New Racism

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New Racism

Revisiting Researcher Accountabilities

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Preface

The idea for creating this book arose as I started reading various texts on racism – a topic that I had become increasingly interested in exploring over the last 6 years or so. While working with Carlis Douglas and Susan Weil on developing a book built around holding a (cross-racial) dialogue in which we probe together the multi-faceted dynamics of everyday institutional racism, and upon reading relevant texts, I identified a lacuna. I realized that while there is a myriad of writings aimed at investigating racism and what is called "new racism" across the globe, there is *no text specifically comparing the styles of inquiry* used to proceed in the explorations. With "new racism" seen as operating in more or less covert ways in social life, and not easily visible, the question arises as to how the investigation hereof can properly proceed. How can we go about organizing social inquiries around that which is admitted to be not easily detectable (as well as being a shifting terrain)?

I decided to embark on the specific project of examining in depth the variety of ways in which social researchers/inquirers have tried to study this terrain – looking closely at how they have justified their approach (insofar as they offer epistemological and methodological justifications). As I delved into the various approaches – and looked at these with a view to pinpointing the explicit and implicit justifications for the manner of proceeding – I located possibilities for how they might be redesigned and/or further developed. I concentrated on rethinking the methodologies in line with my previous work on the accountabilities of social researchers. For example, in my book *Accountability in Social Research* (2001), I offer suggestions for how social inquirers can display their accountabilities by being mindful of the potential impact of their inquiries on the continuing unfolding of the social worlds of which they are part. This implies paying particular attention to possible hidden consequences of taken-for-granted views of "knowing" and "knowledge making." This is not to say that none of those concerned with exploring (new) racism already do try to make provision for this. But it is to say that my attention in this book is directed toward considering more possibilities for creating such provision. I do this by drawing from some examples of research that I set out in the book, while expanding upon them, and also by offering some of my own examples.

The project of examining the range of literature in relation to inquiries around new racism and structuring all the arguments into a readable text, turned out to be a more complex process than I originally envisaged. I am hoping that the work that

I have put into detailing different approaches (exemplified with detailed reference to examples that I have chosen) and my proposals for extending them in specific ways will be helpful for inquirers – professional researchers and others – in their considerations for designing explorations around this area of concern.

As I explain in the book, I believe – with many others – that our ways of knowing are inextricably linked with our ways of living and being. Therefore, I believe that the suggestions that I advance for ways of exploring new racism are part of the process of our exploring options for revitalizing our humanity.

I would like to acknowledge that in writing this book I benefited immensely from input from the following people in particular, to whom I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude.

As regards my Chapter 1, which I found – as my starting chapter – almost the most difficult chapter to construct, many people helped me to define its development. Aleco Christakis, Sisinyane Makoena, Janet McIntyre-Mills, Tshimangodzo Mphilo, Phumla Nhlumayo, Abimbola Olateju, Elsa Onkenhout, Susan Schutte, and Susan Weil all read and offered commentary hereto. Susan Weil indicated to me (besides the additional commentary that she made suggesting points at which I should add clarifying material) that, in her words, "I so love how you ARE putting yourself more into your writing Norma ... I think we [Carlis and I] have had a big influence on you in this and in modeling different ways of doing this." She added that this is especially important in a context where "implicit pressures and norms . . . support tendencies to disappear ourselves in academic writing and research." Tshimangodzo Mphilo pointed out to me the parts in the chapter that she found particularly meaningful and worth developing; and this also helped to give me direction.

As regards the rest of the book, in order not to ask too much of my friends, I asked different ones to offer feedback on different areas (although at times I gave the same sections of chapters to different ones hoping to receive a variety of perspectives). Aleco Christakis, Carlis Douglas, Veronica McKay, Phumla Nhlumayo, and Susan Weil all offered feedback that was invaluable both in helping me to see where the structure of chapters needed modification and where points that I had made needed development. Aleco's comments on Chapters 3, 7, and 8 helped me to concretize many of my statements; Carlis's comments in relation to Chapters 2, 7, and 9 helped me to see where I needed to extend the discussion; Veronica's comments on Chapter 2 likewise were useful in this way; Phumla's engagement with Chapters 5 and 6 opened up new insights for me; and Susan Weil's engagement with Chapters 2, 7, 8, and 9 helped me to strengthen my "narrative" (as she calls it). Janet McIntyre-Mills kindly read almost the entire draft at its near-final stage – and I am grateful for her locating some places where I could clarify the text, but also for her summarizing for me how she was reading the book as a totality and how in her view I had proceeded to make a workable "flow" in the book. (I was also relieved to receive from all my commentators highly enthusiastic statements about the book, such as, for instance: that I had managed to weave together constructively threads from sociology, methodology, race, class, gender discussions, and so on – a job that "had to be done"; that the book was "very important toward the

development of our understanding of new racism"; that my inquiry approach in the book made a very important contribution to the field and that it would surely be "well received.")

Meanwhile, discussions that I had with all these people (via face-to-face conversation, e-mail, and/or Skype) around the issues raised in the book also became useful material that became included in the text (and I have cited these conversations as "personal communications" therein). It is heartwarming to have received all the support offered to me – not only through people's material contributions, but also through their "being there" for me. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers chosen by Springer to review my initial proposal, which helped me in the structuring of the chapters.

In conclusion, the fact that I come from South Africa, where national and international icon Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison for his convictions on a humane and inclusive society meant that I could not but be inspired by the magnanimity of his spirit of wholeness. I hope that this spirit is reflected in this book.

July 2009

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Norma R.A. Romm is affiliated as Research Professor to the University of South Africa. She has worked for universities in South Africa, Swaziland, the United Kingdom, and Cyprus – holding the position of Dean in social science and humanity faculties in Swaziland and in Cyprus. She is the author of the books *The Methodologies of Positivism and Marxism* (1991) and *Accountability in Social Research* (2001). She is the co-author of *People's Education in Theoretical Perspective* (with Veronica McKay, 1992), *Diversity Management* (with Robert Flood, 1996), and *Assessment of the Impact of HIV and AIDS in the Informal Economy in Zambia* (with Veronica McKay, 2006). She is the co-editor of the books *Social Theory* (with Michael Sarakinsky, 1994) and *Critical Systems Thinking* (with Robert Flood, 1996). She has written over 85 articles in journals and in edited volumes on issues such as education (including adult education), social development, social theorizing in relation to development, the facilitation of co-learning in group processes, discursive accountability, systemic inquiry, and considerations of racism as a world problem.

