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Exploring social identity in South African Indian cinema through filmmaking

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Exploring social identity in South African Indian cinema through filmmaking

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare the following:

I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
I confirm that ALL the work submitted for assessment for the above course and dissertation is my own work except where I indicated otherwise.
I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that the work I submit is not my own work or writing.



Sachin Narain Date: 2 March 22

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Abstract

In the following research report to accompany my creative output, I explore the construction of social and cultural identity through South African cinema with particular reference to the Indian community. Through my research I focus on how issues of social and cultural identity in South Africa are addressed by Indian filmmakers. Understanding the contextual space of cinema in South Africa is important to assess the context and issues filmmakers address in their films, by defining how they are applicable to the construction of cultural identity and the perpetuation of certain clichés. The themes investigated in relation to the construction of cultural identity will be based on race, class, and socio-economic inequalities. I will look at the issues explored in their films using these discoveries to inform my own filmmaking practice. In so doing, I explore certain themes within the films by the filmmakers under investigation, and apply the discussed analysis to my own short film. I apply the theoretical underpinning and analysis to my own practice in order to reach a conclusion concerning how the construction of social identity is addressed within South African film.

Introduction

> *Whenever we use the word 'authentic' we often have a built-in sense of what constitutes the term and tend do so in ways that mirror the social norms of a community. Culture is mutually constituted, and the community constituting it—in this case, South African Indians—has been called out time and time again for anti-blackness against Black African people, anti-queer attitudes, colourism and classism* (Youleendre Appasamy 2020).

In the extract above, Youleendre Appasamy (2020) considers the construction of the 'authentic' versus how communities operate within contemporary South Africa. We develop our sense of authenticity by looking to representation in our communities, and our preconceived ideas thereof. At its core, Appasamy's statement refers to social norms which are constructed by society and replicated through filmic narratives. This notion of 'authentic' representation filters into the construct of social identity (the theoretical framework of this research paper will be elaborated on in Chapter One). South Africa is a melting pot of various races, languages, and cultures. Moreover, contributing to our diversity are thousands of immigrants from neighbouring African countries. As Appasamy states (2020), culture is constituted. The community under investigation throughout this study is the South African Indian community. I do so with condemnation of the anti-black sentiments and prejudice towards Black South Africans and foreign nationals commonly maintained by the Indian community, along with systematic and persistent emotional and verbal abuse resulting from colourism and classism. Issues which are prevalent not only in South African Indian communities but throughout India as well. In an online article by Lauren Frayer, entitled *Black Lives Matter gets Indians talking about skin lightening and colourism* (2020), the author states that Chandana Hiran, a college student, is marginalised because of the colour of her skin. She states that by being slightly darker in complexion, people categorise her along with the other dark-skinned people of her country. Colourism is evidently extensive in India (Frayer 2020).

My use of Appasamy's statement above is not intended to portray the South African Indian community in a negative light, yet as a member of this community I believe it my duty to reflect the prevalent racism and classism, and ideally encourage a more progressive way of being. Within her statement Appasamy holds the Indian community accountable; however, I would argue that a larger call out be addressed to the broader South African society. Even within a democratic South Africa, hate speech, discrimination, and marginalisation are still felt. It may

not be discussed openly, but within our communities, dislike, and stereotypical associations are indeed problematic.

The topic of my research paper is based on several personal experiences that I have been exposed to, involved in, and engaged people with, regarding incidents of racism and classism. I allow my experiences to inform and formulate my own stance within my filmmaking practice, further adapting to the Indian community to reflect on aspects of real-life interactions which begin to inform the depth of the film as well as my research paper. This paper and its creative output consists of themes such as race, class, marginalisation, discrimination, and socio-economic inequalities. These themes also inform my filmmaking practice.

This research is divided into four chapters. My first chapter consists of my literature review and methodology. This chapter outlines a condensed history of South African cinema post-apartheid, as this not only contextualises the current state of the film industry but discusses both the struggle and progression of filmmaking within South Africa. The complexities that prevent filmmakers from competing with the likes of Hollywood and Bollywood primarily due to lack of resources and funding will also be addressed. I investigate how easily stereotypes are reproduced by the current film/television/streaming institutions, and discuss themes of racism, discrimination, marginalisation, poverty, and political and economic inequalities in communities as portrayed through the South African film industry. This allows me to focus on the theoretical framework of social identity theory conceptualised by theorists Henri Tajfel and John Turner, and to relate their theories to the Indian community in South Africa. The chapter concludes by suggesting how South African filmmakers might rethink their part in the construction of social identity and social and cultural mores by avoiding the perpetuation of deep-seated apartheid-era stereotypes and clichés evident in contemporary South Africa films. An understanding of the caste system prevalent in Indian communities will provide further context to the issue of social identity. This will guide me in exploring the gap where, in my opinion, films should reflect South African narratives as diverse and authentic to our social realities, regardless of genre.

Chapter Two consists of an analysis or close reading of films either directed or produced by selected filmmakers whose social commentary is used to argue my point. I briefly analyse the central voice of films by two specific filmmakers, producer Anant Singh and director Avie Luthra. Where applicable, I argue that their films represent and replicate narratives within

Indian communities. Each filmmaker has their unique social commentary. By considering how each film represents and makes use of certain tropes and stereotypes, this allows my research the space to locate the gap where social issues can be better addressed through narrative filmmaking, which I then apply to my own short film (addressed in Chapter Three). My analysis of each film will focus on themes pertinent to my research, as I address and relate to these in my own film. I will also briefly discuss Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, whose films I perceive more as art than entertainment. The inclusion of his influence is a filmic point of interest, as my intention is to apply some of his more prominent techniques and references to my own short film, such as the use of montage and slow-motion sequences. I intend on using a long-take format to immerse the viewer into the world of the film through visual and auditory techniques. I intend on working the film between scenes and juxtaposing the film between sourced footage of the actual event through montage to create a sense of realism for the audience. Creating a linear timeline while blending between the form of narrative documentary-like editing, in the sense that I'm used sourced footage and imposing my own sense of recreation inspired by that sourced footage.

In Chapter Three, a detailed analysis will be conducted on my own short film. I explain the writing process and my stance on my filmmaking practice. I apply the theory explained through Chapter One which informs my research and serves as the basis for the narrative of my film. I further discuss those filmic techniques by Andrei Tarkovsky which I've appropriated. My analysis of those films discussed in Chapter Two will be applied and explored further in Chapter Three in relation to my own short film, including a script breakdown and my process of reflexivity. The dissertation's final chapter will present my findings gleaned over the course of this study as well as the filmmaking practice, thereby concluding my research.

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical Framework

History of South African Cinema

In the online journal *South Africa History Online (SAHO)*, an article entitled "A history of the South African film industry timeline 1895-2003" (2019) outlines a dense history of South African film spanning from the earliest inception of the kinetoscope[1] to the moment M-Net released their 'movie of the month' brief in 2003. Throughout the online journal are key moments which contextualise the space in which the South African film industry currently stands. Here I highlight the standout moments for the sake of my subjective argument. Firstly, on 11 May 1896 ([sp]:2019) Carl Hertz purchased a projector and began screening at the Empire Palace in Commissioner Street. This was the inception of the "Bioscope"[2] era ([sp]:2019). Although the films were only thirty seconds long and in series, the invention would grow and develop further. In 1903, moving pictures had already been showing for years and the production of dramatic films would begin. It became possible to classify between films which were "topical", "dramatic", or even "humorous" ([sp]:2019). In 1949, the release of Donald Swanson's *Jim comes to Jo'burg* saw an all-black cast for the first time featured in a production ([sp]:2019). This was a key moment in the history of South African cinema as only one year prior the 46-year-long Apartheid regime had begun, which saw severe inequalities, injustices, marginalisation, and segregation of people of colour from privileged white South Africans at the time. In 1969, writer, producer, and director Jans Rautenbach (1936-2016) released his film *Katrina*, which focused on the issue of race by depicting a love story between a white woman and a coloured doctor. At the time it was illegal for people of colour to have intimate relations with a white person.

In an article entitled "The cinema of Jans Rautenbach" written by Martin P. Botha (2015:1), the author states that Rautenbach was one of the few pioneers of Afrikaans films in the sixties who explored themes focused on the fractures of the Apartheid ideology. Botha (2015:1),

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[1]A kinetoscope is a device invented by Thomas Edison; a box in which people could view motion images.

[2]The term Bioscope refers to a cinema or film.

further states that Rautenbach, alongside producer Emil Nofal, produced ground-breaking films at a time when South African cinema avoided commentary on the socio-political landscape and harsh realities the country was facing. The film *Katrina* (1969) is based on a play entitled *Try for White* (2015:3), and through its narrative began to explore and expose the atrocious Apartheid regime and its classification of racial 'difference'.

According to *South African History Online* ([sp]:2019), by the 1970's the South African film industry became fragmented when the idea of "Bantu films"[3] emerged for a specific target audience, in this case, black communities, thereby highlighting the clear contrast of treatment between black and white audiences. The power resided with filmmakers rather than the cast or the stories of the characters represented. Films were told from the perspective of the white minority rather than authentically through the eyes of black filmmakers, as they ought to have been for the audience which they were geared towards.

Rossella Scotton in *History, Culture and Ideology in South African Cinema* (2012:360) states that considering politics and power were in the hands of an oppressive and racist white minority, this was the main hindrance to a strong development of national cinema. She further explains that since the beginning of film culture in South Africa, state censorship prohibited the public from accessing international films which may have invited discourse on gender, race, aesthetics, politics, or commenting on social and racial conflicts through film (Scotton 2012:360).

South African cinema during this period was divided, as white and black audiences were regarded as separate target markets (Scotton 2012:360). While films for white audiences focused on a nation building agenda to strengthen Afrikaner identity, a trend was introduced in the 1950s where the main focus of six feature length films was exploring the black South African experience (Scotton 2012:361). This was achieved through the collaborative process of several Sophiatown African intellectuals (Scotton 2012:361). At this time the Apartheid state implemented new approaches to socio-political control which were fundamental in

[3]Bantu is a Zulu word which translates in English to 'people', and which was appropriated by white colonists to emphasis racial classification. According to SA History Online, 'Bantu films' were films of poor quality produced by white filmmakers, made in ethnic languages, and screened in churches, schools, and beer gardens and shown to racially segregated audiences.

shaping the role of cinema. This was achieved in part through a state subsidy scheme: a program introduced to prioritise funding white narrative films over black narrative films in distribution (Scotton 2012:361). In doing so, the Apartheid state concentrated their support of films and production companies which aligned with their socio-political ideologies (Scotton 2012:361).

In the book *The Devil You Dance With* by Audrey Thomas McCluskey (2009), the author states that the South African film industry during the 1940s and 1950s sought after black stars as a tactic to produce films which audiences could identify with. Along with this approach, the visionary role of the all-European directors ensured their creative control, and resulted in films not being able to replicate an 'authentic' black experience (McCluskey 2009:5). McCluskey (2009:5) further states that those films which showcased black talent coincided with the inception of Apartheid, and the regime's legislations formalising racial segregation. These laws spilled over into film narratives, and as a result of white filmmakers supporting government ideologies, they reflected the misconception that black individuals were not intelligent enough to understand cinema. Therefore films targeting black audiences were low budget and focused on the use of stories to support white-owned film production companies, without focus on addressing social issues relevant to the black population (McCluskey 2009:5).

In *South African cinema and its depiction of race, gender, and class: portrayals of black woman in post-apartheid South African films* written by Gilbert Motsaathebe and published by the University of Johannesburg, the author states that the film production history of South Africa shows films made during the Apartheid era often served to further enforce the ideologies of the apartheid government (Motsaathebe 2018:1). Motsaathebe (2018:1) further elaborate that the films produced during Apartheid placed little to no emphasis on addressing the plight of problems experienced by marginalised South Africans. In contrast, films that did address the social issues and harsh atrocities of the Apartheid government were banned and their makers sent into exile (Motsaathebe 2018:1). Motsaathebe (2018:13) emphasises the following points regarding the depiction of race, gender, and class relation to black cinema. A, the trope of subservience: black women were represented in a subservient role which reflected their position in society. B, post-apartheid cinema did not shift radically from racial and gender stereotypes that was found in both the colonial time and Apartheid (2018:13)

Ntogela Masilela states in *Issues in the South African Cinema* (2009:1), that in South Africa everything is directly dependent on the economy. This naturally includes South African cinema and its development or lack thereof. In another SAHO article entitled "What are the challenges that face the South African film industry?" (2016), key issues regarding the progression of the South African film industry are raised, amongst these were South African audiences' demand for productions inspired by foreign filmmakers. South African films are unique to our context and 'authentic' in their narratives, yet audiences often refer to local productions as evoking 'cringe' ([sp]: 2016). Comparing local films to Hollywood and its allure is a result of societal standards of acceptance ([sp]: 2016). While South African cinema has been around for more than 100 years, competing with the global industry elites remains a stumbling block. Avie Luthra's film *Lucky*, which will be discussed in the next chapter, was directed by a British Indian man and centres on a South Africa story involving an Indian woman and Zulu boy. The lack of consistent film development and national funding may be an obstacle preventing South African audiences from believing that local films are on par with international films.

