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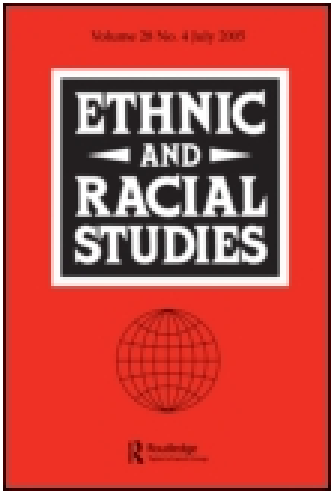

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Racializing teenage pregnancy: 'culture' and 'tradition' in the South African scientific literature

Catriona Macleod and Kevin Durrheim

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Abstract

The signifiers, 'race', 'culture' or 'ethnicity' are utilized in the teenage pregnancy literature (1) to highlight 'differences' in adolescent sexual and reproductive behaviour and (2) as explanatory tools. When 'white' teenagers are the focus of research, psychological explanations are usually invoked, whereas for 'black' teenagers, explanations are socio-cultural in nature. In this article, we explore how, through a process of racialization, the psycho-medical literature on teenage pregnancy in South Africa contributes to the entrenchment of 'race', 'culture' and 'ethnicity' as fixed, 'natural' signifiers. We utilize Derrida's notion of *différance*, together with Phoenix and Woollett's adaptation – 'normalized absence/pathologized presence' – to indicate how 'black' people are cast as the Other, the pathologized presence which relies on the normalized absent trace, 'whiteness', for definition. We analyse how the notions of 'tradition' and 'culture' are deployed to sanitize or disguise the underlying racializing project. 'Black' is exoticized and rendered strange and thus open to scrutiny, monitoring and intervention. 'Culture' and 'tradition' appeal to the myth of origin, thus providing pseudo-historical explanations which essentialize and naturalize racialized collectivities.

Keywords: Racialization; race; culture; tradition; ethnicity; teenage pregnancy; psycho-medical literature.

'Race', 'culture' and 'ethnicity' surface as robust signifiers in the Anglophone literature on the rates, causes, consequences and explanatory frameworks regarding teenage pregnancy and childbearing. According to Caldas (1993), 'That there are large Black/White differences in adolescent childbearing is well documented' (p. 12). In the literature emanating from the United States, statistics showing a higher rate of teenage childbearing among 'black' teenagers are routinely quoted. This is made possible by the fact that national and local social and medical statistics

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are broken down by race in the United States (as well as in South Africa – Ellison and De Wet 1997), something not reflected to date in British statistics (Phoenix 1993).[1]

On the basis of this, a range of 'racial', 'ethnic' or 'cultural' 'differences' have been noted by American researchers. For example, Trent (1994), utilizing data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Labour Market Experience of Youth, concludes that 'blacks' are more likely than 'whites' to expect adolescent and non-marital fertility. Forste & Tienda (1992) use the National Survey of Families and Household to indicate that 'black' teenage mothers are less likely to marry and more likely to complete school than are 'white' or 'Hispanic' teenage mothers.

Various explanations regarding the noted 'racial' differences have been proposed. For example, Rhode (1993) postulates that the appropriate age for sexual relations and parenthood are a matter of cultural definition attached to particular socio-historical conditions. For 'black' women in America this includes the history of the sociological constraints imposed by slavery. Forste & Tienda (1992) argue that these culturally specific normative expectations are transferred intergenerationally. They point out that working mothers and single parenthood form part of the normative behaviour for African-Americans whereas for 'Hispanics' expectations centre around marriage and pro-family ideals. Early childbearing has been postulated as a life affirming choice (Jacobs 1994) or alternative life course (Franklin 1992) for African-American and Latina teenagers in the context of violence and economic strain. Contrarily to this, Henly (1993) argues that the origin of race difference may be socio-economic; traditional measures of socio-economic-status do not, he believes, take into account the social context (in particular those related to racism and discrimination) of adolescents at risk for early pregnancy.

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Racialization

Our aim in this article is not to contribute to a racialized etiology. Rather, we explore how the process of racialization is utilized in a specific example of the teenage pregnancy literature (the South Africa literature) to achieve strategic effects of power; and how this, in turn, contributes to the entrenchment of race, culture and tradition as fixed, 'natural' signifiers. The term 'racialization' was initially used by Fanon (1967) in discussing the difficulties facing decolonized intellectuals, and has since been employed in a variety of ways. In most usages the concept refers to 'a representational process whereby social significance is attached to certain biological (usually phenotypical) human features, on the basis of which people are designated as a distinct collectivity' (Miles 1989, p. 74).

Racialization is anchored in historical and social power relations. According to Jones (1997), 'race' surfaced as a signifier of difference in

scientific and philosophical thought in the early nineteenth century. The Enlightenment concern with the universal development of civilization was replaced with the notion of humans representing distinct, primordial groups, characterized by specific physical traits. 'Race' became the repository for representations of difference as 'biological variance' was represented as natural, inherent and unalterable. In contrast, our investigation of racialization has as its aim 'not how *natural* differences determine and justify group definitions and interactions, but how racial logics and racial frames of reference are articulated and deployed, and with what consequences' (Donald and Rattansi 1994, p. 1, emphasis in original). We thus adopt a discursive approach to analyse how 'race' is deployed in a scientific literature to produce and maintain particular power relations.

The discursive processes of racialization can be usefully understood in relation to the concept of *différence*. Derrida's (1976, 1978) notion of *différence* is developed around his critique of Western metaphysics, which is structured in terms of dichotomies: truth versus error; man versus woman; black versus white. He notes that the oppositions do not stand as independent and equal entities. 'The second term in each pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first, a fall away from it' (Johnson 1972, p. viii). The first term is given priority, creating a sense of being as presence, unity, identity and immediacy, with the second term always subordinated to it. In Derridian terms, language is inherently unstable, but is used to create the illusion of being stable by producing binary oppositions which define each other (e.g. 'black' and 'white'). The stability depends on privileging the present term (in this case, 'black'), while marginalizing the absent one(s) ('white'). The privileging and subordination of terms is linked to power relations (in this case, racialized power relations), as indicated below.

