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# BLACK AFRICAN PARENTS' NARRATIVES ON APARTHEID SCHOOLING AND SCHOOL HISTORY

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper was motivated by the anecdotal experiences of the lead author on the views of middle-class Black African parents who did their schooling under apartheid and who were parents of high school learners in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa. In this paper narrative inquiry was used to engage with ten purposively selected Black African parents. In the process their narratives of schooling under apartheid and the parental choices they made on the subjects their children studied were constructed. As a theoretical lens Critical Race Theory was used to allow the parents to tell their counter-stories. These parents were adamant that their children should not study history. This was partially rooted in their own apartheid-era schooling experiences. For the most part the Black African parents tried to live their unfulfilled dreams and ambitions through their children by getting them to study science and mathematics as this was directly linked to upward-mobility, middle-classness, prosperity and success. While school history in the post-apartheid context was lauded and appreciated, the prevailing sentiment was that their children should steer clear of it.*

*Keywords: Apartheid; education; narrative inquiry; parenting; school history.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study is contextualised within apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. We sought to explore narratives of Black African parents of today in relation to their schooling and school history experiences when they were learners under apartheid, and their contemporary positionality regarding school history as it relates to their children. Studies (Mackie, 2007; Subbiah, 2016) have been conducted in relation to learners' views of school history, but Black African parents' experiences about their schooling and school history is under-researched. Therefore, the study is guided by one research question: What are Black African parents' narratives on schooling and school history under apartheid and how did this impact their parenting as it relates to school history in the current context? This question will allow for counter-storytelling as it relates to generational learning and parenting. The study is framed



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within critical race theory (CRT) and guided by narrative inquiry methodology, both of which were important in informing the methods of sampling, data generation, data analysis and discussion of the findings.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The 1948 elections marked the beginning of a key historical period in the history of South Africa. It was in this year that the National Party (NP) ascended to power and adopted the policy of apartheid. The NP ruled South Africa until 1994, when the first fully democratic elections in South Africa ushered in a new democratic dispensation under the African National Congress-led government. As such, the historic 1994 elections marked the end of 46 years of the racist apartheid regime in South Africa.

Central to the policy of apartheid was the idea of White supremacy and privilege that led to the social engineering of separation from Black Africans, Coloureds and Indians. Posel (2001: 50) posits that, according to the contemporary South African Employment Equity Act, "Black" denotes "to all those classified as 'African', 'Coloured' or 'Indian' under apartheid". For the purpose of this study Black African refers to people classified as "African" under apartheid.

The apartheid system affected the lives of Black Africans on social, economic and political levels. On a social level, the lives of Black Africans were guided and controlled by a series of race-based legislations. Amongst such laws was the Population Registration Act of 1950, which racially classified all people in the country (Thompson, 2014). Based on this law, the South African population was divided into four racial groups namely Whites, Indians, Coloureds and Africans (who in this study are referred to as Black Africans) (Thompson, 2014). The Population Registration Act was underpinned by the Group Areas Act of 1950 through which racial segregation was manifested in all aspects of life such as "public facilities, restaurants, transport, beaches and learned societies" (Welsh, 2009: 56). Through these, and other apartheid laws, Black Africans experienced exploitation, oppression, racial segregation and discrimination, thus leading to extreme inequalities between Whites and Black Africans. Whites were not only considered more civilised but they also had absolute political and economic power over Black Africans (Thompson, 2014; Welsh, 2009). The White minority formed the dominant class whereas the Black Africans were socialised to remain in positions of servitude (Wassermann, 2015).

Under apartheid, Black Africans were further subdivided according to their ethnicity, with each group being allocated its own place, ostensibly to nurture their own identity and culture. For instance, Welsh (2009: 60) highlighted that as part of the policy of apartheid, land was divided and allocated to ancestry and language groups. The aim of such policy was aptly captured by Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, who was once the Minister of Native Affairs before becoming Prime Minister of South Africa, and who was quoted as stating:

The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open (Christie & Collins, 1982: 68).