Masilela (2009:2) further elaborates that the Apartheid ideology obsession has been consistently intertwined with South African cinema since its beginning, and that the theme emerges in two ways. 1) To oppose government and attempt to rewrite history, or 2) by portraying Apartheid ideology in a positive light. The division of South African history in relation to the already fragmented social reality in our country (race and class separation) meant that South African cinema, at the time, would cater for two very distinct audiences, as mentioned earlier in this chapter (Masilela 2009:5). The concept of black Apartheid cinema was introduced by white South Africans who, on the foundation of maintaining the dominant ideology of Apartheid, exploited the black narratives for profits (Masilela 2009:5). The aim of so-called black cinema was to corrupt the mindset of black people (Masilela 2009:5).

While the aim of black cinema was to cause a rift amongst black people, Afrikaans cinema intended for the opposite impact, to strengthen the structural ideologies of Apartheid using film (Masilela 2009:5) . Masilela (2009:7) states that while progressing into a post-Apartheid South Africa has changed certain aspects of filmmaking, the independent film culture is one that has seen the most progression.

Social Identity Theory

In the book *Understanding peace and conflict through social identity theory* by Reeshma Haji, Shelley McKeown, and Neil Ferguson (2016:XV), the authors state that human beings have characteristics which make socialisation an essential part of communicating with one another. These social ties connect people and help create unity or division amongst them collectively (Haji, McKeown, and Ferguson 2016:XV).

As stated by Tajfel and Turner (2016:XV), social identity theory is defined by the knowledge and emotional affection which become associated with a group. Groups that formulate a bond create a sense of membership amongst themselves. This idea of membership has an impact on the behavioural patterns of the people within the group (Haji, McKeown, and Ferguson 2016:XV). Haji, McKeown, and Ferguson (2016:XV) further state that a strong sense of self-esteem is adopted by the influence of and possible belonging to a group.

Social identity theory includes the notion of progression groups. The progression of social theory is called intergroup differentiation, [4] which serves to distinguish groups between three collections: "in groups", "out groups", and "other groups", the latter being the groups to which you don't belong (Haji, McKeown, and Ferguson 2016:XV). Haji, McKeown, and Ferguson (2016:XV) elaborate that the separation within intergroup differentiation creates intergroup discrimination, i.e. the favouring of one's own group at the expense of another. This demonstrates that social identities are liable for conflict between groups, however just as social identities can be used to break groups apart, they can also be used to harness unity.

Sabine Trepte and Laura S. Loy in *Social identity theory and self-categorization theory* (2017:1) state that the theory of social identity was introduced by Henri Tajfel and further developed by John Turner. The theory proposes that individuals in society willingly categorise themselves in groups which they associate with. Trepte and Loy (2017:6) explain that at the core of Tajfel's theory, the definition behind social identity is that individuals identify themselves within the context of a social group (for example, a group that idealises a popular musician or public figure) which fosters emotional attachment and may result in one feeling valued. These social groups provide members with a shared identity and create a sense of access, as people aligned with what they believe and how they should address and conduct

[4]Intergroup differentiation is a process wherein we attempt to separate our grouping from 'in-groups', 'out-groups' and the groups to which we do not belong.

themselves amongst their peers (Trepte and Loy 2017:6). Trepte and Loy (2017:6) elaborate that social identities play an important role in society as they create differences which separate "in-groups", which are groups individuals feel they belong to, from "out-groups", the groups they do not consider themselves to be members of. To understand the worth of these groups, individuals consistently categorise themselves by comparing the value of both the 'in' and 'out' groups. This is referred to as intergroups relations (Trepte and Loy 2017:6).

As explained by Trepte and Loy (2017:7), social identity defines itself through intergroup relations by the assessment of how people perceive themselves, how they believe others to perceive them, and thus how they will be treated. In other words, when people begin to draw comparison between themselves and the so called 'out-group', the main concern is a positive division between the two. Trepte and Loy (2017:7) further elaborate on the method these groups adopt, through which their identity is based on a subjective and shared belief when drawing comparisons to the other.

Trepte and Loy (2017:7) mention self-categorisation theory (proposed by Turner) as the difference between social identity and personal identity. Social identity is reliant on the group with which the individual identifies. However, personal identity is derived solely from the individual themselves (Trepte & Loy 2017:7). An individual's behaviour is motivated by either their social or personal identity. Social categorisation can be attributed to multiple concepts accordingly to labels which range from young versus old, economic differences in class structure, and even cultural differences (such as Asian or Caucasian groups) (Trepte & Loy 2017:7). In the context of this research paper, the theories explored by Trepte and Loy will be used to provide context for the framework explored in the filmic analysis in chapter two. Further, my understanding of the theory and elements of categorisation will be applied to my filmic component of the research by looking at the way the two dominate characters in the film represent these characteristics.

In *The Caste System: Effects on Poverty in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka* (2010), Jasmine Rao writes that the caste system remains prevalent in India and many South Asian countries. The caste system is a system used to divide people into social classes. At the top of the hierarchy is the *Brahmins*, who are the priests or teachers, second are the *Kshatriyas*, known as the warriors, followed by the *Vaisyas*, who are the farmers, merchants, and artisans in society, and lastly, the *Sudras*, who are the labourers. There is also a group of people known as the Untouchables,

Dalits, or *Harijans*, as well as the *Adivasis* i.e., the tribal people to which the rules of the caste system do not apply. This group finds themselves at the very bottom of the caste system (Rao 2010:97). According to Rao (2010:97), it was conceived to create a working structure in society that would function harmoniously, however, the system failed through corruption and developed into one of prejudice and discrimination, where those at the bottom of the hierarchy are marginalised even in modern times.

The caste system of India and other South Asian countries was an injustice which was perpetuated by colonialism, and which continues to impact modern societies. Rao (2010:97) states that Indian society was segregated into various subgroups which in turn generated social identities.

Rao (2010:99) elaborates on how the caste system contributed towards poverty, the impact of social exclusion, and caste discrimination. The lowest in the caste system are most affected by their social position in society, since the system determines the worth, value, and level of dignity which further contributes to their livelihood, sense of security, freedom, and adaptability to the global economy. While the caste system originates from The Gita,[5]it was meant to be determined by one's behaviour. However, due to the influence of society, the contemporary caste system as we know it is based purely on one's circumstances at birth (Rao 2010:99).

In the book *Social groups and identities developing the legacy of Henri Tajfel* by William Peter Robinson (1996), the author states that people who shared the same religious background categorised one another in a positive light, whereas they considered others negatively when they did not share the same religious background, despite the fact that they were the same nationality or spoke the same language. Robinson (1996:172) notes that in Northern India, a similar study was conducted between upper-class Hindus and Muslims, who looked down upon different religions even more severely if they came from a class lower than their own.

The principles of these beliefs are heavily focused and fixated on several factors such as status—a difference from the other group in question—followed by stability i.e., how stable

[5]*The Bhagavad Gita*, "*The Song of God*", is referred to as 'The Gita'. It is a 701-verse Hindu scripture which forms part of the epic Mahabharata.

the relationships are within the context of the group. Legitimacy brings into question the authenticity of the people within the group, permeability considers how easily people might change their way of thinking and decide to move into the 'out-group', and lastly, the cognitive alternative is the thinking that challenges all groups, contemplating whether a different intergroup relationship is achievable (Trepte and Loy 2017:8).

My thinking based on this research is to apply elements of the theory explained by Trepte and Loy to develop the screenplay which enables me to tell the story in a way best suited. This allows for a foundation to base my characters into a mould of possibly real-life characters. Giving me the freedom as the writer to develop characters allows the space to explore aspects of social identity theory in a screenwriting capacity. Further, this establishing a space where I can critique the understanding of the theory in the screenplay while developing the film to see if the theory and application works or not.

Categorisation within groups is what people will strongly attach to; self-categorisation theory emerged and was witnessed in the early parts of the 1980s (Trepte and Loy 2017:8). The development of social identity theory suggests that people tend to associate with what they are familiar with, which could be perceived as prototypes or stereotypes. Prototypes can be explained as people's attributes including their behavioural patterns, attitudes, customs they follow, the way they dress, and anything that contributes to their individuality. Trepte and Loy (2017:8) further explain that while each person in a group may have their own prototype trait or characteristic, when the same trait becomes more common within the group, a stereotype is created. The development of categorisation means that a pattern becomes predictable. Instead of seeing someone as an individual, they are perceived as a prototype. Thereafter the prototype essentially becomes the stereotype (Trepte and Loy 2017:9).

This leads to the understanding that how one social identities with another is scaffolded, creating distinctive features of group and intergroup relations. This means groups and its members will go to great lengths to promote the belief that the idea of 'we' is superior to 'them'. Members of each group will perceive strong distinctions between themselves and another group. The idea of oneself is defined in relation to the group, thus making status, prestige, and social impetus of the group interconnected to the ideal of the individual (Trepte and Loy 2017:9).

Trepte and Loy (2017:10) state that social categorisation becomes more effective through its capacity to reduce confusion or uncertainty in groups. This is achieved by how groups and the people involved in them interact and behave with one another, such as agreeing to likeminded objectives or validating one another's ideas (Trepte and Loy 2017:10). Being ambiguous in terms of social categorisation means that one is uncertain about where they fit in, which according to Trepte and Loy (2017:10) may arise from groups being set in their ways, or having closed ideologies and staunch belief systems with a hierarchical or authoritarian structure. Such structures are commonly associated with aspects of social uncertainty and instability. The ambiguity present in the group caused by the authoritarian structure may offer similarities across all its members, yet internally there can be differences that arise (Trepte and Loy 2017:12).

In my analysis of Trepte and Loy, I find they reflect tropes that have similarities in the South African Indian community. Examples of these tropes that reflect are the hierarchical structure that incorporate authoritarianism, social and economic uncertainty, instability, ambiguity, difference, and similarity. There characterisations are explored by the Indian filmmakers under discussion. In Moodley's film she explores characteristics of matriarch authoritarianism as Jennifer and Shanti are both female characters who oversee household and making of key decisions. Singh develops his focus on the social and political concepts related to Indian South Africans. In my work, I develop an aspect of racial tension that is shown between the compassion the shop keeper has for his community.

People in society tend to have a psychological connection with groups they belong to, which can be understood as social identity. Reflecting further, people in society have the underlying need for positive self-esteem. This need motivates them to behave and conduct themselves in particular ways to create, maintain, and uphold a positive social identity (Trepte and Loy 2017:20). Trepte and Loy (2017:21) elaborate that the self-esteem hypothesis (summarised in this paragraph) explains how discrimination can stem from groups as a result. Discrimination as explicated by John Turner (in Trepte and Loy 2017:21), might also be termed social competition, which is the competition for one's social status and supremacy in a group which aims to be positively distinct from another group.

In *Emerging patterns of social identification in post-apartheid South Africa* (2010), Elirea Bornman (2010:237) explains that social identity theory by Henri Tajfel identities that we

integrate into social groups, thus implying that the self can be defined by its membership within these groups. Furthermore, Bornman (2010:237) elaborates that the positions of both ingroups and outgroups can become psychologically significant and associated with changed forms of social and political behaviour. The proposition of a hierarchical structure has a profound influence on one's attitudes and behaviour as related to nationality, race, ethnicity, and culture (Bornman 2010:237).

The abovementioned points are all important to my study in that social identity theory gives context as to where ideas of racism, discrimination, marginalisation, and inequalities are derived from. Moreover, these points can be used to contextualise issues of race, class, culture, and tradition in the analysis of the films I have selected as well as my creative component.

