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WHO DO I THINK I AM? AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC AND ZOOMORPHIC COMICS AND THE EXPRESSION OF COLOURED IDENTITY.

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2024
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Abstract

This thesis presents my investigation into what I term my "Coloured Experience," my examination of zoomorphic imagery, and my approach to portraying this research through a comic book. This aims to produce an artifact that talks about being Coloured in a creative and personal way, which is a response to a significant gap in the portrayal of Coloured people, highlighting a tendency towards oversimplified, sensationalized, and politicised narratives. I employ autoethnographic reflection as my method of inquiry and use zoomorphism as a technique for representation, the outcome of which is a comic book.

Zoomorphism in graphic narratives, works as a visually stimulating tool for representing the concept of race, by drawing on visual metaphor, animal association and allegory, in combination with the comics medium, and an engagement with guided autoethnographic journaling, this research produced a comic book where I was able to host a discussion on my experience as a Coloured person in a safe and creative way.

This research does not extensively explore my origins, nor does it delve into the formation of Coloured people as a distinct racial group to establish a definitive common ancestor or construct a narrative to define the essence of being Coloured.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation/thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Digital Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Ethics Clearance Number: H23/11/01

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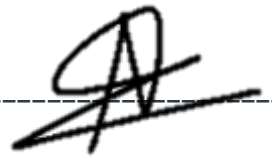

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Preface

Maus (1986) by Art Spiegelman (see Figure 1) is one of the most written about comics in comic's scholarship. Although my research is not about *Maus* (1986) it takes inspiration from it. *Maus* (1986) stands out because it is a story about an intimate relationship that the author has with a deeply tragic historical event – the Holocaust. It is a personal account that demystifies his father's experience as a Jewish person during that time. What interests me is this:

This story could have been written in typical prose style, but it wasn't - it was presented as a comic. It could have been drawn with characters in human form, but it wasn't - the characters are drawn with zoomorphic forms instead. This is what inspired my research.

There are certain advantages that come with 1. Representing humans and human experiences through zoomorphic images. And 2. Presenting non-fictive stories through comics form. My research investigates this.

As a Coloured person in South Africa, I have been subjected to discrimination and racial prejudice. I believe, there is immense value in documenting and sharing this experience. Is it as grand an experience to capture, as that of a person subject to genocide and war? No. Not by any means.

But this topic is as intimate. Given South Africa's unique history, it is best to mention that discrimination is not an isolated experience that only Coloured people are subject to. Indian people, Black people, and foreigners all experience some sort of shoving to the side out onto the cold banks of "You don't belong here" beach. But I cannot speak to those experiences. I can only speak for my Coloured experience and hopefully capture, discuss, and share the nuances of it.

Like Spiegelman's *Maus* (1986), the medium for this inquiry into my Coloured experience, that I have chosen to employ is comics. Storytelling through comics offers a compelling advantage over traditional prose, as it makes the topic of race, identity, and culture more accessible and relatable to a diverse audience. This will be discussed later.

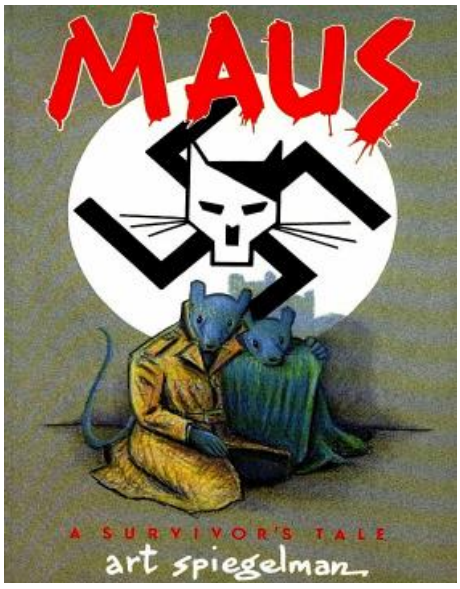

Figure 1: Maus, As Survivor's Tale cover(Spiegelman, 1986)

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Much of what is written [about Coloured People prior to the mid-1990's] was journalistic, polemical, speculative, poorly researched, or heavily biased" (Adhikari in Adhikari, 2009, p. 1).

Professor of History, Mohamed Adhikari (2009) speaks on a significant gap in the portrayal of Coloured people, highlighting a tendency towards oversimplified, sensationalized, and politicised narratives. These narratives take preference over genuine approaches to understanding the Coloured community, lending most writings to be heavily biased and resulting in harmful stereotypes and social inequalities.

"Coloured cultural, ethnic and racial identity remains an issue of ambiguity in South Africa" (Petrus and Isaacs-Martin, 2012, p. 87). It is precisely because of this ambiguity that, Professor in Anthropology - Theodore Petrus and Professor in Political Studies - Wendy Isaacs-Martin, discuss, that I am motivated to do this research. I believe that there is value in having a conversation about Colouredness[1], and that being Coloured in South Africa is an experience that deserves to be documented and presented. By documenting Coloured culture from my perspective as an "insider", I aim to share my intimate experiences with "outsiders".

This thesis presents my investigation into what I term my "Coloured Experience," my examination of zoomorphic imagery, and my approach to portraying this research through a comic book. As a comic artist, my research methodology is rooted in comics-based research (CBR), complemented by autoethnographic inquiry techniques. Consequently, my approach involves leveraging my own experiences as a means to distil a smaller but valid pool of evidence, framing it as a legitimate inquiry into Colouredness from the perspective of an insider within the group.

This dissertation ultimately addresses this research question:

How can zoomorphism be used to explore the Coloured Experience in Post-Apartheid South Africa, through an autoethnographic comic?

Simply, my research focuses on my own experiences as a Coloured person. I employ autoethnographic reflection as my method of inquiry and use zoomorphism as a technique for representation, the outcome of which is a comic book (the creative component).

I utilize autoethnography to delve deeper into my Coloured experience through journaling. The insights gained from this process inform the content of the comic (the creative component). Additionally, I explore zoomorphism to determine the most fitting animal representation for the comic's subject group.

[1] I use the term Colouredness, similar to Blackness or Whiteness. A term that indicates a state of belonging to those groups. Colouredness to me, references all the indicators and qualities - visible and invisible - that prescribe me as being Coloured and a part of the Coloured Community.

By taking a self-study approach to exploring the Coloured experience, I have the opportunity to describe nuances and intricate dynamics that shape the racial perceptions and interactions of this experience.

In Part 1 of the literature review, I briefly provide the history of the formation of the Coloured racial group in South Africa and discuss how this has shaped the identity of Coloured people.

I discuss the term "Coloured," examining its political implications and the complexities of Coloured culture. I delve into Coloured rejectionism, Coloured assimilation and Coloured Shame as well as the right for self-identification among Coloured people and differing views on Coloured culture. Additionally, I share personal reflections, alongside scholarly insights into Colouredness.

I share feelings of shame, confusion, and pride around my Colouredness. I speak on marginalisation, stereotypes and Coloured rejectionism. I also speak frankly about my struggles with identity, highlighting sentiments that claim that Coloured people have no heritage, are thought of as mongrels, and have no ambition beyond alcoholism and crime.

In Part 2 of the literature review, I elaborate on zoomorphism, and animal agents in comics as a method for representing the self.

I discuss the impact of visually depicting humans as animals, to investigate the effects and affordances gained from such a drastic visual shift. Here, zoomorphism works as a tool for representing the concept of race, drawing on visual metaphor and allegory.

To further elaborate, throughout literature, media, and everyday conversation, it is a common practice to compare people and animals. This practice, places emphasis on behaviours or characteristics exhibited by people and metaphorically aligns these traits with those displayed by animals. These comparisons can often be reductive and serve to defame people, especially in conversation.

In positive instances, one might be compared to a swan, because they behave gracefully, or to a lion because they are brave and fierce. In a negative instance, one might be compared to a snake because they are thought of as untrustworthy or a sloth because they are lazy. These are individual cases of comparison, but being compared to animals can take on racial undertones and are used to demoralize, dehumanize and to perpetuate stereotypes.

In my experience, Coloured people are often compared to dogs, or more familiar to me is being called a “pavement special” (a mixed breed).

Moreover, in children’s literature, animals can be used to demonstrate morality and to educate i.e., *Winnie the Pooh* (1977-2005). In animal comics (graphic novels, comic strips etc), animals are funny and can be used as satire for political issues i.e., *Animal Farm (1945)*.

What is significant with cases of zoomorphism or anthropomorphism, is the conflation between human races and animal species. For example, *Zootopia* (2016), separates animals into prey and predator, and could be interpreted as an allegory for racial dichotomy in society. And *The Bad Guys* (2022), which speaks to societies perception of villainy, draws on accusations that wolves, sharks, snakes, piranhas, and spiders are bad, emphasising that animal associations can be both positive and negative.

In this section, I explore literature that delineates between zoomorphism and anthropomorphism. I discuss how zoomorphism functions as an abstraction or literary device to create visual allegory. Additionally, I examine the implications of speciesism, specifically the use of different species depictions in graphic narratives to reflect race relations.

In Part 3 of the literature review, I investigate the comics form as a graphic strategy for presenting scholarly inquiry.

My exploration into zoomorphism as a representational strategy is assisted by the comics medium which my research is presented in - and this forms my creative component (the comic book). The comic book is an application of zoomorphic techniques, on an autoethnographic study of my Coloured Experience.

I use the comics medium for this research because of their inherent visuality. This quality allows me to visualize my memories and imbues me with a sense of agency (Køhlert (2015) in Kunka, 2018, p. 84) meaning to say, that I can describe events as they occurred in traditional prose style, but also choose how to depict those events.

A comic book that motivated this approach is the work of political cartoonists André and Nathan Trantraal (the Trantraal Brothers) titled *Coloureds* (2010). A day-in-the-life story about two Coloured siblings (a brother and sister) Caitlin and Nigel, who navigate the alcoholism, domestic abuse, poverty and evangelism of their household and community.

Although this comic book works to bring visibility to the plight of Coloured people, I am exhausted by the focus of Coloured stories centring around alcoholism, child abuse, evangelism, poverty and gangsterism.

As a Coloured person, I am motivated to write stories that highlight other aspects of this experience. Aspects that creatively:

1. Bring visibility to the perception of Coloured people South Africa (both positively and negatively).
2. Highlight us as a people and community beyond stereotypes.
3. Share the complexities of our culture and language we have and my struggle with identity.

In this dissertation, I define the nature of comics and explore their intrinsic qualities that render them a valuable visual strategy. I highlight how this visuality serves as a tool for scholarly inquiry, particularly distinguishing comics from other graphic media such as illustrated works or picture books. Additionally, I delve into the use of comics in the autobiographical realm, examining how they serve as a tool for expression.

In Chapter 3 of the dissertation, I outline my methodology by defining autoethnography and explaining how guided journaling serves as the primary process for delving into my memories and introspection within the context of my Coloured experience. This involves identifying experiences specific to being Coloured, distinguishing them from common experiences unrelated to racial discrimination or prejudice.

I then introduce the eight guided journaling exercises and present the responses to these exercises along with reflections on each one. This process constitutes my autoethnographic process.

Following this, I introduce my zoomorphic exploration and present the illustrations created in response, accompanied by discussions for each illustration. The zoomorphic exploration exercise consisting of seven illustrations depicts a single scene with character variations.

The goal is to investigate:

1. The impact of zoomorphic projection on how a racially codified scene may be interpreted.
2. The differences in function between anthropomorphism and zoomorphism.
3. To develop and establish the argument for the final choice of animal representation.

I assess these scenes by evaluating how effectively they align with the goals I've set for the zoomorphic projection to achieve. In my research, zoomorphism is used:

1. To facilitate racially nuanced discussions without intentionally causing harm.

2. To illustrate individuals' racial heritage without resorting to stereotypical or oversimplified features.

3. To align with the author's (my) identity and perspective, given that the author is Coloured and specifically South African.

Finally, in Chapter 4 of the dissertation, I report and reflect on the creative component. I discuss the autoethnographic journaling that I engaged with to create a pool from which to draw from. I then discuss the comics form and the elements employed to assist the autoethnographic narrative in the comic. This report also reflects on zoomorphism as a vehicle for discussing social issues and providing nuance to the complexities of race, identity, and discrimination.

Lastly, I undertake an examination of the final comic output, addressing key inquiries such as:

- The treatment of language and slang within the comics form.
- The impact of zoomorphism on the portrayal of my Coloured experience.
- The specific components within the comic that intricately engage with the nuances of the Coloured identity.

Overall, my research aims to produce an artefact that talks about being Coloured in a creative and personal way. An attempt injected with research, self-study, and reflection. My research is not intended as journalism or aimed at being polemic. To be clear, my research is not meant to glorify Coloured people and condemn others. The goal is visibility. To talk deeply about my exploration and intimate relationship with being a Coloured person in South Africa.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Part 1 – Coloured Experience.

In this section, I take on an exploration of the term "Coloured", delving into the political implications, and conflicting viewpoints on Colouredness and what defines a Coloured person. I scrutinize the sociopolitical implications of Coloured assimilation, shame and rejectionism. I discuss the internal struggles, negative self-perceptions, and attempts by some to distance themselves from Colouredness through the adoption of alternative racial identities.

Moreover, I discuss the self-identification of Coloured people, emphasizing the dynamic nature of Coloured culture. I navigate polemic stances on Coloured culture, acknowledging that some view the term as a perpetuation of racist agendas, whilst others view Colouredness as a source of pride.

The overarching aim is to explain the diverse narratives surrounding Coloured identity and culture, acknowledging the socio-political and historical contributions to the complexities and discourse surrounding Colouredness.

1.1. The term ‘‘Coloured’’- What does it mean and who does it refer to?

I believe it is important to flesh out an understanding of the term “Coloured”. Unlike in the international eye, “Coloured” does not refer to the general Black public, instead, it refers to the highly diverse and multiracial social group akin to South Africa (Adhikari, 2005b, p. 2).

> *“[Coloureds] are a negative group. The definition of a coloured in the population register is someone that is not black and is not white and is also not an Indian, in other words a no-person. They are the leftovers. They are the people that were left after the nations were sorted out. They are the rest”(Adhikari, 2005b, p. 13). - Marike de Klerk, 1983 interview.*

Marike de Klerk, the former first lady of South Africa from 1989 - 1994, defines Coloured people based on what they are *not*—Coloured people are identified solely in relation to other racial groups, lacking an inherent identity of their own. She defined them by their negation: not Black, not White, not Indian. Being characterized as a void or deficiency of qualifying traits, as opposed to having a "true" identity, is deeply reprehensible, harmful, and divisive.

By describing Coloureds as a "negative group" and characterizing them as "leftovers" or "no-persons", Marike de Klerk encapsulates the discriminatory attitudes prevalent during the apartheid era. The impact of such words from a prominent figure, especially the first lady of a nation, reflects not only racism but also disregard and dehumanization toward a segment of the population. Her influential position amplifies the spread of such sentiments across the nation, exacerbating social divisions and perpetuating harmful stereotypes.
In his article *“God Made the White Man, God Made the Black Man...": Popular Racial Stereotyping of Coloured People in Apartheid South Africa,* Adhikari, engages analytically

with the issues of racial stereotyping of Coloured people and how public discourse has reinforced these stereotypes (Adhikari, 2006). I will talk more about stereotypes in the next section.

His article confronts and unravels the attitudes and assumptions that underline popular Apartheid-era jokes made about the supposed origins of the Coloured South African (Adhikari, 2006). This article specifically dissects the well-known racially charged joke by Jan Van Riebeeck, about Coloured people:

"God made the white man, God made the Black man, God made the Indian, the Chinese and the Jew — but Jan van Riebeeck, he made the Coloured man"(Adhikari, 2006, p. 149).

This joke tells us that Coloured people do not own themselves and that the power of claiming this identity does not belong to Coloured people. What I'd like to highlight about this article is that it discusses how racial stereotyping of Coloured people is rooted in the perception that they are racially impure and illegitimate (Adhikari, 2006).