Chapter 1
General Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The focus of this book is on providing a review of some of the ways in which inquiries around what is called "new racism" have been approached, with a view to reconsidering what is involved in such research endeavors. I look in particular into how our ways of "knowing" in this arena can be accounted for by rendering open to discursive accounting the pursuance of research aims.

Researchers highlighting new forms of racism consider these as different from what is called "old-fashioned racism" (as I explain in detail in Chapter 2). New racism is conceptualized as encompassing forms of racism that manifest in the patterning of social existence in less obvious ways than does old-fashioned racism. To understand this, it is argued that, calls for modes of inquiry equipped to delve into more covert coded expressions of racism (including instances where people may indeed not regard themselves as contributing to perpetuating racial hierarchies). In the book I examine and compare various ways of proceeding with such inquiry, and I offer proposals for how research options can be reworked and/or extended. To provide an indication of the terrain that I shall be covering in the book, I start off with some brief illustrations of how "new racism" has been conceptualized as differing from "old racism."

In the context of (contemporary) South Africa – for example – "old racism" is seen as manifested when White people blatantly make use of apartheid-styled racial labeling that denigrates others, marks them as inferior, and affronts their dignity, thus overtly still drawing on notions of White superiority.[1] Under the apartheid system, as Pampallis indicates, a mandate to "entrench the system of White supremacy" was given by the White electorate (in 1948). Social segregation in accordance with racial categories became enforced in that "Blacks living in close proximity to White residential and business areas were forcibly removed to segregated townships on

[1] Pampallis explains that in 1948 the National Party was elected to power (by the White electorate) under the slogan of "apartheid" (2008, p. 5). As regards derogatory racial labeling, which continues today, I have in mind in particularly the use of the word "Kaffir" (to refer to Black people), which is known to be insulting and offensive. (See also Footnote 140 in Chapter 5.)

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the outskirts of the cities," and the "political, social, and economic rights of all Blacks, and especially those of Africans, were severely restricted." In addition, "non-parliamentary opposition was ruthlessly restricted through a range of new legislation" (Pampallis, 2008, p. 5).

"New racism" in relation to this is seen as expressed more subtly, for instance, when people refuse to admit the continued need for social policies designed to redress past as well as continuing discrimination against those suffering the effects of apartheid following the move to a post-apartheid society (cf. Pillay & Collings, 2004).[2]

Considering options for addressing the manifestation of new forms of racism in South Africa (alongside "older" forms), the South African Human Rights Commission offers a report on an inquiry into the manner in which issues of race are portrayed in the media. The Commission notes that notwithstanding that post-1994 (in the transition to democracy) "political power in the new South Africa is in the hands of the Black majority," the power relations in the country are still skewed (in favor of Whites). The Commission points, for instance, to the ways in which individuals and communities can exercise power, and the ways in which corporations exercise power. The Commission points out that generally in a modern democratic state, state power is limited – thus rendering it important to understand power in "more nuanced ways" (2000, p. 54).

The Commission highlights the importance of sensitizing people toward understanding "manifestations like structural forms of racism and the institutional character of racism" (2000, p. 54). They state that by racism they mean to include forms of racism that are linked not only to conscious intention to harm or discriminate, but also to how "effects are felt" within society – whatever the intention (2000, p. 55). In the light hereof, they suggest that it is important to set up a dialogical process, where South Africans, through dialogue "will learn, understand, and have the facility to use race theory and analysis" (2000, p. 8). They see the purpose of their own inquiry into the media as having the potential to "engage all South Africans in seeking common solutions to racism and constructing a society free of racism" (2000, p. 8).

As another example of identification of less easily detectable forms of racism – this time in the context of the USA – Collins suggests that it is important to delve

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[2]On the basis of his interviews with 400 Black workers spanning the years since South Africa's transition to a post-apartheid society (in 1994), Sitas indicates that 51% found the transition to be "extremely beneficial" (in that they became upwardly mobile), 25% remained "stuck" in their occupational milieu of the 1980s/early 1990s, and 22% experienced "rapid deterioration of life chances" (2004, p. 830). Of those in the last-named category, he notes that the majority attributes their position to their prior disadvantages: "no skills, no education, no nothing, now we are suffering" (2004, p. 840). Some of these expressed that the "Black elite" was being appeased by the (White) "Bosses" (those seen as having continued power) – and they expressed disappointment that the struggle movement (and comrades therein) had not been able to "look after them" in the post-apartheid era (2004, p. 840). (Sitas notes that the remaining 2% among those interviewed had got into serious "criminal trouble" by becoming involved in "violent crime and/or peddling drugs" – 2004, p. 833.)

into new racism in order to explore the ways in which, despite legislated desegregation in the USA, "actual segregation in everyday life" is still pervasive – but becomes masked by the media (2005, p. 6). She argues that part of the new racism in the USA consists in obscuring the manner in which "power relations that elevate some groups over others" continue to play themselves out in the "theater of race" (2005, p. 3). As she puts it, "in the post-civil rights era, the power relations that administer the theater of race in America are now far more hidden" (2005, p. 4). This means that:

> Recognizing that racism even exists remains a challenge for most White Americans and, increasingly, for many African Americans as well. They believe that the passage of civil rights legislation eliminated racially discriminatory practices and that any problems that Blacks may experience now are of their own doing. (2005, p. 5)

In order to provide an alternative to these views, she considers it crucial to find ways of exploring the "forms that new racism take in the post-civil rights era" – with the hope also of catalyzing an "effective anti-racist politics and contribut[ing] to a broader social justice agenda" (2005, p. 7).

