Psychological Sense of Community in a Politically Constructed Group

Psychological sense of community in a politically constructed group[1]

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RUNNING HEAD: SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Abstract

McMillan and Chavis' (1986) psychological sense of community (PSC) model was used to build a profile of a politically constructed group. Twenty-three people, who were classified as Coloured in South Africa, now residing in Melbourne, Australia were interviewed with an instrument to assess PSC. The data indicated that the model presented two dimensions for this group. The first dimension reflected the externally constructed and imposed definitions of group membership under the Apartheid laws. The second dimension relates to the ways in which the people socially constructed notions of community within their sub-group. Results also showed that the people rejected the imposed label of 'coloured', but they still internalized some of the negative stereotypes associated with the label and status. The people also internalized positive experiences of support and

group membership that developed within the enforced groupings. It is suggested that the PSC model provides a useful tool for investigating group specific meanings and understandings of community. It is argued that a PSC facilitates experiences of belonging, security, and relatedness. PSC, in turn, will facilitate adaptation to new contexts.

Key words: adaptation, oppression, psychological sense of community, social support, South African

Sense of Community in a Politically Constructed Group

Conceptualizations of community have shifted from focusing exclusively on geographical settings to include notions such as members' sense of significance, solidarity, and security (Clark, 1973; Gusfield, 1975). Heller, et al. (1984) confirmed this in stating that "[c]ommunity can consist of a particular geographical place, or it can consist of nonterritorially based networks of relationships that provide friendship, esteem, and tangible support" (p. 138). Many people now attain their identities and experience feelings of belonging in communities that are not located within specific geographical areas (Heller, 1989; McMillan & Chavis, 1986), that is, relational communities.

Ethnic and racial groups can be conceived of as communities that are founded on shared criteria such as language, history, and symbols (Cox, 1989; Smith, 1991; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). The relationships between dominant and subordinate racial groups are sometimes characterized by oppression and by other processes which influence the nature and formation of group boundaries, group preferences, and group identities.

Fanon (1967) and Memmi (1967, 1984) have written of the

destructive impact that colonialism and oppression have had on individuals, and have highlighted the psychological dimension of oppression. Bartky (1990), drawing on the work of Fanon, suggests that people can be psychologically oppressed: "To be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in your mind; it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over your self-esteem. The psychologically oppressed become their own oppressors ...." (Bartky, 1990, p. 22). Tajfel (1981) and Turner (1984) suggested that groups can have notions of separateness imposed upon them. The interaction between the imposed group boundaries and internal group dynamics contribute to a variety of social and psychological adaptations to a particular social reality, and these are reflected in how group members respond to their imposed labels and social status.

Cross-cultural interaction, according to Berry (1984, 1986), can lead to (a) assimilation; (b) integration; (c) separatism; or (d) marginalization. Although these responses do not necessarily imply oppression, they do provide a framework to evaluate group responses to the imposition of nondominant group membership (Berry, 1984, 1986; Tajfel, 1981; Watts, 1992).

One mode of adaptation to intercultural contact is characterized by

the internalization of negative individual and group identities (Montero, 1990). Consequently, oppression can negatively influence aspects of individual functioning and psychosocial well-being. Specifically, the imposition of labels with negative connotations and meanings can lead to the rejection and devaluation of one's membership group and the identification with an external group -- often the dominant group (Bulhan, 1985; Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1984). Other responses to oppression have been characterized by group unification, the strengthening and/or redefinition of group identity, and the revitalization of an original culture (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990; Tajfel, 1981). Turner (1984) also said that in some cases of imposed membership, groups may develop forms of behaviour, norms, and attitudes that are indicative of group cohesion and positive group identity.

In some situations, however, it may be difficult to change the imposed negative identity criteria because these criteria are embedded in the legal structures of a political system (e. g., the Apartheid system in South Africa). Such systems influence individual and group identity formation, identification, group cohesion, and psychological adaptation. Imposed and maintained negative membership criteria can facilitate the externalization of

reference groups, often accompanied by the decrease in identification with a particular in-group and also other negative and positive psychosocial outcomes (Bulhan, 1985; Smith, 1991; Tajfel, 1981).