At the beginning of this chapter, Appasamy's quote mentioned authenticity as a social norm of a community. While her statement challenges the notion of anti-blackness, anti-queer attitudes, colourism etc. towards the Indian community, it does not spark any solutions nor a new perspective that might be proposed to a community and by extension, South African society. In my opinion South African cinema has not done enough to create an image that informs audiences both inside and outside the Indian community about attitudes towards race, gender and culture. Furthermore, these films in Appasamy's statement do not demonstrate any representation of multicultural or multiracial narratives, something which can be unique to a South African audience, considering that the film can read as an informative and realistic body.

South Africa through Films

In 1994, South Africa became a democratic state which in principle meant that South Africans of all ethnic and racial backgrounds were considered as equal. This rendered South Africans of all racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds equal. The change had large social and political implications as well as impacts on identity structures (Bornman 2010:238). South Africa today can considered a diverse and complex society, however, it is still deeply segmented not only through culture, race, language, and religion, but the difference lies within the economic structure of the country and issues of class (Bornman 2010:239).

South Africans today experience a deep need to identify themselves. Bornman (2010:241) explains that the need to identify themselves looks deeply in the ethnical, cultural and racial identities background to understand and confirm these identity questions. Bornman (2010:241) likens this to the social identity theory of groups explained earlier in this chapter, by stating that racial and ethnic identities will not only persist but can potentially integrate in a complex manner with social environments, thereby giving rise to a new perception of how the terms 'us' and 'them' are defined (Bornman 2010:241). In a study conducted between 1997 and 2000 within her research, Bornman (2010:242) found that in terms of identity, most black South Africans preferred the label 'African', while the majority of white South Africans preferred the label 'South African'. The research did not, however, account for the Indian or Coloured communities, but did attest to associations with religion being far more important to these communities (Bornman 2010:242). While the report does suggest that the hierarchical structures explained earlier do hold sway, it also reveals more 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' to the already diverse and complex South African society. Race plays a primary role in social identity, it is also an indication of similarity and can therefore serve as a crucial element for a particular group (Bornman 2010:243). While language is still regarded as an important aspect of culture, it also works to connect ethnicities (Bornman 2010:243).

In the book *The Ending of Apartheid: Shifting Inequalities in South Africa* by Margaret Roberts quotes Steve Biko in understanding the classification of people, the text from Biko states (1994:54) we have been defined as black people even when faced with alternative terms such as non-white, bantu, Africans or natives, we chose black as that is what feels right. This extract by Biko, explained by Roberts is important as she goes on to further elaborate how an element of apartheid ideology was to uphold the identity of the white Afrikaner (1994:54).

The Population Registration Act of 1950 meant that every person was by law required to be classified as part of a particular racial group (1994:54). The Population Registration Act according to Roberts (1994:55) did not cause people to treat each other differently based on their racial group as racial tension and differences existed before Apartheid. The Act did however force the South African population to be grouped according to their race and placed in systematic categorisation group and treated differently from each other under the Apartheid law.

Roberts goes on to further state that (1994:55) despite the laws changing, the classification of race that define people have filtered into their attitudes and way of thinking. Roberts (1994:55) states many white South Africans use the racial categories when referring to groups that aren't white, Roberts uses the example "most people have swimming pools in South Africa, most people support this or are doing that" to clarify that they are referring to white people and the other group are people of colour. Robert (1994:55) states that people of colour often find themselves in situations where they feel the impact of this. Establishing the notion of in and out groups dependent on which group is being categorised. It is this attitude that still plays a factor in causing the separation as being a person of colour, I often find myself in conversations hearing phrases as "that's not what we do" again referring to us as people of colour. In certain ways, I find that in a contemporary South Africa, this can go either way and at times used to differentiate one racial group from the next.

To aid with the context of the above paragraph. In the extract *Homi Bhabha, hybridity and identity, or Derrida versus Lacan* by author Anthony Easthope (1998:145) the statement is that Bhabha claims a space occurs between a designation of identity and fixed identifications which allows for cultural hybridity to exist. Easthope (1998:145) goes on to further state that, a definition of hybridity could mean a person has access to two or more ethnic identities.

In the book *Class, Race and Inequality in South Africa* by Jeremy Seekings and Nicole Nattrass (2005:49), the authors highlight the turmoil of Apartheid society and its policies which enforced systematic racial discrimination and segregation, contributing to deep-rooted issues of inequality—issues which continue to occur in contemporary South Africa. In depicting South African society, Seekings and Nattrass (2005:250) speak on the impact that films and novels provide by vividly describing how society functioned in the past. Seekings and Nattrass (2005:250) make mention of a duality which entailed South Africa featured in twentieth-

century films showcasing not only its racial issues, but the stark societal contrast between its booming towns and the surrounding greenery of its countryside. Characters would be compelled to each make a shift from the one into the other. Films at this time fixated on the broader socio-economic situation at the time.

While South African cinema has changed since the Apartheid regime, Scotton (2012:361) makes mention that, in the 60s and 70s, South African films depicted stories which were poorly developed. The target audience of these films aligned with the Apartheid regime policy, thus race and class divisions were woven therein. Scotton (2012:361) states that for these reasons, the quality of South African cinema post-Apartheid has its own unique inspiration, as it draws from Apartheid-era documentary film movements and alternative cinema in the 70s and 80s to create a strong sense of social realism. The transition to democracy lifted the imprudent image of South African cinema which persisted for nearly ninety years, resulting in freedom of expression and the voicing of social commentary which would have been marginalised under the Apartheid regime. Among these voices, Scotton (2012:361) states that the African population plays a massive role. Like every other country in the world, South Africa's social issues such as violence, crime, poverty, and HIV/AIDS contribute to the content and context of its cinema, as they inform social realism narratives (Scotton 2012:362).

In an article from the *Journal of African cultural studies* written by Jordache Abner Ellapen and titled "The cinematic township: cinematic representations of the 'township space' and who can claim the rights to representation in post-apartheid South African cinema", the author takes an analytical approach to the cinematic representation of post-Apartheid South African townships. Ellapen (2007:113) states that township imagery has become a standard representation to showcase 'authentic' black South African stories, however, this can be problematic in a post-Apartheid context when considering the reality that most black South Africans still live in these townships. As filmmakers, we are required to move past instead of 'freeze' the township space to represent 'authentic' black experience. Not only do these spaces essentialise the storytelling of black identity and black experience, but they are also politically and historically outdated (Ellapen 2007:113). South Africa as a contemporary space has multiracial groups within it. Ellapen (2007:113) goes on to argue that the township space should now be considered a space of hybridity. When considering that South African filmmakers are similarly diverse and multiracial, this raises more complex questions as to what these spaces may mean to different demographics.

Referring back to Bhabha's statement earlier about hybridity and relating that to Ellapen, the South African township space becomes a place in which different racial groups of colour would be in close proximity to one another allowing for cultural and ethnicity similarities to become more prominent as time passes. Which could further emphasise the points made by the classification of race and grouping by white people and people of colour.

Ellapen (2005:117) applies hybridity theory to discuss the cross-over of ideas and identities which were generated through colonialism. Understanding the township space through this theory allows us to perceive it as a hybrid one which has changed since the Apartheid era. Ellapen (2005:117) makes mention of this by elaborating on how the movement of people from township to urban and rural spaces has allowed for a change of ideas, opinions, cultures, and belief systems. The township space has now become a place of meeting which many black South Africans relate to with a sense of belonging. Movement from the township into the city space is regarded as pivotal to developing the many identities that exist within the city (Ellapen 2005:117).

When the group areas act segregated and marginalised people of colour during Apartheid, black, coloured, and Indian citizens were moved into various townships across the country. However, moving into a democratic South Africa these spaces and places cannot be perceived in the same way, rather, they have nuanced the static and one-dimensional perception of the past (Ellapen 2005:118). One must take into consideration how space and place have an intertwined relationship with social, political, and economic factors, as they give character and inform the environment of a community (Ellapen 2005:118). While space and place are products of social and cultural constructions, the way society operates within it is a spatial organisation of the aforementioned factors (Ellapen 2005:118).

Ellapen (2005:120) further discusses how space is defined as either appropriate or inappropriate, safe or unsafe, according to the race, class, or creed which is associated with it. This extends further as different social spaces have different set of images, languages, as well as behaviours attached to them. These create connotations that become associated with the space or place, which can be identified throughout popular culture such as film, song lyrics, poetry, and even novels (Ellapen 2005:120). Bornman's (2010:252) statement supports the above by making mention that the introduction of a democratic South Africa has not truly

dispelled or solved underlying problems which stem from heterogeneity, diversity, and identity conflict. Due to the importance of social identity and the impact of self-concepts of individuals, their attitudes and behaviour can directly influence intergroup relations as well as the social and political stability of a community.

Haseenah Ebrahim and Jordache A. Ellapen in their book *Close-Up: South African Cinema*, in the chapter "Cinema in Postapartheid South Africa" (2018:169), reflect on the twenty-five years since the dawn of a democratic South Africa. Ebrahim and Ellapen (2018:169) address how the development of the film industry has now shifted. When South Africa transitioned into democracy the overall assumption with regards to filmmaking would be that the change in both cinematic forms of film and television would coincide with the new political landscape (Ebrahim and Ellapen 2018:170). However, this was not to be the case, as the challenges which presented themselves at the time, along with the state of the South African film industry, meant that the task would be complex and difficult to handle. Problems were largely due to economic, social, and political issues which promised to be challenging for a newly independent South Africa (Ebrahim and Ellapen 2018:170).

Film as a medium can have a powerful impact and, as a result, can be used as a tool to build a sense of community or document the transition between social, political, and economic changes, such as the landscape of post-Apartheid South Africa (Ebrahim and Ellapen 2018:171). Film can be used as a medium to represent a nation as well as platform to develop interest within the country. Ebrahim and Ellapen (2018:171) refer to film as a commodity; a product that can generate market value and profit. While filmmaking is a process that is collaborative, which allows it to uplift the economy of a country, there is also an aspect of it which serves as a source of pleasure in both cultural and artistic expression (Ebrahim and Ellapen 2018:171).

The National Film and Video Foundation, commonly referred to as the NFVF[6], was set up to support and encourage a thriving film industry within the context of South Africa (Ebrahim and Ellapen 2018:171). The NFVF is the main funding source for film production in our country, however, other organisations are also involved. The Industrial Development

[6]The National Film and Video Foundation provides funding for film and video-related productions.

Corporation, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Arts and Culture, and the South African Revenue Services all work together with the NFVF to fund the film industry, education and training, and market and distribute local film (Ebrahim and Ellapen 2018:171). An additional goal of the NFVF is the intention of building an authentic reflection of South African culture, language, tradition, and heritage, to cater for both national and international audiences, along with further developing national content and production (Ebrahim and Ellapen 2018:171). As identified by the NFVF, the power of cinema can be connected to the growing interest of nation-building and dealing with the ideals of representation as a vital component when addressing identity politics (Ebrahim and Ellapen 2018:172).

In the book *The Devil You Dance With* by Audrey Thomas McCluskey (2009:7), the author states that by the end of Apartheid, Black South Africans were not fully equipped with the technical skillset or had adequate opportunities to immerse themselves in the film industry and/or media platforms in order to pave their own ways in the industry. During the transition into a democratic South Africa, rapid changes and the wait for future development meant that the national film industry could not compete with global industries (McCluskey 2009:8).

According to McCluskey (2009:8), South African films which address and employ narratives that speak of the tension that exists in our society receive mixed reviews, they are either praised or met with ridicule. As a result, opinions of these films are divided. A portion of opinions saw the engagement of films that dealt with historical subject matter and national priorities as effective and necessary, whereas others felt that the patriotism these films evoked was backward thinking; the latter favouring the Hollywood releases more than South African content (McCluskey 2009:8).

McCluskey (2009:8) elaborates that black African films set in a postcolonial time all had four primary objectives: to decolonise the mind, to further enhance the development of a radical consciousness, to show the growth of a revolutionary and newly transformed society and, lastly, to introduce a new film language with which to accomplish all these objectives. South African films were employed in an oppressive manner during the Apartheid era by the racist white minority. Entering democracy, the space for film resides more in a “public sphere” (McCluskey 2009:8), allowing for debates on issues that affect the public.