And as yet another example, Kundnani refers to new forms of racism that he identifies as emerging in twenty-first century Britain (and elsewhere in Europe), characterized by intolerance toward that which is defined within the national story as "alien" – as perpetuated by the media, political stances on immigration, and so on. He notes how supposedly core British/national values can be used to set limits on multiculturalism, while allegiance to the defined (hegemonic) values becomes a factor in "assessing the merits of different categories of migration as well as a necessary condition for the settlement of immigrants" (2007, p. 122).

In Chapter 2, I present Table 2.1 that provides a summary indication of the kinds of social exclusions on which I am focusing in this book – which I shall be discussing (as do others) under the banner of "new racism." (See Chapter 2, Section 2.4.) The book is structured around my examining various ways of proceeding to define and explore these forms of racism, and offering proposals for how such inquiries can be extended. My argument in the book is that all approaches to the study of racism (whether thought of within a continuum as more "old-fashioned" or "new") – as with research more generally – should be treated as being inextricably linked to developments in social life. That is, *the inquiries and the researchers should be understood as part of (and not apart from) the social fields being researched – of which researchers are indeed part* (cf. Weil, 1998, pp. 42–45; Ladson-Billings, 2003, pp. 398–402; Romm, 2006a, pp. 79–83). Through the book, I detail ways in which social inquirers can gear themselves to specifically take into account the potential (as considered by themselves and others) of their impactful involvements in the unfolding of the social fabric. I do this by drawing on, while also extending, what I see as the prospects offered via the examples of research that I discuss.

The suggestions for revisiting modes of inquiry around new racism that I forward in relation to my discussion of the relevance of my chosen examples follow from a specific constructivist stance that I argue for in the book following also

from my work on researcher accountability (Romm, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). With reference to the justification of research/inquiry endeavors, my suggestions relate to the understanding of both the process and the products of these endeavors. With regard to *research processes*, I discuss implications of recognizing that our use of methodological procedures[3] might itself evoke certain experiences at the point of exploring them through the research. And regarding the writing up of *research results (products)*, I underscore that we also need to be attuned to the possible social consequences of our style of presenting these. I make a case in the book for researchers practicing reflexivity in terms of an orientation as summarized by De Souza – as looking back at one's research practices in order to become more cognizant of, in her terms, "how social position, personal histories, and lived experiences matter" in the way in which research becomes constituted and the way in which it becomes presented (2004, p. 473). As De Souza notes, reflexivity implies an admission that these "matter" in our framing of the questions we ask as inquirers and the way in which answers are explored. As I hope to show in the book, different starting framings – as well as different understandings of what is involved in doing science/research – can make a difference to whether and how racism becomes detected and to the manner in which "recommendations" become posed for solution to any identified areas of concern. A stance of reflexivity, as understood by De Souza, enables researchers to portray an awareness hereof (to themselves and to others).

Not all researchers define reflexivity and its purpose in the same way. For example, Finlay points out that for some researchers, the process of reflexively monitoring and auditing the research process is argued to offer "truer" accounts of the research process in an effort to help "affirm the validity of the research" (defined in realist terms[4]) (2002, pp. 210–211). She indicates that realist-oriented accounts of reflexivity have been challenged by those pointing to and embracing the "socially constructed nature of the research experience" (2002, p. 211). She explains that "researchers of different theoretical persuasions . . . lay claim to competing accounts of the rationale and practices of reflexivity" (2002, p. 212). My own stance on reflexivity is linked to developing what I call *discursive accountability* as a way for would-be researchers to earn trust in their endeavors – as I explain in Section 1.6. My views on *reflexivity* are discussed in Section 1.5. But in essence, my suggestion is that reflexivity needs to be coupled with taking some responsibility for the ways in which our research practices can be considered socially consequential.

In line with my focus on reflexivity, which includes researchers' mindful admission of their own presence in the research process and its products, I would like

[3] I use the term "procedures" to point to the *processes of inquiry* that might become activated. Sometimes these are also called research *designs* or *strategies* – as, for example, in Romm and Adman (2000), Gray et al. (2007, p. 45), Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi (2008, p. 140), and Vogt (2008, pp. 1–2).

[4] As we shall see in the chapters that follow, when validity is defined in realist terms, the focus is on trying to improve the likelihood that theoretical conceptualizations will correspond with (or match) the workings of reality. (See also Section 1.5.1 below.)

to offer a brief biographical narrative created here for the purposes of introducing myself to readers in some way. This might help readers to "place" some of my arguments developed in the book – by recognizing (with me) that they are a human production produced in terms of particular involvements of mine and particular social concerns (which form a starting point for the dialogues that I invite via this book).

1.2 A Brief Biographical Narrative

I was born in 1957 in South Africa into an English-speaking family of Jewish background. Being (defined as) White in apartheid South Africa, I became at some point conscious (I remember this consciousness as being most acute during my teenage years) that this afforded me immense opportunities and privileges. The reason that I can recall this consciousness arising at this point is that I remember joining the "Institute of Race Relations"[5] and organizing various charity events for the Institute, while participating in seminars aimed at considering ways of countering apartheid thinking and policy. I also taught (for 10 years) for Sached in South Africa – an organization that was set up to rectify the discrimination against Black students under apartheid.

I studied for my university degrees in Sociology – doing my DLitt et Phil while employed in the Sociology Department at the University of South Africa (UNISA), where I worked from 1982 to 1991. While working there (as Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, and Associate Professor), I became involved in the development of a "humanist" approach to examining the construction of social realities in official and everyday discourse. I was able (thanks to a humanist-oriented head of department – Prof. Cornie Alant) to write guides reaching thousands of (Black and White) students across the country – discussing racism as a social problem that dehumanizes social relationships.

I became head of the newly formed "humanist group" in the department, which focused on the implications of developing a symbolic view of "culture."[6] In this view, culture is not seen as encapsulating fixed ways of life that are supposedly shared among groups of people, but rather is considered as opening spaces for

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[5]Because of the importance that this book gives to the way in which we use language – as part of the reproduction of our ways of seeing – I would suggest that it may be preferable to refer to the Institute of *Raced* Relations in order to show that the racialization of discourses and the *racing* of social relations (in terms of whatever definition of race" is used) is a historically variable mode of social existence (cf. Hercules, 2006, pp. 42–43; Kiguwa, 2006, pp. 127–130).