Thus, while much is made of the benefits occurring from membership or psychological engagement with one's community, there are potential negative impacts because of sociopolitical forces. The relative power positions of differing racial groups can be equated into the construction of dominant and subordinate communities (Smith, 1991; Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1984).

Ethnic and racial groups, provide members with some a of ethnic belonging that is psychologically important for people -- it serves as an anchor for individual relatedness (Berry, 1984, 1986; Smith, 1991). Moreover, although people may be members of other secondary groups, ethnic groups are often the primary membership groups that reinforce norms, values, and identities, and provide structures and social support systems that are crucial to the well-being of its members.

The social and psychological processes inherent in, and emerging from, in- and out-group interaction and subsequent adaptations to the sociopolitical context have numerous implications for the development of

individuals and groups. According to Sarason (1974), these social and psychological processes, and characteristics within communities, reflect experiences, associations, networks, indicative of a psychological sense of community (PSC). Sarason contended that PSC reflects " .... the sense that one belongs in and is meaningfully part of a larger collectivity; ... the sense that there is a network of and structure to relationships...." (p.41). PSC implies that people will feel part of a group, they will share the values and beliefs of that particular group and they will have some significant affective attachment to and investment in that group. For each group, the experience of community will be characterized by, and premised on different objective and subjective constructs, experiences, processes and meanings, and the interactions between these factors.

Psychological sense of community framework

McMillan and Chavis (1986) proposed a model that could be utilised to investigate PSC among locality-based and relational communities. Their definition of PSC comprises: membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection. According to McMillan (1976, quoted in McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p.9) PSC is "a

feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together."

Several researchers (e.g., Chavis, 1983; Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, & Wandersman, 1986; Davidson & Cotter, 1989; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991) have investigated sense of community in urban localities. Chavis and Newbrough (1986) and Chavis and Wandersman (1990) suggested that PSC might be the component that holds community development efforts together, it may serve as catalyst for participation, and it may be useful for the design of prevention and intervention programs in human services. It has also been suggested that the model would be appropriate to use to investigate the factors, mechanisms, and structures that contribute to group cohesion (Chavis, et al., 1986; Felton & Shinn, 1992).

Pretty (1990; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991) investigated correlates of PSC (using the Sense Community Index) in university and other organisational contexts, representing a combination of locational and relational settings. The dynamics underlying the experience of community were similar in their studies, reflecting the importance of notions of shared support, cohesion, and involvement in facilitating a PSC. For example,

Pretty and McCarthy found that perceptions of supervisor support and involvement predicted PSC for female managers and perceptions of peer cohesion and involvement predicted PSC for male managers in an organization.

The political construction of the coloured community

The coloured South African community represents a group that had membership criteria and a social status imposed and maintained through legal structures of the Apartheid regime in South Africa. The history of indigenous and other 'non-white' groups in South Africa has been characterized by the oppression, dispossession, and disenfranchisement by colonial groups (i.e., English and Dutch) for more than three centuries. In the late 1940's and early 1950's, the South African government introduced numerous components of its Apartheid policy, the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, the Immorality and Mixed Marriages Acts, and the Separate Representation of Voters Bill (commonly regarded as the cornerstones of Apartheid). These Acts signified the legal physical and psychological separation of the population on the basis of skin colour, racial and ethnic background, or origin, and social acceptance or rejection.

According to James (1986), the Apartheid system signified the creation and hardening of racial and ethnic boundaries. Although all black groups in South Africa were influenced by this legislation, the coloured group, in particular, was affected by the new system by the provision of a non-status (Foster, 1991), by being declared neither black nor white.