Understanding the words used to dehumanize Coloured people provides insight into the values and attitudes of the society it circulates in. I recognise that Adhikari's (2006) article speaks specifically to the Apartheid era, however in a post-Apartheid context, jokes about Coloured people are still in circulation and permeates in modern society.

Many texts focus on the political implications of being a Coloured person, as well as discuss the conflicting points of view on Coloured Culture and attempts to define Coloured identity. I do not attempt to define what Coloured Identity is, nor do I attempt to define the scope of Coloured culture. My goal is to discuss these topics as they pertain to my lived experience.

A broad and in no way all-encompassing view states that Coloured people are the result of colonial contact along the Cape Coast, with years of miscegenation between colonists, the indigenous KhoiSan and other slave populations from the East, resulting in a racially and ethnically mixed group (Petrus and Isaacs-Martin, 2012, p. 92).

Denis-Constant Martin in *What's In the Name Coloured?* provides a general description for Coloured people, stating that we appear in all skin tones fair and dark, with Asian, European and African phenotypical features, who are either Christians or Muslims, and who speak Afrikaans or English or both (1998, p. 523). This is a very reductive description however it does paint an image of the type of people who are considered to be Coloured.

In this regard, I concur with Martin's description of Coloured people, as my family fits within the parameters he outlines. It's important to note that Martin's description isn't a definitive template or the sole indicator of Coloured identity. However, my family aligns with the characteristics he delineates.

In my family, there are numerous phenotypic variations. Just within my immediate family, there's a diverse range: my father had dark skin and coarse hair, and my mother has light skin and curly hair, both with dark brown eyes. I have a mid-toned complexion with thick curly hair and lighter brown eyes, while my younger sibling has a darker complexion with thin ringlets, and the youngest sibling shares my father's dark skin tone with thick, silky hair, both having brown eyes.

Looking beyond my nuclear family, towards my aunts, uncles, and cousins, the variations continue. Sometimes, the only resemblance amongst us is in our facial structure. There is a lot of diversity.

Martin suggests that the prevalence of Afrikaans as the primary language among most Coloured individuals exemplifies cultural interaction (1998, p. 531). This phenomenon stems from a communication system developed between Coloured slaves and their white masters in the Cape (1998, p. 531). This dynamic is attributed to the cross-fertilization of cultures among diverse populations in the region (1998, p. 531).

In terms of language, I grew up in a household where both Afrikaans and English were spoken. The majority of my extended family members speak either Afrikaans or English. However, I'm aware that other Coloured families may not speak Afrikaans and instead speak various Bantu languages, influenced by their local context. For example, Coloured families from KwaZulu-Natal may primarily speak English and Zulu.

Martin highlights the role of political exiles, like the Muslim Saints, in establishing Islam, particularly among Cape slaves (1998, p. 526). Subsequently, Christian Saints also became involved in evangelizing among the slave populations (1998, p. 526). This resulted in a significant portion of Cape slaves adopting Catholicism, Calvinism, Anglicanism, or other denominations (1998, p. 526).

Regarding religion, my family encompasses individuals who practice both Islam and Christianity. This diversity in religious beliefs is a wonderful aspect of our family, as it allows us to celebrate each other's religious holidays and share in the joy of communal gatherings and delicious food.

In all sincerity, this research has sparked my curiosity about my heritage and prompted a desire to explore my true roots. However, it is important to clarify that this research does not extensively explore my origins, nor does it delve into the formation of Coloured people as a distinct racial group to establish a definitive common ancestor or construct a narrative to define the essence of being Coloured.

At this stage, my research does not prioritize inquiries into origins; rather, it focuses on the lived experience of being Coloured and the profound impact this has had on my existence. The essence of my research lies in understanding and articulating the complexities of Coloured identity, rather than seeking to rigidly define it.

Whether the Coloured label[2] serves as a political tool for segregation or if our origins trace back to instances of violence like rape, is of secondary importance. What holds significance is the modern reality of our existence as individuals living as Coloured, and the profound ways in which this racial term shapes our lives.

[2] In this case the word “label” is used to refer to the forced placement of the term “Coloured” as a racial classification, by the ruling government during Apartheid. This echoes the sentiment that many did not identify with this term.

In his book *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community,* Adhikari works to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Colouredness and how it functions as a social identity in South Africa (Adhikari, 2005b, p. xxi). Adhikari speaks to Coloured assimilationism, Coloured shame at racial hybridity and Coloured rejectionism.

Assimilationism

Due to the fear of being associated with the broader Black identity, Coloured individuals were influenced by the White ruling establishment and were positioned within a racist ideological framework(Introduction Adhikari, 2005b, p. xiii). This led to a strong inclination towards assimilation with whiteness. Even today, I have observed instances where elders in my family express anti-Black sentiments, motivated by a desire to uphold a false sense of privilege or status.

In essence, the closer one can appear to Whiteness, the more likely they will receive approval, access (however measured) and some privilege. Whereas closeness to Blackness often leads to disapproval, less access, and little to no privileges, granted by the racist and prejudicial powers that be.

While this proximity scale simplifies race into a binary framework, it's important to recognize that race operates in more nuanced ways. However, I argue the mechanism of assimilation functions in such a manner, designed to encourage Coloured individuals to distance themselves from the broader Black identity that emerged during the Black Consciousness Movement.

Assimilation or striving for proximity to Whiteness frequently manifests in the preference for fairer skin, lighter eyes, and straighter hair - it also entails placing value on having White ancestors (Adhikari, 2005b, p. 11) breeding a sense of shame in appearances and family bloodlines.

Shame

Adhikari discusses the prevalence of shame within the Coloured community. He highlights how the negative connotations associated with Coloured identity have profoundly impacted individuals' lives, hindering the affirmation and positive expression of their identity - further noting that the Coloured identity was not readily embraced, and those who did identify as Coloured often did so with a sense of resignation *(2005b, p. 14)*.

When discussing my experience with Coloured shame, it's important to delineate between two distinct pathways:

Firstly, there's the shame associated with being Coloured, which originates from the racist ideology that imposed a negative self-image upon the Coloured community. Throughout my life, I've grappled with this distorted self-image and sought to distance myself from it by aligning with Whiteness, Blackness, or even attempting to detach entirely from any racial identity. However, there came a turning point, thanks to the pride demonstrated by other members of the Coloured community.

Witnessing fellow Coloured individuals take pride in their heritage, accent, and cultural diversity served as a catalyst for my own transformation from Coloured shame to Coloured pride. One memorable instance of this was at an event hosted by the Kullid Foundation in Riverlea, Johannesburg, where I observed people joyfully celebrating their identity, proudly wearing "Kullid" emblazoned t-shirts. Inspired by this display of community, I began to

embrace my Colouredness more openly, often donning similar shirts on occasions like Heritage Day or whenever I wanted to affirm my identity. In High school, I listened to Coloured artists like Early B and Agemi[3], singing and rapping away in Afrikaans, celebrating Coloured slang and the Coloured accent - feeling a sense of kinship and appreciation for Coloured culture. Being Coloured was officially “Cool”.

I began to examine and confront my lingering feelings of shame when I entered University. During this period, I made a conscious decision to stop hiding my Coloured accent, even when lecturing, as I recognized the significance of representation for my Coloured students. Speaking authentically without attempting to conceal my accent became an act of empowerment and solidarity, fostering a sense of pride and affirmation within myself and my community.

Secondly, there's the shame associated with belonging to a group that has endured significant hardships within a society that perpetuates low self-esteem. This shame manifests in the form of widespread anti-Blackness and a tendency to embrace white supremacist ideologies as a means of attaining Coloured pride. In essence, it's the shame stemming from some members of the Coloured community adopting a superiority complex and resorting to anti-Black sentiments in their pursuit of their Coloured pride. This approach is very exclusionary in my opinion and subtracts from the concept of shared culture with other racial groups and perpetuates segregation.

Rejectionism

Coloured rejectionism refers to the societal attitude and treatment towards individuals of Coloured ethnicity in South Africa creating a social pariah out of the Coloured community (Adhikari, 2005b, pp. 6, 131. 132). Since Coloured people are viewed as “impure” and not belonging to a “recognised” group. Colouredness is imbued with negative connotations.

Coloured rejectionism intrigues me because it manifests in various ways, with individuals often seeking to distance themselves from Coloured identity. This can take different forms, such as aspiring to align with Whiteness, Blackness, as mentioned before - or even connecting with another heritage, like Asian ancestry, to minimize association with Colouredness.

Danille Elize Arendse in her article, *Culture as a Colonial Hub: My reflections as a ‘Coloured’ [Woman] in Post Apartheid South Africa* (2021), takes an interesting approach to her identity. She chooses to separate her racialized identity, her legally racialized identity and her ethnic identity. She states that through the lens of the Black Consciousness movement – which serves to unite all non-White individuals in a collective – she identifies as Black. However legally she is classified as Coloured – which the author states, is an identification label that has been used to divide and control. She goes on to say that ethnically she identifies as Coloured based on her cultural and language practices.

This separation of identities is interesting to me, as I identify both ethnically, racially and legally with being Coloured regardless of the colonial and Apartheid ideologies. I believe this speaks to my lack of knowing of my familial roots and general lack of involvement in the

[3] My favorite song was Dakskroef. Listen here: Dakskroek

political stage. As stated before, what holds significance to my research is simply the fact that we exist as Coloured people, this is what holds the most merit and continues to be the topic of intrigue for my inquiry into Colouredness.

What I confront in my research, is this claim to and rejection of Colouredness. In my observation, this creates two groups of “legally classified” Coloured people, those who open-heartedly claim the term and those who find the term undesirable. What makes the term desirable or undesirable is up for personal interrogation.

Adhikari also discusses how the social identity of Colouredness in South Africa is shaped by the negative reception it receives socially and politically, primarily due to the perceived "impurity" of Coloured people (Adhikari, 2005a). This pressure often leads Coloured individuals to assimilate to other racial identities, reject their Coloured identity, or reluctantly accept it, resulting in a sense of shame.

I have personally experienced this phenomenon and have had to actively celebrate my racial identity by resisting the urge to change my accent or speech to conform to societal expectations, which often stereotype Coloured individuals as violent, loud, and unintelligent.

I note that the “Coloured accent” is not a marker of Colouredness. Many Coloured people do not have this accent, many people who are not Coloured, have this accent. I mention it here as a personal experience, a core element that has affected my life as a Coloured person.

These phenomena of assimilation, rejection and shame often cause Coloured individuals to admire physical traits associated with Whiteness, giving rise to colourism, texturism and anti-Blackness within Coloured communities.

1.2. Coloured Narratives on stereotypes and culture.

Stereotyping

> *“You can take the Coloured out of the bush, man, but you cannot take the Bushman out of the Coloured” (Adhikari, 2006, p. 160).*

To return to the idea of stereotyping, Adhikari expands on this quote, explaining that because of their Khoisan heritage, Coloured people are negatively referred to as "Bushmen" portraying them as inherently dirty, untrustworthy, wayward, treacherous, irresponsible, and delinquent, with low moral and intellectual capacity, as well as a having a propensity for theft and vagrancy – these traits are perceived as being deeply ingrained in Coloured DNA (Adhikari, 2005b, p. 28).

Furthermore, Adhikari highlights that racial slurs such as "Hotnot" and "Bushy" were commonly directed at Coloured individuals to imply inferiority and physical unattractiveness (Adhikari, 2005b, p. 28). Discovering this connotation is quite surprising to me. Growing up, I often heard friends and family affectionately refer to each other using terms like "Bushy" or "my Boesman." To me, it was regarded as friendly and endearing. However, I hadn't realized

that beyond our Coloured group, these terms were used derogatorily and specifically associated with physical repulsiveness.

Similarly, Vernon February in his book *Mind Your Colour: The "Coloured" Stereotype in South African Literature* illustrates the function of stereotypes as it pertains to South African Coloured people, as a form of social control and repression (February, 1981).

A quote that encapsulates the general beliefs towards Coloured people then and even now states that: "They are lazy, they love to drink, they swear and fight at the slightest provocation and are generally immoral" (February, 1981). There is a mental image of Coloured people being lazy, alcoholics, gangsters, and drug addicts. Ethnocentric stereotypes like this negatively impact Coloured people externally and internally.

In my observations, I've noticed that these stereotypes have made it incredibly challenging for Coloured individuals to secure, for instance, employment. After all, who would want to hire someone they perceive as untrustworthy and potentially prone to theft? This situation often makes assimilation seem like the most logical choice, whether it's towards Whiteness or Blackness. Trying to distance oneself from such detrimental stereotypes simply to secure a livelihood makes perfect sense.

I've witnessed this dynamic within my own family, where discussions revolve around potentially indicating "Black" on job applications or at the bank to gain an advantage. Additionally, there's an emphasis on speaking "perfect" Afrikaans or "proper" English when communicating with potential employers over the phone, all in an effort to appear more desirable for employment. These are just a few of the strategies employed by many individuals in our community to increase their chances of finding work.

I experienced this first-hand when I went for my first big interview as a student assistant. My mother faffed over my appearance, "wear this, change your hair, speak properly when you get there." I felt the need to perform and embody the words: "I am trustworthy", "I am responsible", "I'm not dangerous". I imagine job hunting is never easy, however, I do think that battling these stereotypes and fighting to appear "decent" as part of the job-seeking process, makes it particularly difficult.

I acknowledge that much of this pressure is from my mother. The job itself did not impose these rules on me. I think this is a reflection of generational strife within the Coloured community, more intimately, my family. It is also important to note that those sentiments she expressed are products of her time job seeking in her youth. She passes them on to me, not knowing if/how times have changed post-Apartheid, regardless of its legacy.

I must also state that a clear indicator of how times have changed is in the existence of this research. However, it must also be acknowledged, that I committed a fair amount of assimilation, and rejection of my Colouredness whilst climbing the academic ladder.

Culture

Beyond forming an understanding of the term "Coloured", understanding the culture is paramount to my research. In my observation, Coloured people's approach to culture can be thought of as a "Mixed masala" as my mother would say. It is not a static thing, and it is different for every Coloured person. It has influences from other ethnic groups and is

affected by religion. Regardless of the differences, there are similar and identifiable aspects that bond them as being Coloured Culture.

Martin states that these people (Coloured people) whose label was assigned by the government “invented specific lifestyles, which gave… form, content and substance to otherwise scattered pockets of people”(Martin, 1998, p. 524).

There are polemic stances on Coloured Culture. To some, the idea of Coloured culture is problematic as it further perpetuates the racists and oppressive agenda to separate the Black body in favour of White Superiority (Martin, 1998, p. 524). To others, Coloureds have created a unique culture that they have the right to claim and be proud of (Martin, 1998, p. 524).

I agree with this. Coloured Culture is unique and a borrowing of the cultures we have a closer proximity to. It is not homogeneous and can vary from Coloured household to household/ community to community. Topics like music, culinary habits, slang, celebratory events/days, clothing/costume are significant here.

Part 2: Animal agents in graphic narratives

In this section I establish zoomorphism as a representational tool within the context of graphic narratives and attempt to demarcate its distinct features from those of anthropomorphism.

This section will also explore the ways in which zoomorphic allegories work to extend metaphors and communicate cultural, social, or political messages. I discuss the ethical implications when employing zoomorphism to support narratives that are racially codified, focusing specifically on the effects of depicting different racial groups as different species depictions.

Moreover, I discuss the use of zoomorphism as an abstraction and way of cartooning for simplified yet effective communication of iconic figure and authorial avatars.

2.1. Establishing Zoomorphism in the context of visual presentation.

> *“One of the most popular models of metaphorical nomination is the zoomorphic metaphor, the cognitive source of which is the "image" of an animal transferred to a person.” - (Petrenko and Petrenko, 2021, p. 720).*

In the world of storytelling, we make use of different devices and techniques strategically to craft intricate and vivid depictions, that support engaging narratives. We aim to communicate pivotal moments and complex ideas to our audiences. One such device is the use of metaphor, which can be employed during everyday conversation, or across different

storytelling mediums - to construct mental images through association, serving as a tool that characterises or amplifies certain aspects of the narrative.