[6]For ease of teaching and organization, the department was organized along four lines: research methodology; conflict theory; systems approaches; and humanist sociology. I was appointed as head of the "humanist group," in which we explored implications of humanism for sociology – with a focus on humans as dialogical beings. This often involved us in heated conversation with those endorsing the specific value of (definitions of) "conflict theory" or "systems thinking" (with the latter understood at that time in terms of a view of social systems as organisms).

communication around ways of seeing and enacting social life (cf. Romm, 1990b, 1994; Alant & Romm, 1990; McKay & Romm, 1992). In the face of the prevalent reference to culture (now present in much of the international literature on ethnicity) as a "thing" that supposedly "belongs" to given (defined) groups, I feel that it is crucial to keep alive discussion around alternative definitions of the meaning of culture. My discussion in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4, of new racism as involving what some authors have called "cultural racism" draws on and expands on the kinds of exchanges that we developed during our intensive debates with staff and students around these issues at UNISA.

When I left UNISA (at the point at which the head of department retired and I was not sure if the new head would appreciate the humanist argument and its implications), I worked in Swaziland on a 2-year contract (as Associate Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences). There I met colleagues from a range of different countries and engaged in many conversations (with colleagues who became friends) around issues of "development" in Africa. I authored an article on the Tanzanian peasantry on insistence from a Tanzanian colleague (Prof. Sam Maghimbi), as he believed that my discussions with him on this (and my understanding of the issues) warranted it being "written up" in a book he was editing (1995a). I also co-authored with Prof. Apollo Rwomire (from Uganda), an article for a book that he was editing on African women and children (2001).

After the Swaziland contract, I decided to seek a research post, where I could concentrate on research and writing. I took up such a position at the University of Hull in the UK. The research position was in a newly formed Center for Systems Studies in the School of Management – a multi-disciplinary research center aimed at exploring research as systemic intervention. (I became its Deputy Director a few years later.) The University of Hull had a large student body of students from the Far East (especially its postgraduate degrees), and I developed strong relationships with many of my Masters and Ph.D. students from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong with whom I had manifold discussions around different styles of working and interacting in social life. I also naturally learned a great deal from colleagues (again from various parts of the globe, including Africa, South America, the Netherlands, and of course the UK). After working at the university for just over 10 years, I took on a contract (for a year) in Cyprus as Professor of Sociology and Dean of Social Science and Humanities at Cyprus College. The College was in the process of becoming a University – the European University Cyprus – and my task was to help set up the required structures, including research ones. In Cyprus I was exposed to learning about the identifications of "Greek Cypriots" and "Turkish Cypriots" and the ways in which polarities around these identifications became historically reproduced.

I am currently affiliated (as Research Professor) to the University of South Africa, in the College of Human Sciences. For the past few years I have been co-organizing research around adult education in Southern African countries, with special reference to capacity building of educators (McKay & Romm, 2006a, 2006b), and also around HIV/AIDS in relation to the vulnerability of informal sector workers in Zambia (McKay & Romm, 2006c, 2008a, 2008b). I have also devoted much energy

to investigating ways of organizing research – including my own primary research – to look into (new forms of) racism. (I hope that this book bears witness to this energy!) My interest in delving into research approaches in this field arose partly out of my involvement in a book that Carlis Douglas, myself, and Susan Weil are authoring in which we open a (cross-racial) dialogue around everyday institutional racism as we see it manifesting across the globe.

Turning to my other publications (which offer some sense of the range of issues over which I have written over the years) I have authored two books addressing methodological issues in the social sciences. In the first book (Romm, 1991), I explored debates around the methodologies of positivism and of Marxism (in the process spelling out different interpretations of Marxist methodology). In the second book (2001), I examined issues of accountability in social research. I have co-authored three books: one on "people's education" (McKay & Romm, 1992); one on "diversity management" – which included proposals for managing the plurality of approaches to exploring social issues, with particular reference to organizational issues (Flood & Romm, 1996a); and one reporting on, and offering suggested routes toward dealing with, HIV and AIDS in the informal economy in Zambia (McKay & Romm, 2006c). And I have co-edited two books – one on social theory and the other on critical systems thinking (Romm & Sarakinsky, 1994; Flood & Romm, 1996b). I have also authored/co-authored over 85 articles in journals and edited volumes on diverse issues such as education, social development, social theorizing in relation to development, systemic practice, discursive accountability, dialogical intervention processes, and considerations of racism as a world problem.

All in all, my research work involves working across a variety of "disciplines" in the social sciences, with the aim of considering and at the same time helping others to consider fresh options for conceptualizing and acting in the social situations being researched/explored. This orientation is linked to my specific systemic approach to research practice, which highlights "knower(s)" and "knowing" as being part of the (unfolding) system being addressed (e.g., Romm, 1995b, 1996, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2006a, 2006b; Flood & Romm, 1996a; Adindu & Romm, 2001; Gregory & Romm, 2001, 2004; Romm & Hsu, 2002; Romm & Adman, 2004).

In deciding to embark on the preparation for this book, the question arose (in conversation with others and in relation to arguments in the literature) as to whether my being White in terms of the context of my upbringing in South Africa and in terms of my being seen as White in other countries too may serve as a disadvantage for me in relation to developing insight into the issues with which Black and other minority-status groupings of people have to contend. By virtue of privileges that could so easily be taken for granted and go "unnoticed" as I have interacted in daily life, could it be argued that I lack the necessary experience to offer an insightful account of ways of delving into (new) racism? In response to this question, I furnish readers with an outline of my interpretation of my experiences as follows:

I would suggest that already from my teenage years, I made some effort to be aware of the ordinarily unnoticed privileges accruing to me by virtue of being (taken as) White in the South African social system. I also tried in a range of ways to

"make up" in some fashion for "everyday racism" (cf. Essed, 1991, 2001, 2002) such as, for instance, noticing Black people not being greeted in an elevator and being made to feel invisible. I specifically greeted and started conversation with Black people – despite what I saw as the unspoken taboo against creating such "cross-racial" exchanges. I also made efforts (since my teens) to undercut the use of derogatory language (including jokes) directed against Black people – and I found ways of reproving those using the language. In this sense I would argue that I displayed and also cultivated a sense of my own empathy, and tried to express what Bonilla-Silva calls a "loyalty to humanity" (2006, p. 230). I would argue that I could be classified as one of those "whites willing to tell the world when whites do or say things that disadvantage minority groups" (2006, p. 230).

