightforward. My train of thought was I can't live like that - I mean at that stage I was 32 years old, I had heart palpitations, I was overweight, I just realised*

*– I mean, I went and saw my doctor. My doctor said, your health is going to give in - something will have to give at the end of the day.*

Andre felt that his sense of himself as a moral and principled man was jeopardised by living in post-apartheid South Africa:

*Andre: People don't follow rules anymore. The speed limit is 120. You go at whatever you want to and hope you don't get caught. If you do get caught you pay the traffic officer something and he will let you go. So there's a sense of lawlessness, if I can call it that. Everybody was guilty of that - me too - and it irritated me ... Something that really, it keeps amazing me is that although Australia is very secular society, I think that the moral standards here are a lot higher than in South Africa, where we are purportedly a Christian society, the white people at least.*

In addition, it was important for Andre to feel that he was making a contribution to society, and he experienced it as a significant blow to his sense of self when he concluded that his contribution was unwelcome in South Africa:

*Andre: Well, I was always very patriotic. I grew up in an Afrikaans environment. I naturally ... when elections happened in 1994 there was a bit of anxiety, but then after 1994 things seemed to go well. We won the World Cup in '95 and I was really, um ... I felt that I had something to um ... contribute to the new South Africa and I did my best to do so. My father is a very conservative man and on Sunday at the braai he used to complain about this and that and I always used to say, 'Dad, you know, when the white people came to Africa there were natives attacking them, the mosquitoes bit them and the snakes bit them, that's the way it is. We live in Africa. We have to make do'. But after a while, I think I just got tired of it. I thought there was nothing I could contribute.*

As with Andre, the thwarting of the need to feel valued, to feel that they were making a contribution, was a significant factor in many of the participants' experience of threat to their sense of self:

*Roger: I didn't feel welcome there anymore. Wherever I went I felt confronted with - people don't want to deal with me, people don't want to - they don't want to have you. I'm not really phrasing it ... uh ... People don't want you to be there anymore. You're contributing, you're working so hard and I think that's what I felt - you work so hard, but you go to the tax office and people just - they assist you, but they're sort of offish.*

*Now again, do you write it off to culture or do you write it off to, 'They really don't want me'? I mean, they feel ... but there's a bad energy that you're confronted with. But those kind of things made you feel it's not me, there's a better life out there - it's not good for my health, it's not really who I am. I don't want to go through those kind of experiences; I don't want to have a day that has those kind of events in them. You start feeling that it's not me: what I'm going through on a day to day basis - maybe that's that foreign feeling - is not who I am.*

Roger's experience of assault on his sense of self contained no reference to the way in which his manner of responding may have contributed to his experiences: his innate human capacity for aggression and destructiveness did not form part of his evaluation. Rather, his sense that his centre might not hold related only to the impact of external factors. Steve, too, while demonstrating some awareness of the role his psyche played in his experience, felt that this was primarily a result of the impact of external forces:

*Steve: Being unstable I think is a ... is something I experienced as well. You don't - you're not aware of it at the time - it has a huge effect on your psyche. Nothing stays the same ... I think that - in my psyche, nothing stays the same - and it's usually not for the good, either.*

Jerry was more aware of his inherent vulnerability and could thus note the interaction of this with his experiences in the post-apartheid present. He felt the similarity of the traumatic impact of having served in the army some 30 years before, with what he was experiencing in working in the black townships prior to his emigration, and he began to doubt whether he could endure:

*Jerry: It was getting trickier and trickier and trickier in the lead-up to '94. It was getting very difficult, the townships. And I was getting quite tense and quite - otherwise. It was - I think it was really starting to impact on me. (Pause) ... Maybe I should add that I served in the army and I was in Namibia, Angola in '76, Operation Savannah<sup>42</sup> and all of that, and I'd had a - that's a different story. I don't think it necessarily relates to this, although it may do, but...*

*Cathy: We might come back to that...*

*Jerry: Yeah.*

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<sup>42</sup> Operation Savannah was the name given to the South African Defence Force's 1975–1976 covert intervention in the Angolan Civil War.

*Cathy: ... because I think there is something interesting about your history as a South African – for a male, that includes the military, in many cases.*

*Jerry: Well - but what it impacted here was ... I was never formally diagnosed with it but I think I had - it affected me really badly; it affected my marriage. I went on quite a self-destructive path. Now I found myself working in the townships with, once again, violence every day, and it started to actually hook back into that. And I started to see some rather nasty warning signs that I thought, I don't know how long I can work in this environment. And I just thought - I reached a point where I said, I can't do this for much longer. I'm going to burn out. I'm going to either flip or just lose it one day.*

For Jerry, the situation carried an additional complexity that impacted his sense of self. For he was very aware that his work in the black townships was an opportunity to assuage his guilt at what he had done while serving in the army. But at the same time, he felt a sense of futility that ate away at his attempts to make reparation:

*Jerry: And ... dare I say it - I don't know whether this is a common thread with others - but I know I felt (pause) ... okay - it's hard to (pause) ... on the one hand I felt guilt about serving in the army in South Africa. On the other hand, I've justified it and said, 'no, I don't feel any guilt because what they did was just as bad as what we did'. But there was always a conflict, and I know in the lead-up to '94, part of what I felt was, 'I can contribute to rebuilding. I can make amends'. Whatever it was, whether it was right or wrong - I'm not going to argue that point now - but I supported something that I ... I intuitively knew was wrong, be it flawed, whatever it was - but I knew it was wrong. And here was my chance ... And then just to see sometimes the way it wasn't - did I start to feel a sense of a lack of appreciation? And I think, yes, I did, because some of the schemes that we started to put in started to deteriorate. They were never maintained. They were never looked after. That sort of sense of disillusionment started to eat away at me as well. I thought, 'here I am: I'm being hopelessly idealistic, that I can actually offer this'. I'm just - sometimes I would come home and I'd say to my wife, 'I'm wasting my time'. That definitely ate away at - your sense of purpose, your sense of meaning was impacted by that.*

Jerry's account of the role of guilt in the colouring of his experiences in South Africa was somewhat unusual among this group of participants. There were instances where uncomfortable feelings such as this one played a role in the decision to emigrate, but these were less conscious,

and emerged only in the course of our interview, as things that had never been thought before. Also, some did not emerge explicitly but were evident in the latent content of the narratives. In this sense, these were factors that the self, as centre, could not hold in conscious awareness.

### **9.5 The Centre Cannot Hold: Dissociated Factors<sup>43</sup>**

As I discussed in Chapter 3, Griffiths and Prozesky (2010) proposed that, in addition to the manifest factors of crime and affirmative action, South Africans have unacknowledged and unarticulated reasons for emigrating as well. Analysis of the data in this study revealed this to be true in most cases presented here – Jerry’s conscious awareness of his guilt and Sandy’s awareness of her inherent anxiety, and the role it played in her decision to emigrate, were unusual in this regard. For the rest, there were dissociated factors that also shaped the decision to emigrate, and these factors were usually in the form of painful or difficult feelings and emotions<sup>44</sup>.

In some cases, these painful feelings made their way into consciousness during the course of our conversation: in Chapter 7 I demonstrated in detail how the feeling of regret made its way into Sally’s awareness. Although she was not conscious of it at the time of her emigration, her desire to escape an enmeshed relationship with her mother was an integral part of her decision to leave:

*Sally: There was also personal reasons why I needed to leave, I ... I was quite enmeshed with my mother, who was very unwell, um ... And ... And I think it had taken its toll on me. Um ... So ... Yeah, I probably thought this was a good opportunity to kind of break ... break that ... break that relationship, or break the level of dependence from her and my care ... caretaking of her.*

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<sup>43</sup> In using this term, I am referring to the defence mechanism that acts as a protection against conscious awareness of the conflict, shame or other painful experience that is part of everyone’s life to some degree or other. Such feelings may become available to consciousness under certain circumstances and within certain intersubjective fields, as I described in Chapter 5.

<sup>44</sup> Following Damasio and Carvalho (2013), emotions are general affective phenomena which may be conscious or unconscious. Feelings derive from emotions, and are the subjective experience (including the somatic experience) of emotions, and therefore conscious.

*Cathy: Mmm*

*Sally: Soooo ... That was kind of all timeous in terms of, I needed to ... I had this opportunity to go and study overseas, but it also provided other opportunities on an emotional level, I suppose too ... But it was very much at a very unconscious level, you know, wanting to get away from that relationship? The impetus for leaving was 'cos I was going to study. The other issue of the relationship, basically, it was ... That wasn't why I left, in my mind, you know what I mean? But probably it was there at a very unconscious level.*

*Cathy: Mmm*

*Sally: So when the opportunity presented itself, I took it, it made sense to me.*

The feeling of regret that Sally became conscious of during our interview, while also dissociated prior to our discussion, was something which she came to experience *after* her emigration. At the time of her emigration, though, it would be reasonable that she may have been conflicted about a need to 'break' her mother's dependence on her, and that guilt would also quite likely have been part of such a conflict, especially as her mother's deterioration and death followed soon after Sally left. When I suggested this, however, Sally denied guilt: and yet she did not deny the feeling specifically, but rather the use of what is, to her, an uncomfortable word:

*Cathy: So ... is some of that feeling – would it, would ... guilt be too strong?*

*Sally: I don't use the word guilt, necessarily. It's not ... It doesn't sit well with me; it's not the kind of word I would use to describe that feeling.*

Whether guilt<sup>45</sup> was part of her emotional experience or not, it seems unlikely that there would not have been very painful emotions accompanying a decision to escape her relationship with her mother. Since the need to get away from that relationship was dissociated at the time, all accompanying emotions and feelings would necessarily have been dissociated too.

It is not unusual for emigration to be associated with difficult family relationships in the country of origin. Altschuler (2006b) has noted the way in which migration sometimes reflects a need to escape difficult family relationships. Susan also mentioned that the need to get away from a difficult family situation played a role, unconsciously, in her decision to emigrate. Unlike Sally,

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<sup>45</sup> See Section 11.5.1 for report of later developments in this aspect of Sally's experience.

though, she displayed no difficult feelings about this during the course of our conversation. On the contrary, she affirmed her need to be away from her family:

*Susan: I think that for me actually it's better for me to be living away from my family. So I think that's actually ... was perhaps more subconscious, I think, for me at the time. But I think, in retrospect I think that's probably better for me if I live in a different place from my family. Which is quite different to some people's experience – they have to be, have to have family. So I think for me emotionally it's better to have that separation. So I think that probably was more of a ... what's the word ... more of a factor in me emigrating than anything else, perhaps. You know like, not even consciously at the time, but needing to be separate from the family.*

What was more conflicted, for Susan, was her emerging awareness, during our interview, of the painful conflict she felt between 'abandoning' the country just as democracy arrived, and her fears for the future, and whether *having* fears for the future made her 'racist':

*Susan: It's almost like, you feel like it's almost racist. 'Cos like it's rather silly but you're leaving when there's a rainbow nation, so like ... Why're you doing that? Why're you leaving when actually everything's good? Like, it's right now, you know, it was wrong before? So in some ways, it feels like you're colluding with apartheid! I don't know, like you're colluding with apartheid by leaving when apartheid finishes? I suppose in some way one feels ... it's not nice to think that ... But I just wanted to study overseas, I just wanted to get away, I don't know if it was actually ... yeah, it's hard to explain, but I don't think it was so much of a ... yeah, like thinking about what was happening politically? I mean I think there was, if I think about it now, at that time there was a lot of talk about that there was going to be a civil war, and there was gonna be ... like a lot of people said, 'this has never worked in Africa' and whatever ... so there was a lot of concern about how this was gonna ... there was lots of uncertainty, and maybe, probably, I imagine that was also in my mind as well, like it's very uncertain. But I think that, to be honest, and I hadn't really thought about it, but um ... one doesn't really think about these things till you talk about it (laughs) ... but um, I think that I would be afraid to live there as well, I think I would be afraid for my children's sake, and my safety. I think ... I'm ok there, when I'm there, but I think there's definitely a feeling edginess and discomfort around, just my safety and my ... yeah, what you take for granted to some extent living here. And I think the fact that I was held up when I was 16, and that was quite young, and that was quite long ago ... So I think, you know, one can't underestimate the violence, the fear and that, how much that impacts on you. I*

*don't think that's being racist, I think that's being realistic. So I think that, you know, yeah, I've had experience of that myself and it does make a lot of people wanna leave, I've heard that before.*

Susan's dawning awareness of her painful conflict is clearly evident in this extract, in phrases like "*maybe, probably, I imagine*", and in her statement that she had not thought these things before. One of the painful feelings that may have been part of her unconscious conflict could be shame, for while she did not use the word shame, it is implicit, I believe, in her comment:

*Susan: Why're you leaving when actually everything's good? Like, it's right now, you know, it was wrong before? So in some ways, it feels like you're colluding with apartheid!*

Henry was explicit in noting the shame he felt about leaving the new South Africa:

*Henry: Well, it was very, you know, we felt very - I guess my wife and I felt - and I - I have to talk for myself - but I felt ashamed really. I felt it was very hard to talk to friends. In fact a very good friend of ours, we had an episode where we didn't even tell him we were going, it was so difficult to talk about.*

*Cathy: Why?*

*Henry: I think I felt like we were betraying them. Or they would maybe think less of us, for leaving. Yeah. So, again, it was quite an ambivalent, conflicted thing, to say goodbye.*

I noted earlier in this chapter that there were aspects of self-experience that could not be held in conscious awareness, and that there were thus elements that were more and less dissociated.

Susan's sense of shame, I propose, is more dissociated; Henry's is less. Although he was somewhat tentative in his description of his feeling, using words like "*I think*" and "*I guess*", for the most part he was explicit in naming how the feeling of shame was part of his emigration experience.

Shame and guilt were evident in Andre's account of his emigration, too, but towards the more dissociated end of the spectrum. One of the first things Andre told me about himself was that he was very patriotic, which in his terms meant:

*Andre: I'm a South African, I'm South African born. I'm part of the white tribe of Africa<sup>46</sup>. South Africa is my country and you have to make it work. Patriotic in that sense. I support my national rugby team, I support the soccer team. I support the South African instead of anybody else regardless of my liking for the person or the team. If it's South Africa then I'm behind it. I'm not sure whether I'm phrasing it correctly, but patriotism in the sense that we are all South Africans and South Africans have to stand together and we make do, whether there are problems or not.*

*Cathy: So, ok, what I'm hearing you say and you must correct me if this is not what you intended to say, but what I'm hearing you say is that for you, patriotism expresses itself more towards ... it's very much about the country, irrespective of who is in power or what the politics are. For you, it's about 'this is my country, this is my land. This is where I'm born and bred'. Is that what you are saying?*

*Andre: Exactly, yeah.*

At the end of our interview, Andre stated that he wanted to ask me some questions:

*Andre: Can you see the difference between when people moved, whether they moved shortly after the democratic South Africa or recently, in the themes that you pick up?*

*Cathy: Um ...?*

*Andre: The people that left just after the new South Africa sort of feel that they betrayed something, that they should rather have stayed, whereas people that recently moved find more justification in the fact that they did try to stick it out and then decided to make the move.*

*Cathy: Now that's really, really interesting because you know I hadn't thought about that. So it's actually so interesting that you ask me that question. That's something I need to go and look at.*

*Andre: I am sure you will find that people in my position said, well we tried for 15 or 16 years to make it work. We decided that we were not making a contribution or we feel alienated in our own country. We feel more justified in our move to Australia, whereas people that moved shortly before or shortly after '94 might feel that maybe we should have given it another shot, we're not sure.*

In my reflexive process after the interview, I commented: *This is an interesting angle – where does this come from? I haven't even thought about this – but HE must have!! He must have been asking himself some questions - he's so articulate and clear in this - I wonder why? As I*

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<sup>46</sup> Some Afrikaners use this phrase to emphasize the fact that they consider themselves indigenous to Africa.

processed further, I related this to his strong patriotism, such a firmly-held element of his self-experience. It appeared to me that Andre may have found it difficult to reconcile his desire to leave South Africa with his sense that “*South Africans have to stand together and we make do, whether there are problems or not*”, and that this internal conflict may have meant that certain self-states may not have been able to stand alongside each other. Painful feelings of guilt, shame and betrayal may thus have become dissociated, and his formulation of the difference between earlier and later migrants may represent his later justification for his decision to emigrate.

Andre’s reference to people feeling that they were “*not making a contribution*” or feeling “*alienated in their own country*” was confirmed in many of the interviews for this study, as I noted above – although this was not dependent on when the participants had emigrated. There were also instances where feelings of alienation, rejection and failure were more dissociated than those reported in the previous section, and thus they may be viewed as some of the elements of experience that the self could not hold in awareness during the emigration process.

Terry, for example, described his self-experience growing up during the years of full-blown apartheid. He grew up on a station in a rural area, and the community to which he refers here were the local black people:

*Terry: I liken myself, to a large extent, like the royal family. They are put in this position ... I was born into this family who happened to be the ... the fiefdom or whatever it is, of this community of, let's say ten thousand living around, that would come down to use the post – we were everything, post office, bakery, bank ... uh ... you could get medicines there, you could get hardware for your ploughing, and we'd trade skins for money and then they would buy stuff in the shop. So we were our own little village, and here I am, this little prince living here.*

Later in his emigration story he described the business he tried to establish in post-apartheid South Africa – one in which he employed 20 of the local black people. Although Terry did not

articulate the link, it seems that he still saw himself as a benefactor to society, but failing because of his refusal to be “hard” and “strict”:

*Terry: So, the committed Christian in me said ‘Look, it’s - it’s a contribution I’m making to society. If it goes pear-shaped well, what the hell, I’ve learned something. But hopefully they can see the concept and it can go well!’ But uh ... it didn’t work out and interest rates didn’t help either. When I made the decision in November we were paying 27% interest and I had borrowed money for the business, for the acreage we were on, we had implements there, I had vehicles in the business and ... It was just ridiculous, and I decided to pull the plug and within two months we were gone. I sold it to one of my local opposition companies and just packed up and moved on. And it was a pretty good decision in the end.*

*Cathy: So was it primarily financial? Because it sounds as though you’d taken the position that you wouldn’t do all the security, the cages and inspections and – and that sort of approach?*

*Terry: I just knew that I had tried this approach and it didn’t work. I wasn’t of the nature ... I had a quick flashback to all the successful people in the area, and how hard they were as businessmen, and how strict they were in terms of security and all that, and I realized that wasn’t me, and I knew that I couldn’t change or adapt to survive in that environment, it was better for me to go.*

*Cathy: It felt to you like you would have to become a kind of policeman, as it were, over the staff, work them hard in order to be successful?*

*Terry: Well it was mainly stopping the - they call it seepage – product disappearing in things like garbage bags and out windows and that sort of stuff. And yeah, the seepage would have to be stopped and I had no way of ... it was just not part of my concept.*

Noting the juxtaposition of Terry’s failure in business and his immediate decision to leave the country, it seems plausible to link a sense of failure with a desire to leave. And given his early history of having been at the head and centre of his world, there is an added, but dissociated, weight to his comment that he could not “change or adapt to survive”: post-apartheid South Africa has required whites to make significant changes away from the dominance and privilege of their apartheid history. And yet, as Vice (2010) proposed, such ways of being-in-the-world are not so easily discarded, especially where the sense of entitlement is embedded at the level of the unconscious. Thus, an ingrained sense of privilege may well drive some whites “to settle in

a region more likely to remain culturally congruent and supportive of white identity” (Steyn, 2001, p.156) – as Terry commented:

*Terry: Since I was three, I had to make decisions, am I part of the system or not? And every time the decision was to stick with the palefaces and go with the first world. And um ... that's what's happened, I've ... I've always found that I go with my roots and my uh ... yeah, my natural instinct is to go with staying with my clan!*

Terry was not the only participant in this study with a sense of having been a benefactor to the oppressed black population in apartheid South Africa. As discussed in Chapter 3, however, such humanitarianism in the South African context is difficult to separate from a need to preserve a position of superiority, or a sense of one's own goodness. In such cases then, the rejection of or lack of appreciation for one's largesse may constitute an unconscious injury to the sense of self, and might constitute part of a painful conflict of feelings. Linda expressed such a conflict:

*Linda: I developed this little training course for black people in the townships. And I remember - at the end of the very first course that I did - I remember one woman stood up and started to sing. Then every one of them, one at a time, would stand up and sing in this absolute magnificent harmony. And to me, that's Africa. That just really sits with me. It was the most beautiful thing. They were singing a thank you song - they were singing it to me.*

It is pertinent that black people were singing their thanks to her, for as she later noted, describing her feelings about being in Australia:

*Linda: Quite often I've said to people, you know, I need to get into a place where I'm giving; I just want to be in a place where I'm giving, you know ... because I just feel connected to someone who needs a bit of help and whatever. So in leaving, some of my strengths - humility and that kind of stuff - went.*

In the year just prior to her emigration from South Africa, Linda made an observation regarding the township people she had been helping:

*Linda: They didn't want to use the resources we had set up – they wanted to do their own. So we taught them how to - somebody went to Cape Town to learn how to run bank*

*accounts and to learn how to save money, even if it's just 10 cents a week. So we set up quite a - there was quite a lot done there. But, I don't know, after a year I'd sort of let it go, but I know that towards that time we were hearing that the Bakers' bread would stop off load off half here before it went to the townships. That's Africa, isn't it?*

*Cathy: How did you feel about that? When you saw that or when you heard that, what was that like for you?*

*Linda: Well, I was - I think I got a bit angry at the time because I thought, what was this all about? I started questioning what it was all about and I got angry. Because part of me says, well, that's Africa, we know. My biggest thing was I had to stand surety for the money, that it wouldn't be misappropriated. So, while we had tight control of it, that was fine. But once we handed it over ...*

While Linda noted her need to be in control of township initiatives, she did not make the link between this need, the declining position of whites being 'in control' in post-apartheid South Africa, and her worry about the future, which comprised part of her decision to emigrate. Given her strong need to be in the position of giving to those in need, though, it is likely that a rejection of her assistance and control may have been painful for her, and may have been one of the factors, albeit unconscious, that contributed to her decision to leave.

Gina, too, had a strong sense of having been a benefactor in South Africa. In fact, her feeling was one of having been a custodian of both the land and the indigenous people:

*Gina: Afrikaners in particular, white South Africans, but Afrikaners in particular, see themselves, or traditionally saw themselves - perhaps less now, these kids less - as custodians, you know? You weren't there to rip off the land - which you could! You weren't there for the short haul, the quick buck. You have a connection, you know, to the land yes, but to the people. You're not there to gain something.*

Later in our conversation, Gina asked me why I was doing this study, and I replied:

*Cathy: I'm trying to build a picture of this post-apartheid migrant. Somebody who's lived through the change, who grew up in the country, grew up under a certain way of thinking, lived through a change and then left. What's that about?*

Although the “*what’s that about*” was expressed rhetorically, Gina linked to a memory of her son and the black boy who had been his friend. She went on:

*Gina: The war you wage is not against black people - the war you wage is against ignorance, against black nationalism, against instigation, against corruption, against idiocy, against the abuse of power against black people. Because the white people can speak up, can hire a lawyer, can fend for themselves but the black people can't. To me that's the worst part - that you're sitting there, you're allowing those abuses to continue, you can't do anything about it. The white people have Solidariteit<sup>47</sup> who fights for them. But the disenfranchised black people, they have nothing, they're poor, they're uneducated. You can't stand by and see that happen. That is ... perhaps that was my deciding moment, perhaps that's what pushed me. I can't face that ineptitude, that total helplessness, that total disinterestedness in the suffering! People don't have a clue; they don't know what poverty is here. My clothes, my stuff that I was going to chuck out, that other people chuck for the council ... that goes back home! I don't take a suitcase to South Africa. You can't just abandon them.*

It seems that Gina came to a new insight about her emigration in the course of our conversation – “*perhaps that was my deciding moment, perhaps that’s what pushed me*”. She noted her strong desire to take care of the “*poor disenfranchised black people*”, and felt powerless to do so in the post-apartheid era. But Gina appears not to have made the transition to a post-apartheid South Africa in her sense of herself – for black people are no longer disenfranchised in the new South Africa, and may choose a different process than she could envisage for them from a custodial position: the demand is for more than just old clothes. Possibly, then, it is Gina who needed there to be a disenfranchised group for her to be a custodian of – as she said earlier, this was what she was raised for, and what gave her a sense of pride as an Afrikaner. And it may be that the thwarting of this important but dissociated need shaped her decision to emigrate, in addition to the factors held in conscious awareness.