This is an indication that the lives of Black Africans were meant to evolve around the impoverished homelands without adequate resources and infrastructure, thus making the vast majority of Black Africans susceptible to oppression and exploitation.

Economically, Black Africans bore the brunt of the apartheid laws that were designed to keep them at the periphery of the economy, while preserving and promoting the economic interests of the White dominant class. The NP effectively used the Job Reservation Act of 1956 to regulate the labour market, thus ensuring that certain jobs were reserved for Whites (Welsh, 2009). Such discriminatory laws established a master–servant relationship between Whites and Black Africans (Thompson, 2014). The apartheid laws also contributed to the gross disparity in the distribution of economic resources and a wide gap between Whites and Black Africans' earnings (Thompson, 2014: 200). An additional objective of the Job Reservation Act was to curb interracial competition, particularly in the urban areas. In the process, the law created a reliable and sustainable source of cheap labour for White-owned industries (Thompson, 2014; Giliomee, 2009).

At a political level, the lives of Black Africans under apartheid were characterised by oppression. Black Africans under apartheid did not have the right to vote in public elections (Thompson, 2014). Such a political differentiation based on race not only promoted White supremacy and control over Black Africans, but it also inculcated a sense of “otherness of Black Africans” (Welsh, 2009: 65). The Black Africans had to find solace in the homelands of which they were citizens or the township on the outskirts of White urban areas. This socio-economic and political inequality borne by Black Africans under apartheid had a bearing on their experiences of education.

Prior to the establishment of the apartheid state, education for the vast majority of Black African children was under the control of mission schools (Hartshorne, 1992; Reagan, 1989; Thompson, 2014; Zungu, 1977). However, this was destroyed by the implementation of “Bantu Education” in 1953. This marked the end of the dominant role of mission schools in the country (Johnson, 1982). As Christie and Collins (1982) noted, before 1953, out of 7 000 schools, 5 000 were under the control of missionaries and by 1959, all Black schools, with the exception of 700 Catholic schools, were under the tutelage of the Native Affairs Department. With such a paradigm shift, education became a crucial vehicle through which Afrikaner ideology and identity were instilled in White learners (Kallaway, 1995; Siebörger, 2018).

The education system under apartheid was underpinned by the NP philosophy of Christian National Education CNE, which was used to cement Afrikaner ideology and white supremacy through segregated education (Thompson, 2014). Based on the above, Whites were set to manipulate the education system to their own advantage and to the detriment of the vast majority of Black Africans whose education was geared to turning them into mere ewers of wood and drawers of water (Thobejane, 2013). As the then Administrator of Transvaal stated, “We must strive to win the fight against the non-White in the classroom instead of losing it on the battlefield” (Johnson, 1982: 214). In other words, at the heart of apartheid education was the notion that the Black African child should not be educated beyond certain predetermined positions in life. All of this was guided by the Bantu Education Act of 1953. This legislation instituted “an inferior type of education that was designed to maintain the subordinate and marginal status of the majority racial group of the country” (Thobejane, 2013:2). Such an education was aimed at promoting unskilled labour amongst Black Africans. It follows then that the Bantu education system advanced racial segregation, inequality and economic need, detrimentally affecting the lives Black South Africans. This impact on Black students highly contributed to their low-quality education and lack of access to employment (Gallo, 2020). The inferior curriculum was also linked to the inadequacy of resources such as infrastructure,

stationery and qualified teachers (Thompson, 2014). Coupled with the challenges faced by Black Africans in their schooling journey, was the lack of opportunities after school.