As far as the development of what I would call my "progressiveness" is concerned, Bonilla-Silva proposes that "more research needs to be conducted to ... specify what are the set of circumstances ... and the conditions that lead actors to become racially progressive" (2006, p. 210). He noticed in his own research that working-class women (i.e., those he classified as working class in terms of some of their statements in interviews) tended to be a ("segment of the white population that is more progressive than others"). He suggests (tentatively) that working-class women experience two kinds of oppression in social life (by virtue of being both working class and women) – and thus possibly have the requisite experience to develop empathy with racial minorities. He points out that "in their narratives, many of these women used their own experiences to articulate their views on various hotly contested racial issues and, more specifically, to describe how discrimination occurs nowadays" (2006, p. 210).

Being a "woman" could well be argued to have impacted on my being able to empathize with targets of both old-fashioned and new racism. I have often heard old-fashioned ideas of women's (ascribed) inferiority expressed in various contexts in South Africa (and these expressions have not in my view disappeared). Furthermore, more subtle, covert ways of treating women as having less status (akin to the covertness associated with new forms of everyday racism) can also be seen as diffuse in South Africa as elsewhere. I can recall innumerable experiences encountering what I regard as unequal treatment in status due to my being (seen as) a woman, and when I speak with other women (Black and White) very soon stories of experiences of discrimination become recounted. But I admit that my being White has afforded me a different quality of experience (from those seen as Black) – and has been immensely helpful within social and work life as a route to "normal" (but oft-unnoticed) privileges.

As far as a consideration of my Jewish background is concerned, I believe that this has made me sensitive to how easily the misuse of ascriptive categories (based on people's ascribing characteristics to others in terms of an understanding of their background/heritage) can be employed in everyday life. Again I have many memories of this occurring in my presence – whether or not people were aware that I came from Jewish background. If I commented on how the use of derogatory labels based on ascriptive categories can have wider effects on social living and is not without consequence for the people concerned, and if I mentioned that I happened to be

Jewish, I would oft be told, as Bonilla-Silva puts it (in relation to the category of being Black), "you guys are hypersensitive" (2006, p. 211).

1.3 Creating Depth of Insight Through Developing Connectivity

Despite the above considerations around my experiences, it still could be argued that this does not adequately address the question as to whether my lack of social experience of being Black might disadvantage me unduly in my endeavor in this book to try to extend methodologies for exploring new racism. I now consider this question by taking as starting point some of the deliberations that Collins has provided in relation to her (brand of) standpoint thinking arising from experiences in the USA.

Collins points out in the *Preface* to the *first edition* of her book *Black Feminist Thought* (first appearing in 1990, but which she includes in the 2000 edition) that her writing on issues of racism arises from the standpoint of "placing Black women's experiences and ideas [in the USA] at the center of analysis" (2000, p. vii). She explains that the book expresses a concern with framing ideas in a way that resonates with Black women's experiences. She indicates that while admittedly writing from this standpoint and at the same time "privileging" African American women's ideas, she hopes also to "encourage White feminists, African American men, and all others to investigate the similarities and differences among their own standpoints and those of African American women" (2000, p. vii). Furthermore, she states that she does not wish to imply that "Black feminist thought" is a fully coherent set of ideas (and interests), and she hopes "to see other volumes emerge which will be more willing to present Black feminist thought as a shifting mosaic of competing ideas and interests" (2000, pp. viii–ix).

In her *Preface* to the *second edition*, Collins expands (and alters somewhat) her conception of the link between "Black feminist thought" and "alternative" positions. She remarks that:

> I have come to see how it is possible to be both centered in one's own experiences and engaged in coalitions with others. In this sense, Black feminist thought works on behalf of Black women, but does so in conjunction with other similar social justice projects. (2000, p. x)

Collins suggests that this shift in her thinking allowed her to

> emphasize particular dimensions that characterize Black feminist thought but are not unique to it. . . . . I tried to reject the binary thinking that frames so many Western definitions,[7] including my earlier ones of Black feminist thought and Black feminist epistemology [i.e.,

[7] Binary thinking is also sometimes referred to as thinking that relies on a type of logic where it is contradictory to state that, say, "*p* and not-*p* are both (socially) true." In her book on *Black Sexual Politics*, Collins clarifies the use of the term binary. She defines binary thinking as "a system of thought that divides concepts into two oppositional categories, for example, white/black, man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, saint/sinner, reason/emotion, and normal/deviant" (2005, p. 349). She indicates that "both/and" thinking allows us to see the connections between the apparent oppositions.

> conceptions of knowing processes in society]. Rather than drawing a firm line around Black feminist thought that aims to classify entities as *either* being Black feminist *or* not, I aimed for more fluidity . . . . (2000, p. xi)

Here Collins makes the point that the very decision to draw a boundary around the notion of Black feminist thought – seen as separated from "other" thinking (and experience) – was a decision that could be shifted. She now envisages a more fluid relationship with insights/experiences offered from arenas supposedly "outside" Black feminist thinking. Nevertheless, in the main text of the book she makes the point that, in her view, "It is more likely for Black women . . . to have insights into the condition of our oppression than it is for those who live outside those structures" (2000, p. 35). She argues that this does not imply for her that "others cannot participate" in the enterprise of trying to offer insight (2000, p. 35). But she avers that "the primary responsibility for defining one's own reality lies with the people who live that reality, who actually have those experiences" (2000, p. 35).