Derrida's aim is to deconstruct this seeming stability. To do this he has employed his concept of '*différence*', which implies two things. Firstly, all language exists as a system of differences, rather than as something essential or of intrinsic significance. 'Race', for instance, is a symbolic differencing system. The signifier 'black' does not stand as an independent entity, but relies on the absent trace, 'white', for its meaning. 'Black' and 'white', as present and absent terms, define and interpenetrate each other. Secondly, there is a time lag or distance between the present and the absent trace – 'whatever is consciously perceived (the present) may only be read in the past' (Sampson 1989, p. 11). Thus, the Enlightenment civilized/primitive dichotomy continues to inhabit 'race' as a system of signification while, as we shall illustrate, 'race' interpenetrates the more recent focus on 'culture' and 'ethnicity'. In this article, we analyse how 'race', as a system of symbolic differencing, informs and structures investigatory practice in the social sciences.

Phoenix and Woollett (1991) extend Derrida's thinking in their use of

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the concept 'normalized absence/ pathologized presence'. Applied in the context of social science literature, this would refer to the way in which 'white' is seldom referred to as a racial category (Bonnett 1993; Wong 1994). Thus, it becomes a silent signifier, the normalized absence, maintaining and obscuring its position in these texts. On the other hand, 'black' people materialize as the pathologized presence – the repository of culture, attitudes, traditions, values, ethnicity and behaviours, all of which are yoked into the explanatory framework of a problematized phenomenon such as teenage pregnancy. In this essay, we indicate how, in the South African literature on teenage pregnancy, 'black' and 'African' are the pathologized presences, in need of explanation, investigation and intervention, with 'white' forming the unproblematized absence. A simple example of this racialized focus is that of the seventy-seven theses, reports, chapters and articles analysed in the broader study (Macleod 1999a) of which this article forms a part, nineteen used the words 'coloured', 'black', 'African', 'Zulu' or 'Xhosa' as signifiers *in the title*. 'White', 'Afrikaans-' or 'English-speaking' are not used in any of the titles.

Although the 'scientific' claim of superior and inferior 'races' has largely disappeared (Miles 1989), the pathologization of 'black' people remains. Here we analyse how 'tradition' and 'culture' are used in the South African literature as strategies to essentialize and naturalize racial collectivities through an appeal to pseudo-historical explanations (the myth of origin), while at the same time masking the underlying process of racialization (cf. Durrheim and Dixon 2000). These strategies allow for the 'sanitary coding' or 'disguise' (Wetherell and Potter 1992, p. 71) of racialization and the pathologization of 'black' people. This type of culturalist and ethnicist explanation has been termed the 'new racism' in the general literature on racism (Barker 1981; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Donald and Rattansi 1994).

In some respects the South African literature can be seen as a subsection of the Anglophone discourse on teenage pregnancy and childbearing as, in the words of Burman, Kottler, Levett and Parker (1997), 'systems of invisible imperialism . . . are played out in academic and intellectual life' (p. 6). However, there are also points of divergence between the South African literature and that emanating chiefly from the United States and Britain. The types of racialized boundaries constructed differ, with South African literature, in the main part, utilizing the Apartheid racial classificatory system and ethnic definitions based chiefly on language use (e.g. Zulu, Xhosa). Concerns with the perpetuation of poverty attendant on early reproduction centre in the South African literature around demographic population dynamics and in the United States and Britain around welfare issues. Each of these has racial undertones (cf. Macleod in press). Finally, 'tradition' is used as an explanatory factor far more readily in the South African literature than elsewhere.

Race, as a signifier, has had (and continues to have) particular

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pertinence in South Africa. During Apartheid, people were classified according to the Population Registration Act into the main divisions of 'white', 'black', 'coloured', and 'Asian'. On the basis of this classification, people were given and denied access to certain living areas (Group Areas Act), schools, jobs, and resources (such as water, sanitation, and health care). This system of racial classification served as the basis for the oppressive policies and police action characteristic of the Apartheid era. Apartheid saw its official demise in the 1994 elections. However, as Burman *et al.* (1997) point out, 'the pervasive notions of self, Other and legitimacy that saturate racist ideas and behaviour will long outlive the dismantling of apartheid' (p. 5).

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Data and methodology

Published and unpublished research and literature on teenage pregnancy in South Africa from 1970 to 1997 formed the data for this article. The material was collected for a larger study on teenage pregnancy (Macleod 1999a). This essay represents one aspect of the complete analysis conducted on these data. The data were accessed by (1) conducting searches on international and national bibliographic data archives, and (2) sending letters to heads of departments of relevant social science, education, and medical departments of all South African universities, and health- and education-related non-governmental organizations, requesting information concerning research conducted in the field of teenage pregnancy in their organizations. The result was a collection of seventy-seven research reports, theses, articles and chapters, forty-one of which are published.

Of the 107 authors of these document, sixty-eight are 'white' and thirty-nine 'black'[2]. Of the forty-one published documents, twenty-eight are written by 'white' authors, eight by 'black' authors, and five jointly by 'black' and 'white' authors. Twelve of the documents reported on studies conducted with 'white' participants; five had 'white' and 'black' participants; fifty-three had 'black' participants; seven were theoretical papers or reviews. Thus, there is a predominant focus on 'black' participants, but this may be unremarkable as 'whites' form the numerical minority in South Africa. However, the ratio of 'white' to 'black' authors overall as well as the ratio of texts published by 'white' as opposed to 'black' authors reflects the racialized power relations immanent in the production of knowledge in South Africa.