With the implementation of the Population Registration Act (1950), which defined race according to physical appearance, origin, and social acceptance and rejection, a South African coloured person was defined as a person who was neither white nor black, or who was married to someone who was coloured. An amendment to this Act later saw people who were considered neither black nor white (a non-definition according to Foster, 1993) assigned labels reflecting their "coloured ethnicity". These ethnic group labels included, for example, a) the Cape Coloured, b) Cape Malay, c) Indian, and d) Asiatic.

Using these criteria, all people were assigned to a racial category. The imposed label signified the political construction of the coloured group -- the creation of a heterogeneous, subjugated group. Although some people labelled coloured might physically appear to be white and some might physically appear to be black, in general they can all be considered to be

part of the racially oppressed majority of South Africa. The coloured group, however, shared the culture of the whites, a culture the group assimilated over three centuries (Adhikari, 1991; Sparks, 1989; Western, 1981).

The Group Areas Act (1950) assigned racial groups to different residential localities, effectively restricting the group's space and mobility. Residential segregation represented part of the process of divide and conquer and was instrumental to the overall domination of black people in South Africa. Consequently, the coloured group was allowed certain privileges that the black group was not. This contributed to resentment and rejection between the two groups (Sparks, 1989). Freire (1972) stated that: "As the oppressor minority subordinates and dominates the majority, it must divide it and keep it divided in order to remain in power." (p. 111).

Some have suggested that the label coloured was dehumanising (Adhikari, 1991; P.G., 1984). The label and negative stereotypes (such as whites being superior and blacks inferior) contributed to feelings of not belonging to either the black or white group. Positive experiences of belonging were, however, facilitated in other activity settings (O'Donnell, Tharp & Wilson, 1993) and mediating structures such as church groups and sporting organisations within coloured communities in South Africa. It is

obvious that the group was marginalised into an intermediate status (Kinloch, 1985) in South Africa.

In view of the literature, this study aimed to build on the knowledge about group responses to enforced categorization. Given the group's history in South Africa and its responses after classification and relocation, with the use of interviews, this study aimed to investigate how the PSC model operated for this group. It is hypothesised that, (a) people show a lack of identification with the imposed label (coloured) and (b) group members have positive experiences of support in structures that stem from enforced groupings and time together.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through the senior author's social networks. Twenty-three people who were classified as Cape or other coloured in South Africa, now residing in Melbourne, Australia (15 males and eight females between the ages of 23 - 74 years), who were 16 years old or older when they left South Africa participated in this study. At the time of interviewing, the participants had been living in Australia between three

and 16 years. The average length of education for the group was 14 years (with a range of 12 - 21 years).

Instrument

An open response format interview schedule was developed to assess the elements of the PSC framework (i.e., membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection.) Two people (one Australian and one South African) read the interview schedule to ascertain the face validity, specificity, and clarity of the questions.

Procedure

The interview schedule was used by the senior author to collect data through semi-structured, in-depth interviews which were tape recorded with the participants' verbal consent. Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about the confidentiality and anonymity of the project, and of their prerogative to abstain from responding to any or all questions.

Interviews were between 25 to 50 minutes in duration. Valuable information was also collected in discussions after completion of the interviews. Points raised during the discussions were recorded on the

interview schedule. All interviews were conducted in English.

The authors recognise that a sample of convenience have limitations, including, the possibility that the sample may misrepresent the population (Neuman, 1991). This, in turn can threaten the external validity of the study (Kerlinger, 1973). However, this particular population was difficult to reach and, according to Kerlinger (1973), a sample of convenience can be used in such situations as long as one uses "extreme circumspection in analysis of data and interpretation of data" (p. 129).

Results

Results were recorded on a question ordered matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1984). A question ordered matrix has its columns organised in sequence, so that the researcher can view participant responses to the interview questions. The columns were used for participant responses and the rows were used for each individual. Summaries of responses to the questions posed during the interviews and key words reflecting the summary are entered into the cells of the matrix. Two other people cross-checked the authors interpretations of the data to ensure their validity.