### 3. SCHOOL HISTORY FOR BLACK AFRICANS UNDER APARTHEID

History plays a vital role in the establishment of an identity in a given society, so often school history is used to advance governments' ideologies and the use of that for identity formation. According to Barton and Levstik (2004: 48), "One of the most important ways of legitimising claims to nationality is through history". This was the case in South Africa when the NP came to power in 1948. In line with their racist philosophy, they successfully ensured that the school history curriculum promoted "Afrikaner nationalist historiography" (Kallaway, 1995: 12), which placed a focus on racial segregation and advocated the myth that the Afrikaners were chosen by God to lead and civilise Black Africans. To this end, the school history curriculum affirmed an "Afrikaner-centred European perspective in history books during the apartheid era" (Engelbrecht, 2008: 519). In these textbooks the history of Black Africans hardly featured. It is in this context that Van der Berg and Buckland (1982: 23) argue that "the history taught to the Black African denies his existence as it is a heroic tale of the rise of the Afrikaner, the heroism of black resistance to their conquest is hardly charted". Such a historiography contributed to the creation of the notion of White supremacy.

The denial of Black Africans to learn about their own history was aimed at conditioning the minds of Black African learners to accept Afrikaner historiography, thus taking part in the glorification of Afrikaner identity and supremacy. In support of this, Van der Berg and Buckland (1982: 23) noted that Black Africans were taught a "history intended to prevent the growth of a national consciousness and to reduce as much as possible any desire for a radical alternative". Such history teaching relied heavily on religious validation. Johnson (1982: 218) explains this as such: "History must be taught in light of God's decreed plan for human race ... God willed separate nations and peoples". In order to cement undisputable authority, the NP introduced various master symbols that were used to indoctrinate and inculcate a sense of patriotic spirit amongst white learners and subjugation for Black African learners. Such symbols included:

Whites are superior; Blacks are inferior; the Afrikaner has [a] special relationship with God; South Africa rightfully belongs to the Afrikaner; South Africa and the Afrikaner are isolated; the Afrikaner is military ingenious and strong; the Afrikaner is threatened; South Africa is the leader of Africa and the Afrikaner has a God given task in Africa. (Wassermann, 2015: 4)

For Black learners, these symbols denied them a sense of identity and the right to belong to the South African nation. This meant that the school history education for Black Africans under apartheid was not rooted in their life-world situation, aspirations and political development (Van Jaarsveld, 1990: 119). They were exposed to a school history with which they could not identify. In this regard, Z.K. Matthews, in the 1950s, highlighted his major concern regarding the history that was taught to Black African learners:

Our history as we had absorbed it from tales and talk of our elders, bore no resemblance to South African history as it has been written by European scholars. The Europeans insisted that we accept his version of the past ... we struggled through the white man's version of the so-called k\* wars ... we studied this history not merely in the white man's version but in a distinctly pro-Boer version (Stolten, 2003: 3).

The bias and misrepresentation meant that Black African learners were taught a school history that systematically denied their citizenship rights thus considering them “aliens” in their own country (Wassermann, 2017). In this way, the Black Africans during apartheid studied a history that promoted white supremacy and black inferiority.

In order to ensure effective indoctrination, a teacher-centred methodology was used in the teaching of history at school, with the dominant pedagogical methods being rote learning and memorisation. Weldon (2010: 2) points out that “education for all children emphasised rote learning, and discouraged questioning or critical engagement in the lesson”. These methods were aimed at discouraging critical thinking, while at the same time promoting passive learners. It is under such general conditions that the participants in this study went to school.

#### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to make sense of the narratives of Black Africans who were history learners during apartheid and parents post-apartheid, this study adopted Critical Race Theory (CRT) for its theoretical framework. The literature reviewed earlier showed that one’s racial categorisation pre-1994 had a bearing on the type of schooling experiences they would have had. Since race is a critical aspect of the study, we adopted a theory that explains issues of race and racism in relation to the established power relations.

CRT first emerged in the United States of America (USA) during the 1970s, and it is mainly concerned with transforming skewed power relations based on racial lines (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011; Hiraldo, 2010; Landson-Billings, 1998). Most of the proponents of CRT broke away from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) because they were of the view that it did not give sufficient attention to the racism and racial discrimination to which Black Americans were subjected. The main tenets of CRT are the permanence of racism; whiteness as property; counter-storytelling and the challenge to dominant ideology (Solorzano, 1997). These tenets were used to make sense of the Black African parents’ narratives of schooling and school history during apartheid and how they subsequently influenced their children about the subject.