The data (i.e. all the documents collected) were analysed using what we have termed deconstructive discourse analysis. What is analysed in this method is the discursive 'event' (Fairclough 1992) which is simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice and an instance of social practice. The discursive events in this instance are simultaneously the texts written on teenage sexuality and pregnancy, the discursive construction contained in that text, and the research practices

engaged in to collect information and produce the text. The aims of our analysis were twofold. First, following Foucault (1991), we questioned these discursive events concerning their prescriptive effects regarding action (effects of jurisdiction) and their codifying effects concerning the known (effects of veridiction). In other words, we aimed to elucidate how racialized categories have been used to construct our knowledge of teenage pregnancy, and how the construction of racialized categories and our knowledge of teenage pregnancy legitimate certain practices. The second aim was to deconstruct racialized discourses by reading their claims to presence, in terms of their dependence on (privileged – in this case 'white') absences. The deconstructive aspect focused on dominance, contradiction and difference.

Concretely, this translates into (1) reading and re-reading the texts, (2) chunking the material according to themes (race, ethnicity, culture, tradition), (3) applying Parker's (1992) seven basic criteria for identifying discourses (viz. that a discourse: is realized in text; is about objects; contains subjects; is a coherent system of meanings; refers to other discourses; reflects on its own way of speaking; and is historically located), and (4) infusing the analysis with theoretical insights which draw on Derrida's deconstructive method (for more in-depth discussion of this method see Macleod 2002). The last part of this process involved (1) highlighting the absent 'white' trace, (2) indicating how the 'black'/'white', 'traditional'/'modern' etc. oppositions are supplementary, and (3) undermining the text's 'truth' claims with regard to 'race', 'culture', 'tradition' and teenage pregnancy, thereby allowing for alternative readings concerning the political effects of the process of racialization. In the analysis the data were treated as one body (i.e. with no distinction between documents). The extracts featured in this article were chosen from this body of data for their salience in terms of illustrating the racializing discourses identified in the full text, and not on the basis of the document from which they were drawn.

Discourse analysts emphasize the importance of reflexivity in the process of research. This recognizes that the 'knower is part of the matrix of what is known' (Wilkinson 1986, p. 13). Both authors were classified as 'white' during Apartheid. We acknowledge the educational and social privilege that this classification afforded us. Since early adulthood, however, we have both been involved in progressive politics and have a strong commitment to anti-racism. We view this article as an intellectual practice against the effects of racialization in South Africa.

Overview

Before turning to the discourse analysis proper, a brief overview of the seventy-seven documents used in the larger study is provided (the reader is referred to Macleod 1999b, 1999c for a more in-depth review). The

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purpose of this is to provide a broad picture of the racializing tendencies of the literature before extracting samples of text which highlight the discursive construction of racialized boundaries, the reliance of the pathologized 'black' presence on the absent 'white' trace, the racialization of culture and tradition, and the legitimation of racializing practices.

Phoenix (1993) notes similarities in the manner in which teenage motherhood is constructed in the United States and Britain. She points out that explanations for the occurrence of teenage pregnancy among 'whites' are usually psychological in nature, while sociocultural explanations are invoked for its occurrence among 'black' teenagers. This trend is reflected in the South African literature. Studies with 'black' participants tend to utilize poor socio-economic conditions, difficult familial and demographic circumstances, the breakdown of traditional practices, and the cultural value placed on children as explanatory categories. Culture, tradition and socio-economic status are basically absent in the documents with 'white' only participants. Instead, these studies focus on the psychological experience of pregnancy and motherhood, decision-making regarding the pregnancy, and relationship issues (with parents and partners). Those studies which utilized both 'black' and 'white' participants tended to provide medically-related comparative data, such as prevalence rates, obstetric outcomes, age of menarche, and age of conception. Extracts from sixteen documents focusing on 'black' teenage pregnancy are featured in this article. The aims of these studies were to analyse: obstetric complications and medical trends; the sexual behaviour, contraceptive practice and reproductive health of teenagers; factors associated with pregnancies; the needs of teenage mothers; the health and welfare of infants one year later; cultural and social aspects associated with teenage pregnancy; cultural responses to adolescent reproduction; the attitudes of pregnant teenagers and their families; the adequacy of familial and other support systems. The focus of the documents not included in the extracts overlaps to a large extent with those featured in the article, with the addition of analyses of the effects of pregnancy on education, male violence in relationships, and intervention strategies.

The 'race' of the authors of the extracts featured in this article varies from 'white' only (Extracts 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19 and 23), to joint 'white' and 'black' (Extracts 22 and 24), to 'black' only (Extracts 4, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21 and 25). It could be argued that in talking of 'race', 'tradition' and 'culture', 'black' authors may be trying to achieve different effects from the 'white' authors. For example, in highlighting the 'cultural' practices of 'black' people, 'black' authors may be attempting to foreground and normalize African societies. We do not deny the progressive intentions of some of the authors of the articles quoted here. However, we argue that progressive and conservative discourses may be deployed by both 'black' and 'white' authors (and certainly have been), and, furthermore, that both progressive and conservative agendas may (in some cases inadvertently) contribute to racialization.

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Racialized boundaries

Rattansi (1994a) notes that the construction of racialized boundaries is slippery. In South Africa, signifiers of difference shift, *inter alia*, between a 'white'/'non-white' contrast, a division of 'non-white' into 'African', 'coloured' and 'Indian', and the division of 'African' into various 'ethnic' groups (Zulu, Xhosa, etc.). Rattansi (1994a) indicates how 'shifting forms of boundary maintenance, division and alliance (. . .) emerge in relation to local politics [in Britain]' (p. 39). As is the case in South Africa, the drawing and re-drawing of these boundaries take place chiefly, Rattansi states, within 'minority communities' in relation to 'white' groups. 'White' remains a constant signifier, the normalized backdrop against which the characteristics of the Other are etched, despite the fact that in South Africa and Europe, those defined as 'white' had previously been categorized as belonging to different races (Miles 1989).[3] The following extracts are illustrative of the above:

Extract 1

> Illegitimacy rates remain high in the non-White groups and the rate is increasing among Whites (Prinsloo 1984, p. 699).