The matrix allows the researcher to search across the columns for recurrent and unique themes and issues (Miles & Huberman, 1984). These

are considered for how often they are mentioned, or even avoided by individuals. Keywords and quotations are used in reporting to illustrate the salience of such themes and to demonstrate how they influence the construction of the participants experiences. The senior author, being of a similar background as the participants, had the familiarity with the group and its language that facilitated the analyses and interpretation of the data. Theme analyses was also facilitated by use of the elements in the PSC framework (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Membership

According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), membership is a feeling of belonging and suggests that one voluntarily invests "part of oneself " (p. 9) to become a member and feels that one belongs to the community. Membership has five attributes (boundaries, common symbol systems, emotional safety, sense of belonging and identification, personal investment) that interact and facilitate a sense of group membership. The data collected in this study suggested that the proposed model operated at two levels for this group. The first level represented the externally imposed criteria for membership, and the second, the displacement and concentration

of positive experiences of community in settings within enforced categories (e.g., church groups, sporting clubs, family networks).

Boundaries. Boundaries determines who belongs and who does not belong to a group. For this group, boundaries represented a large part of the membership component and were externally created. Data collected suggest that many coloured people did not accept the imposed categorizations.

According to Western (1981), the coloured population in South Africa originated from the intermixing between slave groups, indigenous groups, and the whites. Some participants said that the coloured group was a "mixed race", the "group evolved from early inter-racial mixing" and "indigenous people intermixed" with other groups. This mixed ancestry is one of the externally determined criteria for coloured group membership.

The coloured group's character was dramatically altered with the introduction of the Apartheid system. The construction of the coloured group represented political engineering on the part of the dominant minority government. According to one participant:

> ...ethnic groups were political terms, [they] were decidedly political terms.... [For] political experiences differences were

> highlighted, emphasised and recognised by the government. We use the term [coloured] because we are familiar with them. When we use them we know exactly who we are talking about... we do not necessarily accept these terms.

The participant continued: "What the coloured group had was political. We as a group was established as a political instrument,... as a political means to an end -- for separation". Another participant, when asked about events that shaped the coloured group, said: "...unfortunately one can't divorce oneself from the political structure in South Africa because I feel that the whole political set up -- that is what sort of shaped the development of the so-called coloured group". A range of themes that indicate boundary construction and reflect different components of the Apartheid system were also revealed (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

Some participants specifically mentioned that the Group Areas Act meant the destruction of ways of life and the relocation of families into

settings to be shared with other "people of similar origin". Those who were defined as coloured "were to live among their own people". People responded to this grouping of similar origin people in different ways. For example, it was suggested that "all people from the same culture reinforces the idea that it is one group, and depending on how you see it, that either makes the group stronger of weaker".

Another person named the predetermined nature of life in a racial category: "The label you're given from the time that you are born until the time you die. If you live there everything you do socially, economically, educationally, you name it ... is slotted into those three racial groups...". Most of the responses suggested that the coloured group's boundaries were constructed and based on the notion of being "neither black nor white, but in between". This status of being between groups was determined and enforced through legal structures inherent in the system.

Data analysis reflected that participants rejected the label coloured in South Africa. They mentioned a number of emotionally laden responses typifying the rejection of this negative label -- for example, to be labelled coloured felt "awful", they "hated it", it was "depressing", it was "an insult," and it was "derogatory in South Africa". The following comment illustrates

the lack of acceptance of the group's label and what it represented:

> I think the reason that there isn't anything in particular [about the coloured group] in my mind is the fact that I don't think coloureds are proud of who they are ... Some of them could say I'm black and proud of it -- maybe? But that comes down to history, the Group Areas Act, we were put there so to speak. You were a coloured!

When participants were asked how coloureds would define themselves, most responded that they would prefer to be defined in terms their national identity, that is, South African "...irrespective of colour or creed...," as one participant suggested. But when talking among themselves they used "coloured" as it provided an anchored identity.