Regarding the first tenet, critical race theorists assert that race and racism are viewed as normal, permanent features of society and are imbued in people’s daily routines, thus making them difficult to eradicate (Hiraldo, 2010; Solorzano, 1997; Landson-Billings, 1998). According to Hiraldo (2010), the notions of race and racism play vital roles in the creation of social, political and economic control of society. Furthermore, critical race theorists view racism as an integral part of the elite’s civilisation, “privileging white individuals over Black Americans including education” (Hiraldo, 2010: 54). In the case of South Africa, CRT can help make meaning of the research participants’ narratives, since the study, from the outset, makes it clear that it is about Black Africans who can be categorised as a racial group that experienced apartheid and the post-apartheid dispensation, by virtue of their race, in a particular way.

The second tenet is the notion of whiteness as property. This notion explains how some systems validate the “possession and privileges of White individuals” (Hiraldo, 2010: 54). For instance, in the USA, institutions and systems, including education, gave Whites more privileges, meaning that a white person could use their whiteness as property that would give them easier access to power and authority over those categorised as Black and thus inferior. This was also the case in apartheid South Africa whereby whiteness was a property that gave individuals access to better education, facilities and personal aspirations (Thompson, 2014). This means that CRT, as the theoretical lens for this study, can be used as a prism to

understand how the Black Africans' lack of this particular property influenced their experiences of schooling, school history and their subsequent views as adults towards the subject.

Another key tenet of CRT is counter-storytelling, which is a tool used by many disadvantaged groups, not only to express their lived experiences, but more importantly to criticise and expose the injustices perpetrated by the dominant group (Hiraldo, 2010). According to Landson-Billings (1998: 11), this type of storytelling is called counter-storytelling and it aims to "integrate their experiential knowledge, drawn from their shared history as other with their struggles to transform a world deteriorating under the albatross of racial hegemony". The use of CRT in this study gives the participants a chance to provide stories that counter the dominant narratives to which they were subjected.

The last tenet of CRT is to challenge the status quo and the privileges of the dominant class, and especially where such privileges are maintained and sustained by unequal power relations between Whites and Black Africans. Critical race theorists posit that while the situation on the ground continues to favour the dominant groups in society, "the claims of meritocracy, equal opportunity, objectivity and colour blindness are a camouflage for self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups" (Solórzano, 1997: 6). The sum of the above serves to clarify the choice of CRT as the theoretical framing for this paper.

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted narrative inquiry as a methodology since we sought to explore Black African parents' narratives in relation to apartheid schooling, school history and their parental positioning related to the latter. Narrative inquiry enabled us to unearth and analyse the data and create new meaning out of it. In other words, through narrative inquiry we acknowledge that "stories are social artefacts, telling us as much about society and culture as they do about a person or a group" (Riessman, 2008: 106). In this paper, the participants, through their stories, were able to relive their difficult experiences of schooling and school history during apartheid and explain why they made parental decisions related to the subject. Such counter-storytelling presupposes a positive "collaboration between the researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 20). Narrative inquiry accordingly shows the embeddedness of human experience in the historical and political, thus shaping peoples' identities and worldviews, as well as the way they understand themselves in relation to others. It is in this context that Goodson and Gill (2011: 20) note that "narratives provide opportunities to gain insight into the lived experience of individuals and thus can illuminate an understanding of culture as [a] whole". The fact that the participants experienced apartheid education and school history as Black African learners, and post-apartheid education and school history as parents, means that their experiences were also cultural and this differed from the cultural experiences of Whites.