Extract 2

> The high social value which is placed upon fertility and birth in Zulu society makes, perhaps, for a different situation from that in the white community, where premarital pregnancies are (or were a decade or so ago) usually viewed in completely negative terms (Preston-Whyte and Louw 1986, p. 382).

Extract 3

> In the empirical investigation [of "black" teenage pregnancy] which follows, nearly a quarter of the total sample were actually people who, according to the former Population Registration Act, were classified as "coloureds". Because coloureds have frequently shown a high level of westernization, the generalizability of study may have been influenced (Fouché 1992, p. 66, translated from Afrikaans).

Extract 4

> In African societies in South Africa, especially among the Zulu and the Xhosa, adolescent sexuality was acknowledged and allowed expression through intercrural intercourse called "ukusoma" (Mfono 1990, p. 718).

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In Extract 1 the strong form of 'white' signification allows for a homogenization of all those not 'white' into the category of 'non-white', while in Extract 2 'non-white' is replaced by the ethnic signification of Zulu – but with 'white' remaining as the contrastive category. Extracts 3 and 4 utilize 'racial' and 'ethnic' differentiations respectively. Although 'white' is not used directly as a comparison as in Extracts 1 and 2, it forms the tacit, absent back-drop. In Extract 3 'coloureds' are described as 'westernized' which implicitly means that they have become like 'whites' (see discussion later in this article), while in Extract 4 the ethnicized practices of the Zulu and Xhosa are explained to the implicitly 'white' audience.

The drawing and re-drawing of racialized boundaries in relation to 'white' groups allows for the foregrounding of the Other, the 'black', the 'African' as the pathologized presence with the 'white' remaining as the tacit background which renders the characteristics of the Other visible. Characteristics or practices peculiar to 'blacks' are used as explanatory tools in the investigation of medical, social and psychological deviance:

Extract 5

> A higher frequency of contracted or inadequate pelvis among Black patients was found by Off et al. (1985) (. . .) They contend, on the basis of forensic data that, "(. . .) a narrower pelvic girdle (for equivalent body size) is a racial characteristic of blacks" (. . .) before qualifying that this need not imply greater risks as Black women tend to have smaller neonates than White women. (. . .) The apparent association between race or ethnicity and [the] tendency for teenagers (and older females) of African descent to give birth to smaller infants than their counterparts of other ethnic origins is well documented but not satisfactorily explained (Boult & Cunningham 1993, pp. 22, 51).

Extract 6

> Malone (1990) explains this relative "closedness" when he says that African blacks are usually very "open" with their bodies and very private with their words. This finding also explains the contradictory non-verbal bodily attitude (sad face, emotionless facial expression, irritability and apparent uninvolved bodily attitude) that the researcher noticed with some of the adolescents (Fouché 1992, p. 79, translated from Afrikaans).

In Extract 5 the anatomical identity of the 'black' woman is defined as deviant. Her pelvis is 'contracted or inadequate', the implicit comparison being the white woman's 'normal' pelvis (note how these pejorative adjectives stand despite the anatomical identity of small pelvis not meaning any greater danger in birth). She gives birth to smaller babies

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than women from 'other ethnic' groups. The assumption is that 'other ethnic' group babies are normal-sized, making 'black' babies small (if black babies were 'normal', other babies would be large). Thus, the 'white' woman's reproductive capacity (including pelvic dimensions and neonate size) form the implicit (absent trace) medical standard against which other women are measured. In Extract 6 the psychologized notion of non-verbal communication (sad face, bodily attitude) is used to define 'blacks' as 'open' with their bodies. What remains hidden are: (1) the observer, the researcher who defines this particular 'non-verbal bodily attitude' as peculiar to 'blacks'; (2) the assumption of particular bodily and verbal behaviour as normal; and (3) the context within which the observation is being made (in this case a hospital setting soon after the birth of a child). In this first instance the observer (and implicitly the reader of the text) takes on the aspect of the absent 'white' trace, the expert who is able to highlight behaviour peculiar to 'blacks'. In the second instance, the assumption of verbal confession to the expert as psychologically healthy allows for the connotation of pathology in being open with your body but closed with words. Thirdly, the decontextualization of the observations and the ascription of behaviours as inherently characteristic of 'blacks' (rather, say, than of teenagers soon after the birth of a child) serves to entrench racialized boundaries and to foreground and pathologize 'black' people.

These tendencies within this literature (viz. constructing 'blacks' as the pathologized presence, the decontextualization of observations, and the lack of acknowledgement of the (mostly 'white') researcher as integral in the construction of knowledge) allow for the construction of cross-national similitude of 'races':

Extract 7

> The Black (or Afro-American) teenage pregnancy rate in the USA is comparable with rates for countries in Africa – and cause for concern and intervention. Other reasons for the authors' choice of comparative analysis have to do with genetic factors singular to African people, which are largely unsubstantiated, but nevertheless bear examination. (. . .)
>
> It is claimed that during pregnancy and childbirth, young females of African descent are more prone to anaemia, cephalopelvic disproportion and a tendency to give birth to low birth-mass infants, than their counterparts from other cultural or geographic origins. These assumptions need to be examined and challenged. A counter argument is the indisputable evidence that Afro-American and African females live their lives on a lower socio-economic scale than do women in industrialized countries (Boult & Cunningham 1993, p. 1).