Common symbol system. Common symbol systems play an important role in maintaining boundaries and they also serve as a vehicle to unify group members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Smith, 1991). Symbols indicate membership or allegiance to a group and can facilitate notions of separateness and belonging. Accordingly, participants were asked about particular ethnic/cultural characteristics, myths and stories that were representative of the coloured community (see Table 2).

Participants noted that " features of our group [the coloured group] were also features of the White group." Some participants confirmed this by stating that the group reflected a "western influence." It was also suggested that most coloureds were urbanised and enjoyed a "westernised style of living". This was reinforced by another participant who specifically noted that coloureds enjoyed a "westernised life style in terms of religion and cultural experiences".

These comments are perhaps also similar to saying that "there were no distinctive symbols" in the coloured group. This is consistent with the comment: "I don't think there are any coloured traits." The comments suggest that coloured people had assimilated much of the dominant group's culture in the long history of racial domination prior to the implementation of the apartheid system (Adhikari, 1991; Western, 1981).

Insert Table 2 about here

In contrast, it was suggested by some participants that the coloured group inherited cultural traits from most of its "ancestral groups." A participant said that the group's traits and characteristics were "taken from

other groups." Some respondents mentioned that food, music, and language (dialect) contained residuals of ancestral groups. A number of participants mentioned that "the minstrels" (a choir group) was perhaps a "visible reflection of (coloured) culture". Others suggested that they did not identify with the minstrels at all and that it did not represent the group's culture.

In South Africa, the criteria which served to distinguish the group from other groups were central to the structured boundaries and were highlighted for the purpose of racial segregation and subjugation. Although, the coloured group had internalized and shared the culture of both the white group and also its ancestral groups, they could never be like the white group because of their skin colour and their origin. Skin colour and origin were equated with ethnicity and represented the key elements which were used in the apartheid framework to separate coloureds from both blacks and whites. Responses reflecting boundaries and some responses indicating common symbols represented negative aspects of the group identity. Some positive aspects of group membership were manifested in communities within the enforced categories as indicated below.

Sense of belonging and identification. Sense of belonging and identification is essentially a positive phenomenon and alludes to the

psychological importance of belonging to a group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Participants said that they "felt accepted" and "could relate to people in coloured communities" (sub-groups within the coloured communities). Also, living in a common group areas and "sharing social networks" served as catalyst for the experience of belonging and the feelings of "togetherness". Some participants suggested that they felt at home in the coloured community because of a "sense of relatedness".

Participants mentioned a number of processes and outcomes in sub-groups within enforced groups that fostered feelings of belonging and identification. The fact that "the group is humorous and lively" and the group's "sharing and doing things together", and people could "belong to and feel part of groups". The following comment provides a fitting summary of sense of belonging and identification and its roots: "it [a youth group] nullified the negative images projected by the white [political] majority. There was a feeling of I'm here and belonging -- I was part of something" (see Table 3).

Insert Table 3 about here

The following was suggested by a participant as events or customs

that made people feel part of the community:

> Social togetherness, dress, language and because the coloured community as a whole was repressed by the laws that existed at that time and even to date. I could even go so far as call it a mini-nation because of the repressiveness of the government at that time.... [The] repressive laws made you feel a sense of belonging to the so-called Black community as distinct to the coloured community".

It was further articulated that there was a sense of togetherness, "probably because of the whole political structure within South Africa". It was also suggested that the "laws" made people "feel a sense of belonging". Participants also said that "segregation impinges on all spheres of life, it determines where you fit in." It was also said that "...coloureds were different - not part of other groups" and "[we] belonged to the coloured group - not black, not white", and that "I grew up as a coloured, ... [I] did not know any different". Therefore, sense of belonging and identification can be tied to overall system of racial oppression and reflects how the group adapted to this socio-political reality.