The consensus is that film can have a transformative effect, and serves the purpose of creatively informing and addressing issues that politics cannot (McCluskey 2009:8). McCluskey (2009:8) quotes Pan-Africanist filmmaker Haile Gerima, who states that "our cinema should transcend and demystify politics". McCluskey (2009:9) echoes these sentiments in relation to South African cinema, stating that even with international recognition of the South African film industry, we still struggle to fill up cinemas and develop an audience for our products (McCluskey 2009:10). McCluskey (2009:10) notes that the fragmentation seen in the public who visit the cinema can be traced to the Apartheid era and the policies that it enforced. Efforts were put forth to serve predominantly white consumers, thus preventing access for black audiences. McCluskey (2009:10) likens this to the general population of South Africa, stating that this void is still apparent. For the majority black population cinema is considered a costly leisure.

The state-funded SABC is the most available and viable option of television for the majority black population and serves as the primary source of media consumption (McCluskey 2009:10). This is a disservice to South Africans as the market is divided due to certain channels targeting different demographics and languages. McCluskey (2009:10) makes mentions of creolization[7] as the way forward for South Africa, which should be reflected in everyday living as well as popular culture.

McCluskey (2009:11) further mentions that the distribution of films in the South African market is primarily controlled by two key companies, Ster-Kinekor and Nu-Metro, which combined own sixty-eight percent of the available screens throughout the country. Most of the films screened locally originate from major studios from the United States, with a small fraction coming from Europe, some independent producers, and lastly, South African films. McCluskey (2009:11) breaks this down into numbers: Ster-Kinekor and Nu-Metro showcase about seventy percent US content from major studios, a lesser known twenty five percent comes from independent US based producers, four percent based on European content, and the last percent is split between independent cinema and South African films released theatrically.

[7]Creolization is a term which refers to the process wherein elements of different cultures are mixed in order to allow a new culture to emerge.

Based on this alone, it is clear to see the work needed by the South African film industry to compete with Hollywood. However this is not a true reflection on the subject matter of our films, but rather the vast gap between the numbers which constitute commercial cinema. South African filmmakers should still tell stories which are considered 'silent' even if moviegoers turn a deaf ear (McCluskey 2009:13). In the United States, less black youth are willing to watch a film that addresses political subject matter (McCluskey 2009:13). They would rather take the opportunity to see a film starring Will Smith, such his 1997 film *Men in Black*. Star power above controversial subject matter is needed to sell a film, and the South African film industry still has some way to go to achieve that stardom on a global scale.

Dwight E. Brooks and Lisa P. Hébert (2006:297) write in *Gender, Race and Media Representation* that the audience and much of their knowledge and interests are directly derived from the images, symbolism, and stories they engage with either through radio, films, television shows, or other forms of media. How these social identities formulate is based on what they understand of representations of black, white, Asian, Latino etc. people. The media is what ultimately becomes the model of representation in social realities. Brooks and Hébert (2006:297) state that in the same way gender is a social construct (society defines what is either masculine or feminine), racial difference is also a product of socialisation.

As Haseenah Ebrahim describes in the book *Close-Up: South African Cinema Traversing the Cinemascape of Contemporary South Africa: A Peripatetic Journey* (2018), Christian Metz once proclaimed that cinema is actually a vast and immensely complex phenomenon of sociocultural. Ebrahim (2018:199) refers to the concept of national cinema, pinning it to an agenda that is both political and economic. The venture of a national cinema can serve as a means of celebrating unity along with the diversity that exists in the South Africa film industry.

I agree with the points that Haseenah Ebrahim raises as I feel the power of cinema can reflection, comment and represent society in a way that can communicate to an audience in a different way. Storytelling is a something that lives within everyone, and cinema has the platform to address various issues of race, identity, gender, inequality etc. Taking from this research, exploring hybridity and compassion between characters and story forms part of my filmmaking practice.

Film critic Barry Ronge argues that locally produced films should claim a South African identity, making mention of Darrell Roodt's 2004 film *Yesterday* as an example of a film which strongly resonates with South Africanness (Ebrahim 2018:199). While there is a distinct number of films rooted in South Africa based on their themes and narratives, none are as commercially successful as filmmaker Leon Schuster's (Ebrahim 2018:199). Schuster's films gain commercial viability often due to his ridicule of others. Ebrahim (2018:201) further mentions that film is not only a medium that benefits economic activity, but has the power to represent and express cultural identity.

In *Nation-Building through Film in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (2014), Emily Milstein writes that South Africa transitioned into democracy and multiracialism after the fall of the Apartheid regime. After being destroyed socially, economically, and politically, it needed to rebuild itself (Milstein 2014:177). The local film industry directly reflects on the characteristics of post-Apartheid South Africa. South African filmmakers set out to make films which reflect on multiculturalism, along with using the medium of cinema to address the socio-economic problems still prevalent in our country. As it stands South Africa still faces multiple problems which range from crime, poverty, and unemployment issues, along with economic and racial inequalities. While film is used as a tool to build up our nation post-Apartheid, there are still limitations as to what social change can be generated, and how it can define contemporary South African culture (Milstein 2014:177).

Referring to Ebrahim (2018:201) in *Close-Up: South African Cinema Traversing the Cinemascape of Contemporary South Africa: A Peripatetic Journey*, the idea of a South African cinema is not yet established, as the local film industry is prosperous yet unclearly defined. Ebrahim (2018:201) states that simply believing a uniquely successful South African cinema will emerge from the developing film industry is not a carefully considered approach. She further points out that film should not purely be considered an activity of economic benefit, but one which provides deep expression of cultural identity as well. To exclude this only worsens the complex and complicated economic and cultural challenges which the South African film industry is faced with (Ebrahim 2018:201). While South Africa is well into its second decade of democracy and approaching the start of its third, Ebrahim (2018:201) believes that the time to shift into a contemporary South African cinema-scape is upon us. Ebrahim (2018:201) proposes first locating film audiences, as the cinema can no longer be considered the primary source of film culture.

"Lokshin Bioskop" refers to as a series of low-budget feature-length films which are locally made and screened on Mzansi Magic. "eKasi Stories" is its opposition which airs on eTV—a privately owned free to air channel. Although these films are made on shoestring budgets and do not have the production value to compete with global elite industries such as Hollywood, Bollywood, and Nollywood, they have managed to reach and accumulate an audience nonetheless (Ebrahim 2018:205).

This is a form of "imperfect cinema", a term coined by Julio García Espinosa and referred to by Ebrahim (2018:205) in her article, which means attempting to copy the production standards of First World mainstream cinema. Ebrahim (2018) states that on close inspection of "Lokshin Bioskop", one can deduce they are more like soap operas than films. The themes explored are often based on interpersonal relationships, witchcraft or *muti*, [8]corruption, greed, polygamy, and adultery (Ebrahim 2018:206). Although the audience is predetermined based on the subject matter and representation of black South Africans, productions around "Lokshin Bioskop" or "eKasi Stories" assist aspiring filmmakers by offering them a chance to hone their skillset as they grow professionally through these productions, while beginning to develop the audience for local films to be produced. Often these small productions provide sources of employment for university and other graduates, from drama students to screenwriters alike (Ebrahim 2018:206).

Ebrahim (2018:208) explains that over the years there has been a steady increase in the production of Indian films by Indian filmmakers in the South African film industry, and a steady increase of films about South African Indians by non-South African filmmakers. Ebrahim (2018:208) list of examples includes *Florida Road* (2009) by Brad Glass, *Lucky* (2011) by Avie Luthra, and *Material* (2012) by Craig Freimond. All these films are either about Indians in South Africa, or the dynamic between African and Indian communities. Ebrahim (2018:208) elaborates that while the history of Indians who came to South Africa as indentured labourers is well documented, there have hardly been any films based on their arrival, other than the documentary by Hina Saiyada entitled *African Indian Odyssey* (2010) and Jayan Moodley's debut feature film *White Gold* (2010).

[8]*Muti* refers to a form of traditional medicinal practice which originated in Southern Africa.

In her essay *The South African Indian film industry: New directions in Indian Commercial and Diasporic Cinema* (2009), Stefanie Lotter states that South African Indian filmmakers can trace back their ancestries, however, their identities are not from there, as they consider themselves to be black South Africans rather than hyphenated Indians. Lotter (2009:119) continues by explaining how South African Indians challenge the stereotypes seen in Indian commercial cinema. South African Indian films choose to tell the narrative of Indian townships from the perspective of the South African working-class Indian, and depict them in ways true to reality. Their films often feature the unconventional yet lovable and highly intoxicated male figures, who consume large amounts of alcohol and gamble their money away for instant gratification, and young Indian woman who are often unemployed and pregnant outside of marriage. Examples of this would be in Kumaran Naidu's *Run for Your Life* trilogy of films and *Broken Promises* franchise films.

In *Run for Your Life*, the story revolves around continuous drunk Perumal, who takes a bus from Phoenix, an Indian township in Durban to Lenasia, another Indian township in Johannesburg to visit his sister's family. He has luggage mix up as his bags are swopped with a drug dealer and Perumal is left with drugs in his possession. The drug dealer Mr. K sends his goons to retrieve his luggage, which results in the kidnapping of Perumal's niece, who is an unmarried Indian woman that is carrying a baby out of wedlock. The family blames Perumal for this as he is constantly drunk further adding to the blame. Perumal decides to rescue his niece from the drug dealers' clutches and in turn it brings home the father of his niece's baby, a local street gangster named Bush-knife Bobby Maharaj to meet the family and take care of his responsibility. This differs as films that explore unwanted pregnancy, living conditions in which couples stay together without marriage and cross-cultural relationships are not looked at openly in Bollywood cinema yet it is normal and part of life in a South African Indian community (Lotter 2009:129).

In *Broken Promises*, Naidu sets up the film to follow a story between Ruben and his love interest Natasha. The story revolves around the two as they figure out how to be with each other as life partners. Ruben's mother, Amsugi, is a stern obstacle in this relationship. This sets up the trope of Indian mothers having control and possessiveness in their sons lives while leaving the son helpless to choose between his mother and partner. A common stereotype in the Indian community. Naidu also explores the idea of cross culture relationships and

marriages, which has become something more common and normalised in South African Indian communities than it would be in India.

These two examples are prevalent yet unexplored in traditional Bollywood cinema, as the image maintained by Indian cinema is one which is family orientated with values and traditions to uphold (Lotter 2009:119). South African Indians differ as they are not attempting to uphold the ideals of a diaspora to which there is no longing nor connection. Breaking free of this mould, South African Indians create their own characters, which are represented in a social reality or environment in film.

Lotter (2009:120) mentions that contemporary South African Indian communities portray their narratives and position themselves in a manner whereby their characters can be identified as underdogs when compared to older generations and traditions. Even going so far as to evoke the caste system still prevalent in Indian and South Africa, although the latter is more based on name and bloodline. When you look at the representation of South African Indians on the big screen, there is strong evidence to show that South African Indians are underrepresented. Even with the emergence of local productions, this void still exists (Lotter 2009:125). This could be attributed to not enough South African Indians involved in the film industry, or perhaps the scope of national cinema remains a small market which is steadily improving. As it stands, there are complexities and challenges that local filmmakers face, based on the difficulties of financing a film and recovering the costs of that production (Lotter 2009:125). The South African government does finance independent films, however the funding provided is insufficient (Lotter 2009:126). Furthermore, there are no definite plans in place to promote these films, further causing independent filmmakers to remain stagnant for long periods of time. Combine the aforementioned issues with a lack of realistic promotion in order to compete not only nationally but on an international level, and the lack of support from banks and other private sponsors, there is little structure in place for independent South African filmmakers to propel from.

Despite these challenges, South African Indian filmmakers find means for their films to exist and overcome via independent release both formal and informally, such as distribution through hard-copy DVDs sold in markets, through video stores, and even on the streets at robots (Lotter 2009:126). Lotter (2009:126) states that South African Indian films are still a recently developing sector of filmmaking, with the first film featuring South African Indians only

produced in 2004. Throughout the years of Apartheid, representation of South African Indians was not an immediate priority.