In the first part of Extract 7 the signifier 'black', in its pathologized presence, is so pervasive as to link people living in completely different parts of the world. Biologized similitude (even with the caveat of 'largely unsubstantiated') is extended to imply sociological likeness. 'Blackness' becomes universally associated with pathology (in this case teenage pregnancy), which allows for 'concern and intervention' and further monitoring by the expert, who, in this context, takes on the aspect of the absent trace – 'whiteness'. In the later section of the extract cross-national 'Africans' (including the weakened form of 'Afro-Americans'[4]) occupy the position of the Other – they are prone to medicalized deviancy and they are poor. 'Women in industrialized countries' operate as the absent (white) trace, despite the fact that 'Afro-American' women live in an industrialized country.

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The racialization of tradition and culture

There has been a shift in terminology in the social sciences because of the increasingly pejorative connotations of the taxonomic categories which centre chiefly on 'race' (Sollors 1989; Jones 1997). In the place of biological 'scientific' racism, we have a 'new racism' in which 'culture', 'tradition' and 'ethnicity' perform the work previously achieved by the category of 'race'. This is achieved in the South African literature on teenage pregnancy through (1) the portrayal of 'blacks' as possessing 'culture' with 'whites' having what Wetherell and Potter (1992) call a 'mundane, technical and practical outlook'[5] (p. 135); and (2) the construction of a dichotomy between the 'traditional' and the 'modern', with 'traditional' implicitly meaning 'black' and 'modern' implying 'white'. These are illustrated in the following extracts:

Extract 8

> It is however with much disgrace that the cultural values of the African people were perceived to be inferior and on the other hand the western way of life which was seen to be superior did not bring a substitute for the social structures that were broken (Mkhize 1995, p. 43).

Extract 9

> [P]articular and unique local factors may be involved – especially with regard to urbanization and the disruption of traditional Zulu life (Craig and Richter-Strydom 1983, p. 454).

Thus, as seen in Extract 8, 'Africans' have 'culture' whereas the 'Westerners' have a 'way of life'. 'Westerners' constitute society; they are the common sense against which the cultural peculiarities of 'Africans' are

etched. In Extract 9 the normalized backdrop of the urban/modern ('white') is juxtaposed with the traditional ('Zulu'). 'Black' people may move from the 'traditional' to the 'modern', but at a cost, viz. the breakdown of traditional lifestyles (see later discussion).

The racialization of 'tradition' and 'culture' allows for the foregrounding of particular practices as peculiar to 'black culture':

Extract 10

> Socialization into sexual life took place specifically through formal instruction which was given at the puberty rites such as initiation schools for boys and girls. Such practices have been characteristic of many traditional African communities. These puberty rites served to prepare children for life as adult members of society (Seabela 1990, p. 71).

Extract 11

> [T]raditional patterns which were used in developing adolescents [sic] such as ceremonies celebrating puberty and early marriages, are breaking down due to a lack of parental control (Tanga 1991, p. 34).

Extract 12

> [W]e will explore (. . .) one set of Zulu cultural responses which seek to contain the problem in a ritual manner derived from, but by no means identical with, the way in which it is reported to have been dealt with in the past (Preston-Whyte and Louw 1986, p. 361).

We see here how the practices ascribed to 'black' people are exoticized through the use of words such as 'rites', 'ritual', and 'ceremonies'. In this way, these practices are rendered strange (as opposed to 'modern' or 'Western' practices which are assumed to be 'normal') and hence worthy of explanation and investigation. In Extracts 10 and 11, it is explained how traditional rites were used to prepare adolescents for adulthood, while in Extract 12 the aim of the authors' investigation into traditional cultural responses is laid out. It is through these processes of explanation, examination and inquiry that not only the 'traditional', but also the 'modern' is constructed. As Rattansi (1994b) states: '[T]he encounters between 'the West' and 'the rest' have been mutually constitutive (. . .) the 'Western' identities (. . .) have been framed relationally, in difference [and *différence*] – that is, by conceptions of what 'the West' is not like, by way of constructions of the supposed attributes of the subjugated or colonized Other' (p. 37).

The positioning of 'black' people as the exoticized Other – as people

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of culture, rituals and traditions – allows for the depiction of social problems among 'blacks' resulting from either acculturation or the break-down of tradition:

Extract 13

> [I]t is shown that the *collapse* of these traditional societal structures brought many problems for the inexperienced teenagers who become unwed mothers (Mkhize 1995, p. 38, emphasis added).

Extract 14

> The process of cultural *diffusion* that has resulted from contact with Western culture and the urbanization process had *shattering* effects on the traditional life of the blacks (Seabela 1990, p. 80, emphasis added).

Extract 15

> Different African cultural practices and beliefs have been *diluted* in the past few decades. (. . .) In this respect, the African people are not unlike other cultural groups around the world, who, because of slavery, colonization and/or industrialization and increasing urbanization, have been forced to negate the ways of their forefathers (Setiloane 1990, pp. 2–3, emphasis added).

Extract 16

> It appears that acculturation is also a factor contributing to teenage pregnancy. Christianity brought with it the fact that one's body is God's temple and therefore no one must temper [sic] with it. There was, therefore, a shift away from interfemoral sex practices (*ukusoma*) to teaching girls not to allow anyone to touch their bodies (Ntombela 1992, p. 4).