A similar technique in literature is Zoomorphism - a practice that attributes animal forms, qualities or behaviours to humans (D. C. Sly, 2021, p. 11). Its conceptual opposite is Anthropomorphism, which is the practice of ascribing human traits or mental attributes to non-human beings, specifically animals (Turner, 2022, p. 49).

In *Zoomorphic Metaphor And Its Correlation With Linguistic Worldview In British Fiction*, Alexander. P. Petrenko and S. A. Petrenko (2021, p. 720) state that in essence, zoomorphic metaphors allow individuals to draw on the rich symbolism and associations with various animals to describe human traits, behaviours, or characteristics. By doing so, they can evoke nuanced meanings and convey complex ideas using familiar animal imagery. This suggests that by employing zoomorphic metaphors, speakers and writers can evoke vivid mental images and convey subtle nuances in meaning, enhancing the effectiveness and expressiveness of their descriptions.

As a starting point we must explore the functionality of Zoomorphism for its textual presentations across media like traditionally written prose and its visual presentations in illustrated stories like children's books and comics.

Zoomorphism can appear in idioms to demonstrate a situation or describe a person's behaviour by drawing parallels with animal association.

For example:

> "The early bird catches the worm". Here we're able to express the idea of being punctual leading to a rewarding result.
>
> "He's as blind as a bat". Which expresses the extent of which that person has the capacity for sight.

From these forms of expression, we understand that zoomorphism evokes animal imagery to underscore a nuanced human experience, conjuring a mental image.

I maintain that when zoomorphism is visually depicted, it operates differently compared to its textual expression. In text, zoomorphism typically triggers a mental image as readers imagine the animal-like qualities being described. However, in visual representations, such as illustrations or images, the animal imagery is already presented to the viewer. This pre-existing visual representation can alter the perception of zoomorphism and may blur the distinction between zoomorphism and anthropomorphism.

In his article *Storyworld/Umwelt: Nonhuman experiences in Graphic Narratives* (2011), David Herman explores how graphic narratives depict animal experiences. Although Herman's main concern is studying the portrayal of nonhuman experiences in graphic narratives, what interests my research is the framework he has developed.

Herman draws on the study of storytelling practices across media and research on the nexus narrative and mind - illustrating his test cases along two scales - 1. A Post-Cartesian Continuum for Consciousness Representation and 2. A Continuum of Strategies for Representing Nonhuman Experiences (See figure 2) (2011, p. 158).

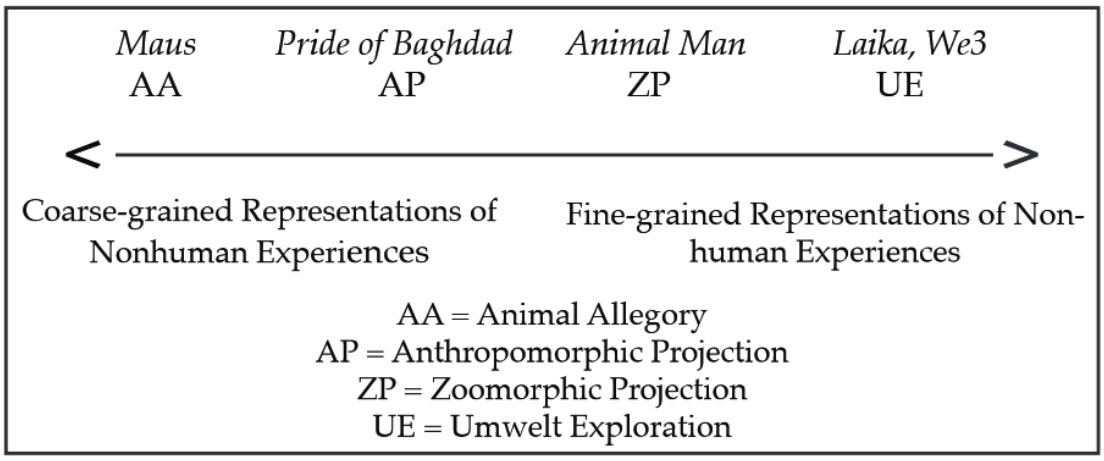

Figure 2: A Continuum of Strategies for Representing Nonhuman Experiences ((Herman, 2011, p. 166))

Herman's representational strategies are: Animal Allegory, Anthropomorphic Projection, Zoomorphic Projection, and then Umwelt Exploration. However, I disagree with the layout of this scale.

I take issue with Animal Allegory being positioned as a Representational Strategy and instead see it more as an intention. Animal Allegory can be thought of as a literary device that allows authors to establish metaphors or messages with hidden meanings by pulling on symbols and animals thus creating layers of understanding in their narrative.

I maintain that Zoomorphic projection, Anthropomorphic projection, and Umwelt Exploration can be used to achieve Animal Allegory.

I argue that there is no visual/mental image that specifically reads as Animal Allegory, however there are images that are elicited from the terms: anthropomorphism and zoomorphism.

To expand, Herman refers to Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1986) as an example for Animal Allegory, as it extends a metaphor for the racial tensions between the Jews and the Germans during the Holocaust, and conflating that relationship with that of cats and mice.

Maus (1986) visually represents its characters as bipedal with animal faces/ masks (see Figure 3) and otherwise human form. This would be considered zoomorphism by Sly's

(2021, p. 11) definition as *Maus* (1986) visually showcases the practice of attributing animal forms to humans. Therefore, animal allegory is the goal of the comic, not the representational strategy – that would be zoomorphic projection.



Figure 3: Page 139 of Maus showing character's with animal faces and wearing animal masks(Spiegelman, 1986)

In George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) - an Animal Allegory for the Russian Revolution - the characters are visually presented as animals, who are capable of speech – a human characteristic. This would be categorized as anthropomorphism according to Turner (2022, p. 49), as human qualities or mentalities are ascribed to animals both in their visual depiction and when written. These characters are not humans in animal form, they are talking animals.

Both *Maus* 1986) and *Animal Farm* (1945) are examples that employ different representational strategies yet are both examples of Animal Allegory in graphic narratives.

Therefore, I propose a simplified model for understanding the spectrum or degree to which these representational strategies could be understood, specifically in a visual presentation. (See Figure 4).

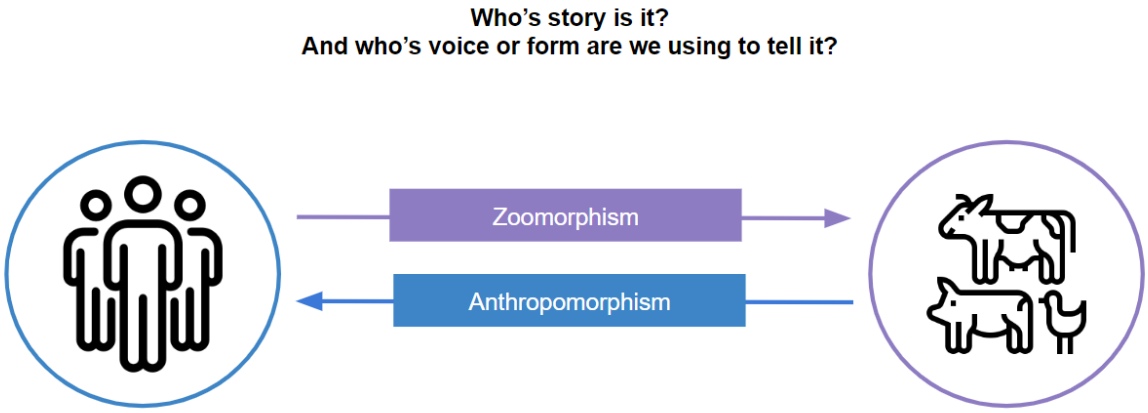

Figure 4: Illustration depicting relationship between zoomorphism and anthropomorphism.

I demonstrate in Figure 4 that the representational strategies - zoomorphism and anthropomorphism – can be thought of as being on opposite ends of a spectrum.

Positioning these representational strategies in this way enables us to discern whether a narrative originates from a human-centric perspective, making use of animal mentalities, behaviour, or form to amplify key concepts (Zoomorphic projection).

Or whether the narrative originates from an animal-centred portrayal, making use of human mentalities, characteristics, or behaviours to highlight key concepts (Anthropomorphic projection).

The relevance of this spectrum is that it helps us understand the intentions, motivation, and thematic nuances of the narrative. What is the story trying to do by using these devices? Who does it serve and what message is it trying to convey?

By asking the questions: Whose story, is it? And who's voice or form are we using to tell it? We begin to understand where on this graph we have positioned our story and which device (zoomorphism or anthropomorphism) we are using.

For example, I would place *Maus*(1986) on the left side of the spectrum, shifting from human towards animal (zoomorphism) since it expresses a human experience, with human mentalities and modes of communication whilst adopting some animal form.

Conversely, I would place *Animal Farm* (1945) on the right side of the spectrum, shifting from animal towards human (anthropomorphism) since it expresses an animal centric story with human mentalities and human modes of communication whilst still exhibiting animal forms and animalistic behaviour.

Both of which discuss real-life events that humans have experienced yet use different representational strategies for the purpose of creating Animal Allegory.

Understanding the difference between zoomorphism and anthropomorphism is crucial, particularly in illustrated narratives like comics or children's books. The potential confusion between these concepts can undermine the intended message of the story if anthropomorphic characters are mistakenly perceived as zoomorphic.

What I find intriguing is the notion that employing zoomorphic representation techniques might inadvertently dehumanize the subjects being portrayed. While the idea of dehumanization may seem counterintuitive or even concerning, my intention is not to strip human subjects of their voices or subject them to moral abuse. Rather, my aim is to utilize zoomorphic representation to humanize their experiences and perspectives, leveraging the positive impact of visual abstraction.

One reason I'm drawn to using zoomorphism in my comic is the challenge of cartooning, which often requires reducing characters to essential, identifiable features. The Coloured community is incredibly diverse, with individuals exhibiting a wide range of physical characteristics. Attempting to capture a "signature" Coloured look without resorting to stereotypes or perpetuating racial ambiguity would be extremely difficult.

Moreover, dialogue plays a significant role in character identification in my comic, particularly due to the use of Coloured slang. While certain characters may be easily identified as Coloured based on their speech patterns, what about those who don't use slang? Could they be mistaken for members of a different racial group?

In my comic, characters from different racial backgrounds engage in conversations on various topics. It's crucial for readers to be able to identify these separate groups, as the dynamics of these conversations could easily be misconstrued. This is what I aim to avoid.

Zoomorphism serves as a valuable tool for representing these racial groups in distinct ways. I argue that Animal imagery not only enhances storytelling but also facilitates reader engagement and understanding - employing zoomorphic projection, a certain distance is created between the reader and the characters, making it easier to broach sensitive topics and fostering deeper comprehension. Additionally, I believe that animal imagery has a softening effect on difficult conversations, making them more digestible for audiences.

This concept revolves around abstraction, metaphor, and imaginative interpretation to underscore and creatively communicate my personal understanding of being Coloured. Instead of diminishing the humanity of the subjects, I seek to enhance their portrayal by tapping into the power of visual metaphor and symbolism through zoomorphic projection.

2.2. I of the Tiger - Animal icons/masks in comics.

> *"Funny-animal comics are possessed of an enchantment almost mystical in nature. The inherent irreality of the concept gives them instant fantastical quality, and, paradoxically, a reality that far exceeds the dulled naturalism of "realistic" comics. As a result, many of the most evocative comic books and strips ever done fall into the funny-animal category" - (Thompson, 1986, p. 32)*

Comic book editor Kim Thompson, in this quote, suggests that funny animal comics possess an enchanting and fantastical quality, making them ideal for hosting engaging and intimate conversations (1986). Their inherent irreality creates a space for abstraction, allowing for graphical representations, such as cartooning in comics, to convey complex human stories in a stimulating manner by incorporating animal imagery and applying techniques like zoomorphism or anthropomorphism.

This aligns with Scott McCloud in his book *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art,* who elaborates on the vocabulary of comics, singling out the icons we call pictures (1993). McCloud states that pictures are images designed to resemble their subjects, however, as resemblance varies so does its iconic nature - "some pictures are more iconic than others" (McCloud, 1993, p. 27).

McCloud talks about the realism of the picture icon and how, even as we migrate further away from realistic representations and move closer to abstract, simplified representations; a hyper realistic picture of a face versus a cartoon (See Figure 5) - we can still recognize and accept it as being just as real (McCloud, 1993, p. 29).

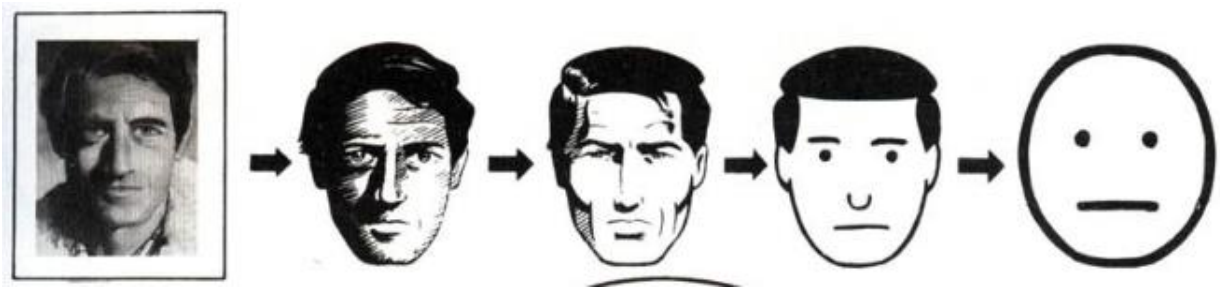

Figure 5: Image showcasing the simplification of a hyper realistic drawing of a face towards a simplified drawing of a face.(McCloud, 1993, p. 29)

This brings us to the concept of the authorial avatar.

Professor of English, Andrew J Kunka in his book *Autobiographical Comics* offers a discussion on authorial representation and the narrative "I" in autobiographical comics. He draws on Rocco Versaci (2007) who identified five ways for first-person narration to occur in comics one of which is the alter ego or the autobiographical avatar (Kunka, 2018, p. 61).

Kunka (2018) draws a comparison between the function of abstractions, such as figurative language, in traditional prose and comics, particularly regarding animal imagery. In prose,

when an author employs zoomorphism like "I was a mouse caught in a trap," readers typically understand it as a metaphorical expression, not a literal depiction (Kunka, 2018, p. 7).

However, in comics, figurative language operates more literally because it is visually depicted. Kunka gives the example, that in *Maus* (1986) the characters are not metaphorically "like" mice; they are depicted as mice, serving as a visual allegory (2018, p. 7).

These visual representations of figurative language in comics require delicate handling because they rely on referencing reality. If the abstraction becomes too far removed, the reference can be lost, and the icon no longer serves its intended function, lending itself to misrepresentation.

One of the challenges in my research stems from the autoethnographic nature of the comic, where my authorial avatar isn't solely a representation of myself. Since my research focuses on Coloured people and I am a part of this community, how I depict myself must also extend to other community members depicted in the comic. Consequently, how I abstract myself to become an icon must be applicable to the broader group.

Unlike other comic artists who draw themselves separately from other characters - choosing to depict only themselves as animals or consistently wearing the same shirt or hairstyle. My approach is to showcase myself at various ages, with different hairstyles, and wearing different clothes, this limits my options in terms of creating a distinctive icon solely for myself within the narrative.

I must integrate my avatar as part of the larger group, ensuring that I am identifiable as a Coloured individual. The way I portray myself needs to align with how I depict other Coloured characters and should serve as a faithful representation that allows Coloured readers to recognize, "Oh, that's a Coloured character," even if they are represented using the zoomorphic image.