We adopted convenience and purposeful sampling methods to select the Black African parent sample of the study. For Punch, "purposive sampling is a deliberate way, with some purpose or focus in mind" (2005: 187). In addition, Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014) and Bertram and Christiansen (2014) view purposive sampling as the selection of participants based on certain characteristics for which the researcher is looking. These characteristics included being a Black African who experienced schooling and school history under apartheid and who is now a parent of a high school child. The participants were identified by the first author at the independent school in KwaZulu-Natal at which he teaches history. As

such, this was convenient since we did not need to search for potential research participants sampling processes in qualitative studies, such as this paper, have no set rules for sample sizes (de Vos, 2005). The bottom-line being sample size must be large enough to generate relevant data for the study or “small enough to manage it” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020: 77). Consequently, we selected ten participants, who were Black African, had studied school history during apartheid and were parents of learners. In them agreeing to participate in the study pseudonyms were, for ethical reasons, allocated. These parents were all middle-class and their children attended a private school and as such this study cannot be generalised to the Black African population as a whole.

The data for this paper were generated through semi-structured interviews enhanced by photo-elicitation. The photographs depicted education-related aspects of apartheid and school history and they helped to trigger the participants' memories of their own experiences when they were learners. The open-ended questions allowed for the generation of in-depth data as participants freely expressed themselves without necessarily being interrupted (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). As noted by Bold (2012: 65), semi-structured interviews give the researcher the “flexibility to ask further questions to clarify points raised by the interviewee”. These methods tally with narrative inquiry methodology, which enabled us to “generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements” (Riessman, 2008: 23).

The data analysis was conducted in two stages. The first stage consisted of analysis of the transcribed data, which led to the compilation of ten personal narratives – one for each participant. The analysis was done through open coding, which is “a way to generate an emergent set of categories and their properties” (Ezzy, 2008: 8). Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1990: 62) view open coding as “the part of analysis that pertains specifically to naming and categorising of phenomena through close examination of data”. During the second stage of data analysis, the personal narratives were analysed, also using open coding, to compile participants' narratives about their experiences of schooling and school history under apartheid and their contemporary parental positioning related to school history.

## 6. PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The findings of this study are based on two major narratives:

- contemporary Black African parents' narratives on their experiences of schooling and school history under apartheid, and
- contemporary Black African parents' narratives on the impact of their experiences of schooling and school history on their parental positioning as it relates to school history in the contemporary context.

The narrative of the Black African parents on their experiences of schooling and school history under apartheid painted a picture of an evil system under which education was used as a tool of oppression. In this regard Phiwe remembered, “When I look back, I can say it [education] was a way of blocking us, maybe they doubted our intelligence”. The personal narratives of the Black African parents serve to highlight what “blocking” entailed, namely inadequate infrastructure and overcrowded schools. In this regard Sindi vividly recalled that “it was common at school to have different grades in a mud-brick classroom. One side would be one class and the other side would be another class”. How normal such educational conditions were under apartheid were commented on by Madoda, “we did not see anything wrong with the mud-brick school because that was the only experience we had”. This mental

and physical oppression extended to the general curriculum as remembered by Themba who bemoaned the fact that, “We were prevented from doing mathematics and science for the sake of opening doors for the Whites. That was a demarcation; it was well planned that as Blacks we could not cross the line”. The result was, according to Thabo, that “we were limited and we were not exposed to different professions as we see them today”. The consequence in terms of employment was, as recalled by Phiwe, “if you did not become a teacher, a nurse, or policeman then you could become a clerk or simply a school drop-out and nothing else”. Against the above backdrop of counter-storytelling Black African parents hardly featured in the schooling of their children. For instance, Fana highlighted that his parents were too poor to send him to school, which is evidenced by the fact that he only began attending school aged 13. He stated that his main motivation for going to school was learning how to read and write. Sindi, in her narrative recalled that, “In my schooling days I do not remember the practice of parents coming to attend school meetings at school”.