The 'modern'/'traditional' dualism allows for the image of breakage noted in Extracts 13 and 14. 'Tradition' and 'culture' are portrayed as 'collapsing', 'shattering', being 'diffused or 'diluted' under the weight of processes termed 'modernization', 'urbanization' and 'westernization', all of which are accompanied by social problems such as 'unwed motherhood' (Extract 13). 'Blacks' become more like 'whites' (the tacit, normative backdrop) as they display the characteristics constructed as 'modern', urban' and 'western'. However, because of the 'black = tradition' signification, 'blacks' are 'modernized' rather than 'modern', 'urbanized' rather than 'urban', and 'westernized' rather than 'western', and hence are pathologized mimics of the real thing. The 'modern', the

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'urban' and 'western' remain the domain of 'whites' who, as the normalized absence, attain the status of 'westerners' because of their supposed association with another region of the world (even if they have never left South Africa). Packard's (1989) analysis of the writings and discussions of 'white' medical authorities in South Africa from the late nineteenth century to the postwar period reveals a similar pattern of pathologization. He discusses the myths of the 'healthy reserve' and the 'dressed native'. The rural areas, from which African labour was drawn, were idealized as 'healthy reserves' while urban areas were portrayed as bringing high morbidity rates, alcoholism, family separation, and crime owing to the African's difficulty in adjusting to urban industrialized life. The 'dressed native' symbolized the latter, in the apparent incongruence of 'European'-style clothing when worn by Africans.

Acculturation is seen here and elsewhere (see Wetherell and Potter 1992) as happening only to the colonized. 'Blacks' have their 'culture' diluted by 'Western' influences. Butchart (1995), however, places the thesis of acculturation of the colonized in South Africa in historical perspective:

> In South Africa (. . .) the idea of "indirect rule" described the tactics adopted by the colonists to resolve the crisis posed by the perception that the education and "civilization" of Africans was eroding their malleability and docility, thereby endangering social control and threatening the economic base of cheap labour. To contain this threat, the discourse of indirect rule translated African dissatisfaction out of the lexicon of political resistance and into the vocabulary of ethnology, anthropology and psychology. Signs of "native restlessness" thus became symptoms of "deculturation" or "acculturation", iatrogenic consequences of the colonial cure for African barbarism (p. 197).

Despite the de-politicizing move of 'acculturation' talk, talking about cultural disruption is politically expedient, since it allows the speaker to blame 'blacks' for allowing their culture to be corrupted. At the same time, however, such talk permits the adoption of a politically correct stance by blaming colonialists for corrupting traditional culture.

The legitimation of practices and interventions

In their analysis of Pakeha (people of European descent living in New Zealand) discourse concerning Maori affairs or politics, Wetherell and Potter (1992) distinguished two constructions of 'culture'. The first was culture as 'heritage': a set of traditions, rituals and values passed from one generation to another. The second concerned culture as 'therapy', in which it was suggested that young Maoris needed to re-discover their culture in order to become 'whole' again. Although they found that these

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constructions were applied in different contexts and were used to produce different objects and subjects, there appears to be some overlap between them (the word 're-discover', for example, implies, to a certain extent, going back to something that existed before). Wetherell and Potter (1992) state:

> Culture as therapy blends together humanistic psychology with social analysis of anomie and alienation. Culture [which includes heritage] becomes offered as a form of treatment for delinquent and dispossessed individuals and communities (p. 131).

Although South African authors do not go so far as to offer 'traditional' culture as a remedy to teenage pregnancy, the positive rendition of 'traditional' practices resonates with the culture as therapy construction as well as with the myth of the 'healthy reserve' referred to above. 'Tradition' and 'cultural' practices are lauded in the literature as promoting stability, a sense of identity and pro-social behaviour. This is used to legitimate these practices (Spiegel and Boonzaier 1988) and to promote normative prescriptions with regard to sexualized interactions. In the words of Alldred (1996), 'tradition evokes a history [which] (. . .) then confers a moral weight so that it becomes possible to argue that it *ought to be* simply because it *has been*' (p. 147, emphasis in the original). Consider the following passage:

Extract 17

> By the time the traditional Zulu boy and girl reached the stage where they could begin to think about marriage they *knew a great deal* about sex and enjoyed it as a pleasurable part of life. This stands in sharp contrast to the findings presented here, which can be epitomized by admonition: "Stay away from boys for they will bring shame to you". *Open social control* has been replaced by *ignorance* and secrecy; intracrural sex play has been replaced by abstinence or coitus.
>
> Comparing the accounts of the sexual activities of traditional youth with that which seemingly exists in the townships at present, the difference does not seem to be in the practice of accepting a lover for sexual purposes, but in the *degree of social control* exercised over that activity and the nature of the sexual activity itself. The Zulu youth in the townships today seem to be forced to drive an "individual" bargain often from the standpoint of *ignorance.* In traditional Zulu culture it was never the sole responsibility of parents to educate a child in sexual matters and to *enforce the rules and norms* of the community in this regard. *Sex education* was in the *hands (and eyes)* of almost the whole community, and there was apparently *little confusion* about *appropriate*

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> *sexual conduct*. The peer group played a prominent role in the *education* and *control* of its members through the age-set organization of traditional Zulu life. There was *little ambiguity* as to the social norms and rules in traditional Zulu societies. High levels of *consensus* existed and the social control of individual behaviour was *effective* (Craig and Richter-Strydom 1983, p. 454, emphasis added).

There are a number of assumptions made in this extract. Firstly, behaviour which constitutes '*appropriate* sexual conduct' is taken for granted. It appears to mean intracrural sex play, perhaps abstinence, but certainly not sexual intercourse (or any other sexual interactions such as those between same sex partners or with inanimate objects). Secondly, 'traditional' 'Zulu' society is assumed to be a non-contestable, real entity. It is presented as harmonious, consensual, non-ambiguous and effective. This positive rendering of the 'traditional' serves to legitimate the practices ascribed to it, in particular social control through education and observation. Note how 'modern' adolescents (it is assumed that those who live in urban settings are 'modernized' as opposed to their 'traditional' counterparts) are 'ignorant', whereas the 'traditional' teenagers 'knew a great deal about sex' owing to the sex education they had undergone. In traditional society, sexual behaviour is portrayed as having been observed and monitored – 'in the hands (and eyes)' – by the 'whole community', including the peer group. Thus, through the use of the word 'tradition' (which lends historical weight to the argument) certain sexual behaviours (sex play and abstinence) are rendered acceptable, and certain social practices (observation, monitoring, education) concerning the policing of sexuality are legitimated.