As we shall see throughout the various chapters of this book, the idea of giving credence to the experiences of people's lived realities is a theme that threads through my book. In this sense I concur with Collins that the power of defining experiences of oneself and of one's existence, and the power of constructing visions of social realities and of unfolding futures should not be ceded to others supposedly better equipped to "understand." In order to deflect "existing power hierarchies" (Collins, 2000, p. 36), it is *crucial that hierarchies in the production of "knowledge" too become revisited*. Collins cites Lorde as pointing out that "if we do not define ourselves for ourselves we will be defined by others" (Lorde, 1984, p. 45, as cited in Collins, 2000, p. 36).

Collins continues her argument by suggesting that

> Black men, African women, White men, Latinas, White women, and members of other U.S. racial/ethnic groups, for example [as well as others outside of the U.S.] . . . can identify points of connection [in thought and suggested forms of action] that further social justice projects. (2000, p. 37)

Collins thus emphasizes the potential connectivity, rather than boundaries, between members of different (social) groups trying to further "social justice projects" – as I would suggest (and hope) I am trying to do via this book.

1.4 The "Reality" of Groupness

While Collins points to the potential connectivity between the social groups that she identifies, she also endeavors to deal with the issue of her apparently essentializing the different groups that she isolates as relevant. Before outlining her argument, it is worth noting that normally when one charges an author with being "essentialist" in orientation, this implies that the author making use of the concept of "group" is treating groups as if they are *entities with definite characteristics*, to which "members" necessarily belong. This is normally contrasted with a "non-essentialist" position that emphasizes *the processes by which social groupings are (re)created as social*

productions within the course of social life. Anthias and Yuval-Davis elucidate that in their understanding, a *non-essentialist* position does not approach social reality as if there are groups to be *discovered* ("in reality"), but rather sees social realities (including social groupings) as "being created and recreated when practiced and discussed" (1996, p. 191). A non-essentialist position argues that "essentialist" categories of difference can all too easily be deployed to create a discourse of cultural difference that constrains unnecessarily people's conceptions of "who they are" (1996, p. 195).

Ways of treating the existence/development of groups in turn are often linked to ways of seeing the relationship between different possible forms of cultural expression supposedly connected with different "groups." Parekh, in criticizing an essentialist argument, calls upon people to revisit their way of relating to "culture," especially "in an age in which cultural boundaries are porous and permeable and in which culture both absorbs the influences and defines itself in relation to others" (1997, p. 61). Brubaker and Cooper also caution that we need to be wary – both as analysts and as practitioners – of working with a notion of "bounded groupness" (2000, p. 33). They point out that references to social groups can all too easily imply that members share "comprehensive identities and ways of life." Like Anthias and Yuval-Davis, they maintain that this way of seeing groups not only *posits* (as existing) the identified groups, but also *encourages* the reproduction of bounded groupness within the social process (2000, p. 33).

Also considering the matter of the boundedness of groups, Alleyne (2002) suggests that "we cannot live together in the global system if we hang on to our old essentializing identities." Instead of "hanging onto" an essentialized and reified conception of identity (as defined by an experience of a static "self"), we might try, as Alleyne cites certain "radicals" as trying, to "create new, more inclusive, transcultural, transracial . . . social identities" (2002, p. 179).

Collins's position in relation to her discussion of groups is that it is sometimes necessary for people sharing what can be regarded as common experiences to develop "safe spaces" where they can develop their ways of thinking about these experiences and about possible futures (2000, p. 110). She considers this in the light of her discussion of the (new) rhetoric of "color-blindness" – where inequality becomes legitimized by pretending that people are being treated equally (without regard to racial categorization), while they still continue to be categorized as racially "other" by those purporting color-blindness (Crenshaw, 1997, as cited in Collins, 2000, p. 110). As Collins explains:

> Despite protestations to the contrary, this new color-blind racism claimed not to see race yet managed to replicate racial hierarchy as effectively as the racial segregation of old. (2005, p. 3)

Collins suggests that in this social context, it becomes very difficult to maintain safe spaces for people experiencing continued (but now redefined) racism. As she puts it, "any group that organizes around its own self-interests runs the risk of being labeled 'separatist,' 'essentialist,' and anti-democratic" (2000, p. 110). She argues that racial boundaries continue to be preserved in the USA (as elsewhere), while

the superiority of Whiteness is institutionalized – with attendant economic penalties being associated with Blackness.

Zuberi and Bonilla Silva support this account by likewise pointing to the ideology of color-blindness and arguing that it is important to develop ways of knowing and living that can counteract this ideology by being "openly race conscious" in orientation (2008, p. 333). They make the point that racialized structures "produce differences in life chances (i.e. inequality and exclusion) and in [social] identities"; and they indicate that their position is that "we advocate a move from race as soon as the conditions of racial stratification no longer exist" (2008, p. 333).

While Collins as well as Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva see the value of "identity politics" (where, say, Blackness as a political identity can offer a challenge to the perpetuation of normative Whiteness), they consider that identity politics could give way to alternative forms of effectively organizing. Collins proposes a model of "transversal politics [which] concerns coalitions of all sorts" and which can "accommodate the contradictions that seemingly distinguish identity politics and affinity politics" (where the latter involves people forming groups or communities[8] on the basis of some perceived affinity) (2000, p. 296). Likewise Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva point to the importance of producing knowledge and practices that will "ultimately help abolish race as a category of exclusion" (2008, p. 333).

The issue of how one should treat "groupness" in society can be seen as tied to the question of how "members" of the (posited) different groups are to be defined. In this book, I operate in terms of the understanding that the binary logic that separates supposed opposites such as White and Black, "us" and "them," and so on. (whether in terms of phenotypical or cultural markers), itself needs to be revisited.[9] Considering my own use of categories to "identify" myself in relation to what are

[8]Bouchard (2004) prefers to use the word "community" rather than the word "group." She argues that the word "group" already implies for her an "us/them" relationship between (groupings of) people. A similar suggestion is offered by Young (1990), who argues for the need to develop normative conceptions of communities where identifications with groups (or rather, communities) can emerge on the basis of understood affinities, while creating openings for people to "become acquainted with new and different people, [and] with different cultures and social experiences" (1990, p. 319).