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<sup>47</sup> A Christian-based trade union.

## 9.6 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the results pertaining to the emigration process of the participants in this study. As has been illustrated in Chapter 3, the perception of South Africa as an unsafe country with a high crime rate and instances of corruption is not an unrealistic view. Feelings of vulnerability and anxiety are thus understandable, in this context, and are unsurprising contributors to a desire to emigrate. However, as the present chapter illustrates, there were additional layers of painful and uncomfortable feelings, both more and less conscious, which were part of the self-experience of the participants, and thus part of the emigration process.

These additional layers of the emigration process comprised three dimensions in which the core conceptual category, ‘the centre cannot hold’, was expressed: South Africa as geographic and political centre; the cohesiveness of the self as centre of experience; and painful feelings and emotions unable to be held as conscious self-states. The convergence of these factors, which found both conscious and unconscious expression, took place in the context of the idea of emigration, and resulted in the decision to leave. The chapter which follows will describe the decision and leaving process.

## 10. THE CENTRE CANNOT HOLD: LEAVING

### 10.1 Introduction

In the migration literature surveyed as part of this study (Chapter 2), the migration process comprises emigration and immigration stages: I did not encounter any work that examined the actual process of leaving. And yet, in this study, this stage of the experience had a number of significant features that make detailed examination worthwhile.

For most of the participants, the final decision to leave South Africa and the actual process of leaving had many manic characteristics: generally, it was a quick and chance-filled experience. Feelings and emotions were dissociated, subsumed by the activity and sense of adventure that came to characterise the flight from what had become an unsettled reality. Vulnerability was thus denied and the experience of depressive anxiety and guilt defended against. Notably, this is the way that the manic defence has been theorised to operate (Altman, 2005; Aron & Starr, 2013). Even those who had been debating the possibility of leaving for some time frequently made their final decision in an impulsive or reactive way. And it was frequently by chance that Australia was the final destination, many arriving sight-unseen, or on the basis of a very short visit, thus suggesting that pull-factors played very little role in the decision to emigrate.

As I continue to track the way in which the core conceptual category ‘the centre cannot hold’ manifested throughout the migration process, the snap-like rapidity, and the emotional disconnection that accompanied the leaving dimension of this process expresses the way in which these participants lost contact with their historical, geographical and emotional subjectivity in the moment. In other words, a centred and grounded way of being-in-the-world did not hold. I will illustrate this in the sections which follow, but before doing so, the variation

which Sandy provides should be noted: as the ‘deviant’ case in this study, her account offers an interesting contrast to the accounts which will follow.

Sandy differs from the other participants, in the way that she, after wrestling for many years with her desire to emigrate from South Africa, made her decision in a slow, thoughtful and emotionally-engaged manner. Over a period of five years, she found herself conflicted about her decision, changing her mind, grieving for what she would be leaving behind, and anxious about what would happen if she decided to stay. She was fully aware of the difficulty of the decision she was making:

*Sandy: As time was going by, I was sort of getting this momentum that we should leave. Um ... but, my big issue was my closeness with my family, because I'm very, very close to them. But I pursued this, I just had this thing that we should really go, but at the same time, quite terrified ... Then [my husband] got offered this really nice job and he then said let's go, and I turned a complete 180 degrees. I said, 'I can't do this, I can't leave my family' – even though I'd like, I'd been ... I couldn't leave. The separation and the ... mainly about my family - and about the country a bit, but it was much more about the family that I thought I couldn't do it. So I sort of backtracked completely, and then he of course took the position that we should go ... [After five years] eventually we made that decision and it was ... leaving my family was extremely difficult, really very difficult.*

Sandy's vulnerability to feelings of loss, and her dependence on her family, are undefended in this account of her decision to leave South Africa. The extracts which follow differ in this regard.

## **10.2 “We just upped and went”**

For many participants, the decision to leave South Africa was a sudden, even an impulsive one. In Tina's case, for instance, after her husband had been hijacked on his way home:

*Tina: We decided then and there, and the next day – into the Australian Embassy.*

Andre had the thought and took action immediately, even though his wife was not in favour of the idea:

*Andre: At the beginning of 2008, or December 2007, I got a bee in my bonnet to move to Australia. My wife wasn't very keen in the beginning, um ... but we decided to start the process, to apply for a visa, to find out from a migration agent what the options were, and we started the process.*

Even among those who had been thinking about leaving for a period of time, the final decision was often made on the spur of the moment, and the process itself took place in a quick, domino-like fashion. Jerry made his decision while on a short visit to Australia:

*Jerry: I ended up one day standing on the street corner waiting to get a train at Wynyard. I just looked around - it was lunchtime - and there were people sitting on the grass, which was cut. And there was no rubbish around, and the traffic lights were working. I looked at my watch and I thought, 'I have a fair certainty the train's going to be here'. And I thought back to my visit to Kampala and I just thought, vibrant as it is, the other side of it - I just realised at that moment I was essentially Eurocentric and I was more peaceful in that ordered sort of society. I thought, 'That's it - we're going to go'. I went home, phoned my wife and said, 'Get everything in motion (laughs) - let's go'. So I flew home, we sold the house; I resigned, cashed-in my pension, got on the plane.*

Jerry's account is worth noting for the way that the words almost tumble over themselves towards the end - the literal representation of the manic quality that pertains to most of the participants' accounts of their leaving. Gina's story reflects this too, in the way that she condenses the wrapping up of a life into, "*We just upped and went*", in the context of an intent to relocate to, and spend the rest of her life in, a country that she had never seen or experienced before:

*Gina: You know, it had been in our minds for some time; we'd been thinking about it, we'd talk about it. Then one day, one evening we were sitting in the bath and we just decided, within five minutes, to get it going. We said, you know, it's now or never ... So we just started making moves, applying for visas ... We had to sell the house. Of course, you know, you have to arrange a whole lot of things in terms of your career, your income, stuff like that. We just started getting that all in order and we just upped and went. We'd never even been here - we'd never seen what the place looked like. We looked on*

*the internet, we saw a lot of South Africans living in St Ives so there must be something that they like there - got on the plane and we came.*

Roger's account also presents a somewhat manic quality in the way that it suggests that he shed the 37 years of his South African life in much the same way that he disposed of all his possessions and moved to Australia – all in the space of three months. Additionally, Australia at that stage was a place that he had visited for nine days in total before deciding to spend the rest of his life there:

*Roger: My visa was granted in September 2007 and I had to validate my visa before December 2007. So I quickly flew over for four days to come stamp my visa and get back and then moved here 1 March 2008 – lock, stock and barrel. Sold up everything in South Africa - everything. All assets, all houses, properties, business - everything. Just had ... arrived here with five suitcases, walked off the plane on a Saturday afternoon and, yeah - in thinking back sometimes I think, 'How the hell did you do it'? Didn't know anyone - not one single person. Been here before for five - okay five days and then four days to come validate - five days on holiday, four days to come validate my visa.*

### **10.3 “It sort of just happened”**

In Roger's case, as with many of the other participants, it was also part of his leaving process that Australia as new home was selected quite by chance. This supports the contention that the desire to leave post-apartheid South Africa was a consequence of the perceived situation in South Africa rather than the attraction of another specific country, for the participants in this study:

*Roger: A friend took me to - she was interested in moving to Europe on a working exchange or something - took me to a presentation by recruiters, a recruitment company from London doing recruiting in Sandton. So I went there and had a chat and I never even considered Australia at that stage. After the interview they said - one or two of the guys said, 'What about Australia? We do placements in Sydney', and sort of stuff. That sort of got me thinking and I started investigating.*

For many, Australia became their new home simply because things worked out that way. Carl had been struggling to find work in South Africa:

*Carl: That's when we said, well if it's that tough in the year 2002, I couldn't imagine how tough it's going to be when the kids need to find employment - and then we started. My wife was fortunate, she first found employment in Kentucky, U.S.A. but they never came around with providing a formal offer of employment. Many phone calls, many interactions but they never formalised it. But then a company from Australia, they then formalised and she got employment with them. That's how we ended up over here.*

Tina had an anti-America position, which made Australia the country of choice:

*Tina: I think we sort of romanticised the idea about Australia. My ex-husband had been to America - his brother or his sister had lived in America - and I was always very anti-America; always been anti-America. Never been there, don't want to go there because I'd hated what America had done to South Africa. I hated it. I hated them. So he said to me, 'Well, we'll try Australia. We'll go and look and see what it's like. But if we don't like Australia, you'll have to take my word and we'll go and live in America'.*

And Gina made her decision in what she described as “one minute’s think”, based on perceived lifestyle similarities:

*Gina: I wouldn't be able to live in the Northern Hemisphere. I wouldn't be able to live in a cold place, so Australia's very similar in many ways. The climate's similar, they have the same kind of life style, they have an interest in sport, the outdoors. So we gave it one minute's think and then decided. Never ever did we consider another destination; you know, it was just one of those moments where you knew it was a deciding moment. I have to do something now, I have to make this split decision - and then, off we went.*

Susan had a boyfriend at the time who had moved to Australia. She decided that, if she was accepted into the study programme that she wanted, this would be a sign for her that she should move to Australia and try again to make the relationship work:

*Susan: I came to visit him in the holidays and we decided that we were gonna try and make it work. And at that point, I decided I wanted to study further anyway, and I decided that if I got into my course, that was kind of ... that's the way I would come to the country and I would do the student visa. Um, so prior to that, before we actually got back together, I was actually thinking of studying in America or England. So I'd actually*

*written the exams, the GRE exams. And so I think, you know I guess, the relationship really I guess brought me here, I suppose, when I think about it. And so, yeah, so I came here, and I actually got into my course, so sort of it felt right. I came here and I studied here and we got engaged and we got married here and that's the end of the story! (laughs) So, and we've been here for whatever, 12, 13 years. So um, so in terms of, I guess, I never had really thought about like my whole life I want to live in Australia. It hadn't been something that I'd really planned a lot, it sort of just happened I suppose because um, he was living here and we got back together and I did want to study overseas, so it seemed to fit that way. But yes, I hadn't really thought about it until we talked about it, but I hadn't, it wasn't really a plan as such ... I suppose it just sort of happened that way.*

Importantly, as she noted in the extract above, until our conversation, 14 years after she had migrated to Australia, Susan had never consciously thought about the fact that she had never had a plan for her migration. This suggests some dissociation of certain aspects of her migration, a level of dissociation that had remained in place until invited into awareness by our interaction.

While of course it is true that life often brings unexpected or unplanned events, it cannot be coincidental that for almost all these participants, their decision to uproot themselves from the country in which they had grown to adulthood was made in a generally hasty and thoughtless way. It suggests that the leaving process, for this group of migrants, was accompanied by a level of dissociation, and for many, was undertaken from a defensive or 'not-me' position. I illustrate this in the section which follows.

#### **10.4 "A little bit out-of-body"**

For some participants, their manner of leaving represented a departure from their usual ways of behaving, suggesting that it may have happened while in a somewhat dissociated, or not-me, self-state. Sally expressed this quite clearly:

*Sally: I don't think I really realised what that would mean, leaving my family, I really don't – what that really meant, um (pause) ... as I know now, in hindsight. Ah ... I wonder if I would've made a more measured decision, I really do, yeah.*

*Cathy: Measured as in?*

*Sally: I wouldn't have maybe been as impulsive.*

*Cathy: Ah ...*

*Sally: 'Cos there might have been a level of impulsivity there - which is quite unlike me.*

Jerry, too, in the way that he described his literal waking-up one morning in Australia, referred to the way in which he 'woke up to' the reality of his emigration. Prior to that moment, his leaving had seemed 'not-me', and seemed to have happened while he was 'out of his mind':

*Jerry: I remember waking up one morning at my brother-in-law's place, and the kookaburras were going on outside, and I thought 'No house, no job, no prospects. I don't even recognise those birds outside'. I thought, 'What the hell have I done? What have I done? I must have been out of my mind'.*

And Henry, too, described his process of leaving as something taking place outside of him, dissociated from conscious awareness:

*Henry: It definitely wasn't measured or considered. It was an adventure, but it didn't feel entirely sort of hyped. It just - it sort of felt like it was just happening. It was a little bit out-of-body, you know; just this sort of very strange, slightly out-of-body experience, you know, where you feel like you - you feel like there's some fundamental change afoot but you can't quite put your finger on what that means, as an impact hasn't quite hit you yet.*

In some cases the participants noted that they felt no sense of agency, or personal involvement in their process of leaving. It was as if the leaving process was the central event and they were merely actors in the drama that was playing out. Henry used the word "momentum" to describe his memory of the process, and the way in which the momentum held sway over his internal reality of not feeling right or comfortable:

*Henry: I guess what swung it was that it does gather a momentum of its own, you know, once you sort of take those tentative steps. You sort of get into - yeah, there's momentum behind it and you sort of then have to make a conscious decision to stay rather than to*

*go. I guess that's what happens ... I guess that is what happened. It wasn't very - it wasn't simple. It wasn't clear. It didn't feel right or comfortable. But we went... um (sigh) yeah.*

Sally called it a merry-go-round which began to spiral, allowing no space to think or opportunity to do anything different. Like Susan, it was only during the course of our conversation that she remembered aspects of her experience of leaving – prior to this, for the past 14 years, certain elements had remained dissociated:

*Sally: But I was quite ... Yeah, once I'd .... Once I'd got in the process of, you know, applying for universities, I was in it; it was quite hard to get out of it. Um, so I felt as though there was no going back ... it's interesting now, 'cos if I look back to when I was in the thick of it, you know, packing up, I kept pushing through, you know, there was no space for me to entertain the idea of 'what if' at all. I didn't allow any space – I wish I had – um ... But it wasn't possible. It was like, this is what I'm doing, get on with it.*

*Cathy: And so, feeling very ...*

*Sally: (interjects) And it's kind of, you know once you start the process of packing up stuff, it's quite hard to get off that merry-go-round, you know, you ... 'cos it spirals, you know. Once you start making plans to leave or whatever, it's just yeah, you've just got to run with it.*

Winnicott (1935), in his discussion of the manic defence, noted the way in which some authors take flight from personal internal reality and portray painful events as 'adventure'. This dynamic manifested in some of the accounts in this study. Andre, for instance, minimized his painful feelings about the loss of his Afrikaner culture in South Africa and emphasized the adventure quality of his emigration, naming it both in our initial telephone conversation as well as in the interview:

*Andre: Afrikaner culture is pushed off the plate. It's not even ... In the 1970s it was the middle of the universe as far as we were concerned, and now with affirmative action, the centre of the plate is Africanisation, and the whites and Afrikaners will fall by the wayside, Afrikaners first and then the whites.*

*Cathy: How do you feel about that? When you say this, do you experience a feeling, an emotion? What's that like for you to realise this?*

*Andre: It's a bit of a grudge, but I must say and I told you at our initial interview, a large part of our move was also a pull from Australia, not only a push from South Africa. Both my wife and I felt that we were ready for a new adventure. Our children were small enough and big enough to experience the adventure with us. So we really looked forward to come here and I'm glad we did. I feel a little grudge that I was sort of pushed out of my own country, but it wasn't exactly a flee. It was a push and a pull.*

In my reflexive process after the interview, as I noted my countertransference reaction to this extract, I wrote: *I remember feeling quite defensive with him here; on the back foot ... he was quite abrupt in his manner. But I've asked him a perfectly reasonable question, so why should I feel as though I've stepped out of line, or pushed him too hard? Perhaps I've encountered his defences here, something he's denying, or not ready to think about?* If I integrate my countertransference into this analysis of the interview extract, then it becomes quite conceivable that, as Winnicott (1935) described, Andre has taken flight into the external elements of his reality to retain a sense of control in the face of what could otherwise feel like a painful and helpless sense of being “*pushed out of his own country*”. In the defended version, he feels only a “*bit of a grudge*”.

Tina also escaped from what might have been a “*terrible sense of sadness*” by conceptualising her move as an adventure. Furthermore, in the way that Winnicott (1935) suggested that conceptualisations of external reality may be fantasised in order to facilitate the defence from painful internal reality, Tina created a fantasy of herself as “*pioneer in a new country*” – even though Australia is by no means uncharted territory and she was not an early settler here. It is possible that this defence may have been mobilized to offset the fact that she found she did not like her new home:

*Tina: I knew I was going, but it wasn't this terrible sense of sadness really. It was more like going on an adventure; starting a new life and being the pioneers in a new country. That's what it was. I had this wonderful idea about Australia. Even when I first came here to look-see, and I didn't like Sydney, I still had this idea that it's going to be good and - you know.*

In fact, Tina was explicit about the way in which she used television versions of reality to dissociate from the reality of her aversion to her new home, and the pain of leaving South Africa:

*Tina: So we came to look at the place - in March '95 is when we came. From when we arrived here, I hated it. I didn't like it. But we decided, okay, if we're going to move, this is probably the best place to come. We got back to South Africa, packed up, basically. It was very, very hard - I remember it was the World Cup. But we kept on - I suppose I kept romanticising this idea about Sydney, looking up books on the harbour, and watching TV programmes - what's it - that Home and Away, and the beach life, and, 'Oh, you know, it's not so bad'.*

From this extract, it would seem that Tina was aware of her emotional reactions to the leaving process, but that her defences functioned to minimise and over-ride them. For some of the other participants in the study, there appeared to have been little or no awareness, in the moment, of the emotional impact of leaving their country of origin. Gina, for instance, evidenced greater awareness of her dogs' distress than her own – for herself, she took a matter-of fact, solution-oriented approach:

*Gina: The dogs, we put them in quarantine as soon as we applied for the visas and we calculated how long it would take, because they have to stay in quarantine for seven months. So - but that was a really tough experience, putting those poor dogs through that, because they don't know what's going on. We put them in there and then had to prolong that with another month, because the visa then came a little bit later than what we were expecting. We were flying out a little bit later. So we just got on the plane, we booked everything. We got off here, we got a taxi. We said, 'Can you take us to Chatswood'? We'd rented an apartment there just to check it out and to see - it's quite a central place Chatswood - just to organise the Medicare and the car licenses and buy some cars and all stuff like that. So... It's not that hard, people are a lot more savvy nowadays with the internet and that. It makes it a lot easier.*

One could interpret Gina's location of vulnerability in her dogs, rather than herself, as a somewhat omnipotent defence mechanism, which would accord with the way in which some of the manic defences operate, as has been outlined in Chapter 5. It would not have been strange if Gina, in the process of leaving everything familiar to live in a country she had never even

visited, had also found it a “*tough experience*” and wondered “*what’s going on*”. But this was not how she experienced or remembered it, suggesting the possibility of a defended position.

In Linda’s case, too, with her assumption that she would be “*fine*” wherever she went, and that it was her husband Jerry who needed to leave, one might discern the operation of an omnipotent defence protecting against the experience of vulnerability:

*Linda: So I was pretty much compliant and just plodded along with him. Having said that, I could see - I was beginning, on a personal basis, to wonder how much longer we could actually go as we were because it was his work - working environment he was in - which was conflicting with his value system, was putting a lot of toll on him. And part of my thinking was it would be better for him, coming across here, from an emotional - work ethic - everything else. Because jobs were getting more and more difficult to get so he was pretty much - would stay where he was and working in the area he was working in. So, I would just kind of go with the flow ... I was compliant to all of that, those first sort of moves and things with Jerry initiating and thinking about it all, it came from him. And I didn't think anything would come of it, to start with. But then the more I thought about it, I thought, 'Okay - I know I can do it'. I also feel that my whole life thing - it's collapsed a bit since I've been here - but my whole life thing was, you know, you take yourself with you. So, you know, wherever I go, that's fine, we'll make a life of it.*

The fact that most of the participants in this study went through the leaving process in a defended position is not in itself an unusual phenomenon. As discussed in Chapter 2, many authors (Akhtar, 1999a; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1984; 1989; Thorpe & Thorpe, 2008)) have noted that defensive operations frequently come into play in the first stage of the migration process, in order to protect against painful feelings of mourning and loss. What is more significant, in the context of this study, is the way in which it forms part of a defensive set of procedures that generate a sense of self as a centre unable to hold in a steady and engaged manner.

## 10.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have illustrated the ways in which the core conceptual category, ‘the centre cannot hold’ manifested during the leaving process. Almost all of the participants undertook this part of their migration in an impulsive, rapid, unplanned and emotionally disconnected fashion. Defence mechanisms, such as dissociation and omnipotence, were evident in the accounts of the decision to leave as well as the actual steps involved, such that the participants appeared to have undertaken the major life event of relocation to a new country from a self-state that was separated from a grounded and centred way of being-in-the-world.

I have noted the similarities between this manifestation of the self as ‘a centre unable to hold’ and the manic defence: as such, I suggest that the decision to leave South Africa may represent the operation of this particular defence against the painful reality of a country that is no longer experienced as safe and welcoming, as well as defending against feelings of loss, guilt and other experiences of vulnerability.

As the next chapter will illustrate, the defences that form part of the manic defence continue, in many cases, to form part of the context of these participants as immigrants in Australia. This has implications for their ability to feel settled and grounded in their new country, and ‘feeling unsettled’ continues to characterise their experience.

## 11. THE CENTRE CANNOT HOLD: 'UNSETTLED'

### 11.1 Introduction

In the interviews, the participants' stories of their migration flowed sequentially from their experiences in South Africa, through the leaving process, and culminated in conversation about what it is to be an immigrant in Australia.

It is important to note that all the participants presented as well-functioning individuals – none of them formed part of a clinical population. In most cases, they described themselves as settled in Australia, with generally happy and productive lives. This notwithstanding, as our conversation about the immigration experience deepened, areas of uncertainty and vulnerability became evident, as well as the defences surrounding these feelings. In some cases, the defences shifted in the course of our conversation, towards a more open and vulnerable position, suggesting that the intersubjective context had provided sufficient containment to allow for the creation of a 'third space'.<sup>48</sup> This suggestion is supported by the fact that, in their responses to the follow-up survey, a number of participants lost touch with or denied the vulnerability and unease that they had expressed during the face-to-face interviews. This may suggest that, outside of the intersubjective interview context, some of the defences returned to shield against feelings of discomfort and vulnerability. Of course, it is possible that I exerted too much influence in the interview and pushed them to opinions which were more mine than theirs, but I think that the extended extracts which follow will show that this was not generally the case.