Another challenge arises from the combination of zoomorphic projection and autoethnographic content. It's crucial that the comic doesn't give the impression of being purely fictional. Unlike a traditional narrative with fictional characters, the content of this comic is deeply rooted in personal experiences, but it is also meant as an analysis of the self within the larger context of the group.

Therefore, the use of animal imagery must be carefully executed to avoid creating a disconnect between the zoomorphic projection and a faithful representation of the subject matter. These are not fictional characters going through a story that takes inspiration from real-world happenings. These are real people, and I am relaying my real memories and thoughts through this comic, relying on abstraction and animal allegory.

2.3. Species and Race.

It's important to understand the risks that come with relying on animal imagery especially when discussing racial differences.

Leslie Bow in their article *Racial Abstraction and Species Difference: Anthropomorphic Animals in "Multicultural" Children's Literature* explores how talking animals are used to model racialized behaviours in children's literature and picture books (2019).

Bow highlights the potential unintended consequences of using species differences as a means of racial abstraction, particularly focusing on anthropomorphic animals (Bow, 2019).

While these animals are often employed to teach tolerance and advocate for diversity, such as in narratives depicting adoption by showing adoptive parents and children as different animal species to emphasize cross-species bonds, or stories showcasing a diverse range of species to illustrate inclusion and biodiversity, there are complexities to consider (Bow, 2019).

Using anthropomorphic animals as substitutes for discussions on race relations carries the risk of inadvertently producing racist caricatures of the represented racial group - additionally, there is the danger of instilling animal associations, as children's books and other graphic narratives can inadvertently lead audiences to form strong connections between specific animals and particular races or ethnicities (Bow, 2019).

Of course, it must be recognized that animal associations are not global, "Zoomorphic metaphor acts in accordance with figurative-associative models, formed in native speakers based on experience, perception of the world, and personal observations" (Petrenko and Petrenko, 2021, p. 718).

Gregg Gerrard argues that zoomorphism can be crude or critical. Where crude zoomorphism is reductive - representing humans through a racist lens i.e., Black people as monkeys or Chinese people as pandas (Gregg Gerrard in Pearson, 2016, p. 51).

Similarly, I argue that there are specific animal images and associations that are globally recognized as being racially charged and are utilized to promote negative ideologies. For example, in my comic, I refrain from using imagery of dogs, particularly Pitbulls, due to the connotations they hold within the Coloured community - that of being a "pavement special" or "mixed breed," which reinforces the notion that Coloured people are racially impure. I strive to avoid perpetuating these stereotypes in my depiction of Coloured individuals as I would consider this to be a crude representation of Coloured people.

In his article *Speciesism, Part I: Translating Races into Animals in Wartime Animation* Cinema and Media studies Professor Thomas Lamarre coins the term “Speciesism” (2008). This term is used to refer to the translation of species relations to race relations. Lamarre speaks specifically to the wartime between America and Japan and how the American Media of the time degraded and dehumanized the Japanese through caricature and bestialization (LaMarre, 2008, p. 75).

The strategy, Lamarre says, was to use animal imagery to strip the Japanese of their humanity by depicting them as nonhuman or subhuman representations such as reptiles, insects and most prominent monkeys or apes (LaMarre, 2008, p. 75).

What we understand from this is that bestialization is the application on negative animal associations onto humans, however Lamarre makes it clear that even friendly or positive animal images can be used to imply racialization especially when speciesism is at play. (LaMarre, 2008, p. 76).

As part of my research, I engage in an exercise of zoomorphic exploration. This involves creating illustrations of various scenes to experiment with different character representations, aiming to assess how they are perceived and whether they appear crude or critical.

A crude representation would undermine the Coloured image, applying negative associations without consideration, and failing to take action to counteract these associations. On the other hand, a critical representation considers the multiracial and multicultural nature of Coloured people and acknowledges their nuanced identity.

Through the process of zoomorphic exploration, I rationalize my final decision on how I depict Coloured people in the comic. The initial scene features two human characters, while subsequent scenes introduce dynamics arising from the presence of human characters alongside anthropomorphic or zoomorphic characters.

This exploration allows me to observe how zoomorphism is perceived in various scenarios: when a zoomorphic character interacts with humans, when all characters are zoomorphic but of different species, and when all characters are zoomorphic and of the same species. This exploration of visualizing each approach helps me gain a deeper understanding of zoomorphic projection.

Further reflection on these observations is provided in Chapter 3: Who Do I Think I Am? Autoethnographic And Zoomorphic Comics and The Expression of Coloured Identity.

Part 3 – Comics, Research, and Expression of Documentative Narratives.

This section is dedicated to discussing the intrinsic qualities of comics that make them a viable visual strategy for my research.

I establish what comics are and how they fit into the research space as vehicles for inquiry and research output, discussing the key affordances that comics offer researchers. Additionally, I discuss the text-image relationship that is a characteristic of comics and juxtapose this relationship with that of other illustrated works, like picture books.

Furthermore, I discuss autobiographical comics and how this aligns with my autoethnographic approach to comics making.

3.1. What are comics?

Very briefly, I will dive into the semantics of comics. There is much debate on the definition of what comics are, however, my research is not here to debate those definitions, only to situate what the medium is generally accepted to be and what the qualities of comics are that I intend to lean on as I produce the creative component of my research.

The comics form broadly appears as sub-forms such as graphic novels, newspaper strips, web-comics, comic books and Manga - through varying genre such as romance, funny-animal, horror, super hero, alternative/ underground, autobiographical, and journalistic (Meskin, Cook and Ellis, 2014, p. 29).

I understand comics to be a visual medium with an interesting text-image complex, that have unique structural elements. Comics are inherently sequential and facilitate a diverse stream of subject matter ranging from politics, personal expressions, or fantastical narratives. Comics to me are a storytelling medium.

In the following section I will discuss the qualities of comics that set them apart from other visual media like children's picture books or illustrated stories as motivation for why a comic best facilitates and compliments my research output.

3.2. Comics as a research output?

Now that I've established what comics are, I will discuss how comics fit into the research space as a medium and vehicle for documenting and sharing scholarly outputs.

Researcher and ethnographer Paul J Kuttner, and co-authors Marcus B Weaver-Hightower and Nick Sousanis, in their article *Comics-based Research: The Affordances of Comics for Research across Disciplines,* define and document the methodological practice of Comics Based Research (CBR) (2021).

This article argues that there are certain characteristics of comics that "offer powerful tools for scholarly inquiry" (Kuttner, Weaver-Hightower and Sousanis, 2021). These tools can be thought of as "semiotic resources" which are conventions/markers of the form (McCloud,

1993; Varnum and Gibbons, 2001; Walker, 2000 in Kuttner, Weaver-Hightower and Sousanis, 2021, p. 197).

As a comic artist, I wholeheartedly agree with the notion that the comics medium offers a powerful arena for scholarly exploration, as well as any other form of inquiry. This is due to the unique relationship between image and text in comics, granting scholars, autobiographers, and artists alike the ability to utilize both writing and drawing as tools for documenting, reflecting, recording, and communicating.

These "semiotic resources" as this article mentions (2021, p. 197) can be organized as such:

Textual resources:	- Speech/ dialogue - Narrative text/ captions. - Titles. - Sound effects/sonic events and other graphic texts and their qualities (fonts, size, style, colour, etc).
Visual resources:	- Text containers (speech bubbles and text blocks). - Illustrated characters, scenes, backgrounds. - Emenata, speed/ movement lines. - Visual style/ art style.
Structural resources:	- Panels. - Gutters. - Frames. - Layout, and compositional elements that lend themselves to reader navigation and design.

Not every comic makes use of all these resources or features all the markers, however, these structural and semiotic resources provide researchers with a medium that is flexible for research inquiry.

Comics, as a flexible medium, offer the advantages of both art and narrative, with picture-based resources allowing for a spectrum of abstraction and realism, spanning from fictional characters and creatures to infographics and photographs.

Moreover, the narrative possibilities within comics are virtually limitless. Whether through monologues, dialogues, scientific explanations, diary entries, or a combination of text and image, comics can accommodate a wide range of storytelling methods. Additionally, comics possess the unique ability to simulate motion through pictures and convey sound through text. They can effectively depict the passage of time and utilize visual metaphors to extend meaning.

This flexibility is elaborated on in this article as products of three key affordances of the comics form, being that:

- They are multimodal,	Thus allowing scholars to move between modes of writing and images quickly and easily to suit the needs of their research (Kuttner, Weaver-Hightower and Sousanis, 2021, p. 200).
- They feature sequentially/simultaneity,	Thus supporting the analysis and communication of researcher findings, as sequencing through panels and other structural elements of comics aid in readability, whilst simultaneity providing numerous meaning making tools to assist in narrative threading and communicating processes, be they scientific or other (Kuttner, Weaver-Hightower and Sousanis, 2021, pp. 202–203).
- And they are open to creator style and voice (Kuttner, Weaver-Hightower and Sousanis, 2021, p. 200).	Thus allowing the scholar the space for self-expression to explore researcher subjectivity, by connecting themselves in their research in a tangible and more physical manner, and providing a creative mode of communicating their research outputs (Kuttner, Weaver-Hightower and Sousanis, 2021, p. 207).

For my research, comics serve as a crucial outlet for expressing introspections and inquiries into my identity. Without this creative medium, I would struggle to effectively communicate the depth and nuances of my exploration. Comics provide a space to tell my story while offering visual aids that maintain a sense of continuity and connection throughout.

These semiotic resources and the flexibility of the comics medium, are the tools for inquiry that comics offer to researchers aiming to capture and collect significant sensory moments (sounds, smells, gestures, sentences and expressions) of the research subject/participant (Williams, 2012).

To provide an example of how these semiotic resources have been used in scholarly inquiry, I look to Rachel Williams in her research comic *Can You Picture This? Activism Art and Public Scholarship* (2012) who showcases precisely how she has taken advantage of these semiotic resources to display “embodied aspects” of her participants during her study.

Williams (2012) details a multisensory (within the context of the comics form) capturing of her study of the experiences of woman in prison. She refers to her comic as field sketches and graphic accounts of the experiences of her participants and herself. Williams (2012) goes on to state that what is represented in the form of comics in comparison to written word alone becomes more visible, as can be seen in her ‘*Basic Anatomy of a Comic’* (see Figure 6).

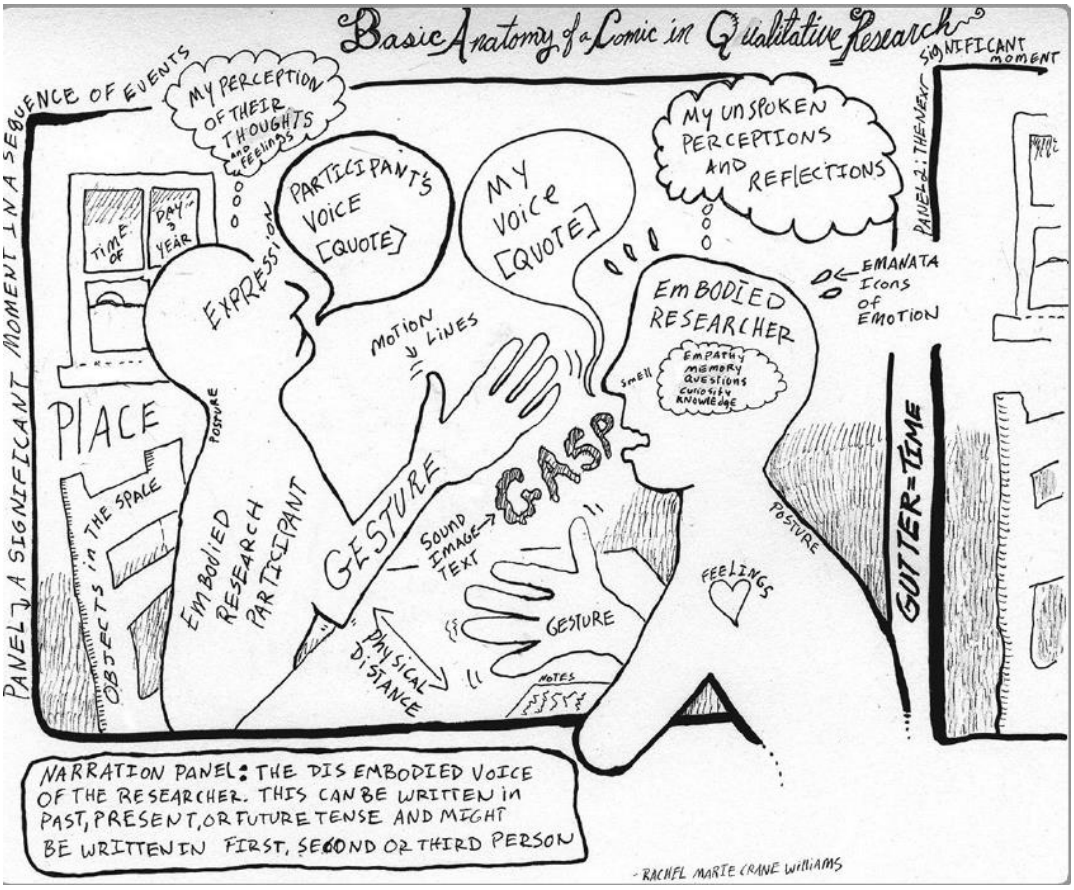

Figure 6: Basic Anatomy of a Comic by Rachel Marie-Crane Williams (2012).

I argue that the nuances of what is being represented are highlighted and made more powerful because of the visuality and multimodality of the comics form.

Williams showcases “embodied aspects” like the participant’s:

- Thoughts,
- Dialogue,
- Body language,
- And the narrative wholistically.

This is foregrounded by the comics form (Williams, 2012, p. 94), through the textual, visual, and structural resources (Kuttner, Weaver-Hightower and Sousanis, 2021).

Although my research does not involve external participants, the goal is to use the comics form similarly to how Williams does - as a graphic account.

To further illustrate how the semiotic resources of the comics form assists researchers, I engage with Ebony Flowers’ *Experimenting with Comics Making as Inquiry* (2017) - this article is aimed at extending Multimodal Analysis (MMA) in ethnographic education research. Flowers showcases her comics making approach in the format of a zine to show how the comics medium has benefited her ethnographic research (2017, pp. 21–22).

Flowers (2017, p. 24) examines the concept of a picture-based approach to research, focusing on the impact of comic making on her inquiry. She outlines four ways in which

comic making influenced her research process, of which, these points I want to bring attention to:

- Her second point - unifying the visual and textual with body-sensory perception.
- And her third point - emphasizing inhabitation.

These points, detailed by Flowers (2017, p. 24) and depicted in Figure 7, illustrate how comic making influenced various aspects of her research. These relate very closely to my autoethnographic inquiry into Coloured Identity and speak directly to the comics making process.