That being said, within the context of comedy shows and stage plays the representation of the Indian community is performed throughout the country, most popularly in Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng (Lotter 2009:126). In these theatre productions the differences and stereotypes begin to formulate and transfer from social realism to staged plays, as the difference between Bollywood movies and their representations of Indians would differ both internally and externally to South African Indians. The jokes accentuate the difference in accents, mannerisms, and attitudes between Indians from Durban and Johannesburg respectively. Lotter (2009:126) makes mention of how the image of Indians as the underdogs is contrasted with minority white South Africans. Along with this comparison, a distinct difference between the high-caste Brahmins (whose bloodline is of higher status than others) and wealthy businessmen who are Muslim and followers of Islam.

The main audience of South African Indian films comprises the community which these films come from. One such example is Kumaran Naidu. Naidu is a filmmaker who struggled both technically and financially when he made his first feature film *Broken Promises* (2005). He was rewarded for his struggle with the Best Amateur Film award at the 2005 Durban Film Festival (Lotter 2009:126). With minimal funding available, Naidu self-invested and began his own distribution company in an attempt to recover his production costs, with which he succeeded. Naidu managed to sell over sixty-thousand hard copies of his DVD, and even produced further films which saw him strike a deal with M-Net for a television series. While his film venture was a success, his television series was not well-received by the Indian community. It's difficult to pinpoint the problems in the series; but his films are successful because they are made for the South African Indian community, however that exclusivity means that accessibility to a large audience is harder to facilitate (Lotter 2009:127).

Naidu's films are mostly comedies, playing to the stereotypes of South African Indians and certain relationship dynamics such as the over-the-top mother-in-law and heavily intoxicated father-in-law of the Indian family household. Credit should be given to Naidu for his use of a hybrid model, whereby he represents the Indian family dynamic prevalent in Bollywood cinema yet echoed in South African Indian stories, while taking it one step further and blending the elder generation's desire to uphold traditions with a care-free and younger generation of

South Africans who strive to embrace the new South Africa and all the promise it brings (Lotter 2009:128).

Carli Coetzee writes in the *Journal of Southern African Studies* (2013) that South African cinema can stop re-enacting the racist past. While Coetzee (2013:721) recognises this would challenge the academics of South African cinema to avoid recreating the racial division and tensions of the past through the narratives of their films, this would serve the purpose of laying the foundations for a new archive to inform a more contemporary form of storytelling (Coetzee 2013:721). She further states that South Africa has no shortage of historians, as the country and its films have a well-documented understanding of the past; the problem at hand is how to re-enact without repetition (Coetzee 2013:723). On investigating the history of South African cinema, there is evidence to show that the industry has been racialised, and the difficulties that came with it created division between white and black audiences.

The abovementioned theoretical framework deals with Social Identity Theory, which further expands on themes of racism, discrimination, marginalisation, and inequalities, not just theoretically but in a South Africa social context. The themes explored shape the foundation on which I formulate my analysis of the selected filmmakers and their films in Chapter Two. To address my research question of how filmmakers address issues of social identity in South Africa, with reference to Indian communities, I relate the abovementioned theory to themes of race, class, and other socio-economic and political differences in Chapter Two.

The theoretical framework of my research is formulated through understanding the theory can are explored further in my filmmaking practice. Part of that is looking at aspects of social identity theory to explore not only in my practice but understanding how they can be found in the films of other South African Indian filmmakers. Anant Singh films deal with social and political issues that are authentic to South Africa due to the countries past, whereas Jayan Moodley's films often depict an over-the-top sense of Indianness. Their films allow me to take what aspects work and make different in my films by exploring racial tension and hybridity of that in both space and ethnicity. It can be stated that their films and mine are authentic South African stories, by looking at the research I am able to formulate a narrative that is informed by the theory and is presented differently, particularly in a multicultural way.

This further underpins how my own film will be created, as discussed in Chapter Three. The following chapter will focus on two South African Indian films, *Lucky* (Avie Luthra, 2011) directed by Avie Luthra, and *Place of Weeping* (Darrell Roodt, 1986) produced by Anant Singh. I analyse their social commentary in relation to my theoretical framework to further contextualise the underpinning of my own short film. My film represents aspects of the themes explained, such as race, culture, class, and contemporary socio-economic issues, through the lens of Social Identity Theory. More context to this will be provided in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER TWO

In the previous chapter, I discussed the literature review and theoretical framework which is explored further in my film. I critically engage with the literature review through my practice. In Chapter Two I focus extensively on the selected filmmakers and films that inform my research and support my argument, which explores aspects of social identity such as racism, class, and socio-economic issues in contemporary South Africa through the practice of filmmaking by South African Indians. As my research is based on filmmaking through a South African Indian perspective, the following analysis focuses on the approach of filmmakers who are of Indian descent. Anant Singh and Avie Luthra are two contemporary Indian filmmakers, their stance in their filmmaking practice provides insight into how certain issues of race, culture, class, and inequalities are addressed in a contemporary South African context in relation to the local Indian community.

Anant Singh

Anant Singh (1956-) is a South African Indian film producer, whose filmography spans over fifty feature films with numerous awards and acclamations to his name, including an Oscar nomination (IMDb 2021). For the purpose of this research paper, my analyses will focus on Anant Singh's work as a producer on the films *Cry, the beloved country*, *A Place of Weeping* (Darrell Roodt, 1986), *Sarafina!* (Darrell Roodt, 1992), *Mandela Long Walk to Freedom* (Justin Chadwick, 2013), and *Yesterday* (Darrell Roodt, 2004). Each film will be discussed with emphasis on its subject matter and the social issues it interrogates, rather than an in-depth analysis.

In the book by Martin P. Botha entitled *The Cinema of Darrell James Roodt*, the author states that Anant Singh frequently collaborated with South Africa film director Darrell James Roodt (1962-). The 1986 feature film *A Place of Weeping* (Darrell Roodt, 1986) produced by Singh, who also marketed the film internationally, navigates racial conflict and tensions. The film deals with the murder of a black farm worker who is beaten to death after he opposes the low wages he receives; in response to this, his employer murders him. The crime is never reported and goes undetected, out of fear by the other farm workers for their own futures. Word gets out when a news reporter gets involved with a housemaid from the farm and decides to expose the incident. The film explores themes of social injustice which would go on to form part of

Roodt's directorial style during the eighties, nineties, and the turn of the millennium (Botha 2013:1).

Singh and Roodt also produced another picture together, the 1992 musical *Sarafina!* (Darrell Roodt, 1992) based on the musical production by Mbongeni Ngema, which deals with a school boycott in 1976 South Africa. The film comments on the brutality and oppression enforced by Apartheid police during the time. It brought global recognition to Roodt, and further strengthened the motif and role of strong black women whose stance was strong resistance against various forms of social injustices, which appeared repeatedly in his later films. Contextually, the film tackles the socio-political context of the Soweto Uprising of that same year (Botha 2013:2).

Cry the Beloved Country (Darrell Roodt, 1995) was another film produced and directed by Singh and Roodt, which was adapted from the book of the same title by author Alan Paton. The story is set in the 1940s and navigates the journey of Stephen Kumalo, a Zulu pastor, as he travels from the rural areas of Zululand to the city space of Johannesburg. The reason for his journey is his search for his son. The journey Kumalo embarks on positions him in direct conflict with James Jarvis, a white man who has lost his own son through an act of violence. Themes of forgiveness are explored through the film, as the two men are compelled to learn forgiveness with dignity, a strong correlation to what was happening in South Africa during the Apartheid era, and a theme which would prove relevant in South African post-Apartheid cinema (Botha 2013:3).

The collaboration between Singh and Roodt through the years was important, as Singh's company *Videovision* produced and distributed many films to the national and international markets. The two filmmakers are frequent collaborators, with Roodt stating that Singh would even finance the entirety of their productions, as he did with the 2005 film *Faith's Corner* (Botha 2013:3).

In his article *Mandela's Long Walk to Hollywood* (2013), Peter Wonacott highlights the role that producer Anant Singh played in the development of the 2013 biopic of the late former statesmen of South Africa, Nelson Mandela (1918-2013). Singh set out on a twenty-five-year long journey to produce a film about the life of Nelson Mandela, pursuing his idea which was initially developed in the mid-80s. Singh was becoming increasingly active with political and

social commentary in the films he was producing, and Nelson Mandela was still the figure of resistance despite being imprisoned into his second decade. It was at this point that, according to Wonacott (2013), Singh made contact with Nelson Mandela while still a political prisoner about the idea of a biopic in which actor Sidney Poitier would portray the Apartheid activist. Anant Singh eventually won the rights to produce the film after the release of Nelson Mandela's autobiography in 1994.

In order to produce the film, the script went through a writing process of around thirty-three drafts and years of Singh trying to convince Hollywood executives that the life story of Mandela could and would be better served in a film, rather than a television series (Wonacott 2013). Wonacott (2013) states that the narrative of a minor political activist who then became a film producer was a key factor in the film being made. The political activist in question being Anant Singh. This was the project Singh cared for the most. The producer ended up raising the budget required to make it, which stood at thirty-five-million dollars, and as a result retained complete creative control (Wonacott 2013).

As a young South African, Singh's focus as a film producer was attacking the Apartheid government's system of oppression. This activism was constantly highlighted in his films. Those films discussed in this study, *Place of Weeping* (Darrell Roodt, 1986), *Sarafina!* (Darrell Roodt, 1992), and *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Darrell Roodt, 1995), all feature director Darrell James Roodt at the helm, with a central message of examining and addressing racial tensions in South Africa. Political influence and South African cinema that dealt with the social realities of the Apartheid regime went hand in hand. Wonacott (2013) states that during the production of *Sarafina!* (Darrell Roodt, 1992) in the early 1990s, Singh received a call from Fatima Meer who was the biographer for Nelson Mandela, conveying Mr. Mandela's encouragement of his film which reflects on the 1976 Soweto student uprising.

In his Master's dissertation, Christo Oberhozer (2006:57) writes that in 2004 Roodt and Singh collaborated for another film entitled *Yesterday* (Darrell Roodt, 2004). The film is about a rural woman and her journey of living with HIV, with the hope of being able to live long enough to see her daughter attend school. Her journey is one of hardship, as she navigates and battles not only the virus but the stigma that comes with the HIV/AIDS virus. *Yesterday* is another film which was endorsed by the Nelson Mandela Foundation because of the subject matter it deals with. It was thus able to secure the necessary funding to be made. The creation of *Yesterday*

was also supported to generate awareness concerning HIV/AIDS prevention, along with the stigma and discrimination faced by those infected with and affected by the virus.

As a producer one is expected to overlook the production of films and work in a coordinated manner on multiple aspects of the production, from choosing the correct scripts, having an overview of the writing, arranging the finance for the film, as well as the selection of crew, the directing, and the final cut of the film. Anant Singh's particular interest lies more in the socio-economic and political landscape of South Africa. Considering the films discussed in this chapter thus far, the subject matter they deal with is rooted in issues which South Africans faced during the Apartheid or those we are currently dealing with. The films Singh produces are far more serious and have broader relevance, however this is not to discredit him as a producer who only makes films addressing sensitive and tense subject matter, as he also produced Leon Schuster's 2001 box office hit, *Mr Bones*.

As aforementioned, Singh and Roodt have collaborated frequently. Insight into their filmography together shows that their focus is aligned on strong social commentary on severe issues that South Africans were experiencing first-hand during the Apartheid era, through to democratic South Africa. Using their voice as filmmakers, Singh and Roodt have actively challenged the Apartheid system, with their films inspired by social injustices such as racism, inequality, social tension, and other injustices which reflect the lives and constraints that majority of South Africans experience. With his social commentary as an anti-Apartheid activist, Singh has geared his films towards reflecting and opposing the oppression South Africans were faced with. His style of filmmaking deals with serious subject matter, and he primarily tells the narratives of marginalised South African, which sets him apart from the two other filmmakers in my research. While Naidu and Moodley's films both deal with contemporary South African Indian communities, Singh's films tackle pressing issues which address the plight of majority of South Africans. In doing so, Singh has been able to tell stories about communities he is not a part of. Naidu and Moodley's films can be described as family friendly South African Indians stories, for which both filmmakers draw inspiration from their own lives. Whereas Singh's films depict social realism in South Africa.

Avie Luthra

Avie Luthra is a British Indian filmmaker whose professional background is one which encompasses writing, directing, and producing. His filmography ranges from shorts to features, as well as adaptations (IMDb 2022). The following analysis will be based on his film *Lucky* (Avie Luthra, 2011). The film will be discussed in relation to the aim of my study, as discussed in Chapter One. It is important to highlight that Luthra is a non-South African Indian filmmaker, yet his film still speaks on the dynamics of South Africa. A trend that is becoming increasingly common (Ebrahim 2018:207).