The core conceptual category of 'the centre cannot hold', that I have traced through the migration experience of this group of participants, is expressed in the 'unsettledness' of the

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<sup>48</sup> As I wrote in Chapter 5, the capacity to negotiate and create positions of thirdness is a crucial component of the capacity to live shared lives with others, in which there is inevitable movement between states of pleasure and displeasure, a sense of belonging and a sense of alienation, feelings of shame and feelings of acceptance. A 'third space' also refers to those contexts where dissociated self-states may become available to consciousness under certain circumstances and within certain intersubjective fields.

feelings and experiences that emerged as the participants described what it is to be a post-apartheid migrant from South Africa. It manifested in their sense of self and identity, their feelings about home and sense of belonging, and in their ability to contain the complexity of feelings about having left their country of origin – specifically South Africa, with its unique political and cultural history. While Sandy continues to be the exceptional case in this regard, the participants demonstrated that their multiple self-states, associated with different aspects of their experience, had not yet found a way to dialogue with, or to live alongside, each other in acceptance and awareness.<sup>49</sup> Again, I emphasize that this does not suggest pathology or dysfunction; rather, it illustrates that areas of defence and difficulty are a normal part of everyday life, and that these areas of defence and dissociation have certain common features among this group of post-apartheid migrants from South Africa.

### **11.2 “From day one, I have slept like a baby every night”**

Just as the high level of crime and violence in South Africa had been the primary focus in the participants’ discussion of their motivations for emigrating, the feeling of safety that they experience in Australia was foregrounded in their conversations about living in Australia. In this regard, Sandy was no exception:

*Sandy: I wanted a sense of safety, be able to walk on my own without being threatened. For me, the notion that one could be safe and walk without feeling anxious felt so – quite exhilarating actually. Even today, even though I take it for granted, I still have that sense. I remember when I first came here, and these women would be walking around at 9 o’clock at night, on their own down the street. I felt like saying to them ‘do you know how lucky you are, that you can just do this’? So I think that was – to come here and to have that sense of safety, um ... was a big thing.*

Susan also noted the way in which safety can be taken for granted in Australia. She compared this to how she feels when she visits South Africa:

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<sup>49</sup> I have discussed the concepts of multiplicity and self-states in detail in Section 5.8

*Susan: There's definitely a feeling of edginess and discomfort around. I'm afraid for - just my safety ... yeah, what you take for granted, living here.*

Others, like Terry, noted the difference in safety for their children in Australia, compared to South Africa:

*Terry: The girls are both at school. The eldest one now is in year 12, she wants to go into medicine. The younger one is not sure what she wants to do yet, but she's, you know, doing well and um ... I'm sure she'll follow in her sister's footsteps. Um ... they're safe and happy and that's the main thing. I just knew that the safety element was gonna get worse and worse and worse in Africa. Having two girls, it did add a little bit ... knowing the African culture and the value that they place on life and uh ... and the attitude towards the opposite sex - there's very little respect.*

And Andre noted the sense of safety he felt for both his children and himself:

*Cathy: You say 'Now we are here and we are happy. We're glad we made the move'.*

*Andre: I certainly am.*

*Cathy: Why?*

*Andre: Well, when I hear a car alarm, I think somebody had better go switch the alarm off. And I hear a dog bark and I wonder whether it is a cat in the yard or whether the dog is looking at the moon and barking. I don't wake up, look for my handgun and go peering outside the window to see what the trouble was. From day one, I have slept like a baby every night, and that counts for a lot to me.*

*Cathy: So you're saying, what you experience now when you hear a car alarm, you hear the dogs bark, and you don't immediately think some kind of crime?*

*Andre: No, that's for sure. We live in Adelaide and my kids walk to the IGA at night and buy bread and milk. In South Africa we were a similar distance from the supermarket but we would never even think of letting the kids, not even during daylight hours, walk to the supermarket. It's just that it's a different world altogether.*

Early in the interview, Steve described the importance of the sense of safety he experiences in Australia:

*Steve: On Friday night we walked home, having had a meal, and walked through the park, the dark park down at the end of the road, with trees. You couldn't see where you were walking but we didn't feel - we didn't feel threatened. We felt safe. That was one of the things on the list - the 'Fors' for Australia. That was the ... I think the overriding, the*

*top of the list, is the safety. That feeling of not being threatened, of not feeling - not having to hide behind a wall; not having electric fences, and burglar bars.*

At the end of the interview, however, Steve spoke again about safety in Australia, and noted the way in which he remains unsettled and threatened; at this point, he seemed aware of the fact that his sense of insecurity was embedded within his psyche, rather than solely being a function of his environment:

*Steve: I was having a conversation about Irian Jaya, and the independence movement in West Papua that's starting to foment. And the Australian Government is very, very pointed in their – they're not going to have anything to do with it. They're happy that Indonesia has – it's part of their archipelago, and they support Indonesian rule. I said to someone the other day, I said, 'You watch, that's going to be trouble, and it'll be on our borders. That threat of Indonesia, and a huge population there, and a Muslim country'. And he went, 'What are you talking about?' And I said, 'Well, don't you think about that? Don't you look at that?' He said, 'No, no, that's across the sea'. I thought, well it's interesting, isn't it, because here is my little head thinking, 'Well, we're fine here - but goodness me, in the future, another ten years' time?', you know?*

*Cathy: This is you – like that image of you just now, looking over...*

*Steve: The shoulder, yeah!*

*Cathy: Yeah, your shoulder, to see 'Where's the next threat coming from, to move me on'?*

*Steve: Exactly. I know. He looked at me as if I was mad! I actually stepped back and thought, 'No, that's – it is strange. Why did I think that? Why did I – why have I suddenly gone and looked at something?' And I suppose I'm – nothing stays the same. Again, I think that's in my psyche, nothing stays the same.*

Although Steve did not explicitly link this deeper level of awareness with his earlier comments about his sense of safety in Australia, it would seem that the more threatened self-state was able to emerge in the context of our interaction – one in which he perhaps felt safe and therefore more able to expose his somewhat dissociated vulnerability. This proposition is supported by the fact that, in the follow-up survey which he completed one year after our interview, he wrote, in response to the theme of 'Safety': "*Absolutely, here in Aus*", which suggests that his awareness of his inherent sense of insecurity had returned to a dissociated self-state in the absence of our intersubjective field.

It is also noteworthy that Steve's particular sense of insecurity in Australia revealed a colonial attitude – for the threat was perceived to be coming from a dark-skinned, Muslim people. As I noted in Chapter 3, Ballard (2004b) suggested that one of the ways in which apartheid in South Africa functioned was to provide a 'comfort zone' for whites in a segregated environment that promoted the primacy of their modern, European, first-world values. When this feels threatened, "home no longer feels very homely" (Ballard, 2004b, p.8), which is perhaps the way in which 'home' felt somewhat threatened for Steve in his new country – in a similar way that he had felt threatened by black majority rule in both Zimbabwe and South Africa. Steve was not alone in revealing some edginess in his sense of home: there were many instances of an unsettled sense of home and belonging among the participants.

### **11.3 "Now I don't belong here and I don't belong there"**

When our conversation turned to the topic of home, most participants initially said that Australia is home now. As Sally commented:

*Sally: If you said to me where's home, I would say here. Whereas, maybe in my first two years, I wouldn't have been able to say that - maybe my first three years.*

And yet, as the conversation went on, Sally revealed unsettledness in her sense of home when she noted that, even after 14 years, she has never taken Australian citizenship. When we explored this, she spoke about the need to remain attached to South Africa as the place where her parents are buried, and South Africa as home slipped unmarked into her conversation:

*Sally: My parents are buried there. You know, I – I'll go home again, absolutely (crying quietly).*

*Cathy: What touches you about this?*

*Sally: It's ... 'cos that's where my parents are. It's interesting, 'cos for a long time, before I got married and before I had my kids, I would think that if I died, I wouldn't want to be buried here. I'd want to be buried in South Africa. But once you have your own family, you know, that would seem bizarre, because you'd want your kids to be able to visit your grave, not have to fly around the world to do that.*

*Cathy: I wonder if that's part of what distresses you now when you think of your parents being buried in South Africa?*

*Sally: Yeah.*

*Cathy: You're thinking 'Ah I wouldn't want to do that to my kids'. But, in a sense, it is what has happened ...*

*Sally: Yeah! You're right, you're right!*

*Cathy: To you.*

*Sally: Absolutely, absolutely!*

It seems that this insight gained during the course of our interaction was a lasting one for Sally, for in the follow-up survey which she completed two years later, in response to the theme 'Home', she wrote: "After 16 years, Australia is home. South Africa is only home based on my connection to my family".

As the conversations deepened, a number of participants became aware that, while Australia was now home in an objective or geographical sense, South Africa remained home in the sense that Laub (2003) described, "a space where an inner truth can be safeguarded and protected, as well as shared with others who are receptive to it" (p.575). Henry epitomized this:

*Henry: You know, we really love going back. It always feels like home, going back. It's like – it's like being able to breathe again. Everything's just very intuitive; the sounds, the smell, the communiqué. Everything's just legible – the landscape, you know? I think as an immigrant you feel – I describe it as being very vigilant. When you're an immigrant, sort of the world around you is new, so you operate on this sort of heightened level of vigilance; you try to identify things that are – do they make sense?; what are they?, you know? The sort of intuitive communication's not there. But when you go back to your home, all that is – it's there, so you sort of – it's like a big sigh, you know. You know it. It's all very familiar.*

Many participants also associated their sense of life and energy with South Africa – or more specifically, with the African-ness of South Africa, and expressed the feeling that there was something missing in Australia:

*Susan: I think there's something quite unique about Africa, you know, my friends and I talk about it, you sort of miss that. There's something you know, like when you see the*

*African dancing, you see some colour, there's some colour, there's some energy that there isn't here, you know I think there's some culture ...*

*Cathy: You used the word soul just now, is that what you're talking about here?*

*Susan: Yeah. A lot of people have actually echoed that view to me. There's some soul, some vibrancy or something that ... yeah ... someone once described Australia to me as 'the land of the bland' – which I don't ... it's a bit harsh (laughs) ... but there's something missing, in the sense there probably was culture here which they've completely squashed. So, I think that's ... it's something that you miss, and it's something that, you know, when you go back, it's kind of nice when you see that, it's something that is comforting, you know.*

The image of African dancing is interesting here – one might associate this with a stereotyped view of African-ness, and reminiscent, perhaps, of a colonial view of 'tribal' Africans. But perhaps that is precisely why Susan found it comforting, a nostalgic memory, perhaps, of an earlier time in her life.

Some participants spoke of the way they missed the liveliness and energy of South Africa, even though they left in order to find the very peace and lawfulness that they now found boring in Australia:

*Henry: I think it [South Africa] is incredibly positive. I think it's amazing. I think it's just – it's um ... it's a very exciting, diverse, creative place. I think it's edgy and it's, um ... you know, it's probably the very antithesis of Australia, which is incredibly rule-governed and managed and, you know, this ultimate parent state, nanny state. There's no edge in Australia at all, I don't think. I don't think that edge is a concept here. I think it's too - everything's too legislated and ... too many protocols and rules, and that sort of takes the edge out of things. There's not enough arbitrary, random sort of rubbing up of conflicting ideas to make magic, really. Although of course there are other kinds of edge here – some of the big open spaces, and that bush and that kind of – you are in a very old, wise place.*

It is a paradoxical position, one might say, to feel the loss of the very thing one planned to escape, but perhaps it might be understood as a melancholic loss – one in which the tie to the object is ambivalent and unconscious, so that the individual “cannot and does not even know

what he has lost when he loses an object” (Bernstein, 2012. p.371). In some cases, as with Henry, this might be followed by a belated recognition that the value of the place/object one could not anticipate losing is retrospectively valued in the acknowledgement of loss (Ivey, personal communication). Such a paradoxical position is thus not inherently defensive: it depends on whether the elements of the paradox are dissociated from each other, or whether they can be seen and held in conscious awareness, as this extract from Jerry’s interview illustrates:

*Jerry: And whilst I love the enthusiasm and the vibrancy of Africa, I just couldn't handle the chaos after a while. I thought, 'I need more certainty in my life. I'm not – I'm just not like that' – if that makes sense. There was always that conflict in me – that 'loving the enthusiasm' – I find, sometimes, things very quiet here. People don't get passionate as much. It's all very, boom, boom, boom, boom, and 'The rulebook says', and 'There we go, we'll get there in the end'. I sometimes want to stand up and say, 'Somebody thump the table'! But on the other side, I walk out and I know that I can get a train home. I know that if there's a traffic jam, eventually it'll clear. I'm constantly aware that I've lost one but I've bought another. I'm always aware of that dynamic.*

But not many participants were able to hold the contradiction in this way: for some, life and vitality were located in South Africa, while deadness, or blandness, was ascribed to Australia. This splitting allows an aspect of life to be located outside oneself, so that perhaps it can more safely be missed and mourned than if that loss of life were felt internally. Possibly this is what Winnicott (1935) meant when he posited the idea of the manic defence as reassurance, as affirmation of life, “a denial of deadness, a defence against depressive ‘death inside’ ideas” (p.131).

Certainly, for new immigrants, as Akhtar (1999a) proposed, splitting often predominates, and feelings of either idealization or devaluation colour the new migrant’s vision of the old and the new country. For Gina, this might have been the case, having only been in Australia for two years when we met. She had a particular take on the ‘blandness’ of Australia that exemplified

the way in which ‘whiteness’ and ‘colour’, for South Africans, are inherent in the way we think – and I include myself in that, for I had no difficulty in grasping her meaning:

*Gina: The Australian culture to me – I don’t, I can’t put my finger on it, I don’t know what it is actually. Because I understand they’re also a mish-mash of all different people – Irish, Welsh, British, whoever they are and wherever they came from ... and also because of the Asian people. They have tried to – I think the problem is – I think I’ve just understood it, they’ve tried to discolour everything so much to accommodate the Asian people, and to accommodate everybody – on the surface, mind you – trying to make everything so bland and so inoffensive and so generic, that it’s now, you don’t know what it is.*

*Cathy: So that was – I’m fascinated by that word you used there, ‘discolour’. And I’m hearing it as ‘dis hyphen colour’, in other words, take the colour out.*

*Gina: Yes, uncolour.*

*Cathy: Uncolour it.*

*Gina: You know, if you put something in the wash, and it becomes that white-grey ...*

*Cathy: Yes. Is that what you meant?*

*Gina: Yes, that’s what I’m saying.*

*Cathy: Which is so different to the South African experience.*

*Gina: Yes.*

*Cathy: Where ...*

*Gina: It’s black or it’s white.*

Gina’s observation was certainly not intended to compliment Australia for its attempts to be inoffensive to all its race groups: throughout our conversation Gina was strong in her criticism of Australia, its people and its values. And this may have been the expectable defended position of the recent immigrant, for her unsettledness was evident also in her conscious sense that she did not belong anywhere any more, as well as in her unconscious switching between first and second person, as if there were different self-states in the interaction:

*Cathy: So, does South Africa still feel like home to you?*

*Gina: I don’t know, maybe, we’ll see. We’re going there shortly.*

*Cathy: Is this your first trip back?*

*Gina: Yes. I’ll see. I don’t think – I think probably when you get there you’ll feel a bit, you know, weird, alien. Now I don’t belong here and I don’t belong there. I don’t think you belong there anymore. You’ve made that choice, you’ve gone – over.*

When I invited her comments, in the follow-up survey, on the various themes that had emerged in the data analysis, it was 18 months since the interview. Interestingly, splitting was still in evidence, but now in the opposite direction. In response to the theme of *'Home'*, Gina wrote: *"My home is here now, and I'm proud to be here. I never consider going back. Once I had made the decision, it was over"*.

It would seem that, for some participants, a split in the sense of home and belonging may continue past the early immigration phase, and may thus be representative of a deeper sense of unsettledness than usually accrues to the new migrant. Gina's ongoing polarised position may express this. Carl too, who had been in Australia for eight years at the time we met, manifested an ongoing split between South Africa and Australia:

*Carl: Well, it [Australia] is home but there's so much that annoys me. I do feel it's a nanny state, totally overregulated. Such foolish ideas and yet this populace retains these people in power. And I just look at it and I think to myself, 'It's no better than Africa with Mugabe!' Mugabe is still in power! For crying out ...! These people are still in power yet not really being competent to be in power. But there's nothing on this side that I feel like I can do. In Africa at least I can shout and be understood in the same spectrum: 'Ja, die man is 'n aap'<sup>50</sup>. But here, you say that about Julia<sup>51</sup> and it's 'No, no, no, they're not that bad'. Yeah, it's a feeling most probably of having no authority, no political power, no sway, no nothing. You're a migrant, you'll always carry your South African accent, you are obnoxious, you are arrogant and that's who you as South Africans are and perceived to be.*

In fact, when I contacted him about the follow-up survey one year after our interview, he had decided to return to Africa (but not South Africa), and was due to leave the following week. Although he therefore did not complete the follow-up survey in written form, he noted in that later conversation that he was still unable to feel settled in Australia and was going back to Africa *"to find a home and a cause to fight for"*.

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<sup>50</sup> Yes, the man is an ape.

<sup>51</sup> Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia at the time of the interview.

Tina, who had been in Australia for 15 years when we met, also manifested a strong split in her sense of home. In her case, though, this did not protect her from perceived feelings of grief and loss. On the contrary, it ensured that she remained trapped in an abject form of melancholia<sup>52</sup>, in which she continued to feel regret and resentment about her decision to leave South Africa, and in which she constellated Australia as her persecutor and captor. This reaction to the migration experience is a 'deviant case' within this group of participants, but as such, is useful in the way that it highlights a variation on the predominant way in which the core conceptual category, 'the centre cannot hold', manifests in this study – that is, as manic defence. Tina's views about South Africa and Australia were entirely polarised:

*Tina: Every time I go [to South Africa], it freaks me out even more. I've just come back now - didn't want to come back here. And every single time I go back I think it gets better and better. And I feel like I've been cheated - I've missed out on so much. You know, I see people – I see black and white people together having tea and coffee and – being friends! I think that's so nice. There's so much pride in the country. I don't see that here in this country. I see the people here as illiterate and I find Australians incredibly lazy. I mean, I just see Australians as like tattooed - the general Australian is lazy, tattooed, piercings, drinking – useless people. I sound awful but that's, yeah, that's how I feel.*

Tina's splitting defence is firmly entrenched. Even though I named it and invited her to comment on it in the interview, she simply agreed with the observation – there was no shift towards resolution, even though she appeared to see that it might not be helpful for her:

*Cathy: You seem to have a very clear sort of split ...*

*Tina: [Nodding] Absolutely*

*Cathy: ... between your experiences here and your experiences there.*

*Tina: Absolutely*

*Cathy: The more – um, in a way, that splitting is perhaps what you continue to do – you put all the good stuff there and all the bad stuff here.*

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<sup>52</sup> A full discussion of this concept is beyond the scope of this thesis; in brief though, Bernstein (2012) suggests that it captures a certain reaction to loss that is mired in resentment and narcissistic disillusionment. Although different to the manic defence, it is also defensive in that it is not a genuine sense of loss or grief, which would comprise acceptance of responsibility and reality.

*Tina: [Nodding] ... All the bad stuff here, yeah – and I think it gets worse and worse. I know it's not healthy, I try very hard not to – but I just can't help it. I just, you know, I don't belong here ... never, never, never.*

Sandy's view represents the other 'deviant case' in this group, and thus also proposes a variation – differently to Tina, however. Whereas, for most participants, the sense of home was unsettled, filled with paradoxes that could not be held in awareness by the self as a centre, Sandy, after ten years in Australia, held the mixed feelings together:

*Sandy: I absolutely miss South Africa, and I love it, but I'm very happy here. I sort of feel I've got both places quite alive for me in many ways. I feel very at home here, and I feel very ... I don't feel marginalized in that same way - you know, when you first get here, and there's this Other, you know, there's this Australian Other, I don't have that. But I am certainly aware that I'm South African, here - I don't feel like a mainstream Australian anyway! But it's a comfortable position, it doesn't feel like I'm walking around feeling like the revolution's happening in South Africa and I might not be part of it, or ... there's life for others here and not me.*

Sandy's comments suggest a significant degree of conscious awareness about her different self-states. For some of the other participants, the relationship with South Africa as home has remained an unprocessed part of their experience. Linda, for instance, surprised herself when she found herself thinking about South Africa as home, eight years after having left:

*Cathy: So – where's home for you? How do you think about that?*

*Linda: I would have thought - without thinking, I would have said Australia. But when I was telling somebody a story the other day, I said something about - it just slipped out, 'back home', and then I said, 'well, what was home'. Which I found very interesting. I mean, nobody else picked it up - well they didn't comment if they did - but I picked it up. Because I'm not aware that I talk about South Africa as home.*

As she processed this during the interview though, Linda became aware that South Africa does not, in fact, feel like home for her any more – although she was confused, initially, about why this change had occurred – whether it was she or South Africa that had changed:

*Linda: I mean, I came here at 50, so the way of connecting has been limited completely because you haven't got children going to school, to make connections there. The people I've watched who have settled a lot easier - although I wouldn't say that we haven't so much settled, because I've very much - I don't ever think of going back and I wouldn't go back because it's changed too much. It's not home any more. My friends - I've changed and they haven't. They're all in the same place. So for example, when I went back even the first time, I just realised how much they're still in the same place. And I was actually pleased for the growth, you know, for myself. I thought, 'No, I've learned so much more than them. I've grown in a lot of places and areas that I wouldn't have if I'd stayed here'.*

Ultimately, Linda decided that it was she who had changed. While a certain reading of this could suggest a genuine appreciation for the ways in which the pain and loss she has experienced in her migration have contributed to a sense of growth and fulfilment, the reality, for Linda, is that she is not well-settled. She noted how uprooted she feels in Australia, *"like a fully-planted tree that you try and transplant"*, and spoke of her difficulty in knowing how to fit in:

*Linda: I'm trying to find out who I am in this country, you know: 'Who am I?' I just can't see where I can fit in here, from the aspect of just connecting and reaching to the poor, and those kinds of people. Quite often I've said to people 'I need to get into a place where I'm giving; I just want to be in a place where I'm giving'.*

When one situates her favourable view of herself in comparison with her friends in this larger context then, Ogden's (2005) reference to the manic defence as "triumph over despair" (p.40) seems relevant here, especially in juxtaposition with the need she expressed to be 'giving to the poor', as she used to do 'back home' in South Africa. As Bailey (2011) and Hook (2011a) suggested, acts of charity may mask a sense of superiority and triumph. But in Australia, as Linda noted, *"the poor aren't as poor as I've experienced the poor"*, and so, perhaps, a sense of feeling 'at home' in Australia has not been able to develop.