Emotional safety. Emotional safety is premised on the idea that

people feel, both physically and subjectively safe and secure with other members of their in-group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Some of the participant responses are presented in Table 4. The interview data indicated that people felt secure with their "own kind and colour". It was also commented that:

> It was easier to go out and mix with your own kind .... I found it hard in going out to mix with someone who was white. I found it easier to mix with a Black person but not as easy for me to mix with a White person.

Feeling secure with your own kind is linked with apartheid oppression and stereotypes inherent in this oppression. People evaluated notions of acceptance, security and safety in terms of the overall apartheid structure and their relative position in it. Your own kind implied not white and not black, but the particular racial group in which you lived. Subsequently, the stereotypes that emerged from racial isolation and racial oppression influenced feelings of safety and security.

Insert Table 4 about here

Integration and fulfilment of needs

Integration and fulfilment of needs plays a central role in PSC and reflected a number of rewarding and positive factors that contribute to group cohesion (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Participants said that they belonged to predominantly sporting and religious organizations entrenched within the coloured community in South Africa. According to the data participants invested a lot of their time and emotional energy in activity settings (namely, church based groups and sport clubs), the groups in which a lot of their social and psychological needs were met (O'Donnel et al., 1993).

It was suggested by most of the participants that the different organizations to which people belonged provided a variety of opportunities for the fulfilment and integration of needs. Some participants suggested that they had opportunities to experience unconditional acceptance as "human beings" or people had the "opportunity to feel accepted as a human being". People could "share with others who have similar beliefs and interests.", also these groups fostered one's sense of "pride", "self-esteem", and "confidence". These relational groups also "increased political understanding and awareness", and provided opportunities to socialise and "have fun". Moreover, participants suggested that the daily activities and events that influenced their lives, belonging to sporting organisations and

church groups, and having extended family and social networks within the coloured community made them feel part of the community.

Shared emotional connection

McMillan and Chavis (1986) suggest that "research should focus on the causal factor leading to shared emotional connection, since it seems to be the definitive element for true community" (p. 14). The notion is to a large extent premised on identifying with a shared history and the quality of experiences people have in a particular community.

Participants mentioned numerous responses that could have facilitated the development of an emotional connection. These were categorised as: racial oppression and social networks.

Racial oppression. A number of comments made by respondents reflect racial oppression and segregation and how people felt the group responded to these conditions (see Table 5).

Insert Table 5 about here

The following comments reflect some psychosocial outcomes

associated with apartheid. Some participants said that coloureds "belittled (themselves) as far as the white man was concerned...", but this was because they "were indoctrinated to respond in this way". A participant responded: "we were told that we were coloured and had to accept the idea"; another said that "it was normal (to be viewed as coloured) for people, you were born in the system".

Segregation impinged on all spheres of life, it determined where you belong. One participant said that:

> It is very easy for someone who is coloured to think that they are one step better than someone who is black and stay in their place because they are one step inferior to someone who is white ..., that is the stereotype that is created there and that myth gets perpetuated all the time. In a way you are brain-washed into thinking that's the way things are and that's the way it's supposed to be.

The internalization of negative racial stereotypes and ideologies and the perceived fixed nature of group boundaries (a sense of powerlessness) served as a catalyst for the reinforcement of ingroup preferences and stereotypes.

Social networks. The coloured community was described as being close knit. The group had an underlying shared bond - a kind of "brotherhood" one person said. Participants said that they experienced a "sense of togetherness" with other coloureds and they experienced a communal life characterised by a pervading 'spirit' of "closeness, a sort of comraderie". It was also suggested that the large and shared friendship and social networks ("everyone knew everyone") contributed to "a sense of feeling at home." A family oriented life style, sharing, an "openness in the community", and a "social togetherness" reflected the nature and quality of some of the social networks in the community.