In *Becoming Visible: All Roads Film Festival, National Geographic Society*, Gail Thakur states that the festival is intended to serve as a breakthrough platform for film from minority cultures who are under-represented around the world (Thakur 2006:26). Thakur (2006:26) elaborates that the work produced by minority artists or filmmakers demonstrates a deeply-rooted hunger to tell stories from perspectives more likely to be unheard or unexplored in mainstream cinema. Thakur (2006) further states that *Lucky* (Avie Luthra, 2011) is one such film that falls within this category. The film under discussion is the short film made in 2006, and not the feature length produced in 2011. Thakur (2006) explains that Luthra's film follows a young boy's journey from rural South Africa as he meets a stranger in urbanised Durban. The author further states that the exploratory bond shared between the two characters is captured in a sensitive manner, as seen through the film's cinematography and editing (Thakur 2006:26).

In a review of the film, author Eleanor M. Huntington (2016:310) writes that it is titled after the youthful protagonist, Lucky. The film transverses the journey and hardship that Lucky endures after the loss of his mother, whose last wish was for him to have an education, a dream he also aspires to achieve (Huntington 2016:310). His journey is halted upon his arrival in Durban. His deceased mother leaves an inheritance intended for his school fees and well-being in the possession of his uncle. Upon his arrival at his uncle's house, he realises that the money was recklessly spent on alcohol, with no intentions to fulfil his mother's dying wish (Huntington 2016:310).

One of the last possessions Lucky's mother leaves him with is a cassette tape. Unfortunately, he does not possess a tape player and, as a result, struggles to access her words. Huntington (2016) writes that Lucky pins his hopes on the words his mother has left behind, optimistic that he will find the answers to his struggles by listening to her tape. At this point, he discovers that his uncle's neighbour is in possession of a tape player, but when Lucky sneaks into her house

to try use it, he is caught by the elderly lady and catches a beating. Padma (the elderly neighbour) misinterprets the young boy's intentions. Her initial reaction is to assume that Lucky is stealing from her (Huntington 2016:310). Huntington (2016) states that Padma, who struggles with the language barrier as she does not understand Zulu, can sense the hurt the boy goes through upon listening to the cassette. A taxi driver translates the tape for her, which reveals that Lucky's mother has passed away from AIDS, and she begins to care for the boy (Huntington 2016:311). Huntington (2016:311) elaborates that the film is unconventional, breaking away from the clichéd manner in which films depict orphans in search of family and a better future. Luthra tells the narrative without exaggerations, as Lucky's situation is a harsh yet realistic representation.

A theme which reoccurs throughout the film is the relationship between Lucky and Padma (Huntington 2016:311). He states that the distrust shown from Padma towards Lucky initially speaks of a detrimental attitude towards black South Africans. An important theme that links back to the theoretical underpinning of my research. Huntington (311: 2016) concludes that the film is a strong depiction of cultures clashing within contemporary South Africa, whose people are referred to as a Rainbow Nation. *Lucky* (Avie Luthra, 2011) is compelling enough to present the discrimination and biases within South Africa, while at the same time, supporting the narrative of the country's marginalised (Huntington 311:2016).

In his statement on the film, Luthra (2022) states that his experience living in a rural area in Natal during 2003 became the driving force behind the film, as a brief moment of grief sparked the idea. He witnessed a boy mourned the loss of his mother at her coffin; a moment that became a key component to his screenplay. Another point that Luthra (2022) mentions in his statement is the racial tension between African and Indians. These tensions have survived from Apartheid. Luthra tackled this by juxtaposing a racist elderly Indian woman with a youthful and innocent black child, evoking the idea of the rainbow nation through these two characters.

In relation to my research, Luthra sets up social commentary on subject matter such as HIV and AIDS by depicting the impact it has on those who are left behind, to deal with life after the death of their loved ones. Furthermore, Luthra explores multiracial dynamics and pushes the complexities even further by looking at social backgrounds and social groups by having his main characters play the roles of an elderly woman and a young black boy.

Andrei Tarkovsky

Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-1986) was a Russian filmmaker whose career spanned seven feature-length films (Totaro 2018:21). Totaro (2018:21) elaborates that the concept of time is a cornerstone principle of Tarkovsky's work. He further states that for Tarkovsky, time is defined through human memory and the process of life one endures. The duality created between the two are seen throughout his films, as the filmmaker associates time and consciousness with nature (Totaro 2018:21).

A Tarkovsky film will contain his trademark cinematic style by utilising multiple long takes, the dripping of water, the sound of wind, an absence of dramatic structure to the narrative, themes that dwell on realms of spirituality and the metaphysical, dream sequences, themes of reflection, the usage of bells and candles as cinematic symbolism, and switching between colour and black and white imagery (IMDb 2022).

In the book *Andrei Tarkovsky's Poetics of Cinema*, the author Thomas Redwood (2010:2) states that Tarkovsky's films give a sense of being loose and impressionistic, as he constructs his films without abiding to the formal principles seen in standard filmmaking practice. Redwood (2010:3) describes Tarkovsky's process of filmmaking as more sensual, with negligible theoretical interest. As aforementioned, Tarkovsky utilises the sound design of filmmaking by immersing his audience in a soundscape of nature and ambient audio. Redwood (2010) further explains that Tarkovsky expects the audience to engage thoughtfully with his films, as if they were experiencing profound development as human beings, rather than watching purely for entertainment value. He elaborates that while Tarkovsky's contemporaries want their films to be viewed as intellectual works, Tarkovsky himself likened his films to the human experience. Tarkovsky wanted his films to be viewed in a way that a passenger on a train might admire the landscape (Redwood 2010:6).

In my opinion, Anant Singh often if not exclusively turns his attention to films that his background as a political activist can inform in some capacity. His preference to mainly work on films that has a social comment in some way, or another could be important in helping to use the medium of film to inform and create awareness such as HIV and AIDS however, the serious undertone that films like *Yesterday* can at times, get lost and not reach the crowd that it could be intended for. I do feel that films that can inform audience about relevant subject

matter are important, I feel they could be suited to a more commercial audience in box office or video on demand releases as that opens to a larger audience.

Avie Luthra's film deals with prevalent issues of racial tension, inequality and language barriers, issues which have no measure in place to provide solutions. I acknowledge that the responsibility is not on Luthra to provide a solution, my critique is that even though he has made a film that highlights these issues and brings them to light, the authentic nature of the story can be debatable as he is not a South African. Therefore, the story could be a South African narrative, but could it be defined as accurate representation of an authentic South African story and experience.

In conclusion, the films by Anant Singh and Avie Luthra discussed in this chapter were considered for the social commentary they provide. Singh's films deal with more diverse and dense subject matter which reflect our country's past, such as racism, discrimination, social injustices, and issues of hate; quite possibly a past that is still affecting contemporary South Africa. Luthra's approach speaks on issues that are prevalent in contemporary South Africa, most importantly his use of racial groups within his film *Lucky*. Overlapping black and Indian narratives in film is not explored as often as it should be in contemporary South Africa. The influence of filmmaking practices by Tarkovsky guides my personal approach my own short film, while also referencing certain overlapping social issues prevalent in both Singh's and Luthra's work.

In the next chapter I formulate an analysis of my own short film, which is inspired by true events, as the film is based on the 2021 Civil Unrest which took place in predominantly Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng. The film will be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter One, with focus on the construct of social identity through themes of race, class, and socio-economic issues. This is achieved by scaffolding those issues and themes by Singh and Luthra explained in Chapter Two, while adhering to the influence of Tarkovsky's filmmaking.

CHAPTER THREE

In this chapter, I discuss my short film *Insurrection* in three parts. Firstly, I discuss it in relation to the theoretical underpinning explained in Chapter One. Secondly, a script breakdown will be provided. Lastly, the production process, reflexivity, and film itself will be explicated. Through my reflexivity, I discuss the changes, challenges, and criticism of the previous film I created entitled *Thru My Eyez*, where after I applied these lessons to the film created for the fulfilment of my Master's dissertation. *Insurrection* is based on true events and inspired by a collection of moments from the 2021 South Africa Civil Unrest.

In the article published by Relief Web (2022) entitled *South Africa: Urban Violence – Emergency Plan of Action*, a situational disaster report states that the violence in South Africa between 9-17 July 2021 was in response to the arrest of former president Jacob Zuma. The riots and looting which broke out became a melting pot of social issues which the South African government failed to manage, resulting in the insurrection of 2021. The riots and looting were driven by high unemployment rates, poverty, and economic inequality. Adding to this, I feel that the manipulation which occurred caused further damage as the riots were escalated with the arrest of former president Jacob Zuma and the fallout of partial ANC members within the organisation.

In the context of this paper, the influence of Tarkovsky's filmmaking philosophy is a practice I intend on utilising through the making of my own short film. Techniques which I plan on utilising are long takes, immersive sound design, the intertwining of colour and sombre tones within the colour grade, and the symbolism of nature and earthly elements.

My film discusses, supports, and, in some cases, reacts to key statements mentioned in previous chapters. These points include those made by Ellapen, McCluskey, and Coetzee. I would argue *Insurrection* addresses certain changes these authors are suggesting. With regards to the point made by Ellapen, concerning the township space being one of hybridity, I make use of Lenasia to corroborate her stance. The cultures and people involved are multicultural—a crossover of communities is increasingly prevalent not only in Lenasia but across most South Africa townships. In the case of Lenasia, the people living in the community are multicultural, including foreign nationals. In my film, the store is owned by a Pakistani man affectionately called 'Kabir Bhai' by the locals in the community.

McCluskey (8: 2009) states that the effects of film can be transformative and, with purposeful intention, can be used in a way that addresses issues which politics cannot. The idea is represented in a manner which politics cannot achieve. This is perhaps because in my opinion the connotations of politics are power, greed, and corruption, at least in South Africa. In creating a film, the voice of the community and their misfortunes can be echoed in a more focused manner, rather than a broader or vaguer overview as politics allows. In the world of filmmaking, we can focus on a narrative structure and character development. The impact of the film produced has a long-lasting effect on the community and its people. Art is a form of expression that is experienced through emotional connection. The emotive connection in contemporary South Africa is achieved through remembering the past and contextualising our present, while attempting to build for the future ahead. Film or art allows us to to play with temporality or sculpting time and space as Tarkovsky says, that enables us to see time and changes at a rapid pace and leave the moment and its relationality open to interpretation by an audience.

Coetzee's (723: 2013) stance suggests improvement to traditional ideas of film creation. South Africa is a country rich in history and diversity, the problem lies in how to create a film without revisiting our history. Coetzee suggests advancing our storytelling capabilities and adjusting the requirements to suit contemporary cinema.

Insurrection

The title for my short film is *Insurrection*, meaning rebellion. The film is based on events which occurred in South Africa, predominantly Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal, in 2021. The film focuses on socio-economic themes and realities in our country; class, compassion, and community. It centres on two main characters, Musa and Philani. The film is about Musa's dream of wanting to franchise his business since he opened his supermarket at a young age. However, his request for a loan is consistently denied. The storyline moves between 2009 and contemporary South Africa in 2021. Being a supermarket in Lenasia, Musa's store is a cornerstone to the community. Here he meets Philani, a regular who comes in asking for any bread or leftovers Musa may have. The shop owner gracefully gives Philani some bread. Musa prepares to meet the realtor as he is about to invest in property to franchise and build his next store. Philani goes about his day job hunting. Tension in the country begin to rise and unfold,

as former president Jacob Zuma is reported to have been arrested. As the country plummets into chaos, looting is sparked in Lenasia and Musa's store is raided. Overnight, his dream of scaling his business is crushed by the political aftermath. On return to his store, he finds Philani who has spent the night keeping watch and protecting it from further damage. Musa realises his legacy is within the supermarket, and Philani acknowledges the good that Musa has done for the community. They share a compassionate moment that epitomises the human condition.

Script breakdown

My script breakdown is straightforward and based on the action and direction of the characters through visual storytelling more than dialogue and exposition. The film begins with a wide shot of an enthusiastic man in a store. He is the owner and prides himself on his good reputation; from the scene we are given indication that he is the owner of this store.