In the context of apartheid schooling, as revealed by the narratives as outlined above, school history was experienced as a meaningless memory discipline based on White experiences that left a lasting negative attitude towards the subject. For instance, Nomakhosi confirmed that “we did not really ask questions”. All they had to do was memorise and regurgitate the historical content handed down to them without critically engaging with it. The meaninglessness was enhanced by the participants being exposed to an Afrikaner-centred European perspective of school history. As a result, Themba, during his interview, angrily complained, “how dare you keep such selective knowledge which affected us?” Adding that “it was difficult to understand my teachers when they spoke about Christopher Columbus, and Bartholomew Dias. It was difficult too to differentiate history from folklores”.

The analysis of the personal narratives also shows that the participants viewed school history as educationally and academically meaningless because it was seen as being based on distorted content. This was highlighted in the narratives of Fana, Sindi and Thabo, who pointed out that they were taught that the history of South Africa began with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck and the White settlers in 1652. The participants also lamented the experiences of Black Africans being misrepresented and belittled in history textbooks. Madoda, Menzi, Themba and Thabo, recalled that Black African leaders were deliberately represented as murderers, barbarians, cowards and as unintelligent. This was especially so with reference to the content in textbooks on South African history, which emphasised the negative elements of the Mfecane in Southern Africa. Similarly, Thabo, in his interview, complained that all they were shown were images of half-naked African leaders carrying spears. Likewise, Madoda recalled King Shaka being presented as a cruel and heartless leader who was always ready to kill. The participants found it difficult to listen to their history teachers describing such a negative history about Black African characters. At the same time victories of Black Africans over White settlers were deliberately omitted or not taught. For instance, as explained by Fana, the victory of King Cetshwayo and the Zulu over the British at the Battle of Isandlwana was never taught. Black African parents were thus exposed to a selective school history while being fully aware of their local history and leaders. In this regard Phiwe commented “when we were growing up we knew that there was Mandela, but we never saw him, even his pictures were banned from circulation”.

Unsurprisingly then the Black African parents who participated in this study did not hold positive recollections of studying history at school during apartheid. This was the case because they were confronted by school history as a memory discipline devoid of any analysis. The

participants felt that they had to learn a white supremacist history that was meant to establish a collective memory for the ruling Afrikaner nationalists and other Whites. This tallies with Wassermann's (2017) argument that Black African learners had to learn a history in which they were not considered as citizens of the country and only appeared on the fringes of society as troublemakers. As a result, the participants of this study developed a negative attitude towards school history in that it not only excluded them from a white master narrative or collective memory, but also undermined their integrity and self-esteem as Black Africans. As such school history was a powerful tool of indoctrination, aimed at instilling compliance and submissiveness amongst Black African learners, while promoting an idea of superiority and pride amongst White learners.

How then did the educational experiences of Black African parents' affect their parental positioning as it relates to school history in the contemporary context? Based on the personal narratives of the participants, they viewed school history as being a necessary component of the current school curriculum. Appreciation was especially expressed for the fact that the content on South African history has changed and that the liberation struggle was foregrounded. The relevance of school history was succinctly explained by Menzi who stated that "history provides us with lessons that we have got to learn as we move into the future. If you don't know where you come from, you don't know where you are going". Menzi clearly speaks from personal experience in this regard. Such a positive view of school history is contrary to the participants' experience of school history as learners under apartheid but were underpinned by a sense of triumph over apartheid school history and what it stood for. Thabo highlights the idea of a triumphant school history curriculum when he stated that "today learners can learn about the struggle against apartheid and how the blacks fought and resisted the oppressive system". Themba expressed similar sentiments, proclaiming that "our history now is something that is quite interesting and does not dehumanise me, but instead makes me regain my humanity and confidence". However, drawing on the past, Themba argued that the ANC government "was not doing enough in promoting our history while the Afrikaners did promote theirs so well during apartheid".