The interdependence, positive attachments, and togetherness were influenced by apartheid oppression. This was echoed by a participant who suggested that apartheid and the oppression "contributed to feelings of being a group." Others suggested that in the coloured community, "you grow up with certain groups of people -- you experience a feeling of togetherness as far as you belong to the coloured group." It was suggested that:

> You look for people that you know have gone through the same thing before. It is only natural, I think, that you feel more attracted to that group of people -- because there is a lot

of things that they can identify with that you can too...,

These responses reflect a combination of values that underlie the community and also the group's responses the sociopolitical context.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the foundations of a politically constructed community using the McMillan and Chavis (1986) PSC model. Some interesting observations were made in relation to the PSC model and also the experience of community for this group. For this group the model has two dimensions. The first dimension represents the legal definitions of groups. The second dimension represents the ways in which the community adapted within the sociopolitical reality in South Africa.

The results showed that people who were classified as coloured showed a lack of identification with that label in South Africa. In the context of the larger social system, most of the respondents rejected the imposed identity construct in favour of their national identity. For many participants the label represented nothing more than an imposed racist tag, a tag that served the function of separating and oppressing people. The label

carried negative connotations that were difficult to redefine because they were maintained and perpetuated by the system. Furthermore, together with other components of the Apartheid system, the racist tags were enforced and appeared to be unchangeable.

However, in Australia the label coloured did not necessarily carry the same negative connotations as it did in South Africa and was subsequently used in an associational manner (Sonn, 1991). People were drawn to others with whom they have shared similar experiences and histories, and were more comfortable with (Sonn, 1991). Others (e.g., Cox, 1989; Smith, 1991) have contended that shared history and identity are central to the development of a psychological relatedness, and these factors can also contribute positively to the development of individuals and groups. On the other hand, this response is consistent with the idea that groups who have shared negative experiences rally around those experiences (Sherif & Sherif, 1964).

This in-group preference could, however, be a learned response that has its foundations in racial oppression (Memmi, 1984; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990, Watts, 1994). That is, people have learned to adapt to certain social contexts in a manner characterized by low levels of

contact with dominant out-groups.

In contrast, high levels of interaction with in-group members can be interpreted as a positive adaptive response to the Australian context. Researchers have indicated that people are drawn to same origin ethnic groups and that such groups are vital to the adaptation process of immigrants (Cox, 1989; Furnham & Bochner, 1986). These groups provide various supportive functions including emotional, informational, and tangible support (Sonn, 1991), and they also facilitate in the adaptation process (Berry, 1984). Moreover, such groups (in less oppressive environments) can provide contexts in which people can reconstruct and reformulate notions of group identity and conceptions of community. Thus, these support systems provide a sense of community.

In South Africa, people did not identify with the label, but they identified with the experiences they had in mediating structures and activity settings (O'Donnell, et al., 1993) (such as church groups, family networks, sporting organisations) that were located within 'ethnically homogenous' contexts. Within these mediating structures, activity settings, and other networks, people could experience security, stability, belongingness, and identification. The settings and relationships provided opportunities for

people to experience acceptance, regardless of skin colour, and a psychological relatedness (Smith, 1991). People shared similar attributes (worldview, history, experiences, values, etc.) and were perceived to be similar by out-groups.

These settings also represented the contexts in which a "coloured group" reality and climate was propagated. Within the South African context, coloureds were politically powerless; yet, the mediating structures represented the emerging political voice of the group. In these settings people's consciousness were raised about the socio-political realities of South Africa. The liberation theology espoused by some the church leaders (e.g., Allan Boesak; Desmond Tutu), and the proactive politics advocated by the sporting organizations influenced the group's awareness about the oppressive politics of South Africa. Group members learnt about the illegitimacy of the system and the alternatives that existed to the system in these contexts. This represents the emergence of alternative psychological responses to apartheid oppression (Biko, 1988; Watts, 1994).

Central to the experience of community is shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Apartheid and the common experiences associated with the system dictated and permeated the ways in

which groups developed and responded to the system. Although these responses were diverse, personal and situational factors (e.g., enforced grouping, oppression, history, circumstances of the group) and the interaction between these, potentially provided a catalyst for the development of a shared emotional connection. Thus, socio-political realities in combination with histories and common experiences of apartheid oppression contributed to a shared emotional connection.