A number of participants reported a feeling of estrangement from South Africa – not only as a consequence of the passage of time, but also because of the changes that had occurred in the country since they left. This meant that they could not sustain a sense of attachment to their roots even as they settled into the new country. Roger, for instance, described himself as “*an Aussie with an accent*”, which may be a form of ‘compensatory identification’ as Hook (2014) described; Akhtar (1995) describes such rapid incorporation of the new country as ‘counterphobic assimilation’, and I think it might also be a form of manic defence – I will come back to this in the discussion section. Roger was explicit in naming the way post-apartheid South Africa became foreign to him, and how much more at home he felt in a Western society:

*Roger: [In South Africa] ... it was in a material sense, a fantastic life, but there was no quality of life. I found there was no deep quality things that - I mean if I have to compare the things that I've experienced just in the last three and a half years here, on a personal level, it just can't compare to - it's so much bigger and better. I'll tell you what has - everything that I left - that made it worth, in a sense, moving here, everything I gave up, are the experiences I've had. I'm a member of the Opera Choir and we sing on a regular basis in the Opera House. Point one - singing in the Sydney Opera House is unbelievable - I mean standing on the Concert Hall stage of the Sydney Opera House is, to me, one of the experiences that any singer can have in their lifetime. It's in the top ten opera houses in the world. Now take that and add you work with people like Vladimir Ashkenazy - he's one of the conductors in the world. It's the best of the best - you don't get better. To me, on a personal level, it was just so much more wonderful experience than I had the last couple of years in South Africa. So - home will always be South Africa, but when I say that I never - the image that immediately pops in my head is not the South Africa that's there today. I almost feel that that country doesn't exist anymore - it feels foreign.*

Roger’s discussion of his sense of home and where he belongs contains certain grandiose elements, which raises the possibility of a defensive operation. It seems that I might have sensed something of this during the interview, for I picked up on his comment about ‘feeling foreign’ and ‘thought aloud’ in my response to him. This led to his association to feeling unwanted in South Africa – as though he may have felt treated like a foreigner in his own

country – a feeling that could well have aroused distress and thus may have evoked a defence in which he rejected the country, rather than feeling rejected by it:

*Cathy: That word 'foreign' ... and what you were describing earlier, just the mindset in terms of planning for the future and those kinds of things, is foreign to your way of understanding how the world works. Perhaps that's what you're describing is part of what made it necessary for you to leave. Perhaps it started to feel foreign? Is that fair comment?*

*Roger: Definitely, definitely. Yeah, if I can phrase it maybe differently – yeah, I didn't feel welcome there anymore. Wherever you went I felt confronted with – people don't want to deal with me, people don't want to – they don't want to have you. I'm not really phrasing it ... uh ... People don't want you to be there anymore.*

Roger was able to elaborate further on his sense of 'feeling foreign' in the intersubjective context of our interview, coming to the realisation that some of his sense of foreign-ness related to how he felt about himself rather than simply being located in the country. He went on to note: *"In hindsight I think I became a person that I didn't know anymore, that I wasn't comfortable with"*. But this insight did not remain in awareness outside of the intersubjective context, for in his response to the theme of 'Home' in the follow-up survey, he wrote: *"I lost the feeling of South Africa feeling as my home. I feel more foreign every time I go back. They are bound and crippled by a very low level and rate of education, as well as a government looking after themselves rather than the greater good of the country. Sydney feels like home and is home"*.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, there certainly are problems in the education field in South Africa, and corruption is also well documented. But there is also a certain amount of denigration, the object pole of grandiosity, in Roger's perception of South Africa as *"bound and crippled"* by low education, and a lack of appreciation for the historical context of education in South Africa among the black population.

Terry, too, evidenced some grandiosity in the way he described himself in his new home country, Australia. His migration story was filled with instances of feeling ‘forced out’ from wherever he tried to settle – from the farming town in which he was raised, which later was assimilated into one of the independent homelands; from the town in South Africa in which he attempted to settle and start a business; from London, which is the first country he tried to emigrate to and where he felt he never fitted in. Now in Australia for the last ten years, aged 50, and having disclosed marital difficulties as well as financial problems, he reported the following:

*Terry: I've got to be unique! There's not many young South Africans who are living abroad, who were raised the first 16 years of their life on a station in downtown Africa.*

*Mandela's home, Qumbu, was the same distance outside my town, going west, as I was going east – I'm not comparing myself to him in any way – but he also had his first 12 years or so kicking around there! I mean, they say, any child's personality's formed by the age of 6 – and where'd I spend my first 6 years?! So, I mean um ... (long pause)*

*Cathy: Would there have been any way that you would've wanted to stay there? What would have needed to happen for you to be able to stay there?*

*Terry: You know, having experienced travelling, I think they've done me a huge favour. Because I was not interested in the whole wide world ...*

*Cathy: "They" being?*

*Terry: "They" as in the authorit ... all the people that made decisions about the future of the country, that's the collective 'they'. This word 'they' ... wow, it's like I've never used it before – 'they' ... they helped me pull myself up by my bootstraps! Because I'm ... I consider myself ... like my German forefathers came out in the 1820s to the Eastern Cape, and they settled into the area, and I think, 'Well that was in 1820, it's only a hundred and fifty odd years ago'. So I think to myself, ok I'm one of the first guys in Australia – from my clan anyway. So, I take a bit of pride out of that, and hopefully (sounds of stretching) one day when I'm 95 and there's 40, 50 people around the table, I won't say anything but I'll just think 'OK, how good's this! We're all here, we're all Aussies, and we've just mixed in', and um ... I'll be the poorest of the lot, but so what?! (laughs). How good's that, I don't have to be part of the change back home, and I can be part of this little country that's only two hundred and something, I added it up the other day, two hundred and thirty years old - it's a spring chicken! So I'm one of the first settlers in this new country! Um ... and I think to myself, 'How good's that!'*

The distortions and grandiosity of Terry's view of himself suggest that there may be considerable distress for him if he were to allow himself to feel the reality of his experiences of loss and rejection: triumph has replaced despair (Ogden, 2005). Notably though, his defence is one of grandiosity, perhaps replicating the sense of privilege and entitlement he felt as a child, growing up in "*our own little village ... this little prince living here*". In his defended position, he has 'colonised' his new country ("*one of the first settlers in this new country*") and any sense of loss is dissociated. In the follow-up survey which he completed one year later, his dissociation remained entrenched: '*Home*': "*Is not in Africa any more*", and his sense of privilege had attached itself to living in Australia: '*Privilege*': "*It's a privilege to be living abroad, having a great life*".

The feeling of having been rejected by the home country was common among the participants, and accords with the literature, reported in Chapter 3, which noted that push factors from the home country are the most common reasons cited for their emigration by South Africans (Crush et al., 2012; Pernice et al., 2000). What is notable here is the way in which this translates, in the new country, into difficulties in sustaining a sense of attachment to the home country, and the defences that are employed to ward off feelings of pain and loss about this. As I have illustrated, grandiosity, in some cases, is one of the prominent features of these defences, and may reflect the sense of privilege and entitlement with which whites in South Africa were raised during the apartheid era. This touches on the question of identity, the theme of the following section.

#### **11.4 "*You always wear the suit of immigration*"**

For most of the participants, the primary issue in their sense of identity as immigrants constellated around what it is to be South African while living in Australia. Henry expressed this clearly – more clearly than some of the others, in fact – perhaps because he had been in Australia for 14 years when we met, and thus may have had more time to process his feelings.

Even so, it is worth noting how strongly the sense of being South African and an immigrant persists, even after so many years:

*Henry: You never – you're always an immigrant. Like, I think you always wear the suit of immigration. You can never really take that off. I guess eventually you can - I mean, I think with time those things do change. I remember when I first got here I spoke to someone and I said, you know, 'Well, do you ever feel like you're not a South African'? And he said, 'No, but it takes about 10 years or something to feel less of a South African' - or something to that effect, you know? Yeah, so just reflecting on the conversation we've had, I think it's your origin, your background – your South African identity's inescapable. It's sort of – you are – that's who you are. So with that in mind you're always reminded, then, of where you've come from, and the challenges you've had, and what you've given up, and what opportunities you've had. Yeah. So it's like, yeah, so it's sort of like a sound track that's always in your life, you know. Yeah. Which I guess is different when you're not an immigrant, you know? So I should ... personally, I feel very much still like an immigrant. I guess I identify strongly with being an immigrant. You know, if there was a box that I had to jump into, it would be the one with Immigrant on it, and with all the attendant feelings of displacement, and anxiety. But at the same time, you know, I guess, whatever - all the feelings of being grateful as well, for the opportunities and blah, blah, blah.*

The somewhat dismissive “*blah, blah, blah*” with which he concluded his thoughts suggests that Henry’s positive feelings about being in Australia are not as strong as his sense of loss and displacement that go along with being an immigrant. Carl also named his difficulty in finding a sense of self in Australia, and his attendant sense displacement: describing how he felt after his third attempt to start a business in Australia had failed, he remarked:

*Carl: After that I said “I am displaced”. In Africa I never worked in business but at least I never felt displaced. I could go amongst my people, speak my language, understand them, have them understand me. But here I couldn't relate to the people. I could never go and sit with an Aussie and say, 'You know how hard it is having a great idea and not being able to get it to work?' In Africa, I could still identify with the people, the feeling, the landscape, the structure; the sense of this is my place. Here, you're just another struggling migrant.*

*Cathy: Whereas here, you haven't got a place?*

*Carl: That's it. That's where the displacement lies.*

Many of the participants noted the difficulties of being a South African in Australia because of the negative perceptions that accrue to this identity. Jerry referred to this:

*Jerry: It's politically incorrect to talk about, but I have had one or two occasions where Australians have sort of alluded to the fact, 'Well, pity you didn't get it right'. You know, 'Pity you lost'. I don't want to go there. I just immediately change tack. I don't want to go there because I think, 'Well, first of all it's a totally different dynamic here, and secondly, you don't have any idea of what you're talking about. You just - you just don't understand'.*

*But when I got my driver's licence here, the driving instructor was a dyed-in-the-wool racist. He made a couple of very disparaging remarks about some of the hair-raising experiences he'd had in testing other races to get their driver's licence. I suspect that he was only telling me because he thought, 'This is a sympathetic ear: this guy's had to flee South Africa because he can't take living with a bl – with other races, so he'll sympathise with my point of view.' I just - I wanted to get my driver's licence, so I just said, 'Hmm, hmm, yeah that's true'. I've never had anybody overtly come out and accuse me of being a racist. But I have had this other, where people have sort of sensed the sympathetic ear and have tried to draw me into the conv - but I don't want to go there. And I don't ever talk about race. I sometimes talk about South Africa - but I don't talk about race or racial issues with Australians. I just avoid it. Because I think you, you know, you can't convey the complexity of what it was, and you will just find yourself in a no-win debate.*

*What was the other comment that I had? 'Didn't you' – what was it – 'didn't you buggers all grow up with servants? That's why you're all so arrogant - you always had somebody fetching and carrying after you'. That was another remark made to me. I said, 'Well, there's an element of truth in that' - and just left it at that. I'm not going to argue. It's not worth it. I'm here now - I'll fit in. 'I'm not going to argue with you on those issues. I'll debate it with other South Africans'.*

It was interesting to note how Jerry stumbled over the word 'black' – stopping after “bl” and replacing it with “other races”. It may suggest that he is not comfortable in talking about racial topics and that his reluctance to engage with Australians on the topic may mask a more dissociated discomfort about racial issues in general. Certainly it was the case that many of the participants evinced conflict about being a white South African – what this was perceived to

imply: as Wicomb (1998) noted, the condition of whiteness in South Africa "...is no longer one to be cherished. Indeed, it is no longer a nice word" (p.363).

It appears that many of the participants may have dissociated from potentially painful feelings of having been tarnished by their whiteness, by locating the 'not-niceness' in other South Africans in Australia. They thus hold onto a sense of themselves as worthwhile and acceptable by disavowing the shameful and unattractive elements of their identity: privileged, arrogant and entitled South Africans – a common stereotype of South Africans in Australia, as Jerry described – become 'not-me'. Sandy and I talked about this:

*Sandy: I think a lot of South Africans here, including myself, are sort of a bit 'self-hating South Africans', you know? Like, when one sees other South Africans in certain contexts, well I can personally cringe and feel embarrassed on their behalf. So there's that element, where I just feel, you know, I can see why there's that anti-South African ... by Australians. So there's that. However, there are ... a lot of my close friends are South Africans, and I find absolute comfort and love that. But I ... we sent our children to the local public school, where there weren't many South African families, and that was quite a deliberate thing.*

*But you know, then I also get comments like, one person said to me 'you're the first South African I've liked', so ... I don't feel I, yeah, I don't have such a ... maybe it's more of a personal thing? I think generally people respond to me and like me, so I don't feel that my South African-ness is going to ... is the main thing that's glaring for them.*

*Cathy: I was wondering about in that – it's come up a bit – so ... I mean, there is a particular stereotype about South Africans.*

*Sandy: Yes.*

*Cathy: Um, and of course, like with all stereotypes, it's hugely over-generalized, and there would be large numbers of people who don't fit that stereotype. But that sort of pushy, brash, demanding, arrogant, all of that stuff that they say about South Africans, um ... And so, what I sort of notice coming up as a bit of a theme, and I wanted to hear what you thought about that, is that there seems then to be amongst South Africans, a kind of an 'us' and 'them' feeling developing, in that 'we're not one of **those** South Africans'. Do you think that's right?*

*Sandy: Yes, I think that's absolutely right, that's a very fair – yes, I definitely think that's right. I think there is a sense of sort of distancing oneself from those South Africans. And I do think that, growing up in South Africa, there's always that sense of trying to separate*

*oneself somehow from 'the evils', or 'the bad', the people who are sort of, seem to be, the group that we don't want to be like. So I think that happens here. So, when someone says to me 'you're the first South African I've liked', well I think 'Good!' you know, 'I'm one of the nice ones, the nice group' [laughs].*

The way in which Sandy identified herself as one of the self-hating South Africans was exceptional in this group, as was her insight that this conflict about the sense of self as 'nice' was part of her experience even before she emigrated. As Lobban (2012) discussed, feelings of guilt and culpability existed in the white South African psyche, even though dissociated and disavowed, long before the transition to democracy in 1994. None of the other participants mentioned this explicitly, however, even though it was implicit in some of the accounts:

*Susan: It was just wrong, it's awful. People being put in jail for years, for no reason ... I mean, if you think about the crime that went on, it's like mind-blowing, you know. But I suppose, what could I do? But I think ... I feel in my own way, I tried. I tried to educate myself differently. I tried to meet children from different races ... I suppose I did the best I could do in my own little Jewish, South African, white, middle-class little ... you know? So ... I don't know ... you can never do enough, I guess.*

The number of participants who identified themselves as 'African' was striking. As I described in Chapter 9, it was, in many cases, the threat of African-ness – with its associations with chaos, savagery and corruption – that precipitated the decision to leave South Africa. And yet a significant number of participants claimed this identity now that they were living in Australia. Steyn (2001) identified this tendency as one of the narratives used by white South Africans, after 1994, to make sense of their new positioning, to rework their privileged subjectivities and cope with their feelings of loss. While her research involved whites living in post-apartheid South Africa, the results of this study show that this mechanism is not confined to residents of the country. I will discuss later the way in which this might be a form of 'compensatory identification', as Hook (2014) proposed.

Gina and Sally were explicit about their identification as African:

*Gina: I consider myself an African really. I don't consider myself a European, no. I'm an African.*

*Sally: You know, if you ask my kids where am I from, even the three year old will tell you I'm from Africa - that's very much a part of who I am and how I do define myself.*

Terry described how he uses African-ness to comfort himself through the rough patches:

*Terry: When I'm working in the garden, I curse and shout in the African language, and I talk to myself in the African language. 'Cos I'm living in this society where I don't have a gardener, I'm the gardener – hot and sweaty and dirty, and drinking water out of the tap. And I actually feel quite at home! Um (laughs) ... and when I'm doing tasks that, you know, that are labour-intensive and all that, I relate to ... and I start talking to myself in Xhosa. Um ... So yeah, to get me through some patches, I just put myself in that environment and I come out the other end thinking, 'Well, how good's this! I can jump in my pool, have a swim, there's no gates, there's no door locks, I'll go sailing tomorrow, jump on the catamaran and off we go for a sail' ... and I think, 'I've got the best of both worlds.'*

Significantly, the rough patches Terry described related to the loss of a sense of privilege now that he lives in Australia: his association is to the fact that black Africans perform the labour-intensive work in South Africa, and this serves as a reminder to him that he is in fact still privileged – he has a pool, a yacht, the freedom to go sailing, and a sense of safety. This is perhaps what Steyn (2001) meant when she noted that whites sometimes appropriate being 'African' in a way that whitewashes the past. And Meister's (2010) observation, too, that such appropriation, by 'consuming the victim', is an unconscious way of preserving triumph, may be relevant to Terry's experience, which is filled with failure and loss, even as it also contains comfort and pleasure. These aspects of experience – or self-states – do not co-exist in conscious awareness, for Terry; rather, the one defends against the other.

Jerry also appeared not to be able to hold certain self-states together in conscious awareness. In one part of the interview, he described how, after a visit to Uganda, he recognised himself as Eurocentric:

*Jerry: I just realised at that moment I was essentially Eurocentric and I was more peaceful in that ordered sort of society.*

Very shortly after that, he described the following interaction with one of his black colleagues:

*Jerry: And his comment to me was, when I told - this was really interesting - when I told him that I was leaving, I was quite worried about what his reaction would be. He sort of looked at me sadly and he said, 'I knew you'd go'. So I said, 'How did you know that?' He said, 'Your forebears came here because it suited them. Now it no longer suits. You're going to move on to somewhere that suits you better'. It was as if it was as inevitable as - to him it was like the rising and setting of the sun; it was just the natural cycle of things.*

*Cathy: Hmm. How did you feel when he said that?*

*Jerry: (Pause) ... I felt in some sense saddened because I wanted to say to him, 'No, no, I'm also African' - and he was like denying the African side of me, and that hurt. He was like saying, 'Only I can be African because I'm black'.*

Jerry noted that he had felt sad because he felt his African-ness was denied – and yet he himself had just reported how he recognised himself as Eurocentric. In addition, Jerry did not seem to consider that there may have been another meaning to what his colleague had said. In my reflexive process after the session, I wrote: *That's not how I hear what was said – the black man said with sadness that whites only stay while it suits them, and hence that they deny their own African-ness.* It seems that both Jerry and his colleague were feeling sad in this incident, but that the opportunity to connect in this emotion was missed.

### **11.5 “Why did you leave?”**

Not surprisingly, given the complexity that surrounds migration, as discussed in Chapter 2, the participants reported mixed feelings as they surveyed their migration experience. There were many ways in which they spoke warmly and positively about the move, not only with respect to feelings of safety and security – although this aspect was certainly foregrounded, as I noted in Section 11.2 – but also about a number of other aspects of their lives.

Gina expressed her appreciation of the landscape and the potential for outdoor activity in

Australia:

*Gina: I like nature, I love bush walking here, and there's so many nice places to go. And the fact that you can just, you're so close by – and you're safe, you can just go. I like that aspect, and I'd love to go to Darwin and the Northern Territories, and Perth. I think it's a really beautiful country.*

Sally spoke about the benefits to her career:

*Sally: [In South Africa] ... I don't think, professionally, I would've ever got to the point where I am. And the opportunities that I've had, also in terms of my, you know, my learning and my training and – I'm not talking about my masters, I'm talking post-masters, so ... So that certainly was a huge plus for me.*

Even as they named the benefits though, many participants went on to name the accompanying losses, and in these instances, were well able to hold contradictory feelings together. Sally, for instance, went on from the extract above:

*Sally: But, is it important? You know, you have to weigh it up. At the time it was. Now? Yeah, now it's great, whatever, but I'm not sure whether that ... You know, you change with age, it kind of ... Your values ... the importance of your place in the profession is a lot less, it really is. Whereas, when I was younger, and didn't have my own family, I was quite ambitious. Whereas that's shifted in many ways. But you get to this point of having a reputable name, and you know, at the time it was very important to me. And it is still important to me obviously, but ... but um ... Is it the most important thing? Absolutely not. (pause) Yeah. So I see it as a bit of a sacrifice, you know, that ambition: I paid a price for it on some level.*

Roger was also able to hold feelings of both loss and gain together, as this related to the material advantages he had enjoyed in South Africa. He described the “*mind shift*” that migration had entailed:

*Cathy: So it sounds as though your material circumstances are less here than they were?*

*Roger: Oh yes, no definitely. If you ask anyone that knew me back in South Africa – I owned 10 cars in 15 years! I love cars, I love driving, I have a passion for it. I've lived here three, almost four, years now, and I have not owned a car. Yes, it has been challenging*

*in the sense of a mind shift. I bought a Vespa earlier this year – so I drive around with a little Vespa. But I do understand it was my choice – living in the inner city, just expense-wise maintaining a car, limited parking, all those kind of things. Yeah, size wise my house is a tiny one bedroom apartment compared to what I used to have in South Africa. So yes, to answer the question, definitely a massive, massive loss in a material sense, but in other senses, no. I think what I've gained was 500 percent more – 500 percent more things that I did not have in South Africa.*

Roger's sense of loss pertained particularly to the privileged position he had enjoyed in South Africa. Jerry's feelings of loss related to friendships:

*Jerry: I had a good network of friends in South Africa, and I don't think you ever get that back fully – not that same depth of friendship, because they have been through all those hard times with you. You don't have to explain your history: they intuitively know it. Whereas often here I sort of think, well, they really don't know what I'm about. I do feel a bit odd sometimes. But I have settled in, and I do enjoy my work, and I do - I do feel it was the right decision.*

It seems that Jerry came to realise that he was perhaps not so sure that he had made “*the right decision*” though, for he went on:

*Jerry: Interestingly, I still read The Mail and Guardian<sup>53</sup> virtually every lunchtime, when I eat my lunch; I go back to see what's happening in South Africa. My wife says, 'Why don't you let it go?' I say, 'Oh, I'm just interested'.*

*Cathy: What are you interested in when you look at it? What are you looking for?*

*Jerry: Oh, I don't know; I just took such a keen interest in how it would all unfold. But, yeah, you're challenging me to say, 'Am I looking for a justification for my move?'*

*Cathy: I'm not trying to point you in a specific direction, but – **are** you looking for something?*

*Jerry: Maybe I am, to some extent, looking for a justification. Because if it all went well, and everything turned out right, and everything started going on the right track, what would I do? Would I think, 'Hang on, I've still got friends there. I can still contribute'. Would I start to feel that I want to give all this up and go back? I don't know – it's never got to that. Or do I think, 'Yep, look at that. Look at that. I made the right choice. Potholes in the road, Eskom<sup>54</sup> is not working. I would have been so frustrated if I'd stayed'. I think there's an element of that. I think that's partly why I do it. Yes, I do believe there is an*

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<sup>53</sup> A South African newspaper.

<sup>54</sup> The South African electricity supplier.

*element of justification. I think some people do it quite a lot - maybe because they are still not certain. I think I'm certain of my move here being the right thing, so I don't any longer have a need to justify it. But maybe I'm reassuring myself. Who knows? I don't know. It's a fine line. I suppose it's a bit of 'Was the price I paid worth it?'*

As noted in Chapter 3, Evans (2011) suggested that expatriate South Africans use bad news about South Africa “as a panacea for any form of residual doubt and/or guilt about having left” (p.411). Jerry’s insight seems to suggest some validity to this suggestion, as does Sally’s comment, quoted in Chapter 8, about the level of crime and violence in South Africa:

*Sally: And in the years that I've been away, there have been incidents that have occurred to my family of origin ... And some of my extended family. And does it affirm my leaving? Yes, it does! You know, obviously!*

I believe it is necessary, though, to try to explore further *why* there should be feelings of doubt and/or guilt about having left – what is the doubt and guilt about? And these explorations should preferably, in my view, be grounded in data, as I suggested in Chapter 3.

In many of the participants’ narratives, there certainly were feelings of doubt, regret and guilt about having left. For the most part, as one would expect, these were not as easily acknowledged as were feelings of loss about friendships, or material privilege. Regret, guilt and shame are difficult feelings, of course, and are frequently masked by defensive operations. In certain cases, though, within the particular subjective context that each participant and I co-created, some participants were able to move away from their dissociation or disavowal of these painful feelings.

Essentially, there were two main groups of reasons for feelings of guilt, doubt, regret and shame: i) having left family behind; and ii) having left the country itself.