Thereafter, a lady signing documents denies his application for a loan. At this point it remains unclear what he requires the loan for, although we can gather it has been denied. The film cuts to a now groomed gentleman who walks across a city space. He opens his supermarket to the public and engages with a customer in South African vernacular.[9]His thick Indian accent conveys that he is indeed a foreigner. It becomes important that a gentleman who understands the language of the locals and chooses to address them in this language is part of the community. They associate and relate to one another in this regard. Presumably categorising themselves as belonging to the same 'in group'[10]. This idea is referring to hybridity by Bhabha and emphasis the space of the township by Ellapen as Musa can adapt on a language different by being exposed to the culture as well as ethnicity differences.



Figure 1, Still from *"Insurrection".* Musa and Ms Dlamini (2022), Directed by Sachin Narain.

[9]Through the characters speaking the same vernacular, I suggest a specific connection between them. In Avie Luthra's *Lucky*, the two main characters demonstrate a language barrier. In this case, I'm creating prototypes by breaking free from that concept. Allowing both my characters to understand each other on a personal level.

[10]Having both my characters associate with one another and being part of the same 'in group', I attempt to convey a perspective not often told in mainstream South African cinema.

In **Figure 1**, Mrs Dlamini greets Musa and begins to ask if "He has any…", but before she can continue, Musa interjects and informs her that her parcel is ready and waiting at the counter. This segment of dialogue implies that Musa has a cordial relationship with his customers and knows them well enough to not only identify their purchases, but communicate with them through the same language, indicating a certain bond which has been formed. Evidently, despite Musa and Ms Dlamini being from different ethnic groups, their engagement through the same language is treated as surprisingly common and unextraordinary.



Figure 2, Still from "*Insurrection*". 2022. Musa and Philani in the shop. Directed by Sachin Narain.

In **Figure 2**, Musa converses with Philani, who is a regular customer to his supermarket. Philani affectionately refers to him as Bhai.[11]In his dialogue, Philani states "Bread Bhai, just something to eat", to which Musa replies he has something to give Philani. Within the context of the scene and the relationship that has developed, emphasis has been placed on respect and admiration for both ethnic groups. In **Figure 1**, we see Musa demonstrates respect towards his customers through the way he addresses them in their native language, despite not being a native speaker of that language, when considering he is a foreigner. In **Figure 2**, Philani addresses Musa with the utmost respect by affectionately referring to him as "Brother", which is a common term in India. Through Philani referring to Musa as Bhai, a term of endearment, their mutual respect is acknowledged. In **Figure 2**, Philani asks for any leftovers, implying that Musa frequently donates his leftovers to members of the community. In this scene Musa reveals

[11]'Bhai' is a Hindi term that translates to 'brother'. It can be used to show affection or to engage with an elder. Most of the time, it is used to convey respect to the person you are addressing.

his plans to franchise. For the first time, we see Musa is a business-minded man, and by him giving leftovers to the community, this could very well be a business strategy rather than motivated by compassion. It is not entirely clear that franchising is Muas's long-term goal, it is however implied later in the film that he is ready for that next step of his business venture.

Musa passes time as he waits behind the counter, anticipating something to occur. A few customers gather in a crowd just in front of him. He hardly focuses on them. The crowd is captivated by the reports being read on the News regarding the court hearing of former president Jacob Zuma. In a later scene, Musa drives his car and hears the News reports repeatedly on every radio channel.

He arrives at a vacant property and meets with a realtor. Upon their handshake we realise that this property is something Musa wishes to purchase, possibly to open his franchise. The scenes which follow are intercut between the [12]unrest that occurred and a recreation scene of the unrest. While Musa fantasises about finally realising his lifelong goal, tension is brewing in other parts of the country. At home, Philani endures his own life crisis. Circling job ads and feeling thirsty, he tries to pour a glass of milk only to find the fridge and his wallet are empty. He leaves the house and we assume he is enroute to Musa's supermarket. Along the way, he is swarmed by a group of men walking against his path. At this point, various incidents begin to break out in the country.

Musa hurries back to his store only to find it on the cusp of being ransacked. Cars gather outside as onlookers remain inside, observing the chaos. Footage of mayhem spreading throughout Durban is shown. Musa looks to his logo, his franchise dreams rapidly fading. What follows is a dream sequence of Musa bent over in sand and mud.

The next morning, Musa returns to the store and finds Philani lying injured, but conscious. He helps him up and discovers that Philani spent the night defending his store from further looting. It becomes apparent that Philani perceives Musa as an important community member. At this point, compassion passes between them. Through my knowledge and application of social identity theory I feel that a sense of hybridity is applied to transcend issues of race,

[12] The footage used in the montage of the unrest is from various Whatsapp groups that I was part of. Footage emerged and circulated constantly from various sources. I do not own the rights to the footage other than the fact that the footage was sent to the groups.

marginalisation, class, and socio-economic differences. The film is based on the mutually beneficial relations we can develop in a South Africa, rather than tearing each other apart.



Figure 3, Still from *Insurrection*. 2022. WhatsApp video compilations. Directed by Sachin Narain.

The above still is part of a montage in [13]*Insurrection*. In the montage, sourced videos that were circulated on social media are used, this showed the extensive violence, destruction and chaos that occurred within one week. Frame one (left) shown in **Figure 3** shows the effects of violence as an unnamed man is lashed opened, the events leading up to the man's injury is unknown, however this image is placed strategically as a statement in the montage with the top frame of [14]Duduzane Zuma, son of Jacob Zuma, whose comment only adds further disruption and tension to the situation. I feel this representation of violence is further escalated by a negligent comment and the outcome has a direct correlation to what we see in the first frame of **Figure 3**. The footage in this montage was circulated via WhatsApp (to individuals and family group chats) during the Civil Unrest and a few days thereafter. The film concludes with statistics gathered by *ReliefWeb* (2021) which provides a numerical description of the disaster that occurred. The unrest lasted one week and, as of 16 July 2021, 212 people had succumbed to the unrest, with a further 2,554 arrested. As a result of the looting and riots, fuel, medical supplies, and food shortages were felt through various parts of KwaZulu Natal. The Rand

[13] Insurrection means rebellion. This speaks to the socio-political and social justice theme inspired by Anant Singh. In his films, the reflection of society is often central, voicing strong social commentary on the subject matter being portrayed.

[14] In this montage, Duduzane Zuma states "t*o those who are looting, please do so carefully and please do so responsibly*". As a public figure, this only adds to further tension and incites violence.

weakened by 2 percent, as more than 200 shopping centres were destroyed (*ReliefWeb*: 2021). According to reports, more than one billion USD worth of damages occurred within this week (*ReliefWeb*: 2021).

Symbolism through Tarkovsky's influence

Throughout my film, the theme of water is metaphorical. In the wide shot of a man walking through the city, we can see water dripping from a leaf. In its purest form, it's a small drop that appears insignificant to the larger narrative. At Philani's house, water drips from the tap and into a bucket. The bucket is filled to the brim and on the cusp of spilling over. Finally, the water turns sand into mud, as tensions rise across the country. My use of water is inspired by Andrei Tarkovsky's use of nature. In my film, water represents the people of South Africa; one drop at a time seems insignificant, yet once set into motion, the people as a collective can have a powerful impact. Whether this impact is positive or negative is entirely up to them but, like water, the people have the capacity to be a precious resource or cause incredible destruction.



Figure 4, Still from *Insurrection*. 2022. Water dripping from tap. Directed by Sachin Narain.

In **Figure 4**, water drips from a faulty tap and begins to collect in a bowl. My short film include montage sequences, and by utilising water in the film I attempt to infuse the symbolism evident throughout Tarkovsky's films. In the book *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky* by Vida Johnson and Graham Petrie (1994:208), the authors discuss Tarkovsky's symbolic use of water along with other natural elements such as wind, fire, and air.



Figure 5, Still from *Insurrection*. 2022. Water droplet from flower. Directed by Sachin Narain.

The use of water in his first four films signify positivity, as it is associated with happy memories (Johnson and Petrie 1994:208). In **Figure 4**, and throughout the film, my use of water is symbolic for tension. In **Figure 5**, a water droplet falls from a flower early in the morning. Here it is subtle and almost insignificant, as one droplet of water in the context of this frame hardly makes for much impact. Particularly in comparison to **Figure 4**, where the drops are falling at a considerably increased pace and tempo.



Figure 6, Still from *Insurrection*. 2022. Water splash into filled bowl. Directed by Sachin Narain.



Figure 7, Still from *Insurrection*. 2022. Musa immersed in mud. Directed by Sachin Narain.

In **Figure 6**, the water droplets have filled the bowl to the brim and seem on the verge of flowing over. In **Figure 7**, the water has filtered through and mixed with sand to form mud. Musa is immersed in the mud to symbolise his inner journey through the tension of the situation he is faced with.

Figure 6 also functions as a dream-like reality—yet another Tarkovsky influence in my work. Johnson and Petrie (1994:239) explain that there are two different kinds of dreams. In the first instance, the dreamer can direct how the dream plays out, as if it was a controlled sequence and he/she has complete mastery of the events to unfold. In the second instance, the dreamer has no control and remains in a passive state, in which the events and violence prevent him/her from protecting him/herself (Johnson and Petrie 1994: 239).

Tarkovsky's filmmaking techniques allow enough for the audience to fully immerse themselves within his film, I find that his use of long takes gives the audience a strong sense of the passing of time as well as amplifies the pressure that characters are going through in the world of the story. Tarkovsky's film have an emphasis on selective cutting between the takes to let the emotions and tone of the scene sit with the audience, I have implored this aspect to my film as well. By allowing the long takes to play out while the frame still appears busy with the blocking, the camera remains static and captures what is essential in my opinion to the story. This allows me to showcase the passing of time and the impact of moments like the restlessness that Musa has when he is about to go and look at the land he just purchased, as

well as the calm before the storm as he is imagining the dream of franchising just as the insurrection is taking place elsewhere in the country.

The use of sound design in my film is different from Tarkovsky's yet the technique he implores of ambience and the environment to play a factor is what I relied on. In the film, there are soundscapes of howling wind and drone dark undertones, this is used to build anticipation and shift the emotional feeling as the progression of the story plays out, while Tarkovsky's film are quieter, the use of winds, cinematic hits and stabs are placed within the mix and layered with soft piano solos to create a sense of immersion and feeling for the weight of what is happening on screen. The immersion within the soundscape of the film and allowing the ambience of the environment to play a role. The colour grading is also rather naturalistic. By using minimal dialogue, I allow the audience to enjoy the cinematography from a storytelling perspective and enjoy the film as if it was a visual journey.

Tarkovsky's films in my opinion are at times difficult to understand in one sitting and often require additional viewing. This stems from being able to interpret on your own accord and not being entirely certain as to what cinematic elements require you to think further about the meaning. In my film, I've tried to create it to feel as a reflective journey which gives insight into an event that was chaotic within our lifetime. The viewer is given the opportunity to think of their own memories while watching the film. This approach is very different from my previous short film, *Thru My Eyez*, and I feel it better serves the story.



Figure 8, Still from *Insurrection*. 2022. De-aged Musa. Directed by Sachin Narain.



Figure 9, Still from *Insurrection*. 2022. Camera Raw shot of Musa. Directed by Sachin Narain.

In **Figure 8**, the story starts of in 2009, a de-aged version of Musa needed to be worked through Visual Effects which I manged to implement. I do see myself wanting to strive and produce advancements to the South African film industry and by using VFX within my films could be a sense of creating standard and familiarity for filmmaking, however, when VFX is best suited and necessary for the film. In **Figure 9**, is the unedited raw footage of Musa.

The film ends of with a video of social commentary that I edited as a sense of social commentary of the unrest. The video was created in the same week of the unrest and serves as a response to the feeling I had as a filmmaker watching the events unfold around the country. My work revolves around social justice issues as a broader theme. I must state that the footage used is not footage that I own as news reports are compiled with video footage shared and circulated on WhatsApp. I must declare that my angle used in that montage edit is one that I feel highlights the period and is unbiased to any agenda. News clipping used are amongst Morning Live, News 24, DW News and a disclaimer is inserted in the credit roll of my film stating that the rights are with the broadcasters and not with the filmmaker.