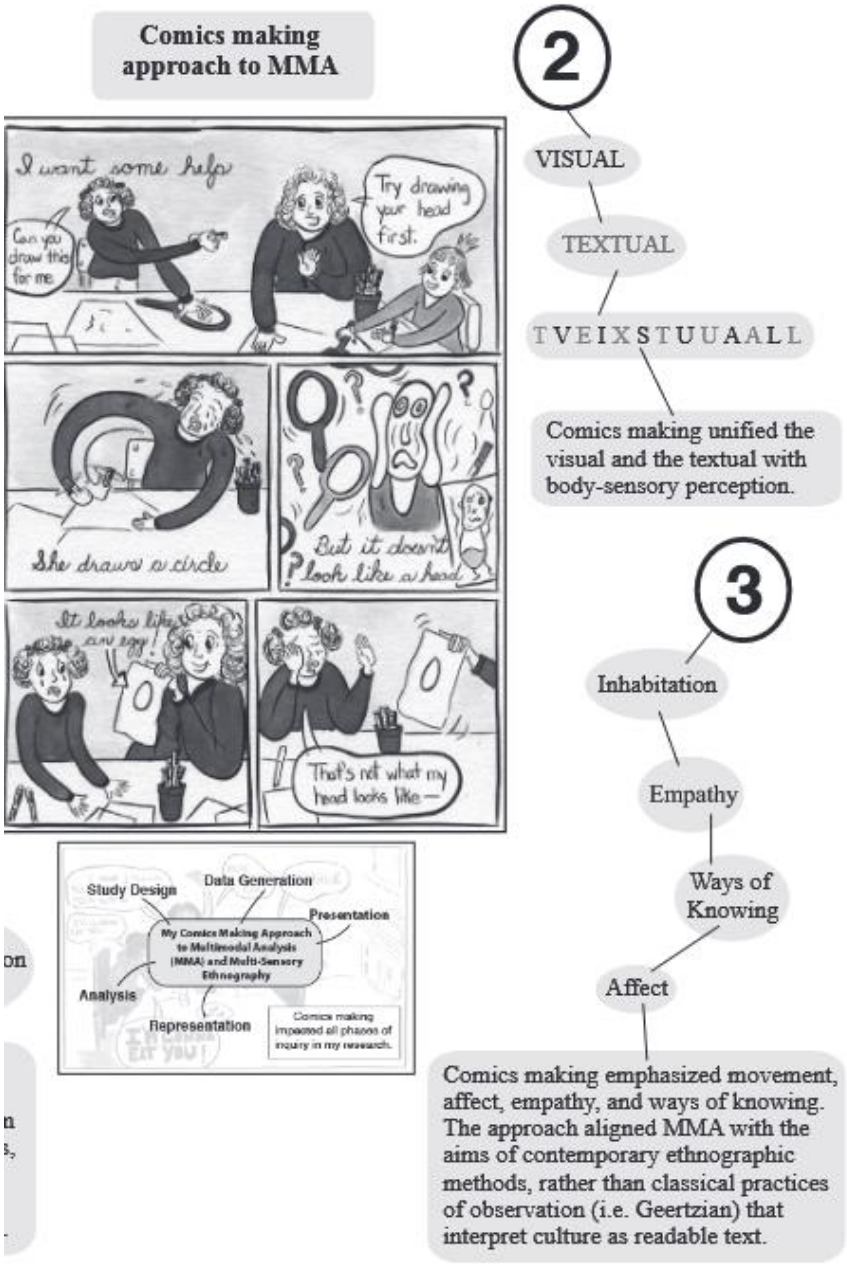

Figure 7: Comics making approach to MMA by Ebony Flowers(Flowers, 2017, p. 54)

"Making comics allows me to draw a space for lively roleplay where I can see myself, other scholars, and my fieldwork as a seamless whole" (Flowers, 2017, p. 39) – Ebony Flowers

Flower's use of the word *roleplay* perfectly describes the practice of writing and creating my research output (the comic book).

Regarding point number 2, body-sensory perception is an important aspect of showcasing the language and the way of speaking of Coloured people that I reflect on. Capturing speech patterns, accents, slang, and body language is especially important to bring to life my voice as a Coloured person. This point aligns with embodied aspects discussed previously (Williams, 2012, p. 94). Capturing these sensory details requires me to participate in a full body observation of movement and dialogue – inhabitation.

Regarding, point number 3, emphasizing inhabitation, talks about the active process of inhabiting the subject of what is drawn to produce a comic (Flowers, 2017, p. 31). Simply saying that the comic artist commits to embodying and appreciating it's subject to gain better insight. Flowers talks about how she placed herself within her research subjects psyche, in order to depict them within her research comics, for instance she would pose as her subjects did, to gain a tangible sense of their movements, or she would repeat phrases they said – inhabitation extended her analysis (Flowers, 2017, p. 32).

Flower's stated that comics making uniquely requires a (re)imagining of lived experience through inhabitation (Flowers, 2017, p. 32). Her research involved other people and also involved and element of shared meaning making between her the researcher and her external research subjects.

In my researcher however, I am the researcher and the research subject and because my research is based in autoethnographic methods of inquiry - my research asks me to resurface memories and reimagine lived experiences. This practice of first engaging in memory work through guided journaling to unearth deep thoughts, and then committing to depicting that content adds another layer of to the concept of inhabitation.

During my comics production stage, like Flowers (2017), I actively engaged with my subject matter. For instance, in the final comic there is an illustration of a handshake - this handshake is a greeting I share with friends. In order to correctly capture the memory of it, I had to move my body and actively roleplay the handshake to capture the details of its choreography. I must have repeated the moment nearly a dozen times.

Similarly for slang or accents of different characters in the comic, I verbalised the lines, rehearsing them, testing their sounds, and rearranging the words before committing them to the comic. This inhabitation was such a personal act of reconnecting and truly seeing and embodying my Colouredness. The ways I speak, the movements I make, embracing the things I recognise as symbols of my identity.

Returning to the concept of roleplaying, due to the autoethnographic nature of my research, I project my own understanding of Colouredness onto my author avatar in my comic. This involved asking them to stand in as myself while I roleplayed as my author avatar, in order to capture my own voice. This creates an interesting space for mirrored performance and confrontation of the self.

These two points emphasize how the process of making comics serves as a direct way to experience and demonstrate effective ways of understanding and discussing complex themes such as agency and identity - the process itself becomes a site for tactile meaning-making (Flowers, 2017, p. 32).

Now that we've explored the semiotic resources available in comics and the opportunities they offer researchers, comic artists, and autobiographers, I want to turn our attention to a fundamental affordance that produce these resources – multimodality. This is pivotal in explaining why I've selected comics as my preferred medium of expression over other graphic forms. Multimodality speaks to image-text complex within comics that makes them stand out from other graphic media.

Professor of Philosophy, Thomas E. Wartenberg in his chapter, *Wordy Pictures: Theorizing the Relationship between Image and Text in Comics*, takes on the task of analysing the text-image relationship that are characteristic of comics by examining illustrated books and children's picture books in relation to comics as they are ontologically close (Wartenberg, 2012, p. 156).

Wartenberg claims that what is unique to comics is that text and pictures are afforded equal priority and that neither the text nor the images in comics impose constraints on one another (Wartenberg, 2012, p. 156).

Wartenberg's analysis assists in rationalizing my selection of comics as the preferred vehicle through which I communicate the autoethnographic reflections of my inquiry into my Coloured Experience. Comics treat words and pictures very differently to how other visual media such as illustrated novels or picture books do. Many other visual media use words and images to assist in building, communicating, and sharing narratives, however the unique relationship of words and images in comics have appealed to my research.

Thus, using Wartenberg's analysis on the text-image relationship in comics, I begin to answer: Why a comic? To answer this, we must compare the comics medium to other graphic narratives.

Wartenberg considers illustrated works like Barry Moser's *The Holy Bible: King James version* which includes 232 illustrations presented alongside the text of the bible verses (Wartenberg, 2012, p. 158). Wartenberg highlights that the relationship between text and image in this work is asymmetrical as there is a pre-existing story that has then undergone the process of being illustrated as a secondary piece – the text dictates the image (Wartenberg, 2012, p. 158).

He discusses that what makes an illustrated piece an illustration, is that it has been directed by the text of which it is an illustration of - the image is considered for its faithfulness to what the text has described (Wartenberg, 2012, pp. 158–159).

Moreover, illustrations can stand independently of the text should they be exhibited and enjoyed that way (Wartenberg, 2012, p. 160).

In children's books however, Wartenberg notes that images may be less subordinate to the text they aim to illustrate even though they are also bound by the constraint of faithfulness (2012, p. 160).

Comics on the other hand do not feature this kind of image-text complex that is present in either Illustrated works or children's picture books. In comics the text nor the images are constrained to faithfulness or subordination and frequently take on different roles.

Comic scholar, Scott McCloud (1993), in his book *Understanding comics: The Invisible Art*, observes that "[In comics] …words and pictures are like partners in a dance and each one takes turns leading… When each partner knows their roles, and support each other's strengths – Comics can match any of the art forms it draws so much of its strength from " (McCloud, 1993, p. 156).

This partnership in comics allows the text and image to combine in various ways to facilitate narrative building and storytelling.

McCloud (1993, pp. 152–155) lists seven distinct categories that words and pictures can combine in comics:

1. Word specific: Words are carrying the storytelling; pictures are supplementary and aren't necessarily significant.
2. Picture Specific: The picture sequence carries the story, words are supplementary like a soundtrack to the visual sequence.
3. Parallel: Words and pictures are telling independent stories. The pictures are showing one thing, and the words are saying something completely unrelated.
4. Additive: Words amplify or elaborate and give context to the images or vice versa adding nuance, expressiveness, and emotiveness to the story.
5. Montage: Words are treated as integral parts of the image. Image and text, blend together to create emphasis.
6. Interdependent: Words and pictures work together to convey something that neither could do alone.
7. Duo-Specific: Words and images are showing and telling the exact same thing.

These categories, outlined by McCloud(1993) underscores the multimodality of comics and highlights the array of semiotic resources at the disposal of anyone employing comics as a method of research inquiry. The fusion of words and pictures in comics suggests that there are virtually no limitations on how scholars can utilize the medium. Whether a comic relies heavily on text, images, or both, or even includes neither, as long as the objective is to communicate something, the comics medium can accommodate it.

The text-image complex present in comics, combined with simultaneity, sequence and structural elements like panels and layout offer ways of representing experiences of temporality, embodied space and memory which are crucial to the reflective process of my research (El Refaie, 2012, p. 4).

In my research, the advantage of using comics lies in the ability to illustrate and narrate a moment simultaneously. This allows for a seamless flow and eliminates the need to switch between writing and drawing. Instead of first writing out a scene and then attempting to

accurately depict it visually, comics enable me to naturally integrate both aspects in real time.

The use of the comics form greatly enhances my research on my experience as a Coloured person. Comics allows me, as a scholar, to effectively capture memories and portray embodied aspects, providing ample room for rich narrative construction. My research output (the comic book) can be either text-focused or image-focused, where text can be presented in speech bubbles or captions, or treated graphically, while images can take on different styles such as photographs, cartoon drawings, or other artistic expressions.

Among these resources, the text-image complex in comics stands out significantly compared to other visual media such as illustrated works or children's picture books. This multimodality, grants me the freedom to employ words and images in various combinations.

Overall, Comics provide an expansive platform for representation and discourse, offering nearly limitless possibilities.

3.3. Comics as autobiographic.

> *"The visuality of the comics form…allows artists to engage with the issues of representation… through the embodiment of the self…"* (Køhlert, 2019, p. 3).

As my research adopts an autoethnographic approach which essentially involves reflecting inwardly to examine and understand my Coloured identity within the broader Coloured community – I will expand on autoethnography in Chapter 3. In this section It's important to explore autobiographical comics briefly.

First, I will make mention of autoethnographic writing styles and how comics forms part of the creative approach to autoethnography that I take in this research.

As previously mentioned, autoethnography encompasses both a process and a product (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011, p. 273).

In my research, the process involves following guided journaling and conducting scholarly research on Colouredness. The product, on the other hand, is the creation of a comic book that utilizes the content generated from the autoethnographic process.
This comic book serves as a platform to discuss and present the findings derived from the journaling process and research, thus comes to question the approach to writing and/or interpreting the autoethnographic data and recounting it in the creative component.

There are a variety of writing styles that emerge amongst autoethnographers, some employ a more descriptive narrative style whilst others rely on analytical and interpretive style. Regardless of the writing style that is adopted, what is important is interpreting the collected life experience data from a cultural perspective and presenting this data as a cohesive finished product (Chang, 2008, pp. 140–141).

Ellis advocated for autoethnographers to take creative avenues like poetry, drama or performance as productions of their autoethnographic writings – storytelling with detailed descriptions to bring life and expression to autoethnography (Ellis (2004) in Chang, 2008, p. 143). This illustrates the multitude of approaches available when crafting autoethnographic content.

For instance, Associate Professor of Education- Heewon Chang's, *Autoethnography as Method* (2008) presents four styles of autoethnographic writing:

Descriptive-Realistic Writing:	Depicting places, people and events with potent and objective description – storytelling to set up context for analysis and interpretation (Chang, 2008, p. 145).
Confessional-Emotive Writing:	Expressing confessionals, unloading personal burdens and personal agonies, exposing more intimate and vulnerable narrative, through emotive writing – may be self-indulgent and emotionally cathartic; aimed at inviting the reader to a shared space and evoking empathy (Chang, 2008, p. 145).
Analytical-Interpretive Writing:	Identifying, highlighting and contextualising repetitive themes and analysing the relationships between data, stripping away any outliers to emphasis the interconnectedness and implications of different data points (Chang, 2008, p. 146).
Imaginative-Creative Writing:	Pulling away from traditional academic writing, this style is criticised for not engaging sufficiently with analysis and interpretations - however this approach is creatively unlimited and experimental, allowing for a less structured approach to autoethnography (Chang, 2008, p. 148).

As previously stated, my chosen medium/style takes the form of a comic. I analyse and interpret the memory data collected and transform that interpretation into a 20-page comic book. This will incorporate a combination of writing styles presented by Chang, (2008) such as Descriptive-realist narratives, analytical-interpretive writings and imaginative-creative style.

I refrain from employing confessional-emotive writing in my work. While my research delves deeply into personal experiences, I strive to steer clear of self-indulgence and unloading personal burdens within the creative component.
The primary objective of this research is to provide visibility to my Coloured experience, and the comic serves as a platform for discussion rather than therapy. In this instance my autoethnography may not align with autobiography, however the other writing styles such as the descriptive-realist narratives, analytical-interpretive writing styles, align very closely with autobiographical comics.

The comics form itself and the utilization of zoomorphic images within the comic is my approach to imaginative-creative writing, as the form affords me textual and pictorial tools that open the capacity for storytelling yet provide a structured medium for reader navigation and effective communication. The discussion held in the comic will showcase a combination of descriptive-realist narratives, and analytical-interpretive writings.

Autoethnography and autobiography a very distinctly different in focus and purpose, however I argue that methodologically they are similar.

To state plainly, autoethnography asks the author to study themselves and their experiences within the context of the broader cultural or social group that they are a part of - drawing on literature and theory (Davis and Ellis, 2008, p. 285).

Autobiography however, asks the author to tell a story of one's life, without necessarily engaging in a larger reflection aimed at understanding cultural phenomena or social issues - dependent on the writer's perspective (Kunka, 2018, p. 84). In my understanding autoethnography is a formal and scholarly approach to life-writing and autobiography if free form self-narrating.

Where autobiography and autoethnography converge is in the approach, both ask the author to examine and recount intimate life events and memories. In relation to my research, I align autobiographical comics with my creative component – an autoethnographic comic - as it entails representing personal lived experiences graphically within a comic format.

Autobiographical comics, among comic scholars are thought to be central in contemporary and the alternative comics space (Kunka, 2018, p. 1). Autobiographical comics function as a tool to express and deliver stories of testimony and has a unique relationship and history of being used to discuss and visually represent trauma and provide social commentary (Kunka, 2018, p. 84).

Scholarly terms like Autobiographical comics, graphic memoires, graphic life writing, diary comics or autographics, all refer to the graphical presentation - using sequential images (and words) - of lived experience writings or reflections (El Refaie, 2012, p. 48).

Autobiography presented in comic format engages readers actively, departing from passive consumption typical of traditional prose. Comics, comprising of diverse semiotic resources, demand a distinct approach from readers.

For instance, "gutters" prompts readers to perform an act of "closure," wherein they bridge the narrative gaps between panels, actively participating in the storytelling process (McCloud, 1993, chap. 3) . This level of engagement, as McCloud (1993) suggests, fosters a sympathetic connection between the reader and the comic's subject, enhancing the overall reader experience.

Again we see how the semiotic resources in comics allows autobiographical authors to visualize their memories and imbues a sense of agency to the author (Køhlert (2015) in Kunka, 2018, p. 84) meaning to say, that the author can describe the events as they occurred using text, but also choose how to depict those events, leaving little room for misinterpretation and miscommunication on the part of the reader.