[9]The term phenotype, as explained in wikipedia, is used to refer to "actual physical properties [of an organism], such as height, weight, hair color, and so on" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genotype-phenotype_distinction). Considered in relation to phenotypical features associated with being Black or White, it is important to note that sometimes people are expressly called (and/or self-define themselves as) Black or White by virtue of their *social* behavior. For example, the use of the word *coconut* can be used to refer (normally derogatively) to someone with phenotypically "Black" features presumably trying to act "White" (see Chapter 5, Section 5.5). In contrast, sometimes calling someone with phenotypically "White" features as "Black" could refer favorably to their being able to empathize suitably with self-reported experiences of "Black" people (as I have heard through many anecdotes in South Africa as well as Britain). As another example, in the context of social relations in the USA, Aleco Christakis (of Greek heritage), indicated to me that he is a board member of the organization called "Americans for Indian Opportunity" and considers himself as Greek Native American (as one of his self-descriptors following on his feeling welcomed in the organization) – personal communication by e-mail with me, August 2008. (See also in this regard Chapter 7, Footnote 198; and see www.aio.org/programs.html as well as http://www.aio.org/21228%20Ambassador%20Newsletter.pdf)

seen to be “groups/groupings,” it may be noted that when using the word White within my biographical narrative, I expressly capitalized it. The reason for my doing this is to emphasize that the racing of bodies with reference to supposedly observable features is not necessarily an “obvious” process – the importance of a feature such as Whiteness becomes obvious only when entrenched in a social order of raced relations.

In commenting on the practice by some authors of putting quotation marks around terms referring to social categories, Collins remarks that “putting brackets around the term ‘Black woman’ and pointing out its socially constructed nature does not erase the fact of living as a Black woman and all that it entails” (2000, p. 166). While Collins does not put quotation marks around racialized social categorizations, and prefers to use capital letters instead, she is of course aware of the way in which these constructions contribute to, and help to justify, the reproduction of unequal raced relations (see, for example, 2000, p. 138). In the remainder of this book I too – like Collins – will use capital letters to refer to these categories as well as to posit possibilities for reconstructing our conceptualizations of the status of the categories (and our attendant ways of living). (It should be noted that when citing other authors’ arguments, if they themselves have not capitalized, I have chosen to leave their texts as is in the quotation.)

1.5 Notions of Reflexivity

As will become clearer as the book proceeds, the stance on reflexivity that I put forward in the book is one that calls for social inquirers to *take account of their involvements in social life* and to *acknowledge some responsibility for the possible social impacts* that their research arguably may be creating (see also Romm, 2002a, 2002b). When calling for an orientation of reflexivity in these terms, I at the same time try to address the various ways in which reflexivity can be conceptualized and practiced. In this section, I locate three accounts – linked to specific understandings of what is involved in the proper practice of inquiry – and I show why I wish to associate myself more with the third-named account.

1.5.1 A Realist-Oriented View

A realist-oriented understanding of the practice of (natural and social) science in society suggests that theories put forward in the process of inquiry can be tested for their closeness to the truth, where truth is defined as the accurate representation of facts, patterns, structures, and/or (in the case of social science) social meanings existing in reality.[10] (For more detail on these terms see, for example, Augoustinos,

[10]The term “realism” embraces a variety of positions that might be labeled under this banner. In my book *Accountability in Social Research* (Romm, 2001), I offer a discussion of four kinds of position that can be considered realist in orientation (albeit in different ways). These are *positivism* (a position focusing on the search through scientific inquiry to come to grips with natural and social regularities); *non-foundationalism* (a position that emphasizes the impossibility of obtaining

Walker, & Donaghue, 2006, p. 22; Gray, Williamson, Karp, & Dalphin, 2007, pp. 39–43.)

Within a realist position, the credibility of theoretical propositions is seen to rest on the degree to which they can be argued to have undergone appropriate tests in the face of competing claims about the operation of reality. All proposed claims put forward by researchers are regarded as needing to be adjudicated with respect to the relevant evidence. While there are various ways of trying to cater for this, Popper famously argued (1959, 1969) that scientists can try to determine via a process of *deduction* what empirical observations (if found) would constitute a *falsification* of their theoretical claims. The more scientists show that they have been prepared to seek such observations (instead of seeking only supporting evidence), the more credibility their propositions are awarded within the scientific community (1969, p. 256).[11]

According to Popper, the mechanisms of science cannot be used to generate *certainty* of knowledge about reality. As Delanty (referring to the Popperian argument) puts it: "Scientific knowledge is uncertain knowledge" (1997, p. 32). Nevertheless, as Delanty notes, Popper argues that it is the most certain kind of knowledge to which human beings can aspire. In similar vein, Gray et al. note that according to this account "theories are rarely completely proved or disproved. [But] . . . findings influence theory by refining it, and making it a more precise tool of explanation" (2007, p. 6). They go on to state that scientists have been trained to use the scientific method (for testing theories) in a way that "decreases the probability of making errors in their observations and judgments" (2007, p. 8).

The central concern within this position, then, is to minimize errors that can be avoided in the process of coming to grips with reality. Researchers are considered as *biased* to the extent that they do not make sufficient effort to avoid preventable errors. Hammersley and Gomm (1997a) explain this position (to which they subscribe) by noting that researchers engaged in practicing science are required to "do their utmost to find and keep to the path which leads toward knowledge rather than error" (1997a, Paragraph 4.3).

In order not to be accused of being unduly biased, Hammersley states that it is crucial that researchers direct themselves toward the immediate goal of "the

indubitable proof); *scientific realism* (expressing a focus on excavating structures of reality); and *Weberian interpretivism* (expressing a focus on striving to understand meaning-making and its consequences in the *social* world).