### ***11.5.1 Leaving Family Behind***

Where this was present, guilt about family referred specifically to parents left behind, which accords with Ward and Styles' (2012) findings, which were discussed in Chapter 2. Linda, for instance, spoke about leaving her elderly parents back in South Africa. Although her comments suggested that she might have felt some regret or guilt about that, she disavowed this. In the following extract, for example, she used the word "worried" and then hastened to negate this with "no, no, not worried, just sad".

*Linda: My parents were very supportive of us coming. They really felt we should come. I was a bit concerned, worried about leaving them – no, no, not worried, just sad. They were wonderful parents and very supportive, and I wanted to be able to be supportive for them as they got older. And then – my mom got motor neurone disease, which is a hideous thing.*

Perhaps it was the case for her, that she did not feel worried, but, given her wish to be supportive of them, worry would not have been an inappropriate feeling – and so one might wonder why she denied this – whether there was a defensive operation in play. The juxtaposition of this denial with her mother's diagnosis of motor neurone disease could also be suggestive in this regard. The question mark that one might raise here about feelings of worry, and guilt, is supported by the way in which, at a later point in our conversation, she spoke about her father's increasing health problems, but denied – three times – feeling any guilt about not being there to help him, and displaced feelings of guilt onto her husband. As in the extract above, sadness was the only feeling with which she associated:

*Linda: And there's a large part of me that just wishes I could be there helping him out and being there to help him. At the same time, I feel no guilt about it because I know that they're very generous - they were very generous, my parents - and I know that they wouldn't want it any other way. So I don't feel guilt. I think at times my husband feels guilt, but I don't feel guilt about it. I just feel sad because there's a part of me that would like to be there.*

I did not pursue the possibility of feelings of worry or guilt with Linda: as I noted in Section 8.4, I considered her to be quite fragile, emotionally, and so refrained from questioning or challenging her, lest I contribute to the possibility that her centre might not hold, given the degree of lost-ness and confusion she was already reporting.

In my conversation with Sally, I *did* try to pursue the feelings of regret and guilt that I sensed within her narrative. I referred earlier (Chapter 9) to the difficulty that Sally had with the word ‘regret’, and how this made its way into her awareness and acceptance during the interview. She remained steadfast, however, that guilt was not a word that she would use, even though she described her decision to emigrate as a “*wrong choice*”:

*Sally: I'm saying it's the wrong choice because my mother deteriorated as a result of that, and she was dead within two years, and I don't think she would've gone so quickly, um ... deteriorated so quickly if I would've been present to care for her. I'm not saying my leaving played a role in my dad getting ill either, but if I'd been there, maybe I'd have been there to take care of him also. Maybe I would've ... Who knows, you know? (pause, cries quietly) Who knows? It's a helluva big responsibility to say that you can increase your parents' longevity or whatever, but I think ... but I think yeah, my presence would have certainly made an impact on their quality of life. But, yeah, there's not much I can do about that now.*

In the moment, I had a strong sense that the emotion inherent in her words was that of guilt, and put it to her – but she refused the idea, and did not return to it in the interview:

*Cathy: So ... is some of that feeling – would it, would ... guilt be too strong?*

*Sally: I don't use the word guilt, necessarily. It's not ... It doesn't sit well with me; it's not the kind of word I would use to describe that feeling.*

In the follow-up survey which she completed almost two years after our interview, her awareness of a sense of regret had endured, for in response to the theme of ‘*Regret*’, Sally wrote: “*Yes, regrets are ever-present*”. And, interestingly, with regard to ‘*Guilt*’, she wrote: “*Loads. Relentless – leaving my parents behind*”. It would be presumptuous to suggest that our interaction caused this shift, of course, but perhaps it contributed to the possibility of holding

painful self-states in conscious awareness, and may thus have been a beneficent experience for her.

Gina too, demonstrated a shift in her emotional state around guilt in her response in the follow-up survey. During the interview, she evinced little overt feeling about leaving family behind:

*Cathy: Is your family all still there?*

*Gina: Yes.*

*Cathy: So what's that like for you?*

*Gina: Yeah, it's hard, but you know, you took that decision with that in mind – you knew that. When you took that decision, you knew that. So you kind of factored all of that in, calculated all of that in.*

In the follow-up survey though, in response to 'Guilt', she wrote: "*I feel guilty about leaving my elderly mother in the care of my 2 sisters*". Again, one should not assume that the interview generated this shift, but her greater ability to acknowledge painful feelings is worth noting.

### ***11.5.2 Leaving the Country***

Feelings of guilt and regret about having left South Africa manifested in a variety of ways. For Susan, her decision to leave the country contributed to her sense of guilt, and shame particularly, because of the question it seemed to raise about her integrity – "*what does that make me?*" It seems that she might be fearful that the answer to her question lies in the next sentence: "*You feel like it's almost racist*":

*Susan: 'Cos I think the question is 'If you're such a liberal, why did you leave'? I guess that's kind of ... you know, people say that ... it's not very comfortable, yeah. That's just a kind of sense that you get. Like when you go, then you see like people of different races sitting together, you think, 'this is kind of, this is the way it should have been, and like: Now? Now when I've left? What does that make me'? Kind of like an unexpressed question ... It's almost like – you feel like it's almost racist. 'Cos like it's rather silly but you're leaving when there's a rainbow nation, so like ... Why're you doing that? Why you leaving when actually everything's good? Like it's right now, you know, it was wrong before? So in some ways, it feels like you're colluding with apartheid! I don't*

*know, like you're colluding with apartheid by leaving when apartheid finishes? I suppose in some way one feels ... it's not nice to think that ...*

While she does not explicitly use the word guilt, it seems that Susan may be feeling guilt and shame at the possible implication that, since she left South Africa once apartheid was officially over, this could mean that she actually preferred the old racist order. Following on from Truscott (2011), such a position could well be unthinkable for many South Africans, for that would suggest an allegiance with “what has been officially declared a crime against humanity?” (p.93). In the follow-up survey, guilt about this seemed to have crystallized for her, for she wrote, in response to the theme of ‘*Guilt*’: “*Yes – about leaving once apartheid was dismantled*”.

Interestingly though, the issue around which Susan *did* explicitly note feelings of guilt during the interview – having been a beneficiary under apartheid and then leaving without giving anything back – was disavowed in the follow-up survey. In response to the ‘*Beneficiary*’ theme, she marked it “*Not applicable*”. And in response to ‘*Privilege*’, she acknowledged it, but with some distancing: “*Life in SA is one of privilege*”. Perhaps it was the case that she felt safe enough in the contained space of the interview to allow this thought to emerge; or perhaps Susan experienced a limitation on the number of painful and difficult feelings that can co-exist simultaneously – perhaps the centre cannot hold all the guilt that she might feel. Nevertheless, she was very clear, in the interview, in her expression of privilege and guilt:

*Susan: That's the guilt thing, I think, having left and then not actually giving anything back. Sometimes that's hard, you know. I think, you were there for 20 something years, had all the privileges, compared to the minority – well, not the minority, but ... and how much did you give back? (voice breaks a little). So, I don't know, you just give money to everyone you see when you go back (laughs), it's like a way ... you know, everyone on the street!*

Susan's juxtaposition of the idea of ‘giving something back’ and the giving of money to street people when she visits South Africa – and implicit perhaps, in her incomplete thought “*it's like*

*a way ...*” – suggests a desire to make reparation in some way. In fact, a number of participants made reference to the way in which they continue to ‘help’ and ‘support’ black people in South Africa, in the form of taking clothes or giving money. As a potential form of reparation though, Klein’s (1940) description of the concept of ‘manic reparation’ (see Chapter 5) seems germane here: manic reparation is made to remote objects, felt to be undamaged by oneself, and considered inferior to or dependent on ourselves. Sally’s description of the way in which she took clothes for her father’s former domestic worker seems to contain some of these elements:

*Sally: My and her bond was long before my father was unwell. We just had this lovely relationship, and every time I’d go visit my dad, I’d take a whole suitcase of clothes for her and her daughter and ... Yeah, and there’s just this ... I mean she loves me, she ... There’s just this lovely relationship there, and it’s mutual ... And there’s, there isn’t really a power differential in the relationship, it’s quite equal, and in many ways, that’s how her relationship was with my dad too, even though he was her employee, employer, and she was his employee.*

Sally made no allusion to any guilt she might have felt towards the domestic worker, perhaps for the way in which she took care of the father in Sally’s absence from South Africa, and yet, as noted above, Sally came, over time, to awareness of her guilt about not having cared for her parents while they were ill. Potentially then, there might have been some guilt towards the one left to be the carer, and a consequent dissociation of such a painful feeling by the remaking of reality inherent in the proposition that there was no power differential.

There was another way in which a possible need to make reparation was implicit in some of the interviews. A number of participants, implicitly and explicitly, expressed guilt about having been a beneficiary under apartheid and then having left ‘without giving anything back’.

Although none expressed it as such, it seems that there was a need to feel that they were making reparation in some way – Jerry expressed it as ‘paying a debt’. This extract follows after Jerry’s description of a black colleague who was angry about Jerry’s decision to emigrate:

*Cathy: So that feeling - what is that feeling, when you say, ‘Oh, I didn’t like that feeling but I can understand his anger?’ What do you understand in there? How do you see that?*

*Jerry: Well, I think he believes that we did come and we did have a good life there. Let's face it - we had a great life. Growing up as a boy - I mean, I came from a very working class family but nonetheless we still had servants, even then. I was able to go to a good school - fair enough, I had to put myself through uni, you know. But I was able to do that. I had all of those good things. I mean, growing up in Africa as a boy, all the things I did ... That's hugely rich. I mean, that's a privilege. How many people in the world get something like that? And what he was saying to me was, 'You got all of that. Don't you think you owe us something in return?' I tried to talk to him about it. I wanted to say to him, 'Look, I've paid my debt. I do believe I've paid it. I've worked 16 years in this environment and it's taking its toll. I can't do it anymore'. But um ... I don't think he was that sympathetic to it.*

*Cathy: Is that how you see it - that you paid your debt?*

*Jerry: I think I did, yeah. We had some really not great experiences ... (pause) And in the army was also – so ... I see that as partly also paying my debt to Africa. Maybe ... no, I think I have paid.*

I sensed some uncertainty in Jerry about this matter of 'the debt having been paid', and wondered about the possibility of residual feelings of guilt about this, but he denied these, and went on to talk about his feelings of resentment about the way in which white veterans, who had fought on the side of the apartheid government, were now being treated as pariahs in South Africa. In the follow-up survey though, there was an implicit reference to feelings of guilt, for he associated 'paying the debt' with the thematic prompt of '*Guilt*' in this survey – even though it was to deny the feeling: "*Not any more. I used to feel that I had a duty to serve SA but now believe that I've paid any debt that I owed*".

Sandy named the guilt that she feels about having lived a privileged life by being a beneficiary under apartheid but, unlike some of the others, did not offset this with thoughts of making reparation. Rather, she seems to have accepted it as a fact that she has to live with; this suggests, again, that she is a 'deviant case' in this group in terms of her ability to hold painful and contradictory feelings and self-states at the centre of her awareness. Earlier in our interview, Sandy had spoken of growing up with feelings of guilt:

*Sandy: I think that, growing up, and growing up in Boksburg – well, in South Africa generally, I always had that sense, a lot of ... you know, that guilt. I did have guilt, felt guilty, I felt it to be an uncomfortable place to grow up in.*

It was clear to me that she was referring to the privileged life she had enjoyed as a white person, but I checked this later in our conversation, and we went on to explore her feelings about this:

*Cathy: You used the word guilt and I'm assuming that that comes with the associated privilege?*

*Sandy: Absolutely, yes. Absolutely.*

*Cathy: So, what's happened to that sense? Where ... what has happened for you, to all of that?*

*Sandy: The thing is – I think that ... Like going back, I go to South Africa a lot and when I go back there's some sense ... there's some wonderful things about it and there's some fantastic things, and, but ... I think even just living there I would still live that privileged life and I'd find it quite difficult. However, having said that, I went to my niece's primary school, which is a very integrated school, and I did have a sense that there was something wonderful about that. There was a ... like the school was so ... really integrated, you know, a lot of diversity, everything was acknowledged. And I did have a sense of, something did get stirred up in me around um ... well, a sense that things had changed in such a ... reflected in this school, in a really wonderful way and it felt like I'm missing out. So I sort of sensed that my children could have experienced something like this, and I did feel very moved by it, and saddened and excited and a whole lot of things. So, um ... the guilt around leaving ... yes, it's there. I mean, yes, I could have made some contribution in South Africa ... but I also don't have such a sense that, you know, my contribution would have been so significant that, you know, that the country would have been any different without me (laughs). I mean, it's more of a principle, that, you know ... it's very mixed. Yeah ... you live with that.*

Although he disavowed this in the follow-up survey, responding to the theme of 'Beneficiary' only with a question mark, Steve was explicit, during our conversation, in naming the ways in which he benefited under apartheid:

*Steve: As a student in the early 80s, we were living off a very fattened South African revenue base. Gold was then, what, \$900 – \$800, \$900 – and we were the recipients of that, in our educ – our subsidised education. While our black brethren and brothers lived in squalor, we were the ones that benefited from it – I did.*

*So I always think of the metaphor – I not only left South Africa with a bit of cash – we didn't bring a lot – but not only that, but within myself, metaphorically, I bought how many ounces or pounds of gold out of the ground? That wasn't just the wealth of the country but someone that sweated getting it, and there had been the knock-on effect of that. So we have all come across – and how much, if you could calculate, of what I benefited from education, and roads, and infrastructure, and medical, and everything that was all that I was spoilt with – how much did I bring with me?*

Although he did not use the word guilt during the interview, it was implicit, together with a sense of shame perhaps, in the way that he associated having taken all his benefits out of South Africa with 'running away':

*Steve: Did we run? Did we, you know, have you – what's the word – it's not cowardly, but you've given up your homeland ... have you ... have you not supported your home ...*

*Cathy: Have you betrayed? Do you mean betrayed?*

*Steve: Yes. Um ... it may be too strong a word. You know, sort of cut-and-run ... because of what it gave me.*

His discomfort – perhaps feelings of shame and guilt – leaves him with nagging doubts about having left the country. Steve referred frequently to the question of whether he did the right thing, whether his fears of what might happen in South Africa were legitimate, or warranted:

*Steve: Did we make the right choice? What was that? We also have friends and family at home that say, 'Well look at it – it's fantastic! Why would – you know, it's perceived! It's all in the press and it's all ...' But it's not! It's real! It is there. As much as you'd like to embrace, you know, your fellow South African and knock down your walls, and sit on your stoep<sup>55</sup> and have a beer, it's not prac – it doesn't work. It's not – it's not – people don't do it. If that fear was only perceived and it was all a beat-up, then they wouldn't be living behind barbed wire, would they?*

Andre also, as I suggested in Section 9.5, seemed to have some conflict about leaving the country – a conflict between his desire to leave South Africa and his sense that “*South Africans have to stand together and we make do, whether there are problems or not*”. I suggested that

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<sup>55</sup> Verandah

this internal conflict may have meant that certain self-states may not have been able to stand alongside each other, and painful feelings of guilt, shame and betrayal may thus have become dissociated.

Henry, on the other hand, was not dissociated from his feelings of guilt, shame and betrayal about leaving the country, as I noted in Section 9.5.

*Henry: I felt ashamed really. I felt it was very hard to talk to friends. In fact a very good friend of ours, we had an episode where we didn't even tell him we were going, it was so difficult to talk about.*

*Cathy: Why?*

*Henry: I think I felt like we were betraying them. Or they would maybe think less of us, for leaving. Yeah. So, again, it was quite an ambivalent, conflicted thing, to say goodbye.*

*Cathy: Can you say more about that feeling of being ashamed of it?*

*Henry: I guess I felt like it was a betrayal of a foundation of our friendship, or of an aspect of our friendship, you know, based on a common view, common commitment. So the feeling was one of... one of just feeling – yeah, I guess being unable to explain ourselves adequately, or with enough conviction to really make it seem authentic or legitimate. That was difficult, yeah. I think it was something we might have blown up in our own minds rather than it being a real issue, though. You know, we felt particularly guilty.*

*There were also some good friends of my wife's, they were doing really interesting kind of work, social development work. We actually met them a couple of weeks before we left and they just said, 'Don't go! It's a big mistake, don't go'. I guess that advice still sort of lingers and resonates, in a way - both that they were so adamant and sure about their place, and that they, yeah, and that perhaps that was advice that we didn't really look at closely enough.*

Henry had been in Australia for 14 years at the time we spoke, and considered himself generally happy and well-settled – and yet, he noted how “*Don't go! It's a big mistake, don't go*” has lingered and resonated, in the context of unsettling feelings of guilt, shame and betrayal.

## 11.6 Summary

The immigration component of the migration experience has been the focus of this final Results chapter. Almost all the participants described themselves as well-functioning and, with the exception of Tina, happily settled in Australia. This was especially the case when speaking of safety and security for themselves and their children. When it came to issues of 'home' and the sense of belonging, their sense of self and identity, and their feelings about having left not only family but South Africa itself, however, there was a significant amount of unsettledness in their experience. Painful feelings of guilt, doubt, shame and betrayal were ambivalently held by some of the participants, and dissociated in certain instances too. In some cases, even where there had been some acknowledgement of these painful feelings within the intersubjective context of the face-to-face interview, these were disavowed outside of this context. At the same time, there were also instances where the possibility of holding painful and contradictory self-states at the centre of their self-awareness endured, and even crystallized, post-interview.

While I have, at times, discussed certain of the findings in the course of these Results chapters, comprehensive discussion of the findings of this study will appear in the following chapter.

## **12. DISCUSSION**

### **12.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the discussion and theorising of my findings represent my subjective interpretations and understanding of the migration experiences that the participants shared with me. This means that I have, of course, privileged certain aspects of the experience over others in my discussion of the findings, but I acknowledge that other researchers, and even some of the participants themselves, may arrive at different conclusions, based on their own subjective interests and understandings. Nevertheless, I hope to show that my understanding is faithful to the material that the participants and I co-created in the performance (Goldner, 1994) of our conversations.

My aim in this conducting this study was to present a composite picture of what it means to be not only a South African migrant, but one who elects to take this step at a particular moment in history and under a very particular set of personal and social circumstances. In the sections to follow, I will present the various elements that I understand to be constituent of such a composite picture, but first, a brief comment on the method.

### **12.2 The Constructivist Grounded Theory and Relational Psychoanalysis Partnership**

In Chapter 4 I proposed that the constructivist GTM approach of Charmaz (2006) is well suited to the spirit and aims of a Relational psychoanalytic (RP) frame, based on her statement that “[a] constructivist approach places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants” (Charmaz, 2006, p.130). To my knowledge, though, there has been no proper attempt to marry these two approaches in research design, prior to the present study.

My experience of the combination approach has proved to be a fruitful one for this study. Use of the GTM, with its close attention to what the participants *say* as well as its detailed description of the steps involved in data analysis, allowed the core conceptual category of ‘the centre cannot hold’ to *emerge* from the findings in a way that no amount of theorising alone would have delivered, in my view. This conceptual category is crucial to the findings of this study, and useful not only for the number of ways in which it manifested throughout the participants’ migration processes, but also for its capacity to serve as an evocative metaphor for the participants’ experience of themselves and their contexts i.e. the psychosocial dimension of their migrations.

Drawing on the tenets of the particular version of psychoanalysis known as Relational (RP) has provided “a means of subverting effects of mastery, individuality and truth” (Hook, 2008, p.397), because of the way in which it eschews the vision of ‘the expert’ analyst or researcher who knows ‘the truth’ of what is happening. On the contrary, RP emphasizes the need for negative capability<sup>56</sup>, for, as Dimen (2010), citing Safouan, proposed, “The point is to have analysts who don’t pretend to know the unconscious. They may hear the *half-said*, but only later; they don’t pretend to know in advance” (p.263). In addition, RP, as a psychoanalytic frame which does not privilege the intrapsychic over the interpersonal or social, is a particularly helpful tool. As Ghent (1992) noted, Relational theorists “share a view in which both reality and fantasy, both outer world and inner world, both the interpersonal and the intrapsychic, play immensely important and interactive roles in human life” (p.xviii). Indeed, in this study, both intrapsychic and intersubjective<sup>57</sup> dynamics, and the social context of migration, all play integral and important roles.

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<sup>56</sup> The capacity to reject postulations of categorical knowledge, to stay in a state of ‘not knowing’, as well as the ability to continually revise in the context of new information or experiences.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Interpersonal’ and ‘intersubjective’, while closely related, are not interchangeable terms: ‘interpersonal’ is a more general term relating to human interaction, while ‘intersubjective’ has additional connotations of self and subjectivity.

### 12.3 Intersubjectivity Type 2

In Chapter 5, I described two ways in which the term 'intersubjectivity' is commonly used. What I termed 'Type 1' refers to the necessary and inescapable influence that any two people in an interaction have on each other, and I illustrated in Chapter 8 how this manifested in this study. Since those illustrations comprise a detailed depiction of Type 1, I do not propose to say more about that form of intersubjectivity here. Type 2 though, associated with the work of Jessica Benjamin (2004; 2009; 2014), is relevant in this study not only as it pertains to the degree to which the participants are able to feel settled, but also in a way that manifested entirely serendipitously.

As noted previously, I wanted to involve the participants in reflexive processing of the themes that had emerged from my analysis of the data obtained during our conversations. From my RP framework, I saw this as a way of honouring the collaborative and mutual nature of the endeavour. I decided to do this in the form of a survey which I sent to them, inviting their written responses to the themes that had emerged as focused codes from the application of the GTM. While I was, of course, aware that this represented a different form of engagement than that of meeting face-to-face, it did not occur to me that this would have the significant impact that it did. I was surprised, therefore, when a large number of the surveys were returned with themes that had previously been in evidence – even sometimes discussed – either inverted or marked not applicable. I have illustrated many of these cases in Chapter 11, but for example, whereas a sense of privilege about being white in South Africa had been part of our discussion in some cases, in the survey this item was either marked 'not applicable' or the sense of privilege now attached to living in Australia.

It was not so much the fact that there had been a change in response that was surprising; the fact that participants change their minds is often cited as one of the drawbacks of conducting member checks (Angen, 2000). Rather, I was struck by a pattern, that it was specifically the

more difficult items – guilt, regret, shame, beneficiary, privilege – that tended to change. In rare instances, the change was towards increased acknowledgement of such feelings, but more commonly it was towards denial or disavowal of these aspects. While Sandelowski (1993) noted the way in which participants sometimes gloss over or edit out certain painful elements at a later stage, and proposed that this is related to the interactional nature of interviews, she did not elaborate further on what it is about the interactional nature that influences such a phenomenon.

In my reflections on what it is about the interactional nature of interviews that might be relevant here, Benjamin's description of intersubjectivity<sup>58</sup> seems germane: "[A] a relationship of mutual recognition – a relation in which each person experiences the other as a 'like subject', another mind who can be 'felt with', yet has a distinct, separate center of feeling and perception" (Benjamin, 2004, p.5). She describes such a relation as a 'shared third', one which is co-created by both parties and thus a co-operative endeavour – belonging neither to the one nor the other exclusively, but existing as a co-created space or relationship between them. In such a space of thirdness<sup>59</sup>, that which has previously had to be dissociated in order to "preserve the self when need-satisfying dependency is unsafe or unavailable" (Benjamin, 2014, Part 3, para.5), may come to be known and acknowledged. Similarly, Bromberg (2012), referring to the clinical situation, described such a co-created space and process as one which involves the

transformation of unthinkable 'not-me' self-states into enacted here-and-now events that ... can be played out interpersonally, processed with the analyst's subjective experience of the same event, and become part of the patient's overarching configuration of *me* (p.8)

While research interviews are not, of course, clinical situations, ideas about thirdness are not confined to clinical process – indeed, Benjamin has worked extensively in the field of reconciliation and witnessing, and has written in detail (2009; 2014) about the crucial

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<sup>58</sup> In using the term intersubjectivity from this point on, I refer to what I have termed Type 2.