Moreover, most of the elements contained in the model were supported in this study demonstrating the validity and applicability of the PSC model. Consistent with the values of community psychology (cultural relativity and diversity), using the model in this manner allows the investigator to explore and evaluate the meanings, experiences, ideologies and understandings that influence PSC within specific populations (Chavis, et al., 1986; Rappaport, 1977, Watts, 1992). In this context, the model specifically allows one to unravel the factors that have played part in the oppression of this group and also the way in which the group responded to the particular socio-political reality. This knowledge will in turn shed light on how individuals and groups adjust and cope in new settings that do not have the same enforced race categorizations. Yet, given the complexity and

interrelatedness of the components of PSC and the relative uniqueness of the group, some aspects have been neglected whilst other components were validated.

In conclusion, the coloured group did not internalize or identify with the label they were assigned. Yet, people internalized some of the negative aspects associated with the imposed identity, status, and apartheid oppression. This, in turn, implies that the group unwittingly played a part in perpetuating the unjust and inequitable socio-political structure (Bartky, 1990; Montero, 1990). Most importantly, the group internalized positive experiences, attachments and other forms of group behaviour that evolved out of enforced categorizations and time spent together. These positive supports and experiences could have played an important role in mediating the effects of apartheid oppression. Finally, the next stage of this project is to investigate the extent to which the group has transferred these qualities, worldviews and belief systems into the Australian context and to examine how this influences cross-cultural adaptation.

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Table 1 Themes Indicating Boundaries

Early inter-racial mixing between slaves, colonists and indigenous groups
Population Registration Act - People were racially classified according to this Act
Introduction of the Group Areas Act - relocation of groups to designated coloured areas', splitting of families.
Demolition of District 6 - declared as a white area
Removal from Voters role (disenfranchisement) - coloured's were no longer allowed vote
Separation of public amenities - people were restricted to use amenities reserved for their particular ethnic/racial group
Introduction of the Coloured People's Representative Council - to supposedly represent the group's interest

Table 2 Themes Reflecting Common Symbol Systems

Language:
Language - "Broken" Afrikaans, dialects, own language
Language and accent
Dominant culture/ no culture?
Westernised - yet, identified with Africans
Don't think there were any Coloured traits
Can't really contrast the group with other groups
Similar to western society in terms of culture and religion
Colour and culture:
Group had no culture, you were neither White nor Black
Blacks were culturally different to Coloureds,
.... a perceived differentness
Traits include a combination of traits taken from ancestral groups

Table 3 Themes Indicating Sense of Belonging and Identification

Doing things together and sharing the same things
Mini-nation - apartheid and the oppression contributed to feelings of being a group
The struggle against oppression contributed to togetherness
Could identify with a specific group - social networks
Felt at home because of relatedness
Shared neighbourhoods in larger Coloured community
People you can relate to
Sense of togetherness based on idea of belonging to Coloured group
Large and strong family units
Family and friends lived in same community

Table 4 Themes Reflecting Emotional Safety

Feel secure with people of your own kind and colour
Lived in the same community
Family and friends in community
People were always ready to help
Felt at home
Spirit of togetherness
Sharing and openness
Members of the coloured community tended to protect each other in times of struggles
Feel attracted to those that have had similar experiences

Table 5 Some Responses to Racial Oppression

Coloureds had nothing - you were neither white nor black.
As a kid it was basically the skin colour - I knew I was Coloured because I was told I was Coloured ... that was basically it.
We were socialised with the label,.... socialised into subservience.
Whites wanted to deny that the features of our group were also the features of the white group.
Superiority was based on skin colour... (but) Coloureds saw themselves as equal to the white group because they could speak both English and Afrikaans perfectly, or most of them could anyway.
People perceived themselves to be Coloured because they had to be Coloured.