However, the sea of change school history had undergone, from a memory to an analytical subject, and the accompanied changes in content, was not enough for Black African parents to allow their children to study the subject in the post-apartheid democratic context. The reasons for this were multiple and complex. In his counter-story Thabo directly linked past educational experiences to the present when he explained that "it was challenging for most parents to allow their children for instance to pursue history because since history did not help them in the past it will not help their children now when there are many opportunities". Likewise, Phiwe related allowing his children to do history with the lack of opportunities of the apartheid past, "for me history is non-existent and what would you do with history, because with it you just become a teacher and what else?" Across the narratives the idea of new opportunities, which they did not have, were foregrounded by the Black African parents. In the elite professional fields they envisaged for their children, school history was seen as irrelevant in securing job security and economic prosperity. In thinking in this manner, they projected their own difficult life experiences, characterised by lack of opportunity, as an opportune moment to encourage or persuade their children to see the future through their eyes. Consequently, mathematics and science were highly favoured as subjects by the Black African parents. This is unsurprising since school history has not received the same attention as science and mathematics post-1994 (Kallaway, 2012). The importance and status of the last-mentioned

subjects were strongly foregrounded by Fana when he argued that they “were linked to status and better paying jobs which was what many Black African parents wanted for their children since they had been disadvantaged themselves”.

In ensuring that their children chose appropriate subjects in Grade 10 close supervision and monitoring took place. The narrative of Menzi is a point in case. He made it clear that his daughter could not take history for he would not allow her to pursue a career in teaching because she came from a family of teachers. She needed to pursue a different profession such as, for example, civil engineering, medicine, accounting or architectural studies. And in this the Black African parents expected the private school their children attended to be supportive of such thinking, as explained by Madoda: “my concern was to see if the teachers or the school did not impose on my children subjects that would not match with the advice that I gave to my children in view of the careers after matric”. The most striking counter-storytelling in this regard came from Themba who very directly linked his abysmal schooling under apartheid to his personal ambitions for his children in the post-apartheid world, “we had high aims as well, but we failed to achieve them. Now that we have kids, we want them to achieve those goals for us, we are pushing them”. In sum, the Black African parents lived their unfilled childhood dreams through their children and in this, school history had no place.

However, the parental decisions regarding subject choices and the envisaged careers for their children were not without problems. Tension arose between their children’s interest and abilities and the ambitions of their parents. This was recognised by Sindi when she pointed out that “the main issue we face as parents is that of status and better life, as opposed to what my child is capable of doing or love as far as subjects are concerned”. Similar counterpoints were raised by other female participants with Phiwe highlighting the fact that the overemphasis on mathematics and science led to many dropouts in these subjects. The best balance between acknowledging learners’ abilities and freedom of choice was conveyed by Londeka who stated that “my view is that children need to be encouraged to do any subject they are comfortable with, provided that they are in line with what they want to become in future”. However, the male African parents who participated in the study had much stronger views and Themba’s personal narrative highlighted the idea of a generational tension when he stated that “whatever we ought to be, if we failed in our time in what we were interested in we tend to make our children do what we failed to do”. Madoda continued by explaining that:

I feel now that my children could have a taste of the side that I never had, the opportunities that I never dream of ... what I teach my children is what I know and I will never teach them what I don't know. So, I will push them to take advantage of the opportunities available for their benefit and well-being in future.

Participants echoed similar sentiments, with Thabo stating that “we would like to see our children get better jobs and succeed in life and not be like us who did not have opportunities”, and Themba confessing that “When I began working as a teacher, I told myself that I will have to channel my child to become a medical practitioner because I did not have the chance or opportunity myself”.

## 7. DISCUSSING THE FINDINGS

What is clear from the data as presented is that the apartheid past, its schooling legacies in general and the teaching of school history in particular, loomed large in the lives of the Black African parents who participated in this study. In fact, it can be argued that this is generally