Once more, we observe the versatility of the comics medium in storytelling, sharing, and communication. It serves as a platform for conveying scholarly inquiries, narrating traumatic experiences, and discussing everyday occurrences. Comics transcend genre boundaries, making them ideal for my research inquiry, which may seem autobiographical at its core.

To connect this with my research approach I want to highlight the nature of the content of my research output. Like autobiographical comics, my research involves delving into my own life experiences as a means of understanding the complexities of my Coloured identity – assimilation, rejectionism, shame, pride, low-esteem.

However, since my research is methodologically grounded in autoethnography, this entails not only engaging in a structured journaling process to explore my personal experiences

within this larger social context but also researching scholarly articles on the Coloured identity.

Embracing the autobiographical aspect of this approach requires me to embody myself as Køhlert (2019) states, and carefully consider how I represent both my own experiences and those of the broader Coloured community.

Georges Gusdorf states that autobiographical writing can be considered as accounting for one's life as an awareness of singularity, where the author preserves themselves by recollecting their life in order to narrate it, thus giving witness to themselves and their existence (Georges Gusdorf in Olney, 1980, p. 29).

Similarly, autoethnography allows for the author to form connections between their personal narratives and theory (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Arendse, 2021). Taking from this, my research will serve to give witness to myself as an individual, with the awareness of the plurality of being Coloured, thus giving witness to my Coloured experience.

It must be said that to achieve a more comprehensive representation of Coloured identity requires access to a broader spectrum of Coloured experiences.

As previously stated, my approach involves leveraging my own experiences as a means to distil a smaller but valid pool of evidence, framing it as a legitimate inquiry into Colouredness from the perspective of an insider within the group.

Hence why aligning my autoethnography with the lens of autobiographical comics is beneficial because of the limitation of my research being that I cannot wholly represent the entire Coloured experience but rather a small piece of it that I am intimately familiar with. My Coloured experience.

Chapter 3: Who Do I Think I Am? Autoethnographic And Zoomorphic Comics and The Expression of Coloured Identity.

In this section, I lay out my methodology, focused on addressing the autoethnographic reflection and the theoretical underpinnings of my research. I offer an introduction to and reflections on each guided journaling exercise. These reflections discuss the efficacy of each exercise in facilitating data collection, as well as highlight any inherent limitations or constraints encountered during their implementation.

Additionally, I showcase my experimentation with the zoomorphic image. This involves a critical examination of zoomorphic expression accompanied by an illustrative exploration of character depictions in a trial aimed at finding the best way to incorporate zoomorphic projection and how varying depictions influence or change the meaning of a particular narrative moment.

I experiment with Human-Human depiction and Animal-to-Animal depictions, paying close attention to speciesism and bestialization. I examine each scene produced during this exercise, accompanied by a discussion on the developmental trajectory leading to the adoption of pigeons as the chosen depiction for Coloured individuals within my comic.

3.1. What is Autoethnography?

> *"Autoethnography is grounded in postmodern philosophy and is linked to growing debate about reflexivity and voice in social research."(Wall, 2006, p. 146)*

To reiterate, the focus of my research centres on the concept of Colouredness, specifically exploring my personal experiences as a Coloured individual in South Africa.

This investigation encompasses an examination of prevalent stereotypes, cultural elements integral to my identity, as well as the complex interplay between feelings of shame and pride associated with Coloured identity. Moreover, the research delves into my personal journey of initially attempting to distance myself from Colouredness, followed by a subsequent embrace and exploration of it.

Part of this investigation involves an exploration of how zoomorphism can effectively facilitate reflexive and racially charged conversations. This entails understanding its potential for projection and its inherent limitations. By delving into these aspects, I aim to gain insights into the strategic utilization of zoomorphism as a narrative device, while also recognizing its constraints within the context of representing complex racial themes.

Zoomorphism serves as the primary tool for representation within this study, allowing for the symbolic depiction of racial themes through animal imagery. The chosen medium for expressing these discussions is a comic format, which offers a visually engaging platform for narrative exploration.

To methodically unpack and reflect upon the multifaceted dimensions of Colouredness, I employ guided Autoethnographic Journaling as the primary methodological approach. This entails the systematic documentation and analysis of personal experiences, emotions, and reflections related to Coloured identity. The autoethnographic content derived from this journaling practice serves as the foundational material for informing the content of the comic book.

Carolyn Ellis and Christine S.Davis in their chapter *Emergent Methods in Autoethnographic Research: Autoethnographic Narrative and the Multiethnographic Turn,* define autoethnography as "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political" (2008, p. 349). Which seeks to describe and analyse personal experience to understand cultural experience ((Ellis, 2004); (Holman Jones, 2005)).

I employ autoethnography as my primary methodology due to the sensitive, personal, and intimate nature of my subject matter. Autoethnography allows me to utilize my memories, thoughts, and reflections as valid sources of evidence in my research (Chang, 2008, p. 71).

By adopting this approach, I am able to position myself both as an observer and a participant within the context of my research subject as Ellis and Davis, go on to say that this approach studies the culture that the author is a part of and is integrated into where the author studies themselves as the "other" (2008, p. 284).

This is the approach taken for my creative output as it uses tenants of autobiography and autoethnography, and as such, is both a process and product (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011, p. 273).

My conceptualization of autoethnography revolves around viewing it as a social exploration practice that offers researchers greater inclusion in their studies. Unlike traditional research methods where neutrality is often emphasized, autoethnography permits me to express my perspectives and experiences without filtering them through an outsider's lens. I have the freedom to articulate my thoughts and observations as they unfold in my life, granting me agency over how I represent my subject matter.

Additionally, autoethnography allows me to integrate my personal research findings with scholarly literature on Colouredness. I can compare how other scholars have discussed this topic and explore whether their theories resonate with my own experiences.

As my research involves reflective inquiry rather than the recording of ongoing activities, memory work plays a significant role. However, it's crucial to recognize that memory can be unreliable, often presenting partial truths with distorted details. Consequently, reconstructing memories poses a challenge.

To address this, I must employ appropriate tools for delving into memory and organizing it in a manner that preserves the integrity of core themes or concepts that will be depicted in the comic (Chang, 2008, p. 72). Despite this uncertainty and the precarity of memory, it holds vast depths of information about the self. Extracting this information can be achieved through guided journaling, which serves as the mechanism for collecting textual data in my research.

3.2. Guided Journaling as my autoethnographic practice:

Autoethnography is a practice in reflexive personal writing that talks about the past retrospectively and selectively - it requires the author to consult with artifacts like journals, photographs, recordings and fieldnotes (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011, p. 275).

JoAnne Banks-Wallace in her article *Eureka! I Finally Get IT: Journaling as a Tool for Promoting Praxis in Research,* illustrates how journaling was an impactful research tool whilst she served as a principal investigator for the *Walk the Talk: A nurse Intervention for Black Women*. Banks-Wallace expressed that journaling uses writing as a means of developing reflective practice, making our ideas clearer as we examine our complex interactions between self and others within particular contexts (2008, p. 24).

This allows us to make connections, gain perspective and helps us to integrate theoretical concepts into practice (Banks-Wallace, 2008, p. 24). Whilst typically journaling is a practice that retells events that have recently come to pass, pulling on relatively fresh memories – the scope of recollection that my research requires asks that I dig much deeper and much further into the past, finding an origin and working towards the present. For that reason, a guided approach to journaling is needed.

Chang instructs on the research method of autoethnography, foregrounded by anthropological, methodological and practical characteristics (2008, p. 10).

My research follows the guiding principles laid out in Chang's writings, which focuses on detailing a methodology for gathering autoethnographic data of which *Chapter 5: Collecting Personal* Memory data, concerns my research best (Chang, 2008).

Chang lays out a set of exercises designed to facilitate an organized and methodical "collecting" of memories through guided writing. Given the personal nature of my research, I aim to avoid veering into self-serving or self-indulgent territory. Through guided journaling, which involves structured questions, I can maintain focus and ensure that my exploration remains aligned with the research objectives.

Additionally, this approach facilitates the organization of memory data, making it easier to incorporate into the comic book, later on. By employing a disciplined approach to self-inquiry from the outset, I can effectively structure my creative output in the comic making phase.

For my reflective process I follow these eight exercises set out by Chang (2008, pp. 72–87):

Chronicling the Past – Giving logical order to information gathered from the past.	Writing Exercise 5.1:	Establishing an **Autobiographical Timeline**. Chronologically list major events or experiences from your life. Select, describe and explain these significance of these events as they pertain to your research (Chang, 2008, p. 74).
	Writing Exercise 5.2:	Record **Annual, Weekly or Daily Routines** from your life – these are where patterns of society showcase themselves, shining a light on language, customs, traditions. List them chronologically with great detail (Chang, 2008, p. 75).
Inventorying the Self – Evaluating and thematically aligning the memory data being collected with the research topic.	Writing Exercise 5.3:	Uncovering **Proverbs** as a way of establishing a social ethos of those around you. List 5, explain their context and describe it's impact on your life (Chang, 2008, p. 77).
	Writing Exercise 5.4:	Recording **Rituals and Celebrations.** List 5 and elaborate within the context of who, what, where, when how and why. Similar to rituals yet more inclusive of both formal and informal occasions aimed at understanding socializing within the group/community (Chang, 2008, p. 78).
	Writing Exercise 5.5:	Sharing on **Mentors** and their teaching. List 5 and elaborate on their influence (Chang, 2008, p. 80).
	Writing Exercise 5.6:	Finding **Cultural Artifacts and Objects.** List 5 and expound on their cultural meaning (Chang, 2008, p. 81).
Visualizing Self – Condensing and reducing, organising memory data into visual structures.	Writing Exercise 5.7:	Visualizing a **kinship diagram,** chartering familial bonds, sheds light on intimate social connections (Chang, 2008, pp. 82–84). Create a kindship diagram with core individuals from your life.
	Writing Exercise 5.8:	Free drawing as **recollection** and connecting with space. Draw a place of importance add as many details such as objects or people, to solidify the place within memory (Chang, 2008, pp. 84–87).

Although Chang does stipulate how many events or items should be listed, it is made clear that these exercises are guides and may be adjusted to better suit the research topic and so my practice does not always follow these restrictions.

Guided Journaling Exercise

In the following section of this chapter, I present the autoethnographic exercises I've completed for my research. For each exercise, I restate the instructions, which are titled and highlighted. Then, I provide a brief paragraph to contextualize my approach to the exercise. Following this, the responses to the exercises are presented in a table format. Each exercise has been answered briefly and any significant points will be elaborated on in the follow-up discussion following each tabled response. Thereafter, I offer a discussion on each exercise.

Finally, I reflect on the entire guided journaling process, delving into the specific insights gained from each exercise and discuss how they informed the narrative and themes explored in the comic. This reflection underscores the significance of the guided journaling process in shaping the content and depth of the comic's portrayal of my experiences and identity.

Chronicling the Past – Giving logical order to information gathered from the past.

Writing Exercise 5.1:

Establishing an **Autobiographical Timeline**. Chronologically list major events or experiences from your life. Select, describe, and explain the significance of these events as they pertain to your research (Chang, 2008, p. 74).

In this exercise I selected events that can be clearly read as racially significant events. The approach I adopted involved selecting memories and then assessing whether they genuinely reflected instances of discrimination or if they were tainted by personal prejudices against others. It wasn't my intention to document every aspect of my life or every instance of racial inequality. Instead, the goal was to capture personal experiences that resonated with other Coloured people, forming a common thread of shared identity and experience. This may be limiting, however because of the scope of this research, my aim is to be more focused on my research subject.

Upon reviewing my timeline, three key junctures emerged that closely align with my research focus:

1. My introduction to the concept of race.
2. My experiences during primary and high school education in racially diverse, English-medium schools.
3. My university career, specifically living in a student accommodation, marked by encounters with identity exploration amid social isolation.

Age Range	Year	Event
	1998	Born to 2 Coloured parents, in Coronation Hospital (Rahima Moosa Mother and Child Hospital). We lived in Johannesburg at the time. Was baptised.
2	2000	Started attending creche and became aware of race via a conversation with my mother.
5	2003	Moved to Cape Town. As a young child I immediately picked up that the Afrikaans spoken in Cape Town was very different to how I'd grown up hearing it. I also developed a Capetonian accent.
6	2004	Entered an Afrikaans primary school (Grade 1). Struggled to understand my teachers and friends. Developed an accent. Moved back to Johannesburg.
8-13	2006-2011	Primary School years. (Grade 2-7) There were racist teachers and a teacher called Mr. Abrahams who would constantly berate the children by telling them that his classroom was "Not a fish and chips shop". Joined netball and was the only Coloured girl on the team so they isolated me and only spoke Zulu or Tswana. Being in a racially mixed school was great though. But Heritage days were awkward for me.
14	2012	Entered High School (Grade 8). Heritage Day became a mockery.
20	2018	Started Varsity – Lived at Sunny Side House of Royalty Accommodation. Noticed that I was one of 2 other Coloured girls in my intake group. Assimilated with Blackness, braided my hair with hair piece a lot more instead of doing plates, Also wore my curly hair out more often – people thought it was a wig.
24	2022	Began my Master's research journey.

Discussion:

Exercise 5.1:

These four significant events serve as pivotal moments in shaping the narrative of the comic:

1. **Introduction to Race**: My earliest encounter with the concept of race occurred during a conversation with my mother while I was in creche. She prompted me to consider the colours of my friends' skin, marking my initial understanding of racial differences. I answered her in literal terms when she asked, "what colour are your friends." My answer? Peach and Brown. I had not yet conceptualized race.

2. **Relocation to Cape Town**: Moving to Cape Town at a younger age also significantly influenced my understanding of race. Surrounded predominantly by other Coloured individuals, I observed the distinctiveness of the Coloured community in different regions. Despite my father being Capetonian, having been raised in Johannesburg, I encountered a language barrier, particularly with Capetonian Afrikaans. This impacted my schooling, but I was fortunate to make friends who kindly accommodated me by speaking English.

3. **Heritage Day Celebrations**: Throughout my primary and high school years, Heritage Day held varying significance. Initially, I felt excluded and inadequate due to a lack of traditional clothing, but by high school, a group of us Coloured individuals humorously reclaimed the day by wearing gowns and slippers as this was what we grew up seeing at home.

4. **Living in Braamfontein**: My time living in Braamfontein, particularly in a student accommodation, was a transformative period. It shattered the facade of assimilation and alignment with Whiteness that I had been striving for, revealing the complexities of identity and belonging. I migrated from constantly straightening or relaxing my hair, to braiding and plaiting my hair more often, and after trying to assimilate to the Black girl's hair habits (braids too would be damaging to my hair), I grew to appreciate my thick curly hair and stopped braiding my hair.

These events, which are depicted in my comic, form a cohesive narrative thread that explores themes of identity, belonging, and cultural heritage, guiding the reader through significant moments that shaped my understanding of race and identity.

Writing Exercise 5.2:

Record **Annual, Weekly or Daily Routines** from your life – these are where patterns of society showcase themselves, shining a light on language, customs, and traditions. List them chronologically with great detail (Chang, 2008, p. 75).

In this exercise, I document the routines from my childhood years, (age range birth - 16) focusing specifically on the annual and weekly schedules centred around significant days in the Old Apostolic Church. These events are based in religion because beyond school, church was a big driving force in my life. I chose not to record my daily routine, as my upbringing as a child of Coloured Christians deeply involved in the Old Apostolic Church meant that my daily routine closely mirrored my weekly routine.

Documenting my routines revealed the significant influence of the church on my family's daily practices and social structures, providing valuable insights into the pervasive role it played in shaping our lives.