<sup>59</sup> It is important to note that Benjamin (2006) differentiates her ideas of thirdness from the contemporary Kleinian and Lacanian conception of the third as the analyst's observing stance and relationship with his/her own theory.

importance of thirdness in coming to terms with past and present social upheaval and trauma in both individuals and groups.

In thinking about the relevance of these ideas to the material that emerged in the interviews in the present study, it seems to me that, as one of the cohort of post-apartheid migrants, I was sufficiently 'like' the participants to constitute a "mind that could be felt with" (Benjamin, 2004, p.5) – someone who they could reasonably assume to have had "subjective experience of the same event" (Bromberg, 2012, p.8). At the same time, by virtue of my position as the researcher, and a therapist by profession, and the inevitable asymmetry and power that inheres in such roles (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013), I believe I was also sufficiently different – even, quite probably, invested by them with some authority (Kvale, 2006) as a result of my roles – to constitute a model for the open acknowledgement of that which might otherwise be considered shameful or unacceptable. As Benjamin (2004) has written, it is one of the roles of the analyst (or, in this case, researcher) to 'go first' in demonstrating willingness to deal with painful topics. In this, I believe that my conviction of the importance of not presenting myself as a mysterious other who deflected questions or expressed no opinions while expecting the participants to be open and disclosing to me about their stories and histories (as I noted in Chapter 5) facilitated the creation of an open and disclosing climate.

Such a climate was crucial, I believe, to the deep exploration of such a painful and sensitive topic as migration in general, and migration from South Africa after the dismantling of apartheid in particular. As I have documented in Chapter 11, South Africans are often not seen favourably within Australia, and, more and less unconsciously, harbour some uncomfortable reasons (at least, the majority of participants in this study did) for being here. It is my view that the co-creation of an intersubjective space made for a safe environment in which to share, both consciously and unconsciously, some of these difficult feelings. This space, albeit temporarily, created an 'emotional home', "a relational home, a space where an inner truth can be safeguarded and protected, as well as shared with others who are receptive to it" (Laub, 2013,

p.575). Outside of this space, in many cases, emotional truth returned to its previously disavowed, not-me position, and hence the disavowal of painful and uncomfortable topics, I believe, in so many of the written surveys.

This reference to a co-created space touches on the issue of transference-countertransference.

## **12.4 Uses of the Countertransference**

As I noted in Chapters 4 and 5, transference-countertransference in the relationship between researcher and participant, and how this should or should not be used, is vexed in the psychoanalytic research literature. My experience in the conduct of this study has demonstrated that interpretations based on the researcher's countertransference *may* usefully and ethically be made, provided they a) stay close to the data as it appears; b) not only acknowledge but rely on the principle of co-creation; c) do not try to fit the data into preconceived theoretical ideas; and d) emerge from deep and thorough reflexive processes.

### ***12.4.1 Staying Close to the Data***

In this study, I have made no inferences about family-of-origin dynamics as transferred onto the present since I believe this would go beyond what could reasonably be interpreted on the basis of a few interviews, let alone a single one. While some authors (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013) advocate a sensibility that takes into account that “what we say and do in the interaction will be mediated by internal fantasies that derive from our histories of significant relationships” (p.42), other authors have expressed their concern about such wide-ranging interpretation (Frosh & Emerson, 2005), and even in the clinical situation, Relational analysts tend to favour interpretations that focus on here-and-now experiences over those that refer to developmental or parental interactions (Bromberg, 1998).

In the Results chapters, I frequently used words and phrases from the participants' narratives as Section headings. This was part of my policy, in both data collection and analysis, of staying close to the words and concepts that the participants used. This was not so much an interviewing technique of the sort that Clarke (2002) proposed, but rather a sensibility that tries to play with meanings in the sense that Bollas (1983) described, drawing on the work of Winnicott, where words can become an object to be passed "back and forth between the two" (p.7) of us, and held onto if the meaning fits (e.g. Gina, p.159). This also provided opportunity for the participants to examine the meanings that were emerging, with which they could then agree or disagree (e.g. Andre, p.150, the 'laager mentality'; Sally, p.125ff, p.172 and p.221, 'regret' and 'guilt'; Steve, p.227, 'betrayal'), and allowed me to ensure that I understood what they were trying to express (e.g. Andre, p.175 'patriotic'; Sally, p.188 'measured').

When I had a hunch or association that developed their words and ideas, I would usually try to tie it to a thought that they had expressed earlier, or to a pattern that I thought I had discerned (e.g. Henry, p.139). And even in those instances where it seemed to me that these were ideas that sprang from my own internal processes, or from other interviews, I would usually try to explore them in the context of what was happening in the moment, both with the participants during the interview and in my later reflexive processes (Sally, p.199; Susan pp.140-141). Inevitably, of course, there were also misattunements and intrusions of my own agenda (e.g. Carl, p.143ff, Sally, p.148; Steve, p.152).

While I was an active and involved partner in our conversations, this did not mean that I talked constantly – as most of the extracts in the preceding Results chapters illustrate, the participants' narratives were the focus and they frequently spoke for long periods of time uninterrupted by me, so that I could listen closely and deeply to both what they said and what they did not say (e.g. Susan, p.173; Jerry, p.212). This did not mean that I thought I was not influencing the emergence of material however, in the way that Holmes (2013a) seems to imply with his

“minimal researcher intervention” (p. 163). As I outlined in Chapter 5, I consider the co-creation of material to be inherent in an intersubjective process.

#### *12.4.2 Co-creation of the Data*

As I noted in Chapter 5, my Relational sensibility inclines me to view interactions as co-created. Certain authors (Frosh & Emerson, 2005; Holmes, 2014; Stopford, 2004) have suggested that such an approach might be helpful in dispelling the myth of the researcher as ‘the one who knows’, able to observe and interpret without impacting or being impacted on. While I agree that this would be a desirable outcome, my approach meant that I not only acknowledged co-construction of the interaction and the data, but in fact relied upon it: I considered our mutual influence to be essential in allowing material to emerge, as I illustrated in Chapter 8.

This meant that, while there were certainly many aspects of both the interviews and later reflexivity and analysis that were based on association, and while I hoped that the participants would feel free to explore their stories as they saw fit, this did not mean that I saw the interviews as a process of ‘free association’ in the classical sense. I relied on the participants to upset<sup>60</sup> my pre-existing ideas about migration by presenting narratives that I had not previously known or considered, and I hoped that my questions, thoughts and interpretations would allow them to go further in their own understandings. I was of course careful and attentive to issues of power and dominance, and thoughtful about when to speak and what to say (insofar as I was able to be conscious in the moment), as I am in my work as a therapist as well, for, as Hook (2008) noted, even in the analytic situation, it should not be a case of ‘anything goes’. At the same time, though, I viewed the participants as adults, like and unlike subjects in Benjamin’s (2004) sense of the word, not the somewhat infantilised (in my view), or at least naïve research subjects who, for instance, should not be asked ‘why’ questions because of the likelihood that

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<sup>60</sup> My thoughts about this are similar to the idea that psychoanalysis has an important role to play in disrupting the normative (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008, Hook, 2008; Parker, 2015).

“you often get a sociological or clichéd answer” (Clarke, 2002, p.178). This was not my experience in this study, for the answers to my ‘why’ questions usually elaborated the topics in constructive and often more explicit ways (e.g. Andre, p.162; Henry, p.174). Similarly, I did not view them as *my* participants, because of the uncomfortable way this suggests to me some kind of ownership of their subjectivity.

Of course, I cannot claim that my thinking about co-creation is not a pre-conceived idea – I am not atheoretical – but I would differentiate this form of thinking from those ideas which make *a priori* decisions about what the material might mean or reveal.

#### ***12.4.3 Openness to the Data***

In suggesting that countertransference interpretation should not try to fit material into preconceived ideas, I have to own, as I outlined in the introductory chapter, that my earliest thinking about this study was based on the preconceived idea that migration might represent a flight from shame. Fortunately, as I prepared the documentation required for ethics approval, I became aware of the headlock in which this thinking had trapped me. As I became more able to hold conflicting self-states together, I came to realise that others might or might not feel shame, but that I really had no idea how others would feel about their migration, and thus I needed to stay open to what the material would show. And indeed, while my interpretations suggest that shame is part of some of the participants’ migration stories, the study suggests that guilt is equally prevalent, and that many other factors – social, interpersonal and intrapsychic – also play a role.

My experience in this regard leaves me thus with some concerns about psychoanalytic studies that start from a particular position – for example, that countertransference interpretations

should be based on perceptions of projective identification<sup>61</sup> (Clarke, 2002; Holmes, 2013a; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000/2013; Jervis, 2009; Marks & Marks-Monnich, 2003), or that research participants are ‘defended subjects’ (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000/2013; Lucey et al. 2003; Strømme et al., 2010). In this study, attention to my countertransference revealed no instances where I could be sure of projective identification in the Kleinian sense of something being ‘put into’ the researcher. In the interaction with Carl, for instance (pp.143-144), while I suspect that shame might have been part of his memories of some of his experiences in the military, I did not interpret this only as something he unconsciously communicated to me, but was aware of my own contribution to the situation, and my shame about having ‘dropped’ him.

Likewise, while I consider defence mechanisms to be a necessary and inevitable aspect of being human, and many, probably even most, of my interpretations related to the operation of these mechanisms, I did not start from the position that I was seeking to identify such mechanisms. Rather, I see them as having emerged from the narratives that the participants and I constructed – ‘third’ narratives, as Jimenez and Walkerdine (2011) described – and it was, for the most part, only in my later reflexive processing that I turned to my theoretical framework (my relationship with which constitutes another ‘third’, in contemporary Kleinian terms) and began to think of the operation of defences. Indeed, the conception of the manic defence – such an important feature of my findings – did not occur to me until I was well into the writing up of the thesis.

In addition, there were many experiences and interpretations that did not involve defensive procedures, as Seligman (1999) noted. For example, I believe my countertransference involved identification with Susan around the longing to feel connected (p.141), and also with Gina (p.202), around our common unconscious immersion in thinking in terms of colour and race. Additionally, there were times when the defensive procedures went from me to the participants, rather than the other way round: with Linda, for example (p.146), I believe I projected my

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<sup>61</sup> Holmes (2014) expressed the same concern about the way in which countertransference and projective identification seem to have become somewhat synonymous in recent studies, perhaps arising from his experiences in his earlier (2013a) paper, in which he used the concepts in just that way.

unwanted self-state onto her. In all these instances (and the many others that word limit constraints have not allowed me to include), these countertransferential reactions added to my understanding of the material without having to rely only on the interpretation of the participants' defences.

#### ***12.4.4 Reflexive Processes***

Most contemporary psychosocial studies include a reflexive component (Finlay, 2002). As I described in Section 6.6.3, for me this translates as my close attention (both during the interviews and in later processing) to the shifting nuances of verbal, emotional and somatic expression in both the participants and me, using my self-experience (countertransference) as information to illuminate how this might contribute to my understanding of the participant and our co-created interaction. In addition, as Ivey noted (2015, personal communication), research supervision is another reflexive component of the research process, in which one is invited to reflect on and, in some instances, reconsider certain understandings<sup>62</sup>.

I also believe “that as research participants also have the capacity to be reflexive beings” (Finlay, 2002, p.218), they should be engaged in reflexive processing both during and after the interviews. The latter took place via the surveys in this study, but I also regularly invited the participants to engage with me during the interviews themselves. Although it seems that such discussion is often regarded in the literature as “interpreting into the encounter” (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p.72), and is contested, as I discussed in Chapter 4, my experience suggests that such mutual reflexive processing, including offering interpretations, added greatly to the depth of understanding that could be reached. For example, the conversation with Sandy (p.213ff) about the stereotypes of South Africans in Australia involved us both in a mutual reflexive process through which, I believe, we each felt enriched in our understanding.

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<sup>62</sup> I see this ‘invitation to consider’ as different from the process of triangulation, which “refers to the use of data from independent sources to improve the credibility of the findings” (Anderson, 2006, p.333).

The intersubjective process of the interviews, in combination with the constructivist GTM and my theoretical framework has led to a number of understandings of the findings of this study – discussion of which follows.

### **12.5 The Centre Cannot Hold**

As noted above, the ability to sustain a position of thirdness is related to the capacity for intersubjectivity:

[The third] not only holds discrepant, unlinked self-states, not only good and bad senses of self, it also holds the tension between self and other, the felt difference of otherness. The intersubjective third puts as much emphasis on conflict between self and other as between part selves or self-states, on transforming the split complementarity of oppositions into *hold-able tension* (Benjamin, 2013, p.376, italics added).

This emphasis on the capacity to *hold* is central to the findings of this study. As I noted in Chapter 7, careful analysis of the interview data using the constructivist GTM resulted in the identification of a core conceptual category which I termed ‘the centre cannot hold’. In this formulation, ‘the centre’ serves as metaphor for:

- The self
- A central set of beliefs and values
- The sense of home
- The country (South Africa)
- The black majority government
- The predictable order of things; continuity
- European values and whiteness

These various associations to ‘the centre’, and the ways in which they are perceived to be ‘unable to hold’, have proved to be a rich descriptor for the numerous ways in which the majority of the participants experienced their migration from South Africa. I have mentioned

these various manifestations in the course of the presentation of results in Chapters 9, 10 and 11, but will summarise them here:

- A perception of chaos in South Africa, the collapse of order, a country in which things are falling apart – education, infrastructure, the economy, etc.
- The perception of the black majority government unable and unwilling to uphold law and order, safety and security
- The perception that European norms and values, perceived as central to a ‘civilized way of life, cannot be maintained in an African country
- The perception that black people, and the black majority government in particular, no longer consider whites to be valuable or wanted
- The awareness that the dominance of privilege and whiteness is under threat, no longer holding the central position in the social ethos of South Africa
- The self as centre unable to hold onto its existing values and beliefs in the face of massive change
- In the context of the self as constituted of a multiplicity of selves and self-states, a core sense of self unable to hold a variety of painful and contradictory feelings in manageable tension, resulting in greater and lesser degrees of dissociation
- A sense of self unable to keep paradoxical views of others, especially black others, in hold-able tension
- A self that is unable to hold the perspective of historicity – the truth about the facts of apartheid and one’s imbrication therein
- A self unable to keep difficult relationships with significant others in hold-able tension
- A self that feels so vulnerable and threatened, so unsettled, that there are fears of possible collapse.

Among the participants, the sense of *unsettledness* that results, to greater and lesser degrees, from the accumulation of all these factors is, in itself, not unexpected. Indeed, it is not even a

new finding, or particular to this study. One might even say that this conception of white South Africans is part of the current zeitgeist of research about post-apartheid whites, for a number of recent studies have named the unsettledness of this people: I began my study in 2009, the same year that Bloom's (2009) 'Ways of staying' appeared, in which he proposed that ongoing unease about the past, the present and the future is part of the condition of being South African. Griffiths and Prozesky's (2010) paper about white South African migrants noted the unresolved questions of identity and belonging that persist, while Vice (2010) suggested that it is impossible for whites who grew up with the privilege of whiteness ingrained in them to be free of their whitely habits, and that one of the tasks of living morally in South Africa requires the acknowledgement of this, with all the discomfort this entails. Straker's (2011a) paper 'Unsettling whiteness' showed how, in South Africa, "being white is now experienced as unsettling by many narrators and how whiteness itself is becoming unsettled" (p.11).

It is important to note that none of these papers suggest that this unsettledness is necessarily pathological; on the contrary, it is usually suggested that in the very unsettledness lies the potential for optimal functioning. As Suchet (2007) wrote,

In the acceptance of who one is, including all the not-mes, there is an opening up of the inner space ... The work lies in a deep acceptance of all the parts of the self and the conflicts that accompany me ... It is to move beyond the shame and guilt of the paranoid-schizoid position, which leaves one split off and evasive, brittle and defensive. We have to allow the self to be immersed in the turmoil and complexity of race with the contradictions of different states of mind and feelings rather than idealizing a smooth, conflict-free, racist-free, split-off space (pp 883-884).

But this ability to hold conflictual self-states in manageable tension presupposes awareness, or consciousness, of these self-states, even when they are painful and troubling. As Hook (2011a), proposed, we need to "foreclose the possibility of narcissistic wholeness and eschew fantasies of transcendence or exceptionalism in favour of something far more fragmented and disconcerting" (p.31).

As I have demonstrated in the preceding Results chapters, most of the participants in this study did not manifest such awareness of co-existing areas of conflict, however, and though such awareness became part of the intersubjective experience of the interviews in many cases, for the most part this ability to tolerate internal conflict did not endure in a way that was reflected in the follow-up survey. Instead, defensive mechanisms such as splitting, disavowal and dissociation returned. The manic defence, in particular, was a prominent feature of many of the defensive structures, both during the leaving process as well as in their post-immigration experience.

## **12.6 The Manic Defence**

In the period prior to their emigration, all the participants felt unsettled in articulated and conscious ways – indeed, in all cases, such feelings constituted their overt reasons for leaving South Africa. As I noted in Chapter 9, their very going-on-being felt unsafe and threatened, because of high levels of crime and violence, as well as the belief that there would be no promising future for whites in the country. All but one participant (the deviant case, which I will discuss later) held the perception that things were falling apart and that South Africa would descend into the state of chaos that they ascribed to the rest of Africa. This led to strong feelings of anxiety, and in some cases, fears for their physical and mental health. They felt that they were not valued in their country of birth, and felt deprived of the sense of self-worth that comes from feeling one is making a contribution.

These findings echo those of most other studies which have examined the reasons why whites have left South Africa in large numbers since 1994 (Bornman, 2005; Brokensha, 2003; Brink, 2012; Crush, 2013; Crush et al., 2012; Goldin, 2001; Khawaja & Mason, 2008; Lucas et al., 2006; Pernice et al., 2000; Politicsweb, 2012; Schönfeldt-Aultman, 2014; van Rooyen, 2000).

In addition, my findings suggest that there were also dissociated needs and feelings that formed part of the “populations of multiple self-states” (Bucci, 2013, p.423) of the participants’ pre-

immigration selves. As I illustrated in Chapter 9, these involved feelings of alienation, rejection and failure, both in the workplace and in the post-apartheid society in general. In some cases, a need for an ongoing position of privilege in this society became apparent, as well as the need to feel that they were benefactors of the poor and needy – with a concomitant disavowal of the historical fact of their own positions as beneficiaries under the apartheid system. This is not to say that the desire to benefit others is always suspect, for, as Hook (2011a) noted, “[t]here is not a kind of unconscious hypocrisy behind every apology or mode of redress” (p.28). But there were a number of examples in this study, as I demonstrated in Chapters 9 and 11, where the context of the material suggested the kind of self-concern that implicates a form of white guilt (Hook, 2011a) rather than an action that holds the benefit to the self of such actions in awareness. More and less dissociated feelings of guilt, regret and shame were also discernible with respect to the decision to leave, and the ways in which this could be perceived as abandonment or betrayal.

I suggest that these particular constellations of self-states *in interaction with* the particular social context of the time – among this group of South African migrants, who undertook the step of migration at a particular moment in their own and the country’s history – form a pattern that provides a fertile incubator for the manic defence. In proposing this, I am reflecting my grounding in a Relational psychoanalytic frame, which sees the intrapsychic and the interpersonal as always and inextricably related. I am therefore combining the two readings commonly reported of the manic defence:

- Those (Altman, 2005; Segal, 1964/1973) which highlight the way in which the defences are mobilized against the experience of depressive anxiety and guilt. In my view, this may be conceptualised as an intrapsychic understanding of the manic defence.
- Those (Aron & Starr, 2013; Hinshelwood, 1989; Ogden, 1986; Peltz, 2005) which highlight the way in which the manic defence is a disavowal or denial of vulnerability and dependence, and the potentially painful feelings of abandonment that may result

when dependency needs are not met. In my view again, this may be conceptualised as a social or interpersonal reading of the manic defence.

As I theorise it, the massive social change that accompanied the transition to a post-apartheid society in 1994 involved the loss of almost all that was known and familiar, and on which the participants inevitably depended for a context of going-on-being (Winnicott, 1960). This dependence on a known and safe environment for protection and emotional support, which forms the basis of secure attachment (Bowlby, 1990), meant that part of the attachment was to many apartheid privileges and structures – no matter how reprehensible apartheid, with its structures and advantages for whites, was or was not deemed to be by each of the participants. The dismantling of apartheid thus meant the loss of these familiar aspects of their lives<sup>63</sup>, inevitably provoking feelings of anxiety and vulnerability. As further traumatic<sup>64</sup> complication, this now-destabilised environment was accompanied by an undeniable increase in levels of crime and corruption (as I discussed in Chapter 3), making the environment and social context feel potentially even more unreliable, and thus unable to be depended on. In addition, as many participants reported, they felt unwanted and unvalued by the black majority, resulting, I propose, in feelings of abandonment and further loss. I see these as the social or interpersonal factors.

At the same time, there were intrapsychic factors in the mix, including the more and less dissociated feelings of guilt and shame: about having been beneficiaries under apartheid; about betraying the country by leaving; and about leaving family members behind.

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<sup>63</sup> Truscott (2011; 2012) has theorised this loss from the point of view of its problematic identifications and thus its expression in melancholia, which is a different conceptualisation from the one I am proposing, even though I am impressed by and interested in his views.

<sup>64</sup> In using the term ‘traumatic’, I am defining trauma as those experiences which result in feelings of “being harmed, discarded, humiliated, or otherwise damaged” (Benjamin, 2013, p 367).

The interaction of these interpersonal and intrapsychic factors resulted, I propose, in a decision and mode of leaving the country – ‘taking flight’ literally – that was, in all but one case, rapid, impulsive, relatively unplanned, emotionally-disconnected, and with the new country often sight-unseen. As such, I believe that one may conceptualise this particular way of migrating as a manic defence.

Further, based on the ways in which elements of omnipotence, grandiosity and splitting functioned, in some cases, to deny painful feelings of loss, disconnection, doubt, failure, shame and guilt in the post-migration period, as I illustrated in Chapter 11, it seems to me that the manic defence may also function as part of the defensive structures that many of the participants use to maintain psychic equilibrium in an ongoing way. In suggesting this, I reiterate that I consider defensive structures to be part of the normal, non-pathological array of adaptations that all humans make to preserve a sense of ongoing self-cohesion. I am merely proposing that the particular constellation of defences that many of this particular group use to maintain their psychic functioning has a number of elements that are associated with the manic defence.

In reflecting on why the manic defence, in particular, is employed, one way of understanding this may be as a continued outcome of the way in which they went through the act of migration: if the leaving process was itself a manic defence against unbearable social and psychic reality, then, in the absence of mitigating or transformative experiences, there would be nothing to challenge the defensive structures that had now come into being. In speaking of transformative experience, I am thinking of the way in which the intersubjective context between the participants and me facilitated, in a number of cases, a context in which difficult feelings could become more conscious. One could extrapolate from this and imagine that, if they had stayed in South Africa, they might have been obliged to encounter and engage many of these painful and confronting self-states, in a way that might (or might not, of course) have led to more self-state awareness. By emigrating, however, this possibility has been foreclosed, and thus, as I

suggested in Chapter 3, the fear and guilt alliance, cornerstones of the manic defence, may remain in place.