Self Reflexivity

My thinking in relation to my study has ranged from wanting to make a feature-length film, to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and finally arrived at directing two short films. My initial concept considered constructs of social identity through a love story. I connected personally with the storyline, based on my past experience of being unable to continue my relationship

due to a conflict in religious beliefs. The short film I produced within the first year of my Master's, entitled *Thru My Eyez*, told the story of an Indian man and African woman from different economic classes. I felt my personal experience of the subject matter would guide my accurate telling of the story. However, I eventually realised that in telling the story, my own experiences clouded my judgement of the film at times, and far more emphasis was placed on the male character. This resulting in the female character feeling more like an extra than a supporting lead. Her role become unclear, and this may have been a fault on my part as the director. I may have fixated more on the story than characters' role in moving the story forward. The film itself felt complete and yet empty at the same time. The final film could have shown more development through the two main characters, and ventured more into the roles of community.

Having spent time away from the completion of the short film, I went into the second year of my Master's. The insurrection of 2021 occurred in July, which resulted in a weeklong tussle between the emotional turmoil of caring for family who was within and amidst the chaos, and my concern for South Africa and her economic downfall. I compiled a video piece from news outlets and various videos circulated over family WhatsApp chats. The 4-minute-long video piece is included as part of the credit montage in my short film *Insurrection*.

My change in approach to the research focused on creating a short film which relates to, mirrors, and speaks on events that are fictional but heavily inspired by the South African Civil Unrest of 2021. The film itself has a greater sense of community engagement, as on set in Lenasia the community was keen and interested in participating in any capacity. For me, writing and directing this short allowed me to detach myself from personal connection, and rather fuel the film with emotional content. I was able to apply a holistic approach to the narrative which, at times, I could not when directing *Thru My Eyez*. *Insurrection* cuts between actual footage circulated on WhatsApp groups and scenes shot in Lenasia. I feel that alternating between the two demonstrates the social realism approach of the film. These events affected not only a community, but its businesses as well. The domino effect of one week of destruction was reported to result in a decade's worth of development. Juxtaposing the narrative alongside real-life incidents allowed me to highlight reality while creating my own fictional storyline wherein research and theoretical underpinning were linked together to create a film that feels arthouse in its treatment of the subject yet evokes a sense of social realism in its message.

Applying the lessons learnt from making *Thru My Eyez* taught me to approach a new project more cautiously and to follow the correct procedures when creating a film. I appropriated techniques and guidelines from Tarkovsky where applicable and used elements of nature metaphorically, which I feel was lacking in my previous film. Through the making of *Thru My Eyez*, I discovered my own style of storytelling which was not as refined as it is now. The difference between the two films can be seen through their treatment and the making process entailing screenplay, production, and editing. I feel my biggest challenge with *Thru My Eyez* was that telling the story another way did not seem clear to me. With *Insurrection*, I was able to remove myself and consider the social commentary of others, the losses, and the emotional attachment. The sense of worry and concern I felt for my family and friends made it personal, but not involved to the degree that my judgement was affected.

Insurrection in relation to Social Identity

Through the lens of Social Identity Theory, I was able to construct and represent social identity through my film. As stated earlier in this dissertation, Social Identity Theory is defined by the knowledge as well as emotional connection and affection with which a group associate. In this case, the relationship between Musa and his clientele represents this. By speaking in a particular dialect with his customers and by them referring to him in endearing terms, emotional association and familiarity is constructed.

Reeshma (XV: 2016) mentions that intergroup discrimination favours one group over another; social identities can create conflict between groups and divide them, but this can also have the reverse effect and create unity and harmony. I have explored this in *Insurrection* through the looters, who might also have been Musa's customers at some point. By looting his store these individuals create conflict and tension, therefore breaking the construct of identifying as part of the same in-group and creating differentiation. The opposite is conveyed by how Musa and Philani are able to look after one another. This considers social identity theory concerning categorisation, which states that individuals willingly categorise themselves in groups they associate with. Their intention is motivated by self-interest, such as Philani spending the night defending Musa's store without being ordered or asked to. This could be looked at as Philani is defending a store he can gain from or that he chooses to defend a store that has provided for

him in the past and he feels it is his duty to return the favour. In his own reasoning, his choice is based on which side he chooses to associate with.

Rao (99: 2010) highlights the caste system as one contributing factor to discrimination, poverty, and exclusion. Throughout the film we hear Musa's accent and gather that he is a foreigner, most likely from India, who has relocated to South Africa. His immigration is not highlighted per say, but it may be a contributing factor motivated by societal constructs. Perhaps his wellbeing and the betterment of his life can only be achieved through relocating from Indian.

Through categorisation, a pattern emerges, and prototypes become more apparent than stereotypes in society. This means that over time the prototypes will indeed become the stereotypes, but the progression thereof is determined by the concept that 'we' are superior to 'them'. This means that the groups people identify with will create a strong sense of distinction between themselves and the 'other' group. In relation to the film, this construct of social identity looks at the relationship between Musa and Philani, as well as the looters and residents or business owners. The relationship that exists between Musa and Philani appears to be uneven as Philani appears to be far more vulnerable and reliant on Musa, however this refers to hybridity and expresses the stance of inequality and seeing one as an equal. Musa is aware of the dynamic between the two as he is in a stronger economic position but views Philani as his equal regardless and even has compassion towards him. In the footage I sourced, majority of the looters are black South Africans. It thus becomes easy to identify discrimination based on how some of the looters are beaten and reprimanded; going back to the belief of 'us' versus 'them'. The stereotypes, history, and social context in South Africa is one deeply rooted in racism and discrimination, even in a contemporary setting. The representation of this issue can be seen in the narrative between Musa and Philani, a shop owner and customer from a community they share, transcending racial and cultural boundaries.

In the following chapter, I summarise the findings of my research and conclude my paper.

CONCLUSION

I began my research by looking at social identity in relation to the research question 'How do filmmakers address the issues of social identity in South Africa, with particular reference to Indian communities?'. In conducting my research and learning about social identity theory, I found that social identity acts as a subconscious force in society. It not only informs our ways of thinking and living within society but forms the basis of how we operate and interact with one another. Like anything else, social identity has positives and negatives. In most cases, the bad outweighs the good. I believe immoral acts such as racism, discrimination, marginalisation, and various other social inequalities stem from the differences between 'in groups' and 'out groups', as outlined in social identity theory. Social identity exists in society, and without cognitive awareness we label ourselves as part of 'in groups' or 'out groups' in relation to one another. Social comparisons and aspects of self-categorisation occur in everyday living, made evident through conversations with peers and acquaintances.

I have discussed social identity constructs in relation to South Africa and how they are represented in films, which are often narrative reflections on society. I have discussed how the South African film industry began, transformed, and reformed throughout the years since its inception, to contextualise why the industry is the way it is now. The challenges I highlighted can be traced back to the years of Apartheid and the marginalisation of the South Africa majority during this period. Even in democratic South Africa, there remains a lack of identity for our film industry. Further, I provided an understanding of the limitations presented to South African filmmakers through economic hardship and competing with global film industries. In this regard, I have expanded on exploring social identity and addressed the complex issues it presents to young South Africans by way of a filmic narrative. By producing a film which deals with this subject matter, I hope to show how the dynamics of social identity theory as I have described affect us as society by the decision, understanding and actions we do take. Further, I feel that the onus is on us to actively make a change by challenging the foundation of certain social identity stereotypes.

In concluding my research, when exploring social identity in South African Indian cinema through filmmaking, I began by addressing the question of how filmmakers address issues of social identity in South Africa with particular reference to Indian communities. This representation was investigated through the works of film director Avie Luthra and producer

Anant Singh. While the two filmmakers arguably deal with different subject matter in their works, the way they address certain issues can be analysed through the lens of social identity theory, allowing me to focus this research on the Indian community. Luthra's film centres on the story between a Zulu boy and an Indian woman. Despite being British, he manages to produce a film centred on two ethnic groups in South Africa and addressing some of the real-life barriers between them, such as language, stereotypes, and the misperceptions between them. Singh is a producer who deals with films based on social realism and does not necessarily hone in on the Indian community in his representations as he has a broader approach to his work. Producing films which tackle themes of racism, inequalities, discrimination, and social injustices, his repertoire as a filmmaker firmly establishes him as an anti-Apartheid activist.

Each work by each filmmaker addresses issues which are analysed using social identity theory, such as language, class, and community as dealt with in Luthra's film. Status and social injustices are also apparent in the social realism works by Singh. The theory of social identity has allowed for insightful analysis of the films, by allowing a reflection of reality rather than considering the film as fictional work. One such critical aspect of social identity theory which I enjoy and instil in my own filmmaking practices is the application of the theory to any story. One's narrative can be formulated through reality, and inform your audience. Understanding this in relation to my own film practice has allowed it to influence the way I construct my narrative approach both technically and in terms of its theoretical underpinning.

I began my research with focus on the statement by Appasamy (2020), who uses the term 'authentic' to imply reflecting the norms of a community. The author also called out South African Indians for their anti-black and anti-queer mindsets, along with their indifferences towards colourism and classism. While to a certain degree her statement is true, as racial tensions and insensitive words have been spoken in the past, we should bear in mind that this behaviour and mindset is not attributed to every person from the Indian community. The selected filmmakers and their work discussed in relation to my research shows that we understand the issues at hand, and that discrimination and social injustices need to be addressed. Through the medium of film, issues can be spoken about within their context and the intentionality of the filmmaker. In a country filled with diversity and multiculturalism, it is a disservice to only be making South African Indian films which explore the South African Indian community, missing the opportunity to inform other local ethnic communities in the process. This presents one way of contextually representing 'authentic' South Africa

narratives, by showcasing and addressing our differences and complexities, which then opens the conversation of reforming those issues. Thereby offering a perspective that is authentically South African.

The themes explored in my filmmaking practice include community, compassion, socio-economic issues, and politics. Amongst these, themes of race, class, and socio-economic issues are explored throughout my research and integrated but not necessarily highlighted within the film. Regarding the issue of community, Musa has customers who he knows and for whom he has learned the correct vernacular in order to engage with; they perceive each other as part of the same community. The theme of compassion speaks to the humanity shown from Musa towards Philani, by his care for the community demonstrated through donating leftovers. This compassion is returned when Philani defends Musa's store in his absence. Socio-economic factors were compounded by both the country's economic downfall and the Covid-19 pandemic. Both these factors played a role in the South African insurrection, along with defiance to the news that broke regarding the arrest of former president Jacob Zuma. Thus politics were a driving force for the events which unfolded within my film.

Through the themes explored, I would argue that my film is successful in moving away from the historic past which South African films dealing with social realism constantly refer to. The problems highlighted in the film are contemporary issues which the country is challenged with. Furthermore, the portrayal of different ethnic communities shows that Appasamy's (2020) statement can be disputed in future films involving the Indian community. In the application of social identity theory, we can choose to portray the positives and expand on those aspects. As a filmmaker, I can actively choose to direct a film which excludes the 'racial tension narrative', even if it is evident in reality. I integrate self-categorisation as a theme by choosing to create characters who work in the interest of one other because as part of the same community they are interdependent.

My recommendation to future readers would be to consider multiracial, multicultural, and multinational constructs that exist in South Africa, which span across generations. The narratives we choose to tell are more diverse than one story. Language and association breaks the borders that are constructed to cater for one demographic group. South African films can create more prototypes than merely reoccurring stereotypes; we are immersed in a melting pot of prototypes. Through intentional narrative and staying true to a vision, I believe it is possible

to redirect racism and classism. Ideally that alone is progressive enough to encourage society to introspection.

The message I wish to convey through my film is based on a generational perspective. Growing up within an Indian community and listening in on conversations about the divides and dislikes which Appasamy (2020) makes mention of, instils a strong sense of disbelief and resentment. Having grown up in a multiracial neighbourhood and being brought up within a welcoming home and diverse community in contemporary South Africa, I struggle to comprehend classism, anti-black sentiments, and racial divides. South Africa is a country which showcases diversity amongst its people, partly through the languages which are spoken. But the invisible barriers and restrictions society creates in which different ethnic communities in South Africa are not properly informed about one another is an obstacle in the face of the rainbow nation ideology. I believe my research and work can assist in offering a perspective which may challenge the way ethnic communities address and regard one another. Ideally as South Africans rather than by the race, class, and the cultures they identify with. I further believe this responds to the gap that exists in South African filmmaking, whereby social issues can be addressed.

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