Annual Routines	
January	New Years eve and New Years Day
March	Easter weekend Confirmations
July	Winter Break from school. Verseeling (Ceiling)
October	Matric Ball season
December	Seen van die Oes (Harvest and Thanksgiving) Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day

Weekly Routines	
Monday - Thursday	School, Parents' Work, choir practice/evening service/ priest visit.
Friday	School, Parents' Work, Family time/Party time.
Saturday	Family time/ Party time – Either household pursuits like Braaiing at home or doing chores. Or extended friends and family visits. Church picnics – Every 3 months the Church would host a big picnic that brought together different fields, to play games and socialize.
Sunday	Sunday School, Church, Sunday Lunch/Family time, Evening Service for School. Depending on which Sunday of the month it was (Sundays rotate), the church service would run differently: - **1st Sunday:** Holy Communion, Baptisms, Birthday acknowledgments for the month before. - **2nd Sunday when it is the last Sunday of the month:** Social Services – Different Fields of the church will gather to hear each field's choirs perform. There will also be small plays put on by each field's Sunday school group. Followed by time for cake and tea. - **3rd, 5th Sunday:** Typical service. - **4th Sunday:** Children's Sunday (Serman dedicated to children + Sunday school gets a longer choir slot)

Discussion:

Exercise 5.2:

A typical week in my life cycled between school, family, and Church. Church was a very big part of our community building and socializing since on my father's side, the entire family attended the same denomination. Seniors in my family were Elders, Priests or Under Deacons and so much of our family gatherings were also during times when the Old Apostolic Church had significant events.

Sunday lunches and **Big** family lunches on Sundays were very important to attend. It's when I saw most of my extended family like second cousins, who lived very far away.

The Old Apostolic Church was always filled with more White and Coloured members. Recently though there are a lot more Black members, with the church integrating more vernacular songs into the choir as opposed to just English and Afrikaans.

Fridays and Saturdays were our most social days and typically were party days. Family visits, braaiing, outings, loud music, dancing. Essentially the time for my parents to get rowdy and unwind and for the kids to see their closest cousins. We'd either visit my father's family or my mother's family.

My father's family was ingrained into the church, but my mother's family was not so much. My mother's siblings followed different denominations of Christianity: Anglican, Evangelistic, Apostolic, or Catholic. So, they rarely socialized or connected through their church practices. They were the livelier side of the family tree – filled with bikers, tattoo artists, and hobbyists. Very colourful people.

There was a very big difference between my father's family and my mother's family, especially in their politics. Where my father's family was more well-off, prim, and proper, and more concerned with "Whiteness" and "Godliness", my mother's family was more humble, and more liberal (they still had their issues) but they weren't as concerned with their status in relation to White people.

From this exercise, I made the decision to exclude any church-specific events in the comic. However, I drew inspiration from the exercise, particularly the idea of family gatherings, which I depicted in the comic. This scene portrays a lively atmosphere, illustrating the vibrancy of a large and active family gathering. Children engage in games, adults play dominoes, some dance Langarm, elders prepare food, and young people smoke Oka pipe and a prayer to open the lunch table. My goal was to capture this moment as a focal point of family bonding and social interaction within the community.

Inventorying the Self – Evaluating and thematically aligning the memory data being collected with the research topic.

Writing Exercise 5.3:

Uncovering **Proverbs** as a way of establishing a social ethos of those around you. List 5, explain their context, and describe their impact on your life (Chang, 2008, p. 77).

In this exercise, I noticed a significant amount of Afrikaans language. Growing up, Afrikaans was my second home language, and much of what I heard wasn't necessarily in the form of proverbs. Gathering proverbs proved to be a challenging endeavour. I had to engage in conversations with my aunts and mother to unearth them and translate/ interpret them for their meaning and application, it remained a daunting task. Interestingly, most of the proverbs centred around negations, cautioning against undesirable behaviours or actions.

Proverbs/ Common sayings:	Interpretations
Elkeen vir homself en God vir almal. *Each for himself and God for everyone.*	Used to explain people's attitudes toward each other. In other words, everyone should take care of themselves and see to their own needs, and not give others their problems and God will be there for everyone. Someone tired of always being there for other people might say this to indicate that they are done allowing other people to always lean on them and not reciprocating. Alternatively, it can describe a family's attitude towards each other. This family never stands together and cannot depend on each other. Each of them is selfish.
Meng jouself met die semels, dan eet die varke jou op. *Mix yourself with the bran (pig's slop), then the pigs will eat you.*	Used to warn against mixing with a bad crowd because there are consequences of having bad connections.
Moenie tande tell nie. *Don't count teeth.*	Used to warn children away from being in adult company. Adults will say it when they notice that kids are listening to their conversations.
Kinders moet gesien word, nie gehoer word nie. *Children are to be seen, not heard.*	Used to warn kids about being rowdy, loud and disobedient.
Los kak, loep kerk. *Stop doing bad things, go to church.*	To steer you away from doing bad deeds.
As die leiwe jou druk, dan druk jy terug. *If life pushes you, push life back*	Used to motivate you to keep going regardless of circumstances.
Pull yourself towards yourself	To infer that you are crossing a line and getting ahead of yourself.
Los drolle uit die pepper uit. Take the shit out of the pepper.	To say that you, a child, need to remove yourself from adult conversation.
ǹ Bushy maak ǹ plan. a Bushy makes a plan	Inspirational, used to say that Coloured people are very resourceful and will always persevere when solving a problem.

Discussion:

Exercise 5.3:

This exercise presented its challenges yet proved to be quite enjoyable as I consulted with my aunts and mother about some of the sayings within the Coloured community. I observed that our manner of speaking can often come across as harsh, but upon closer examination, I realized that many of these sayings are rooted in guiding behavior away from negative perceptions. This led me to ponder whether this tendency for self-policing is a result of the negative stereotypes that have affected the Coloured community. It was fascinating to explore how creatively Coloured people communicate with each other through these sayings.

One saying that particularly stands out to me is "Los drolle uit die pepper uit." This phrase, difficult to translate directly into English, is used in various contexts to suggest removing oneself from company where one does not belong, or to snap out of a daydreaming state.

While none of these sayings make an appearance in the comic, I realized that my approach was somewhat cursory, lacking in the depiction of characters with distinct personalities. Additionally, due to the limited page count, developing a context for these sayings to make sense would have required more space on the page.

Writing Exercise 5.4:

Recording **Rituals and Celebrations.** List 5 and elaborate within the context of who, what, where, when how and why. Similar to rituals yet more inclusive of both formal and informal occasions aimed at understanding socializing within the group/community (Chang, 2008, p. 78)

In this exercise, I recount rituals and celebrations that may appear common to people outside of the Coloured community. However, I aim to highlight that there are distinct ways in which Coloured people perform these celebrations, adding unique cultural nuances. Additionally, I observed that while there are no specific rituals documented, the focus lies more on celebrations within the Coloured community. Moreover, most of these celebrations are heavily decided on by me being a Christian and at the risk of being repetitive, if a specific event appears in the annual routine, I did not mention it here.

Rituals and Celebrations	
Church service/event attendance.	**Easter weekend: Confirmations –** The celebration of Sunday school children becoming youth members and official members of the church. The family host a big family lunch in celebration after the church service where the confirmation group is honoured in front of the congregation.
Births	**Baby showers –** Before the baby is born. Mainly the women of the family are in attendance. The pregnant mother is being celebrated and gifted items for the baby and her after care. She is made to dress up like a baby (wearing a bib and a diaper made from towels). The pregnant mother is made to do fun/ absurd things i.e. Eating chocolate from a diaper or drinking from a baby bottle. My mother was paraded through her neighbourhood in celebration, carrying a baby doll. **Piss Drink –** Day of baby's birth, the father is allowed to get drunk to celebrate and cope with the reality of fatherhood. Typically, the mother and baby are with other women of the family, typically Oumas[4] and Aunties.
21st	A 21st is a very special birthday. Parents throw a huge party to celebrate their child's coming of age. Typically, a child should have remained a virgin until this age and is awarded a 21st key.
Funerals	**After Tears** – A gathering after the formalities of a funeral, where people typically mourn. This usually turns into a livelier party.
Matric balls	A very big achievement. Celebrating the end of high school and matriculation. The gathering before the actual ball is where family and friends come together to celebrate the matriculated youth and congratulate them before they attend the ball. There are decorations and food to share. Lots of pictures are taken as the matriculant gets seen off to their ball.

[4] Ouma is a term used to refer to elderly women and grandmothers.

Discussion:

Exercise 5.4:

Out of all the rituals and celebrations I mentioned, the baby shower stands out as my favourite. However, I miss the way it was conducted during my childhood. Nowadays, baby showers seem rather dull to me. Mothers tend to avoid being paraded around or participating in odd games, and they prefer to skip the tradition of being smeared with sweets, cakes, and chocolates.

Reflecting on my mother's baby shower for my younger sibling, I cherished observing her experience this initiation of sorts. It was a moment where the women in her life introduced her to the realities of motherhood—dealing with various bodily secretions, adjusting to irregular sleep patterns, and coming to terms with the public acknowledgment of her new role as a mother. For me, this was a meaningful way to honour and celebrate a new mother.

Although these rituals are not specific to a particular culture like Zulu or Xhosa culture, I believe there are interesting ways, based on my observations, that demonstrate how Coloured people share culture while also uniquely interpreting rituals or celebrations that may be practiced by outsiders in their own communities. It's important to note that these rituals and celebrations can vary from family to family. For example, some Coloured families may print out a picture of the deceased onto t-shirts as a sign of respect and remembrance at funerals, while others, like my own, do not follow this tradition. Many of these rituals are likely influenced by religious beliefs and connections to other cultures.

Although I didn't depict these specific rituals in the comic, this exercise inspired me to consider more common, smaller rituals that resonate with other Coloured people. As a result, I created a scene in the comic where the characters visit a spaza shop to purchase chupas and cigarettes. This simple yet common ritual brought me joy to reflect upon, highlighting the significance of everyday practices alongside more formal or grand traditions.

Writing Exercise 5.5:

Sharing on **Mentors** and their teaching. List 5 and elaborate on their influence (Chang, 2008, p. 80).

In this exercise, I compile a list of individuals whom I consider having influenced me positively, despite not actively serving as mentors. This list includes a parental figure, a neighbour, two work colleagues, and an author. However, engaging in this exercise caused discomfort as I had to reassess my interpretation of a mentor. Traditionally, I viewed mentors as individuals who actively take on the role of guiding and teaching specific skills or knowledge. Instead, I had to redefine my understanding of mentorship and identify figures in my life who may not have fulfilled the traditional mentor role but have certainly played a significant role in shaping my life's direction and opportunities.

Mentors	
My Father	My father instilled in me the desire to learn. He taught me how to play chess, urged me to read, encouraged me to draw.
Dahleen	A neighbour of mine who donated close to 30 books to me in my teenage years, exposing me to fantasy and a host of other genre, creating a sneaky reading hobby but also sparking in me the dream of becoming a writer.
Kirsten-lee Naidoo	During my first internship, Kirsten was my line manager who introduced me to the international business space. Without her I would not have been exposed to so many new international friends.
Gwen Foster	An international friend based in the Philippines. Gwen has taken me by the hand to teach me about the games industry. But more so, Gwen is well travelled and deals with international clients every day. She is currently mentoring me on business development.
Alison Noel	Author of the Immortals series. Her books introduced me to a fictional dimension called Summerland. What stood out to me about this place is the requirements needed to access it. The main character struggles to enter Summerland one day. She is very confused by it and blames other characters and the wrongs done to her for it. But after some introspection, finds out that it's been her own turmoil and strife that has kept her locked out of Summerland. To regain that access, she must rebalance herself internally. This taught me to look inward in times difficult times and to reflect on my action before blaming external influences.

Discussion:

Exercise 5.5:

To be frank, I initially attempted to fabricate the presence of Coloured mentors who significantly impacted my life. However, I soon recognized that this dishonesty would undermine the integrity of my research. While others might genuinely identify Coloured individuals who served as influential mentors, I couldn't. Apart from my father, who was indeed a crucial mentor for me, the others were not Coloured.

Although I'm fortunate to have had diverse mentors, I must confess I was hoping to identify a Coloured figure as a hero in my life.

This exercise proved to be deeply disheartening for me. It highlighted the stark reality that I couldn't identify a single Coloured hero or influential figure within my community. Despite searching desperately, I could only think of comedians and actors, which didn't align with the exercise's requirement to find a personal idol. This left me feeling let down by the elders of my community.

One mentor who stands out to me is my father, briefly mentioned in the comic as a point of discussion regarding mixed heritage. However, beyond this, he doesn't feature prominently in the narrative, despite his significant influence on my life. Unfortunately, my father has passed away, and his history of drug abuse has left our relationship strained. I chose not to delve into my father or my family's struggles extensively in the comic because I feel that they represent a stark example of a Coloured family plagued by the stereotypes associated with our community.

As I've mentioned before, I'm tired of stories depicting the plight of the Coloured child. Instead, in this comic, I aim to focus on visibility and sharing my unique Coloured experience, steering the conversation towards a broader understanding of our community and identity.

Writing Exercise 5.6:

Finding **Cultural Artifacts and Objects.** List 5 and expound on their cultural meaning (Chang, 2008, p. 81).

In this exercise the items I've listed mostly pertain to church or social routines. While compiling this list, I noticed the absence of objects associated with traditions or rituals, such as special headdresses or ceremonial tools.

One artefact that caught my attention was the appearance of an "Ou Kappie" (small knife/dagger) in my life. It surprised me because it seemed to conform to a stereotype: a Coloured person with a knife...quite the cliché. Doing this exercise also asked me to confront my understanding of what a cultural object could be.

Cultural Artifacts and Objects	
21st key	Awarded as a 21st birthday gift. (I unfortunately did not get one, the reason is not tied to my not meeting the conditions to receive one, but rather financial constraints).
Suit Jacket and Church Hat.	As part of the Old Apostolic Church, it is important for a man to always wear a Jacket, tie, and clean shoes. Similarly, for a woman it is important to always cover her head, typically with a fancy church hat.
Gold fillings	Growing up, the people around me raved about getting gold fillings, or slits or other shaped adornments on their teeth. It was a fashion trend I'd always wanted to take part in but was warned against for fear of looking "too Coloured".
Golf Mark 1	I grew up seeing everyone in my community drive this car. So much fanaticism formed around this car. Clubs like "the German Boys" would drive them, My uncle, an at home mechanic, constantly works on these cars.
Oka (Hookah) Pipes	A recreational pass time. Smoking hubbly, buying a range of flavours, fancy coals and foils is a hobby. The fancier and bigger the pipe, the better. Friends and cousins sit around, chatting up storms, smoking Oka pipe and socializing.
Ou Kappie	I've grown up around a lot of interest in knives. My mother spoke a lot about owning knives and daggers. Many of my family members carried knives. So, did I. My mother's sister has a tattoo of a knife on her thigh. My mother's father bought her mother an Ivory handled, dagger as a gift. It's a common stereotype that a Coloured person will "steek you" (stab you).

Discussion:

Exercise 5.6:

In this exercise, I noticed a shift in my understanding of culture. Rather than identifying cultural objects solely based on traditions and customs, I focused on items that left a significant imprint on my life due to their frequent presence. While most of these items I listed aren't depicted in the comic, two that are included are the Golf Mark 1's and the Oka pipe. Additionally, this exercise inspired the depiction of a handshake as a greeting between friends in the comic. This gesture holds cultural significance for me and serves as a reminder of the cultural artifacts that shape our interactions and experiences.

Visualizing Self – Condensing and reducing, organising memory data into visual structures.

Writing Exercise 5.7:

Visualizing a kinship diagram, and chartering familial bonds, sheds light on intimate social connections (Chang, 2008, pp. 82–84). Create a kindship diagram with core individuals from your life.

In this exercise, I focused on depicting nuclear relations including myself, my siblings, my parents, their siblings, and our grandparents, along with their parents before them, extending up to our great elders. However, I omitted the children and spouses of my aunts and uncles. Below a key (see figure 8) for the Kinship diagram (see figure 9) can be seen.

This decision aimed to highlight lineage while still incorporating immediate family connections. The diagram underscores the limited scope of our lineage, with many elder relatives having passed away and with an indicator to show how little I know about them.