Further reflection yields another theory of why the manic defence may be 'suitable' for South African migrants. I wonder if white South Africans may be prone to defences associated with grandiosity and triumph, given the way in which the privilege and superiority of our whiteness was celebrated under apartheid for most of our lives. As Vice (2010) noted, it is impossible for whites who grew up with the privilege of whiteness ingrained in them to be free of the conviction that white people and their perspectives are central in the country of their birth. Perhaps this extends to the defences we unconsciously employ.

As a corollary to this, one might associate to the way in which, as I noted in Chapter 11, white South Africans in Australia are stereotypically viewed as grandiose, arrogant and entitled: "With white South Africans, the stereotype is that they are brash and rude, condescending to anyone they perceive as inferior" (Pryor, 2008, para 3). Perhaps what Australians are seeing as South African-ness are the defences we employ. And perhaps what *we* see when we 'other' these 'not-nice' South Africans are our own dissociated, not-me self-states. Such projections are, of course, a ubiquitous part of human functioning, and contain

the idea that people try to rid themselves of particular feelings and impulses by attributing them to others ... To the extent that we wish to believe that our violence, our greed, our exploitiveness, our passivity, and our dependence are 'out there' and not 'in here', then the 'other' group, the group that is both similar and different, can easily come to represent what Sullivan (1953) called the *not me*. Sullivan's locution is most felicitous: the *not me* is, of course, *me*—the disavowed me (Altman, 2006, p.60, italics in original).

No available literature addresses the possible role of the manic defence in white migration from South Africa, and so I have no precedents in that field to dialogue this with. Even in the migration literature in general, manic defences are little theorised: Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) noted the way in which new migrants sometimes use such defences as a way of trying to

assimilate rapidly, or use them when, “to the pain of separation are joined strong guilt feelings for abandoning those who remain” (p.64). In this latter sense there is certainly some accord with my proposal, but they do not discuss whether the act of migration itself may be such a defence. Neither does Akhtar (2011), although he does explore the ways in which the manic defence may be part of what he describes as ‘counterphobic assimilation’, an attempt to adopt “the characteristics of their new culture in toto as a way of avoiding feeling different, and therefore anxious and sad” (p.87). And while White (2013) and Wright (2009) have proposed that the act of migration may sometimes be a defensive manoeuvre, they do not suggest it to be a possible enactment, one might say, of the manic defence.

My proposition of the manic defence as it inheres both in the act of migration as well as consequent functioning is but one way of theorising the findings of the present study. In addition, while I believe it to be faithful to, and grounded in, the material which emerged, it would certainly not be appropriate to apply this theory to all whites who migrate from South Africa. Indeed, it is not even applicable to all the participants in this study, as the presence of deviant cases suggests.

### **12.7 The Deviant Case**

I suggested, in Chapter 11, that one of the participants (Tina, p.204) seemed to be trapped in an abject form of melancholia after her immigration to Australia, and that this reaction to the migration experience is a ‘deviant case’ within this group of participants because of the way it differed from the manner in which most others in this sample represented their post-immigration lives. As such, this example certainly proposes that there is variation in the ways of responding to being an immigrant. In this study, the best illustration of variation is the case of Sandy, for the way in which her pattern is different throughout the migration process.

Deviant cases – sometimes called negative cases (Charmaz, 2006) – are those which do not accord with the dominant pattern or theoretical construction. Charmaz (2006) noted that these may emerge through the analysis of data, or they may be purposively imported into the data. Where purposively imported, they are used to refute the emerging theory, so as to revise, broaden and confirm the patterns emerging from data analysis (Bowen, 2008). Where they arise spontaneously, however, as they did in the present study, they may also strengthen confidence in the findings precisely because they show that the theory or pattern is not universally true. In addition, by showing variation from the dominant pattern, they also demonstrate the existence of a dominant pattern from which to differ (Kazancigil, 1994).

I have illustrated, in the course of Chapters 9, 10 and 11, the ways in which one participant, Sandy, evidenced significant ability to *hold* contradictory and painful self-states in manageable tension in all phases of the migration process. I will summarise them here:

In the period prior to her emigration, while very aware of increased levels of crime and violence in the country, she also knew that it was her own inherent tendency to anxiety that exacerbated her responses: projection and splitting were thus notably absent to a large extent – the country was not the only locus of instability. In addition, she demonstrated that she was aware she had grown up in a climate of privilege because of her whiteness, as well as noting feelings of discomfort and guilt about being thus privileged. She also spoke about her need to find ‘others’ in South Africa to see as the ‘not-nice’ people, so that she could distance herself from bad feelings. In all of this, therefore, this participant demonstrated that her centre *could* hold.

In her actual leaving process, Sandy wrestled with the decision of whether or not to leave over a period of five years, aware of many conflicts, and noting the constant ambivalence that accompanied her decision-making. She noted feelings of vulnerability and loss and acknowledged her dependence on her family. Her decision to leave was thus made in a slow, thoughtful and emotionally-engaged manner.

She was similar to the other participants in noting and appreciating her feelings of safety and security in Australia. At the same time, she was able to acknowledge her attachment to the home country and missing out on some of the positive changes in South Africa. She named the guilt that she feels about having lived a privileged life by being a beneficiary under apartheid, but did not try to offset this with thoughts of making reparation. Rather, she seems to have accepted it as a fact that she has to live with, even as she named also a sense of relief at being away from constant reminders of her privileged status as a white.

Lest all of this sound too good to be true, it should be noted that there were some potentially defensive aspects of her experience as well: it is possible that she defended against possible guilty feelings about not making a contribution to South Africa by minimising what such a contribution might be worth (p.226); and she seemed to suggest that she *was* perhaps more likeable than the stereotypical South African in Australia – although she named her potential to be a self-hating South African in this regard (p.213). And perhaps her tendency to “cringe and feel embarrassed” for these other South Africans (p.213) might suggest some shame about being part of this group.

In general, though, a pattern of a centre that *is* able to hold a number of contradictory, difficult and anxiety-provoking elements together is apparent in Sandy’s account of her experience of migration from South Africa, unlike most of the other participants in this study. In general, the predominant difficult feelings and emotions that tended to be defended against by most of the participants were guilt and shame, and loss and mourning.

## **12.8 Guilt and Shame**

Guilt is generally thought to reflect “a self-condemning feeling about a specific harmful or destructive action or thought toward another, or the absence of helpful ones” (Morrison, 2008, p.65): it thus relates mainly to what one *does*, in reality or in fantasy.

As I discussed above, guilt was one of the significant factors influencing the participants' desire to leave the country, and comprised, in my view, one of the intrapsychic components of the manic defence. It was also prevalent in many participants' post-migration experiences, as I showed in Chapter 11: guilt about having left family behind and guilt about having left the country itself.

The guilt that some participants noted about having left family behind accords with Ward and Styles' (2012) findings that guilt was a pervasive, punishing and long-lasting outcome of migration for their participants, and was related to transgressions against the family (having left their parents in the homeland and depriving their own children of grandparents) and the impossibility of making reparation for this.

Some participants (e.g. Susan, p.214) appeared to feel guilty about not having done enough to oppose apartheid while living in South Africa, while others (e.g. Jerry, p.170) felt guilty about what they *had* done under the apartheid regime. For the most part, though, guilt constellated mainly around the (greater and lesser) awareness of having been a beneficiary under apartheid and then leaving without 'giving something back' (Susan, p.223; Jerry, p.225; Steve, pp.226-227). Implicit in this idea of 'giving something back' is the conscious and unconscious need to feel that reparation can and should be made: but in this study, where complicity in an apartheid past cannot be undone, it requires the capacity to bear the pain of knowing one has caused damage that cannot be fixed (Altman, 2005). This proved difficult in some cases however, and thus acts of 'giving back' took the form of manic reparation that could be seen as a form of manic defence in itself, as Klein (1940) suggested. This was especially evident in references to taking old clothes and used household goods back to the home country, or handing out money to street people on return visits home.

That there should be guilt about having left the home country is not in itself a new finding. As Paris (1978) noted:

No matter how well grounded the reasons for emigration or exile, there is a feeling of unconscious guilt in relation to the country of origin. Like parents, the nation of one's birth commands loyalty for having been the first to offer nurturance (p.57).

Akhtar (1999a; 2011) too, has written about immigrants' feelings of guilt about having left the home country, suggesting that guilt "is likely to be greater in those emigrating from socioeconomically disadvantaged and politically unstable regions" (Akhtar, 1999a, p.83). He also noted that "the wish for reparation – arising out of the inner awareness that in leaving home one has in a way attacked it – also propels sublimation and creativity" (Akhtar, 2011, p.16). In the present study however, as I proposed in Chapter 11, it was not always clear that reparative efforts were grounded in authentic acknowledgement of damage caused. The feelings of guilt (and shame) that such acknowledgement would likely bring were not always able to be consistently known and managed, and bore strong resemblance to Truscott's (2012) conceptualisation of "shame and guilt that is not yet and no longer shame or guilt" (p.247). In my conceptualisation then, in many instances the manic defence acts to keep knowledge and acknowledgement away from conscious awareness.

Shame also formed part of many of the participants' experiences, though usually situated towards the 'more' end of the dissociation continuum. Given the close association between shame and concealment – the wish to hide, or disappear (Morrison, 2008) – this is not so surprising, although Henry, with his open acknowledgement of the shame he felt about leaving (p.174) was exceptional in this regard. Shame is generally considered to relate to *who one is*, rather than what one does: "what one is before oneself and others; one's standing, importance, or lack of it; one's lovability, sense of acceptability, or imminent rejection, as seen before the eye of the other or the internal self-evaluative eye of the self" (Lansky, 1999. p.347). Among the participants, shame tended for the most part to be associated with leaving South Africa, their own adjustment (or lack thereof) in Australia, as well as what it is to be South African – and was related both to the perceptions of others as well as self-evaluation, as Lansky (1999) proposed.

Regarding leaving, I believe shame was implicit in, for example, Susan's (p.222) concern about what it 'made her', to have left after the dismantling of apartheid – whether this meant she was racist; for Andre (p.175f), it seems there may be some shame attached to his possible betrayal of the ideal of patriotism; Steve (p.227) may have a level of unconscious shame about a lack of integrity in having 'cut and run' when he left South Africa.

For some participants, there seemed to be shame from a sense of failure in adjusting to life as an immigrant (e.g. Linda, p.206; Carl, p.211; Terry, p.209). While I believe unmourned and unacknowledged loss is inherent in these narratives as well (as I will discuss in the following section), it seems to me that the presence of possible manic defences, such as the grandiosity in Terry's account, suggest that shame about having fallen to a 'lower' status may also be present.

Shame about being South African is implicit, I believe, in the way in which unpleasant unlikeableness is projected onto other South Africans in Australia, as I have discussed. It allows for 'shameful' qualities such as arrogance, entitlement and racism (e.g. Jerry, p.212; Sandy, p.213) to be disowned<sup>65</sup>, and a sense of one's goodness, mastery and uniqueness to be maintained. In this way, it seems to me that shame may also inhere in what group one belongs to, as well as who one is.

I believe, though, that there remains an unconscious awareness of what one is 'doing' to the other when such projections occur. And this reference to 'doing' may be related to the guilt that regularly accompanies feelings of shame – for shame and guilt “readily comingle” (Morrison, 2008, p.66); indeed, many shameful situations “can be understood in terms of guilt avoidance” (Altman, 2005, p.339). I think that it may be as a consequence of this imbrication of shame and guilt that shame and blame so often go together (Orange, 2008). My interaction with Steve (p.151ff) provides a good example of my thinking on this, especially as it was informed by my

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<sup>65</sup> This, I think, is in the same way that degraded and unwanted qualities were (and often still are) projected onto black people to preserve a sense of goodness in many white people (Altman, 2006).

later reflexive processing, reported in that chapter. It seems to me that Steve may have projected his own ‘cynicism and overt racism’ onto his parents from a perhaps not entirely unconscious sense of the shameful (cf. his use of the word ‘embarrassingly’) of such attitudes. And yet, he felt strongly that life as he knew it had been disrupted and overturned, and that blame had to accrue somewhere for this. At the same time, he was also aware that “it’s not all that” – that there was a historical context to what he had experienced, thus perhaps engendering a sense of guilt about having ‘wronged’ those whom he blamed.

Possibly then, as a result of this comingling of guilt, shame and blame, Steve (and I too, in the enactment that occurred between us) became caught up in what Benjamin (2000) has called the complementarity of doer-done to relations, in which one moves alternately between the shame of being the one who has hurt or damaged the other, or the self-pity of being the one who has been hurt.

This doer-done to aspect of intersubjective relating is inherent, I believe, in the most of the participants’ experience of their migration. As I have noted, many of the participants feel guilt and shame about what they have done to others – the parents left behind, a country betrayed, the benefits of whiteness enjoyed at the expense of black people, etc. At the same time, many also feel done-to by what they perceive to be the situation in post-apartheid South Africa – real and feared crime and violence, pushed out of their country of origin, unvalued and unwanted for any contribution they might make, etc. In this way, the act of migration itself as manic defence may represent a breakdown into complementarity<sup>66</sup>; at the same time, defence (both in the form of dissociation as well as all the defensive processes inherent in the manic defence) against the conscious experience of these conflictual positions has prevented, in many cases, the achievement of a position of thirdness – the capacity to acknowledge participation in both sides

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<sup>66</sup> One might say that the two ways in which the manic defence has been theorised, as I described earlier, represents such a complementarity – with the intrapsychic dimension representing the ‘doer’ end, and the social/interpersonal dimension representing the ways in which the participants felt ‘done to’. (My formulation then, which holds both of these as essential elements to the manic defence, represents a ‘third’ position).

of the complementarity in order to achieve a position which is neither entirely one nor the other – that could bring understanding to the sense of unsettledness that is part of what it is to be not only a migrant, but a post-apartheid white South African.

## **12.9 Loss and Mourning**

“At its most accessible and familiar, mourning involves sadness that something has been lost. Loss is registered and the grieving person ... knows and feels that something or someone is missing” (Frawley-O’Dea, 2014, p.596). In addition to sadness, feelings of anger, denial and pain also attend loss (Frawley-O’Dea, 2014). I reported in Chapter 2 that the role of loss and mourning in the migration experience is noted by almost every author surveyed in that chapter, and is inherent in all the aspects of migration that I delineated there (i.e. Home; Separation-Individuation; Dissociation and Multiplicity; and Impact on Self Experience). The findings of this study are no exception to this. Loss pervades the migration stories of every participant, both consciously and unconsciously, irrespective of the number of years they have spent in Australia.

A conscious sense of loss, and the sadness, mourning and sometimes anger associated with this, related mainly to their attachment to family members and friends left behind (e.g. Susan, p.141; Sally, p.148; Sandy, p.183; Jerry, p.218). Although not always explicitly named as a loss, the loss of a sense of home and belonging was also manifest in many participants’ accounts, and usually referred to the way in which South Africa no longer felt like home because of the perceived loss of the four key feelings that Hage (2010) suggested constitute the sense of home – security, familiarity, community, and a sense of possibility or hope. The levels of crime and violence noted by all the participants disrupted their sense of security, and also undermined their sense of a hopeful future for themselves and their children in South Africa. The loss of the familiar related not only to the intuitive sense of where home is (Henry, p.199) but also to the changes in the psychosocial context brought about by the move towards democracy: for

example, a number of participants reported their feelings of devaluation and loss of relevance in post-apartheid South Africa (e.g. Carl, p.164; Jerry, p.170). With regard to the loss of community, this was most evident among the Afrikaans-speaking participants in their perceived loss of the Afrikaner culture (e.g. Andre, p.189; Gina, p.179ff), but also manifested in feelings of displacement from a context in which one is known and understood (e.g. Carl, p.211; Henry, p.211).

In a number of instances, again not always consciously named as such but nevertheless not dissociated, the sense of loss related to those aspects the participants felt they had sacrificed during the migration process: material wealth and possessions (e.g. Roger, pp.217-218), ambition (Sally, p.217), and seeing the new South Africa grow and develop (e.g. Sandy, p.226; Tina, p.204) For many, the losses also related to their sense of identity – the parts of themselves associated with home (e.g. Linda, p.178, her humility; Gina, p.179, her sense of being a benefactor).

In these instances, where the sense of loss was quite conscious, mourning was less impeded – the losses could be talked about and grieved. Mourning, entailing both detachment from and continuity with lost objects (Gaines, 1997), could thus take place without the need for the defensive operations that come into play when loss cannot be acknowledged (Frawley-O’Dea, 2014). For most of the participants, however, there were aspects of loss in their migration experiences that were defended against in various ways. In some cases, defensive patterns may be perceived, in my view, which suggests not just unique or particular individual mechanisms but also the possibility of more widespread defensive phenomena among white post-apartheid migrants.

I have discussed in detail above how I view the pattern of the manic defence as a possible protection from a number of aspects of the migration experience, including loss and mourning. While Young-Bruehl (2003) has noted how the manic defence may be an attempt to restore an

inner world that has been disrupted by loss, or may be an attempt to “leap over the painful mourning process” (p.282), I have suggested that the particular forms of the manic defence noted among this group of white South African migrants relate especially to their migration at a particular moment in history and under a very particular set of personal and social circumstances. In addition, I think that there might also be another pattern of response, also specific to the circumstances of being a white post-apartheid migrant, but more pointedly relating to the losses involved.

In Chapter 3, I mentioned Hook’s (2014) concept of ‘compensatory symbolic identifications’.

This mode of response to loss involves:

a need for compensatory identifications *precisely not with the lost object* itself. This trajectory of identification is directed towards a symbolic locus that lies beyond the grieving subject and the lost object ... [which] helps disavow the painful significance of the loss and enables the location of more suitable object-investments ... there is no fidelity to the object; the object is instead demeaned, devalued in comparison to a series of narcissistically-bound, closer to home object-investments (p.159, italics in original).

In that chapter, I remarked that this concept might usefully be explored among whites who migrate from South Africa. Arising from the findings of this study, there are two ways in which I think it might be meaningful. The first is akin to what Akhtar (1995) has called ‘counterphobic assimilation’, where the new immigrant very rapidly identifies with the new country and totally renounces the old. Roger, for example, in his (p.207) description of himself, three years after his immigration, as ‘an Aussie with an accent’, as well as his intensely negative depictions of South Africa, seems to represent what Akhtar proposed. But I wonder if this also resonates with Hook’s (2014) conception of the ‘compensatory symbolic defence’: certainly, the ‘replacement identification’ as an Aussie permits the pain of the loss of South Africa to be disavowed. When one adds to that the fact that Roger views Australia to be “*so much bigger and better*” than South Africa, then perhaps there is the kind of symbolic identification that *more than* makes up for what has been lost – which is the aspect that inclines me to wonder if this also relates to a manic element in the defence.

The second relates more specifically to the fact that these are South African migrants. I noted, in Chapter 11, the significant number of participants (almost half of the group) who described themselves as African, notwithstanding the fact that they were often critical and devaluing of the way in which they perceived South Africa to be becoming increasingly ‘Africanised’. Hook’s (2014) conception of symbolic identification may be pertinent here, I suggest, for the way in which this appears to mirror his contention that the “identification is directed towards a symbolic locus that lies beyond the grieving subject and the lost object” (p.159). By claiming what they might perceive to be their African birthright, I wonder if this perhaps defends against the experience of loss sustained in leaving the country of their birth.

This idea needs more elaboration and exploration than is possible here, of course, but might be a fruitful topic for further study – which introduces the conclusion to this thesis, in the chapter which follows.

## 13. CONCLUSION

### 13.1 Summary of the Findings

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of migration by a group of white South Africans who moved to Australia after the dismantling of apartheid in 1994, with the hope that I might achieve a composite picture of what it means, not only to be a migrant, but one who elects to take this step at a particular moment in history and under a very particular set of personal and social circumstances. Importantly, the findings represent my subjective composite picture of one possible rendering of what it is to be a white post-apartheid migrant, obtained from my interactions with this specific group of participants. It is not intended to be a definitive statement about all South African migrants.

The findings suggest that there are three distinct phases of the migration process. The first phase, emigration, is founded, on a conscious level, in the perception of South Africa as an unsafe country with a high crime rate and high levels of corruption. A sense that ‘things are falling apart’ and that the future for whites in the country is uncertain at best, led to feelings of vulnerability and anxiety and contributed to the desire to emigrate. There were also additional layers of painful and uncomfortable feelings, both more and less conscious, which were part of the self-experience of the participants, and thus part of the emigration process: feelings of alienation, rejection and failure, both in the workplace and in the post-apartheid society in general. In some cases, it was my sense that there was a desire for an ongoing position of privilege in society, as well as the need to feel that they were benefactors of the poor and needy – with a concomitant disavowal of the historical fact of their own positions as beneficiaries under the apartheid system; and more and less dissociated feelings of guilt, regret and shame about the past, the family left behind, and leaving the country itself.

The second phase, the actual leaving process, was a product of the interaction of these intrapsychic and social/interpersonal factors, resulting in a decision and mode of leaving the country – ‘taking flight’ literally – that was, in all but one case, rapid, impulsive, relatively unplanned, emotionally-disconnected, and with the new country often sight-unseen. I conceptualised this particular way of migrating as a manic defence, and suggested that the decision to leave South Africa may represent the operation of this particular defence against the painful reality of a country that is no longer experienced as safe and welcoming, as well as defending against feelings of loss, guilt, shame, and other experiences of vulnerability.

In the third phase, immigration, the participants felt (in all but one case) happily settled in the new country, especially because of the sense of safety and security they now enjoyed. Nevertheless, there was also a sense of unsettledness – more and less dissociated – relating to such issues as ‘home’ and the sense of belonging, their sense of self and identity, and their feelings about having left not only family but South Africa itself. Painful feelings of guilt, doubt, shame and betrayal were ambivalently held by some of the participants, and dissociated in certain instances too. In some instances, defences such as splitting, grandiosity and omnipotence, associated with the manic defence, continued to form part of the context of these participants as immigrants to Australia. In some cases, even where there had been some acknowledgement of these painful feelings within the intersubjective context of the face-to-face interview, these were disavowed outside of this context. At the same time, there were also instances where the possibility of holding painful and contradictory self-states at the centre of their self-awareness endured, and even crystallized, post-interview.

As the findings show, the core conceptual category ‘the centre cannot hold’ runs through all three phases. As a descriptive thread, this theme refers both to intrapsychic and social/interpersonal dimensions of experience, is both conscious and unconscious, and manifests as both cause and effect of experience. As such, it expresses the unsettledness that inheres in

what it is to be a white post-apartheid South African migrant in this particular group of participants.

### **13.2 Implications of the Study**

In considering the ways in which this study might make a contribution to migration research in general, it seems to me that the way in which the actual process of leaving has been an important aspect of the migration process in this study might highlight an area that has not received much attention in the literature. While the experience of being an immigrant has been well documented (as I reported in Chapter 2), as has consideration of the motivations for leaving (Ainslie et al., 2013), the actual process of leaving and the way in which this continues to impact on subsequent adjustment, if noted at all, is usually just named as one of the factors affecting outcome (Akhtar, 1999a), without deeper exploration of specific ways in which the impact manifests. While I have not consulted the literature on exiles and refugees, logic suggests that the manner of leaving, in these instances, might be considered to be a more significant factor than it is for migrants in general: this study suggests that there might be more general applicability than has been theorised to date, however.