The normalizing prescription of certain practices and relations through an appeal to tradition takes on a gendered aspect in a number of respects, as evidenced in the following extracts:

Extract 18

> Commitment to the ideal of premarital chastity was to an extent facilitated by the very nature of the social organization of traditional African communities which allowed for very few opportunities for social contacts between boys and girls (Seabela 1990, p. 73).

Extract 19

> African and Asian traditions have in the past encouraged early marriage for girls, just before or soon after puberty. Thus, sexual intimacy and childbearing began at a relatively early age, resulting in consequential reduction in extra-marital pregnancy (Setiloane 1990, p. 3).

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Extract 20

> Previous generations of Africans had little difficulty in absorbing the child of an unwed young mother into the extended family. Times have changed: urbanization, the migratory system, and poverty have resulted in many families being unstable, and often female-headed, with meagre resources (Loening 1992, p. 84).

Extract 21

> [T]he overwhelming behavioural cause identified by most analysts for increased fertility is modernization. This has caused both an erosion of traditional values and controls and the introduction of new values and norms, such as equal sex roles, postponement of early marriage and non-virginity prior to marriage (Preston-Whyte 1991, p. 10).

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In Extracts 18 and 19, we see how the 'conjugalization of reproduction' (see further discussion in Macleod 1999a), in which a female's reproductive behaviour is legitimated only in a marital alliance, is promoted. In Extract 18, 'tradition' is depicted as promoting chastity prior to marriage through lack of opportunity. This depiction of 'traditional' African practices directly contradicts that in Extract 17. The implication of this is that 'tradition' may be interpreted (and strategically deployed) in a variety of ways. However, this contradictory aspect remains mostly hidden with individual authors treating 'tradition' as a homogeneous set of practices and beliefs. In Extract 19, the 'tradition' of early marriage is used to render early sexuality and reproduction acceptable. The conjugalization of reproduction is thus legitimated and reinforced by its association with historically validated behaviour. In Extract 20, the 'female-headed' household, as a 'modern', 'urban' invention, is associated with instability and poverty. The implication is that the 'male-headed' family, associated with 'tradition' and 'rural' life, is stable and wealthy. Male 'headship' is assumed (the absent trace) and therefore there is no need to add the qualifier 'male-headed' to the words 'extended family' in the first sentence. This headship is legitimated by its association with historical precedent, whereas female headship is pathologized. In Extract 21, it is 'equal sex roles' that are associated with the 'modern' which in turn is associated with teenage pregnancy. The implication is that traditionally sex roles were unequal and that this is one of the values which is being 'eroded'. The use of the word 'eroded' is important here. It is associated with the geomorphological idea of conservation, and is seen as a negative force: whatever is being eroded needs to be preserved. In this case it appears that this includes unequal sex roles.

The attribution of 'culture' and 'tradition' to the Other is not only used to legitimate certain practices and normative sexualized prescriptions,

but also allows for the intervention of the 'modern', de-cultured rational expert (in the form of either the researcher or the service provider).

Extract 22

> Although unwed teenage motherhood appears to be culturally tolerated and accepted in Transkei, it does interfere with schooling and may produce households headed by women, often resulting in poverty and unfavourable social conditions for both the teenage mother and her child (Buga, Amoko and Ncayiyana 1996, p. 95).

Extract 23

> Cultural meaning of teenage pregnancy: teenage pregnancy is not a major problem for the teenager in the black population. Only the social workers, teachers, community leaders and parents are worried about it because of the tremendous growth of the black population (Brits 1989, p. 203, translated from Afrikaans).

Extract 24

> This last objection [to contraceptives] (. . .) deserves attention. It is an inherent part of a set of interlocking cultural values which we have already met in this chapter. These are: the love of, and desire for, children, either within marriage or outside it; and the emphasis on, indeed approval and encouragement of, active male sexuality. Both derive from the paramount importance which is placed on fertility. (. . .) This value underlies, and makes understandable, the refusal of parents to allow young girls access to easy contraception (Preston-Whyte and Zondi 1992, p. 236).

Extract 25

> A need on the one hand for the acceptance of cultural beliefs such as witchcraft by the medical personnel, and on the other hand a need for the relief of intra-psychic stress caused by these superstitions [this study concerned the psychological needs of pregnant teenagers at a particular hospital] (Fouché 1992, p. 77, translated from Afrikaans).

In Extracts 21 and 23, 'culture' is juxtaposed with the rationality of the expert (either the writers and the readers of the texts, or professionals such as social workers and teachers). 'Cultural' tolerance or the 'cultural' meaning of particular events, such as unwed teenage motherhood, are placed in contradistinction with conditions which any 'reasonable' reader would agree are intolerable, viz. the interruption of schooling,

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female-headed households, poverty, poor social conditions, and the tremendous growth of the 'black' population.[6] This 'reasonableness' relies on certain normative assumptions concerning the nature of schooling, the undesirability of female-headed households, and population growth. These 'unfavourable social conditions' should, by implication, be ameliorated by the rational expert.

The liberal discourse of acceptance evidenced in Extracts 24 and 25 masks the powerful effects it achieves. In Extract 24, the 'cultural values' (of 'Africans') are given 'attention' and rendered 'understandable'. The question of who is paying attention or doing the understanding, or who the beneficent listener or reader is, remains hidden. The 'values' which form the backdrop against which the 'cultural value' of fertility needs to be explained remain unexplored. They form the normalized, de-culturalized absent trace (epitomized by the rational expert) which is not in need of explanation. In Extract 25, it is made explicit who is doing the 'accepting'. The medical personnel's 'beliefs' (which the reader is assumed to share) form the tacit, dominant backdrop which renders those of the patients curious. The patients' 'beliefs' are depicted as 'superstitious' and therefore not based on reality, a reality which, it is assumed, needs no explanation. This construction of the strange and illusory nature of the patients' 'beliefs' legitimates the intervention of those tacitly positioned as rational and in touch with reality.[7]

Conclusion

Racialization allows for the articulation, deployment and maintenance of a set of power relations based on phenotypical features. People are assigned to collectivities signified as racial, and later ethnic or cultural groups. Although crude racism has essentially disappeared in scientific discourse, a 'new racism' has appeared in which 'culture' and 'tradition' perform the work previously achieved by the category of race.