omnipresent in the decisions they make as parents. This is to be understood when considering the lingering trauma caused by apartheid as a racist system that served to advance the interest of Whites while severely neglecting the interests of Blacks and especially Black Africans (Engelbrecht, 2008). Educationally speaking, apartheid was driven by the Bantu Education Act of 1953 which enforced an inferior type of education on Black Africans with the distinct aim to subordinate, suppress and marginalise (Thobejane, 2013). Bantu Education was anchored by school history with its Afrikaner nationalist historiographical ideological underpinnings. The bias and misrepresentation that this spawned resulted in Black African learners being confronted with a school history in which they were classified as inferior and thus partial to being misrepresented or excluded (Ladson-Billings, 1998). As a result, Black Africans only appeared on the fringes of society as criminals, labourers and troublemakers (Wassermann, 2017). The result was the construction of an identity of White superiority and Black inferiority. This is the world the Black African parents who participated in this study inhabited as school children. Consequently, to them race and racism and the associated White privilege was real, normal and seemingly permanent features of their apartheid world (Hiraldo, 2010; Solorzano, 1997). Accordingly, racism permeated their daily lives as Black Africans down to the jobs they could do after completing school.

It is from this world that the Black African parents who participated in this study "migrated" when the NP rule was replaced in 1994 by the democratically elected ANC government. This migration coincided with them becoming parents, with the related parental duties, in a world with new and previously unimagined opportunities. However, the end of apartheid did not necessarily mean a trouble-free post-apartheid dispensation. By virtue of their race, the Black African parents experienced this world in a particular way. This included the opportunity to reconstruct their own lives, by means of a CRT prism, namely counter storytelling of their experiences and struggles as was done in this paper (Hiraldo, 2010). At the same time, they could imagine lives for their children different to theirs.

One aspect of reimagining related to parental involvement is subject choices at school level in Grade 10. While contemporary school history was lauded by the participants as constituting a triumph over the apartheid past and joy was expressed that they could see themselves in it and associate with it, this was for the most part not the subject they wanted their children to study. This could but partly be attributed to the personal experiences of the Black African parents as learners under apartheid. The more convincing reason was that it was possible to envisage a different world and career for their children. This was a world in which school history had no place but in which science and mathematics were foregrounded (Kallaway, 2012). As a result, the Black African parents were seeking a world of prosperity, status, social mobility, success and professional jobs for their children. Consequently, the Black African middle-class parents who participated in this study preferred their children to study science and mathematics as these were the subjects that could entrench the middle-class status of their children (Pazich & Teranish, 2012). For the most part this was done to the detriment of their children's interests, abilities and freedom of choice. In the process the Black African parents were pushed away from history towards mathematics and science by government policies aimed at redressing the imbalances of the apartheid past (Asmal & James, 2001). In the process their children were not part of the 33 per cent of South African learners taking school history up to Grade 12.

With reference to the above, it became possible for the Black African parents to live their lives and deal with their unfulfilled ambitions and dreams, which were thwarted by apartheid,

through their children. This meant they now could, by mark of their middle-class status, for the first time, as per CRT, challenge the existing status quo and the privileges sustained by unequal power relations, especially economic power, between Whites and Black Africans (Thompson, 2014). Being upwardly mobile and middle class meant having power to challenge and access institutions and systems unavailable under apartheid. In short, having property gave the Black African parents who participated in this study admittance to better education, facilities and personal aspirations (Thompson, 2014) which they then projected by means of parental care into their children. In this school history did not have a foothold.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This study explored the narratives of Black African parents in relation to their schooling in general, and school history in particular, both as learners during apartheid and as parents in the post-apartheid world. Schooling under apartheid was oppressive, demeaning, unequal and racist, while school history was biased, negatively value-laden and White supremacist in nature and served to remind Black Africans of their inferior position, not just in school, but in South Africa as a whole. In sum, the narratives of the Black African parents who participated in this study revealed that they experienced school history as learners under apartheid as enabling the racist system. As middle-class parents in the post-apartheid world school history was abandoned in favour of mathematics and science and an envisaged world of opportunity, prosperity, middle-classness and better jobs for their children. These parental decisions on behalf of their children were made by Black African parents based on their educational experiences under apartheid and the value they attach to education. In so doing they achieved a partial reconstruction of their own pasts. In the process they were happy to, for the sake of their children, sacrifice school history as a subject.

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