In addition, although White (2013) and Wright (2009) conceptualise the act of migration itself as a defensive manoeuvre, the idea of the act of migration itself as a possible form of manic defence has not, to my knowledge, been examined in migration studies to date. By highlighting this potential formulation of migration, I believe that this study may make a new contribution to existing scholarship in the field.

Thirdly, Ward and Styles (2012) suggested that guilt as an element of the migration experience needed further research; to that end, I believe that the present study may make a contribution not only in the way that it supports their findings about family, but in the way that it suggests that there may also be guilt about having left the home country itself.

The fourth implication for the field of migration studies in general speaks to Chirkov's (2009) description of the acculturation process as one which emerges in a context of interactions, and his argument for a research method that emphasizes the primacy of people's experience in the development of research knowledge and understanding. I believe that the present study, with its emphasis on a method of research and understanding that highlights both the interactive and subjective nature of experience, supports Chirkov's (2009) position. In addition, although acculturation studies are not traditionally located within a psychoanalytic frame, this study suggests that the incorporation of a Relational psychoanalytic frame in particular, with its emphasis on the reciprocal and interactive nature of experience, could be helpful for future acculturation research.

With regard to its possible contribution to research on white migration from South Africa, I believe that this study may contribute to existing knowledge through its emphasis on unconscious and intrapsychic factors that contribute to the phenomenon. While the manifest reasons for leaving have been well documented (as I noted in Chapter 3), there were only a few studies (Griffiths & Prozesky, 2010; Milton, 2011) that attempted a deeper understanding of the migration experience of post-apartheid migrants – and I did not find any that attempted a comprehensive psychoanalytic exploration. Though there are a few psychoanalytic studies by South African migrants which refer to this aspect (Ipp, 2010a; 2010b; Lobban, 2006; 2013; Philips, 2007), these authors are from the pre-1994 cohort and thus experienced a different migration context.

In terms of the methodology of the study, as I noted in Chapter 4, I have not found any studies that attempted an integration of a dedicated and complete constructivist Grounded Theory Method with a psychoanalytic frame – especially one which relies as heavily on the co-creation of material as the present study does. While Anderson (2006) described psychoanalysis and grounded theory as 'well-suited partners', she used the Glaser and Strauss (1967) version of the method – which specifically rejects the possibility of interpretation, which seems contradictory.

Similarly, while Stopford's (2006) thesis used a Relational psychoanalytic frame in a way that I found helpful and illuminating, she also used elements of the positivist version of the GTM. I hope that the present study might show that there is a beneficial marriage possible between the constructivist form of the GTM and Relational psychoanalysis, and that this might prove helpful for future researchers hoping to find a suitable structure for psychoanalytic research.

As a related point, I noted that Strømme et al. (2010) proposed that the specific psychoanalytic frame that informs the study should be explicitly named and described. I believe that this is an aspect that could contribute to a wider acceptance and understanding of psychoanalysis as a research method if such precision were more widely practised, and I hope that the present study, with its comprehensive explication of Relational thinking in Chapter 5, as well as a demonstration of its application in Chapter 8, might make a contribution in this regard. In addition, I am hopeful that the way in which I have detailed the ways in which I made use of my countertransference, especially during data collection, may contribute to the growing body of work (Jimenez & Walkerdine, 2011; Stopford, 2006; Strømme et al., 2010) that proposes that interpretations during the interview may usefully and ethically be made.

I believe that the findings of this study may provide useful understandings that could guide therapeutic intervention in clinical work with white South African migrants in Australia. Specifically, the study has illuminated the presence of more and less conscious processes of shame and guilt in the self-experience of the participants in this study. While not a definitive statement about all South African migrants, an awareness of the possible presence of these factors may be helpful in guiding interventions aimed at assisting recent migrants especially to manage the unsettledness which may permeate their migration experience.

### **13.3 Evaluation of the Study**

In her attempt to answer the question: “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” (Tracy, 2010, p.837), Tracy suggested eight important markers of quality. These seem to me to be useful ways of evaluating the findings of the present study.

#### ***13.3.1 Worthy Topic***

Tracy (2010) suggests that “good qualitative research is relevant, timely, significant and interesting” (p.840). I noted in Chapter 3 that South African migrants represented 2.6% of Australia’s overseas-born population in 2011, which represents a 31% increase over the five years preceding this census (DIAC, 2014). These increasing numbers suggest that a study of this population is both relevant and timely in the Australian context. In addition, the findings here suggest that, while most of the migrants in this study reported themselves happy and well-adjusted in their new lives, underlying unsettledness continues to characterise their experience. It seems significant then that an attempt should be made to understand something about this sense of unsettledness. And, given the way in which unsettledness is generally thought to characterise the experience of post-apartheid whites in South Africa, it is interesting, I believe, to confirm, among this sample, Griffiths and Prozesky’s (2010) suggestion that this unsettledness is not resolved by emigration.

#### ***13.3.2 Rich Rigour***

This criterion refers to methodological and theoretical issues and proposes that these should be both complex and abundant. In the present study, attention to precision and detail has been a specific focus – not only because of the way in which the detailed steps that pertain to the GTM mandate such an approach, but also because of the way in which I have attempted to develop a combination approach to data collection and analysis that would allow deeper meanings to emerge while at the same time eschewing ‘wild’ or ‘far-fetched’ interpretations.

### ***13.3.3 Sincerity***

This refers to issues of self-reflexivity and transparency. I believe that my attempt to be open about and attentive to my role in the co-creation and interpretation of material has been a central feature of this study. Importantly, in my view, this derives not from an intention to ‘apply’ reflexive processes to the material but rather inheres in my fundamental beliefs about the intersubjective nature of all human interaction. At the same time, I have tried to ensure that the study did not devolve into a catalogue of my struggles and torments (van Heugten, 2004) and that the participants’ experiences are foregrounded.

### ***13.3.4 Credibility***

Tracy (2010) suggests that credibility is enhanced by thick description, ‘showing’ rather than ‘telling’, and the inclusion of voices other than the researcher’s own. I hope that the lengthy extracts from the interviews that I have included in order to *show* how I arrived at my understandings of the material, and the way in which I have usually supported these understandings with reference to the relevant literature, have been appropriate in this regard. In addition, by staying close to the data and confining my interpretations to our here-and-now interactions, I am hopeful that the theoretical conclusions I have reached are faithful to the material and thus that they will feel credible to readers of this study.

### ***13.3.5 Resonance***

Tracy (2010) suggests that researchers need to “engage in practices that will promote empathy, identification, and reverberation of the research by readers who have no direct experience with the topic discussed” (p.844). She suggests further that transferability of the findings is also salient here. Not only because my sample is small ( $n = 13$ ), but also because of the very subjective nature of the understanding and theorising of the material, I do not propose that my findings can or should be transferable to other South African migrants in Australia – although there are ways, as I noted in the preceding section, that I think my findings could contribute to the existing body of knowledge about migration in general, and white South African migration in particular. Further, it is my hope that readers unfamiliar with the history of South Africa, and

the imbrication of whiteness in this context, will find sufficient detail to permit empathic engagement with the topic. In addition, I hope that readers unfamiliar with the beliefs and tenets of Relational psychoanalysis will find sufficient explanation and illustration of these to allow engagement with the framework of the study.

### ***13.3.6 Significant Contribution***

As I have outlined in the preceding section, there are a number of ways in which the findings of this study make a contribution to existing knowledge. These include the importance of the leaving phase of the migration experience; the proposition of some forms of leaving as manic defence; the role of guilt in migration; an elaboration of some of the more and less dissociated factors inherent in white migration; and novel methodological considerations.

### ***13.3.7 Ethics***

Ethical considerations have at all times informed the procedures of this research – interviewing style, making interpretations, etc. – and, I believe, inhere in my positioning in a Relational psychoanalytic frame in which the relationship is predicated on acknowledgement of and respect for sameness and difference. This notwithstanding, there were a number of instances where I know I was insufficiently attuned to the participants’ needs, and where I lost my ability to hold an appropriate listening stance – and there must also be times where this happened out of my conscious awareness as well. Though I do not minimise the significance of these, I do not believe that there have been any significant ethical breaches, and none of the participants reported any form of distress or unease after the interviews: on the contrary, all noted how much they had enjoyed the process, and many felt they had benefitted.

### ***13.3.8 Meaningful Coherence***

Tracy (2010) suggests that this may be attained if the study achieves what it purports to be about, uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals, and meaningfully interconnects literature research questions/foci, findings and interpretations with each other. I hope that the summary of my findings above represents an appropriate and meaningful conception of the

composite picture of what it is to be a post-apartheid migrant within the group that I have studied. I have found the combined GTM and psychoanalytic approach to be a helpful method to achieve this goal, and believe that my incorporation of relevant literature scaffolds the findings and interpretations I have made.

#### **13.4 Limitations of the Study**

The first of these relates to the methodology of this study. It would be disingenuous of me to ignore the fact that my training and experience as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist was advantageous in the conduct of the interviews and the interpretation of the material in this study. Without the training and experience that supports such an approach, I understand the reasoning of those researchers (Clarke, 2002; Hoggett et al., 2010; Kvale, 1999) who suggest that psychosocial researchers could feel some limitation on the extent to which they could effectively employ a psychoanalytic (Relational or otherwise) methodology. Nevertheless, I would suggest that this could also provide motivation for those researchers who do plan to use psychoanalytic methods to ensure that they are well-versed in the multiple forms of psychoanalytic thinking currently available, and suggest further that research supervision by well-trained psychoanalytically oriented professionals could also be advantageous in this regard.

While considered adequate (Guest et al., 2006) for a grounded theory study, the sample size of 13 in this study is small, and certainly limits the generalizability of the findings. At the same time though, a relatively small number of participants may allow for a deeper immersion in the material than a larger group might permit. In a similar vein, the fact that I only had one face-to-face interview with each participant may be considered a limitation of the study. Although each interview presented a great deal of rich and complex material, there would certainly have been more opportunity for deeper exploration if there had been more than one interview.

I chose to invite participants to comment on the findings via a written survey. While this produced very important and useful results, the written format could also have foreclosed on deeper reflection, and certainly represented a point of departure from the interactive nature of the face-to-face meetings.

### **13.5 Suggestions for Future Research**

Emerging from the methods and findings of this study, there are a number of areas that future studies might usefully examine, in my view:

- My study focused on the experience of white South Africans who have left the country, but many people of other race groups have also emigrated and their motivations and experiences could be explored.
- It could be interesting to explore whether language differences affect the experiences of English and Afrikaans-speaking whites.
- Following Andre's (Ch9 p.22) hypothesis, one could research if and how the uncomfortable feelings among post-apartheid whites change with the passage of time in the new country.
- A study that sets out to look for and study the 'deviant cases' among white South African migrants – those who exemplify different patterns of experience – could help to illuminate some of the variety that must exist within such a diverse population.
- As I mentioned previously, Hook's (2014) concept of compensatory symbolic identifications could be a useful way of exploring the experiences of white migrants from South Africa.
- A study that allows for longer engagement with the participants might extend the depth and breadth of the findings.
- I am of the same cohort as the participants – thus an insider (Hage, 2006), with the inevitable complexity as well as familiarity that this brings. It would be interesting to

see what would emerge if the interviewer was of a different nationality to the participants.

### 13.6 Final Comments

I noted in the Introduction that my own grappling with the experience of being a white post-apartheid migrant was the impetus for this study. Immersing myself in the experiences of others ‘in the same boat’, so to speak, has brought pleasure, challenges, and some clarity. While there were many times when I felt warmly connected with each participant, there were also moments when I found myself critical and judgemental of some of the attitudes and characteristics expressed, and wished consciously (and surely unconsciously too) to distance myself from these ‘not-nice others’ – only to be confronted, upon further reflection, with my own imbrication in such ‘whitely ways’. It has thus sometimes been difficult to remain empathically connected to both the participants and myself, to stay with the struggle that I think we all share, here in Australia, of how to feel as though we belong somewhere. It’s hard to claim a space here sometimes: our histories, and therefore our selves – insomuch as we’re formed by our histories and our cultures, and they come along with us when we migrate (Ainslie, 2009) – are truly ‘not-nice’ in so many ways. This sometimes feels especially true, I think, for post-apartheid migrants – as Susan asked, what *does* it say about us that we chose to leave *after* the advent of democracy?

When I say that writing this thesis has given some clarity, I don’t mean that I have answers, or that I feel redeemed or settled. Rather, by encountering so many not-me self-states along the way, it does seem that I see the complexity with a clearer eye. Yet I wouldn’t go so far as to agree with Boulanger’s (2004) proposal that “different self-states holding different passports can coexist peacefully” (p.360). For me, the states are not so peaceful with each other, and there’s not always the free passage between them that a passport would imply.

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## APPENDIX A

### INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

This research is being conducted by Catherine Hicks (tel 0408 200242), to meet the requirements for the degree of PhD in the Psychology Department of Human Sciences Faculty of Macquarie University. My supervisor on this project is Dr Doris McIlwain, Department of Psychology, Macquarie University. Tel 9850 9430. email [Doris.Mcilwain@mq.edu.au](mailto:Doris.Mcilwain@mq.edu.au)

The title of the project is MIGRATION AS FLIGHT, and the aim of the study is to investigate the nature of the experiences and emotions experienced by people who migrated from South Africa to Australia after the dismantling of apartheid in 1994.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to tell, in your own words, the story of your migration from South Africa, as well as your experience of being a South African in Australia. We will meet face to face for approximately 60 - 90 minutes, and I will record our interview, for later transcription into written form. I will then analyse these stories for the themes they contain, and include extracts from the stories as the results of the study.

During the analysis process, it may turn out that it becomes necessary to depth or amplify or check certain themes. In that case, it is possible that I may wish to meet with you again at a later date. I'll ask you to indicate your willingness or otherwise to be recontacted at the end of this form: of course, you are free to withdraw your participation at any time, without adverse consequences.

You will be given a pseudonym which we will use during the interview, and which will be used in the presentation of the data. Any identifying details will not be reported. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the raw data, and it will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office.

Although there are no specific plans at this time, it may be that I re-write certain chapters of the dissertation for publication in academic journals or for presentation at conferences. Again, every care will be taken to ensure that there is no possibility of your identification from the material.

It is possible that you may find it upsetting or distressing to talk about the experience of migration, and the feelings associated with that. Some degree of distress, within the range of 'normal sadness', is nothing to worry about, but if you find yourself experiencing a level of distress that concerns you, please discuss that with me, and I can suggest possible appropriate courses of action for you. I will ask you at the end of the interview how you are feeling, and I will also invite you to have follow-up with a phone call in one month's time. You are also welcome to call me if you are experiencing thoughts and feelings that are distressing to you, and we can discuss possible courses of action for you.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from participation in this research at any time, without having to give a reason and without any adverse consequences to yourself.

If this meets with your approval, and you agree to be part of this study, please indicate your consent by signing below:

I agree to participate in this research:

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME (block letters)

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

I give permission for the researcher to contact me again at a later date for a follow-up interview, if that turns out to be necessary. I understand that I will, at that time, again be given the opportunity to give or withdraw consent. \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

My initials here indicate that I have been given a copy of this consent from for my records:

\_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed by

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

*The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone [02] 9850 7854, fax [02] 9850 8799, email: [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.*

## SECOND INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

This research is being conducted by Catherine Hicks (tel 0408 200242), to meet the requirements for the degree of PhD in the Psychology Department of Human Sciences Faculty of Macquarie University. My supervisor on this project is Dr Doris McIlwain, Department of Psychology, Macquarie University. Tel 9850 9430. email [Doris.Mcilwain@mq.edu.au](mailto:Doris.Mcilwain@mq.edu.au)

The title of the project is MIGRATION AS FLIGHT, and the aim of the study is to investigate the nature of the experiences and emotions experienced by people who migrated from South Africa to Australia after the dismantling of apartheid in 1994.

As you already know from our first meeting, you have been asked to tell, in your own words, the story of your migration from South Africa, as well as your experience of being a South African in Australia. At this second interview, you will be asked to expand or comment further on themes that came up during our first meeting, and perhaps also to comment on possible resonance or otherwise of other themes that I may name, that have been emerging in the research. We will meet face to face for 60 - 90 minutes, and I will record our interview, for later transcription by myself into written form. As before, I will then analyse these stories for the themes they contain, and include extracts from the stories as the results of the study.

We will use the same pseudonym which we used during the first interview, and which will be used in the presentation of the data. Any identifying details will not be reported. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the raw data, and it will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office.

As before, although there are no specific plans at this time, it may be that I re-write certain chapters of the dissertation for publication in academic journals or for presentation at conferences. Again, every care will be taken to ensure that there is no possibility of your identification from the material.

It is possible that, after our last interview, you may have found it upsetting or distressing to talk about the experience of migration, and the feelings associated with that. Again, if you find yourself experiencing a level of distress that concerns you, please discuss that with me, and I can suggest possible appropriate courses of action for you. I will ask you at the end of the interview how you are feeling, and I will also invite you to have follow-up with a phone call in one month's time. You are also welcome to call me if you are experiencing thoughts and feelings that are distressing to you, and we can discuss possible courses of action for you.

Your participation in this second phase of the research is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from participation in this phase of the research at any time, without having to give a reason and without any adverse consequences to yourself.

If this meets with your approval, and you agree to be part of this study, please indicate your consent by signing below:

I agree to participate in this research:

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME (block letters)

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

My initials here indicate that I have been given a copy of this consent form for my records:

\_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed by

\_\_\_\_\_  
INTERVIEWER – CATHERINE HICKS

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

*The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone [02] 9850 7854, fax [02] 9850 8799, email: [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.*

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS NEEDED: SOUTH AFRICAN MIGRANTS**

Were you born and raised in South Africa?  
Did you emigrate to Australia after 1994?  
Were you over the age of 21 when you migrated?

If you answered yes to all of these questions,  
I'd love to talk to you!

Cathy Hicks, a clinical psychologist, is working on a PhD that aims to explore the experiences and emotions that people have about having emigrated from South Africa after the end of apartheid. People will be asked to tell the story of their migration from South Africa to Australia, and their experience of being a former South African in Australia. All participants' details will be changed to protect confidentiality. If you are interested in participating in this study please contact Cathy Hicks on m0408 200242 or email [chic5167@bigpond.net.au](mailto:chic5167@bigpond.net.au) This study is being conducted as part of research at Macquarie University, under the supervision of Dr Doris McIlwain, Department of Psychology, (9850 9430) [Email: [Doris.Mcilwain@mq.edu.au](mailto:Doris.Mcilwain@mq.edu.au)]

## APPENDIX C

### INITIAL SCREENING AND DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Thank you for your interest in being part of this study. May I ask you a few questions at this point, to see whether you have certain attributes that we are particularly interested in for this study? If it is alright with you, may I also ask a few questions to collect some demographic material? None of this information will form part of the study – it is needed to help me in my selection and sampling procedures only.

- 1) Were you born and raised in South Africa?
- 2) When did you migrate to Australia?
- 3) How old were you when you migrated? So you're \_\_\_\_\_ now?
- 4) How did you hear about this study?
- 5) What's your occupation?
- 6) What level of education do you have?
- 7) What was your relationship status when you migrated? And now?
- 8) What was your home language when you were growing up in South Africa?
- 9) How would you categorize your political affiliation in South Africa? And your family's?

Thank you. If you are in agreement, I will contact you in a few weeks to arrange a time and place for our interview. I have to sample as broad an array as possible and it may be that your demographics place you in a category where I have already interviewed a sufficient number of people. In that I case I will call you to thank you very much for your willingness to be involved, but I will let you know that your assistance will not be required at this moment.

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEWING GUIDE: POTENTIAL QUESTIONS

All participants will be asked “*Please tell me the story of your migration from South Africa to Australia*” as an initial stimulus question.

Depending on the stories that emerge, what follows is a list of potential questions or areas of inquiry:

*What influenced your decision to leave in \_\_\_\_\_?*

*How did you feel then about leaving South Africa?*

*How do you feel now about having left?*

*Do you ever go back to South Africa on visits? What do you notice when you go back?*

*As someone who left South Africa, how do you think you're seen by the ones who stayed?*

*What do you feel about what's happening in South Africa now? Do you keep up with the news from SA?*

*What kind of contact, if any, do you have with South African communities here in Australia?*

*What nationality do you consider yourself to be now?*

*How do you feel and what do you say when people here ask when and why you left?*

*What are some of the memories you have of your contacts or interactions with both black and white people in South Africa?*

*When did you first become aware of the racial segregation in South Africa? How did you feel about that?*

*How did you feel about being a white/black South African during the apartheid days? And how do you feel about that now?*

*Were there any particular difficulties or challenges for you in noting the differences between white and black during the apartheid days?*

*How did you feel about the way whites and the apartheid system were portrayed in the international media during the apartheid days, and how they were seen by people in other countries?*

*How do you think you've changed since you've been living in Australia?*

*In your view, how is Australia similar to or different from South Africa around racial issues?*

## APPENDIX E

### FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

Dear

Thank you for agreeing, during our recent telephone conversation, to be part of the second round of interviewing in my PhD research into Migration from South Africa to Australia after 1994.

The information that came out of all the interviews that I conducted – thanks to the openness and willingness of all my participants to share their experiences – has resulted in a very rich and diverse collection of themes that I have distilled into 36 dominant themes.

Since these themes emerged from our interaction and conversation together, our joint efforts as it were, I would like to continue to engage with you around the data to ensure that the work reflects the experiences of my participants in a resonant way. As a result, I thank you for your willingness to reflect on what has emerged and share your thoughts with me about these themes. Of course, since this is a compilation from a number of interviews, it is unlikely that you will find all the aspects relevant to yourself. But I would love to hear from you wherever you feel moved to comment – whether that's to resonate or to disagree!

My plan is to analyse the additional data that you are providing me with in this second round, and to integrate it into the final presentation of the picture that is emerging of the South African migrant.

If you are still happy to proceed, please read and sign the attached second information and consent form.

Once you have completed the survey, please will you return it – together with a signed copy of the consent form (there is also a consent form for your records enclosed) in the addressed, stamped envelope provided.

Many thanks

Cathy Hicks

Below is a list (not in order of importance) of the dominant themes that have emerged in my analysis of the interviews that I conducted with my participants as part of my PhD study of Migration.

I would appreciate if you could take a moment to reflect on each of these, and then comment where it feel appropriate for you to do so. It is unlikely that all of the themes will feel relevant for your particular experience, since they are a compilation distilled from a number of different interviews. But I would appreciate your thoughts on those with which you do resonate, as well as those with which you particularly disagree. If you have no thoughts about a theme, it is fine to mark it 'not applicable'.

The first point refers to your experience of our conversation – what that was like for you, how you experienced our interaction.

1. Experience of the Interview

The themes:

2. Crime, Violence
3. Safety, Security
4. Missing of Family
5. A *feeling* of danger or threat
6. Adventure
7. The future
8. No future
9. Having a child; children
10. Freedom
11. Guilt
12. Chance + Impulsivity
13. A Measured Step – as in pace of decision-making, knowing what was being embarked on
14. Things fall apart
15. Quick process – speed of events – migration process having a life of its own
16. A given – thought of migration ‘always there’
17. Educational Advantage
18. Opportunity
19. Regret / Mistake
20. Privilege
21. Shame
22. Nostalgia
23. Sadness
24. Sacrifice + Gain
25. Getting away from family
26. Race Issues
27. Sense of missing out on the new South Africa
28. Beneficiary
29. Dispossession
30. Views of South Africans in Australia
31. Displacement
32. Flight
33. Push vs Pull
34. Home
35. Identity
36. Going back

## APPENDIX F

### The Second Coming

W.B. Yeats (1919)

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?