The production of a positive knowledge of teenage pregnancy among different 'race' groups relies on the chimera of this knowledge as containing an essentialized meaning, as rendering the world of the young woman ultimately sensible. Through (1) the construction of racialized boundaries as real, natural entities (despite the historical slipperiness of racial categories), and (2) the racialization of 'tradition' and 'culture', the behaviours, actions, and social conditions under which 'black' people live are rendered strange and hence open to scrutiny and finally intervention. 'Black' people are exoticized and cast as the Other; they become the pathologized presence when social problems are foregrounded. What remains tacit and hidden (as opposed to audible and visible) is the normalized absent trace of 'whiteness'. This acts as the backdrop against which the 'traditions' and 'culture' and even the biological identity of 'black' people are etched. It implicitly defines the

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person who is explaining, understanding or accepting the rituals, behaviours, beliefs and values of the Other. It represents the taken-for-granted common sense or rationality which allows for 'cultural' 'beliefs' or 'myths' to be foregrounded and explained. It contains the definition of the expert who is not engaged in ritualistic behaviour or myth-making, but rather in beneficial interventions and fact-finding.

The racialization of 'tradition' and 'culture' creates a double bind situation for 'black' people. The 'traditions' of 'black' people are portrayed as breaking down. However, this does mean that 'black' people become 'modern' or 'urban'. Rather, they have to labour to become 'urbanized' or 'modernized'. The acculturation thesis allows for the simultaneous depiction of 'black' people as advancing to a more developed state of being and as floating in a sea of culturelessness.

Social sciences have achieved a privileged knowledge position by claiming to reveal the truth about ourselves through rationality and efficacious method: truths that can only be understood by expert interpreters. While these sciences claim an externality to the workings of power, they are actually part of the deployment of power (Foucault 1970). Gergen (1992), for example, illustrates how the modernist or structuralist assumptions within mainstream psychology (viz. a basic, knowable subject exists; there are universal psychological processes that can be discovered; research is progressive; correct method provides a guarantee of truth) underlie its 'imprisoning effects' (p. 23). The rationality and efficacious method of psycho-medical experts promise to: (1) reveal the truth of 'racial', 'cultural' and 'ethnic' differences in early childbearing; (2) uncover the basic medical, psychological and pedagogical processes underlying the 'problem' of 'black' teenage pregnancy, which then can be used in efficacious techniques of prevention and reform; and (3) provide the research questions, instruments, and methods of analysis required to perform the above. In contrast, the aim of this article has been to analyse how the social science literature on teenage pregnancy is itself implicated in racialized power relations through the deployment of racialization.

During the Apartheid era, the provision of health services in South Africa was racially-based, with five racially segregated bodies as well as the 'homeland' health authorities being responsible for health (Molteno, Kibel and Roberts 1986). Currently, the health authorities are struggling with the integration of the various former departments, and with shifting the emphasis of care from urban-based curative services (which served mainly the 'white' population) to a district health systems model. Our research indicates that this process is not merely a structural one, as discourses of 'race', 'culture', 'tradition' and 'ethnicity' permeate the scientific thinking in the psycho-medical field. While there is no one-to-one correspondence between scientific thought and professional practice, regimes of health practice will include the codifying effects concerning

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the known – Foucault's (1991) effects of veridiction. We see this article as a contribution to the process of highlighting the taken-for-granted assumptions around racialized signifiers evident in the body of knowledge informing adolescent sexual and reproductive health research and practice in South Africa.

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Notes

1. This, however, may also change as the Census and Sample of Anonymised Records will enable a break-down of motherhood by age and 'race'.
2. Classifying authors in this fashion does not indicate our agreement with racialized categories. The object rather is to reflect on the racialized power relations inherent in the production of knowledge. Authors were classified as 'white' or 'black' (including the Apartheid categories of Indian, African and coloured) on the basis of our personal acquaintance with many of the authors and on the basis of surname.
3. The 'white' signifier was utilized during the Apartheid era in South Africa as a political move to unite English- and Afrikaans-speaking people of European descent against the 'total onslaught' of the 'blacks' and Communism (Stadler 1987).
4. The change of African to a prefix 'Afro-' signifies a shift in emphasis with 'American' seemingly taking on the position of primary signification. Nevertheless, the racializing effects of the prefix include the possibility of sociological likeness with people living a continent away.
5. When 'whites' are depicted as having culture, it is the 'high' culture of operas, novels and art (cf. Wetherell & Potter 1992).
6. There is an alternative discourse, the 'revisionist' approach, which attempts to overturn the juxtaposition of 'black culture' with rationality, positing that teenage pregnancy is a reasonable response to a certain set of circumstances. It reflects the civil rights and, in South Africa, the Black Consciousness movement in re-evaluating the assumed 'Western', 'white' standards used to judge 'black' people. Although the political purpose of challenging the dominant culturalization of 'black' people is served, revisionists fall into the same trap of constructing cultural categories as real entities. Revisionist arguments are generally in short supply in the South African literature, however, with Preston-Whyte and colleagues' work being the main examples.
7. The medical personnel's position is made even more powerful by the use of the word 'intra-psychic' which suggests 'unconscious' processes over which the patient has little 'conscious' control, and which require trained professional help to render them audible and therefore open to resolution.

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