[11] Many researchers in the "interpretivist" tradition have queried this argument of Popper as applied in the social sciences, and have argued for a more inductively based connection between empirical data and theoretical conceptualization (cf. Henwood and Pidgeon, 1993). However, Henwood and Pidgeon indicate that even within this tradition, it is understood that good theorizing needs to integrate "diverse levels of abstraction" as part of the process of developing a "conceptually rich understanding" that can be plausibly argued to "fit the data" (1993, pp. 21–22). Furthermore, they indicate that the "negative case analysis" often promoted within this tradition can be seen as paralleling "the Popperian strategy of ingeniously seeking wherever possible to falsify working hypotheses derived from the emergent model in that, as analysis of initial cases proceeds, further cases would be selected for their discomforting potential" (1993, pp. 25–26).

production of knowledge" (1995, p. 116). He qualifies this statement by stating that this does not mean that they need to abandon other goals, such as hoping that the research may "promote some political ideal or other to which he or she is committed" (1995, p. 116). But the primary purpose – and the one in terms of which all research is to be immediately directed – is that of producing knowledge.

In keeping with this argument, Hammersley suggests that we "draw a distinction between direct and indirect goals" and that we recognize that the *direct* goal to which researchers must properly be directed is "the production of valid and relevant knowledge" (1995, p. 116). He contends that in the research context, the aim is to "discover, through empirical investigation and rational discussion, which conclusions are sound and which are not, and why" (1995, p. 117).

Hammersley refers favorably to the Weberian view (accepted by many philosophers of science) concerning the fact/value distinction – that is, the distinction between the realm of "facts" and that of "values" (Weber, 1949). Hammersley argues that in outlining his view of social science (as indeed *science*[12]), Weber rightly recognizes the "need for detachment from [value-laden] political commitments," that is, the need to strive for "objectivity" (1995, p. 115). What Weber does not concentrate sufficiently on, according to Hammersley, is the "institutional requirements [in the scientific community] for this detachment" (1995, p. 115). Hammersley suggests that he "underestimates" somewhat the manner in which rational debate within the scientific community helps to generate less bias as a whole in the productions of science.

The realist conception of the goal of research to produce knowledge is tied to a specific notion of researcher reflexivity. Here reflexivity, defined as the "looking back at oneself" (aided by the scientific community), is seen as a process of trying *to locate potential biases in one's approach, with the aim of being able to minimize these biases* so as to better discover, in Hammersley's words, "which conclusions are sound and which are not, and why" (1995, p. 117). Davidson and Layder, writing from a somewhat different research approach from Hammersley in terms of their understanding of "empirical investigation," nevertheless concur with him on the import and aim of reflexivity in social research. Like him, they state a commitment to "research that is rigorous and reflexive" in the sense of trying to reflect back on the ways in which its biases can possibly be preempted (1994, p. 38). The aim is to produce knowledge that is "more objective than research which is sloppy and uncritical" (Davidson & Layder, 1994, p. 28).[13]

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[12] Weber (1949) argues that social scientific inquiry is distinct from natural scientific inquiry, because social scientists can explore the realm of social *meaning making* that renders people's actions *understandable*. (See also Romm, 2001, pp. 55–66 for an exploration of ways of locating Weber's interpretivist argument in relation to other positions on social inquiry.)

[13] In terms of the labels proffered in Footnote 10, Hammersley subscribes to *non-foundationalism* (distinguishing his position from positivist *foundationalism or naïve empiricism*). Davidson and Layder invoke a *scientific realist* position – which relies on a different way of connecting "reason" with empirical "evidence" (sometimes called retroductive logic) so as to be able to excavate unobservable structures (Romm, 2001, p. 4). See Chapter 6, Section 6.1.2, as well as Chapter 8, for more detail on this.

In the chapters that follow, it will be seen that realist accounts of research and the attendant understandings of reflexivity can be argued to be decidedly influential within many of the examples of research around new racism that I have chosen to discuss. When discussing the examples, I show how realist positions can be revisited in the light of alternative conceptions of knowing processes and products.

Schmidt contends that researchers themselves can contribute to *altering societal expectations* in relation to the purpose of research endeavors. She notes that often researchers studying "minority–majority relations" in Western contexts and those studying "racism in the United States [USA]" operate in terms of an implicit realist epistemology and communicate this to the public (2008, p. 23). In this way they "reproduce a (popular) understanding of diverse research perspectives as something suspicious" – because it is taken for granted that "the purpose of research is not to think in varieties of possible understandings, but to produce a cohesive, monolithic description of 'reality'" (2008, p. 13). In the face hereof, Schmidt suggests that researchers should set out to highlight what she calls "epistemological variation" (i.e., alternative understandings of how "knowing" should be defined) as part of an effort to point to "the potential of alternative conceptualizations and framing" of what it means to engage in "research" (2008, p. 25). Below I point to some of these alternatives and I outline some implications hereof for the engagement in research around (new) racism.

1.5.2 A Constructivist-Oriented View

Certain authors who may be regarded as more constructivist oriented[14] have focused on the constructed nature of the worldviews developed within the scientific community. Kuhn – renowned for his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), which was republished in 1970 in enlarged form – is sometimes cited as supporting a kind of constructivism with which those studying new forms of racism can sympathize (cf. Collins, 2000; Dunn & Geeraert, 2003; Cohen-Cole, 2005).

Kuhn's position, briefly put, is that scientific inquiry can be conceptualized as proceeding in terms of periods of what he calls "normal" and "revolutionary" science. During times of normal science – which he sees as characterizing most periods of scientific endeavor in the natural sciences – the scientific community works on solving problems or puzzles *set within a particular way of defining its field of study*. It develops "efficient instruments for solving the puzzles that its paradigms define" (1970, p. 166). Its approach to, and definition of, the defined objects of research (its worldview) are largely unquestioned – and it is indeed for this reason that scientists are able to explore in depth their defined puzzles.

[14] As with the term realism, the term "constructivism" embraces a variety of positions. For example, positions such as critical theory, anti-foundationalist feminism, and discursively oriented constructivism all query the realist focus on science as a process of generating increasingly improved access to independently existing (extra-linguistic) reality (Romm, 2001, pp. 5–7).