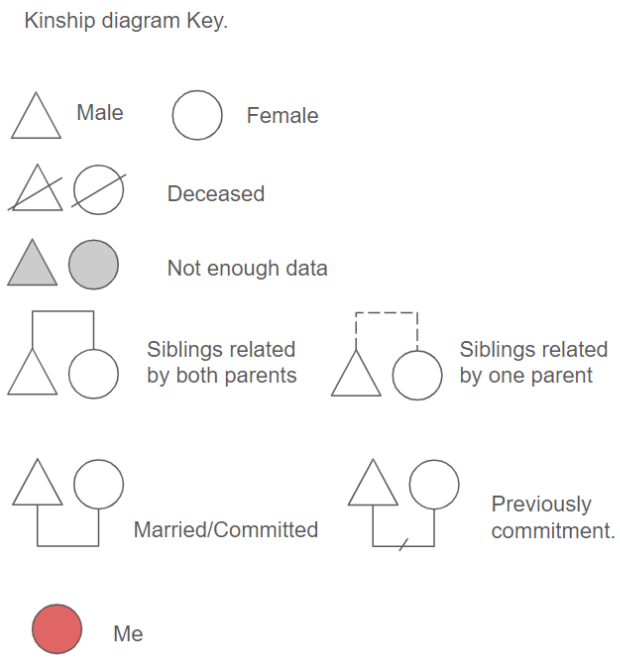

Figure 8: Key for Kinship diagram

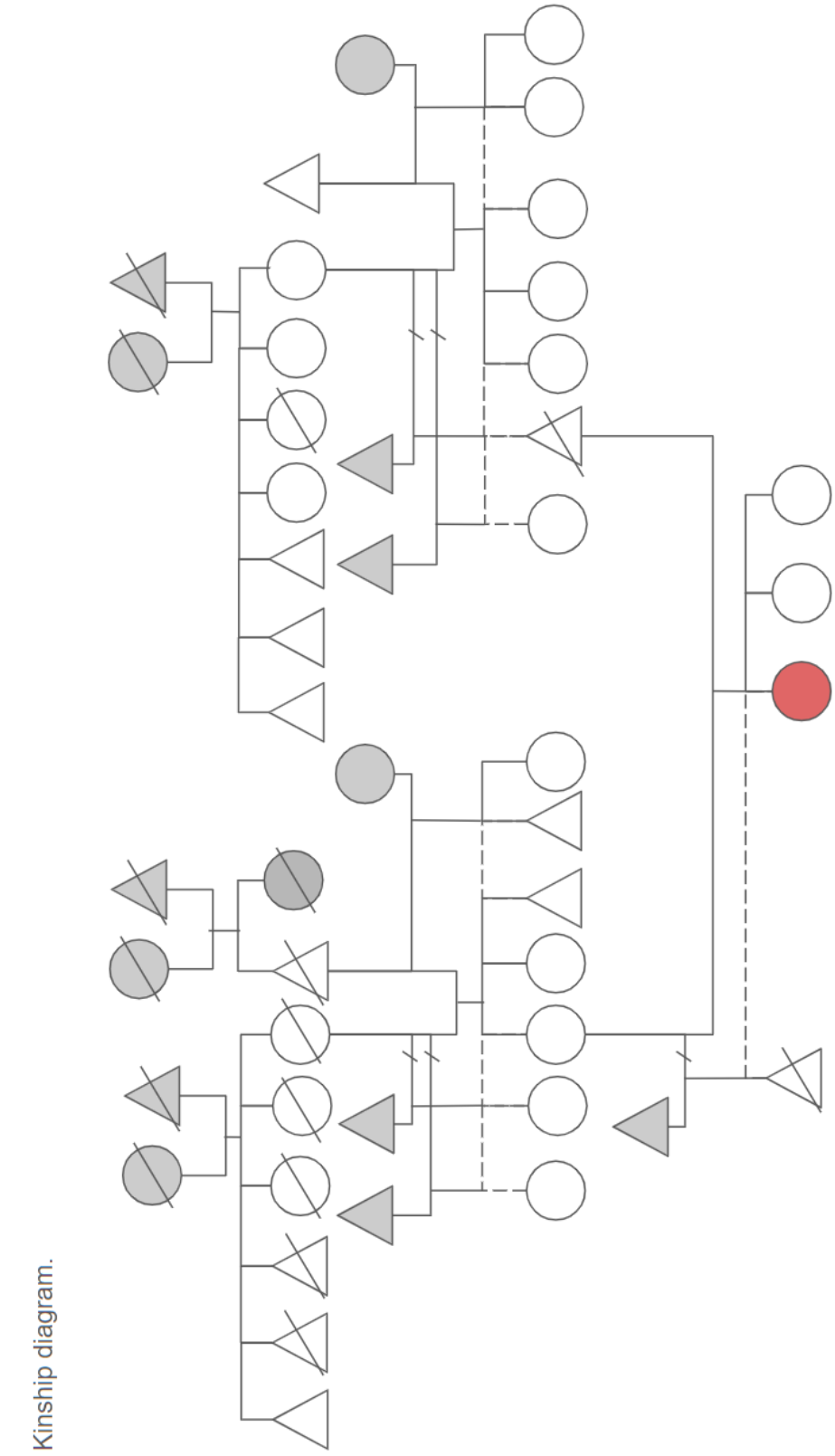

Figure 9: Kinship diagram.

Discussion:

Exercise 5.7:

In this exercise, I aimed to showcase lineage primarily through the core lines of parentage, tracing back as far as I could in my family history. However, my knowledge only extends to my great-grandparents, and even then, there are family members on this kinship diagram whom I've never met and know little about. These individuals represent the seniors of my family, and the realization that my knowledge of my lineage is limited stings deeply.

This limitation strikes a chord because there's a prevalent conversation among Coloured people about the importance of knowing one's family, staying connected, and valuing familial bonds. I believe this emphasis stems from the scarcity of elders within our community.

Ironically, despite the vastness of my family, with numerous cousins across multiple branches, I struggle to trace my roots beyond my great-grandparents. This reality fills me with sadness, highlighting the disconnect between the size of my family and my knowledge of its history.

Writing Exercise 5.8:

Free drawing as recollection and connecting with space. Draw a place of importance add as many details such as objects or people, to solidify the place within memory (Chang, 2008, pp. 84–87).

For this exercise, I created a top-down view of Sharon Flats in Riverlea (see figure 10), which was my childhood home. My granny owned a flat there, and we stayed with her for a while. This courtyard symbolizes a time in my life where I felt the most at home amongst my community.

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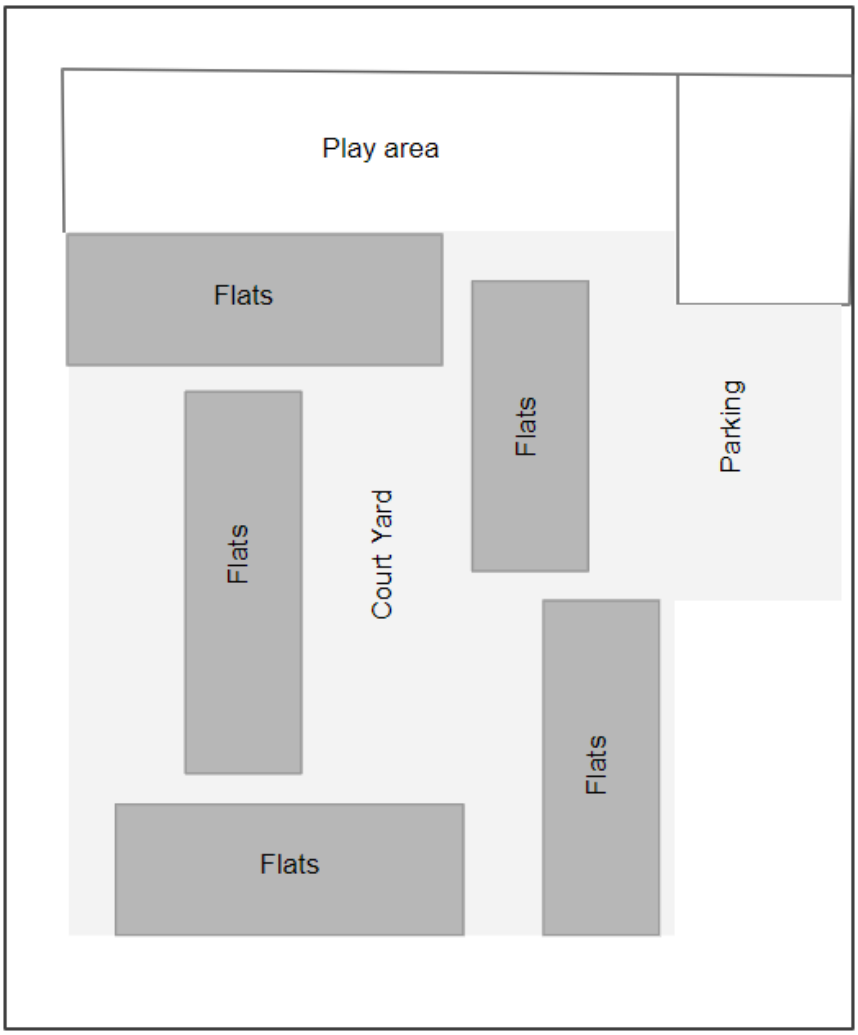

Figure 10: Drawing of place of significance, Sharon Flats

Discussion:

Exercise 5.8:

Living in the flats was an intriguing experience; everyone knew each other and was involved in each other's lives. It was common to borrow sugar from a neighbour or to have Sunday lunch at a friend's flat. The Coloured community in Sharon Flats was very close-knit.

This is where I learned and uttered my first swear word – my mother did not approve. However, we soon moved away. My parents believed that relocating would provide better opportunities for us, as they associated Sharon Flats with regression. Despite leaving, I miss the courtyard where I used to play. To this day I get very excited to go back there (even though I visit seldomly), to see my old friends, smell the air, walk around. Anything to bring back the memories.

This exercise evoked a sense of longing for my former home in Riverlea, particularly the flats where I used to reside. While this space isn't explicitly addressed in the comic, I included a depiction of it as a small token to myself. It serves as a subtle reminder of home, evoking nostalgic memories of a place that holds a special significance in my heart.

The guided journaling process proved beneficial for my research, aiding in maintaining focus on the research topic. Although many of what is answered in the exercises, does not appear literally in the comic, each exercise has definitely inspired me to take a different approach to showcasing some of the key themes that these exercises revealed from my life.

Exercises 5.1 and 5.2 influenced the selection of events showcased in the comic while chronicling routines provided a helpful overview of significant life events.

The comic portrays four pivotal events that profoundly influenced my understanding of race and identity – prompted by exercise 5.1. From my earliest encounter with the concept of race during childhood conversations with my mother, to the relocation to Cape Town and the challenges of navigating language barriers. The Heritage Day celebrations, once a source of exclusion, evolved into a humorous reclaiming of identity with friends. Finally, my time in Braamfontein brought a transformative realization of the complexities of identity and the need to embrace my cultural heritage.

Another event depicted in the comic is a big family lunch – prompted by exercise 5.2. This event is meant to encapsulate how my family comes together around food and drink, with an opening prayer to inject some of the religious influence in my family. These events, depicted in the comic, weave together a narrative that explores themes of identity, belonging, and cultural heritage,

Exercises 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6 prompted reflection on my culture, requiring recollection of rituals, celebrations, artefacts, ideologies, and prominent figures. These exercises were challenging, leading me to engage with other Coloured individuals for consultation. This initiated a conversation and prompted deep contemplation of my cultural identity.

For exercise 5.3, through the process of consultation, I gained insights into our manner of speaking and how it reflects deeper cultural norms and values. Despite the initial perception of harshness, I discovered that many of these sayings serve as guidance to steer behaviour

away from negative perceptions, possibly stemming from the historical impact of negative stereotypes on the Coloured community. While these sayings did not find their way into the comic, this exercise prompted me to reflect on the depth of character portrayal and context-building within the narrative.

Regarding exercise 5.4, among the various rituals and celebrations discussed, the baby shower emerges as my favourite, it breeds nostalgia for the more traditional practices of my childhood. Today, the subdued nature of modern baby showers to me, lacks the vibrancy and significance I once cherished. Reflecting on my mother's experience during my sibling's baby shower, I recognized that customs evolve.

While these rituals may not be exclusive to a particular culture, they offer insight into how Coloured people both share and uniquely interpret traditions.

Exercise 5.5, proved to be sobering as I realized that I do not have prominent Coloured role models. While I briefly mention my father's influence in the comic, his struggles remain largely unexplored due to the painful realities of our relationship and family history.

Exercise 5.6 shifted my perception of culture. Rather than solely associating cultural objects with traditional practices, I began to recognize the significance of items that held personal resonance and made frequent appearances in my life.

Exercises 5.7 and 5.8 required visualizing my relationships and a significant location. Mapping out my kinship diagram in exercise 5.7, revealed that I have only one pair of living grandparents and limited knowledge of my senior family members, underscoring the lack of intergenerational knowledge transfer, which is disheartening. Additionally, this diagram highlighted my lack of knowledge about my heritage and lineage, which became a point of personal discomfort.

In exercise 5.8, Selecting an ideal location for visualization was challenging due to my frequent relocations. However, this process led me to discover the significance of a particular location: a block of flats filled with love, acceptance, kinship, and safety. This location is depicted in the comic. Reflecting on my experiences living in the flats, evokes a strong sense of nostalgia and longing for my former home in Riverlea. The close-knit Coloured community in Sharon Flats fostered an environment where everyone knew each other and shared in each other's lives. Despite the simplicity of borrowing sugar from a neighbour or enjoying Sunday lunch at a friend's flat, these small interactions were integral to the fabric of our community.

Overall, these exercises facilitated the exploration and retrieval of significant memories, providing valuable content for depiction in my comic. Each exercise deepened my understanding of myself within the broader context of Colouredness and contributed key aspects of narrative to my comic. Having participated in a guided journaling process, I was able to mine for memories, collect, inspect and grade them for their worth before categorising them for use.

3.3. Zoomorphic Exploration

This section will feature the zoomorphic exploration, structured as follows: Each scene will be named, with the character pairing identified, followed by the illustration. Afterward, a brief discussion of the scene will be provided. Following all seven scenes, a final discussion on the zoomorphic exploration will be presented.

The zoomorphic exploration involves examining various aspects, including character representation through animal imagery. We need to set goals for zoomorphism to fulfil.

To reiterate, these are points I aim to achieve with zoomorphic projection.

- To facilitate racially nuanced discussions without causing harm.
- To illustrate individuals' racial heritage without resorting to stereotypical or oversimplified features.
- To align with the author's identity and perspective, given that the author is Coloured and specifically South African. This means avoiding the use of sea animals or animals from outside of South Africa, as they may not resonate with the author's identity. Instead, the choice of projections should reflect animals indigenous to or residing in South Africa or those that positively align with the author's cultural background.

This investigation is conducted through a dialogue scene featuring two characters: my author's avatar and another character.

Throughout this exploration, these characters are depicted in five distinct styles and animal representations with a 6th illustration showcasing the final description of how the characters appear in the comic and a 7th illustration that takes on the discussion of colour representation:

1. Initially depicted as fully human characters.
2. Represented as anthropomorphized characters.
3. Transformed into zoomorphic characters while retaining human characteristics.
4. Portrayed as entirely zoomorphic characters, with each character being a different animal species.
5. Illustrated as zoomorphic characters of the same animal species.
6. Depicted as zoomorphic characters of the same animal species, specifically pigeons, chosen by myself.
7. Depicted as zoomorphic pigeons with colour playing a role in representation.

For each section, I provide a discussion on how the scene reads based on the characters' representation, delving into how the chosen animal imagery facilitates racial representation.

This analysis involves exploring hierarchies among animals, racial divides among humans, and associations with specific animal images.

The goal is to justify the selection of the final animal image to be used in the comic, considering its effectiveness in conveying the desired racial themes and nuances.

The dialogue of the scene is crafted with specific objectives in mind:

- It aims to be opinionated.
- It incorporates racially charged elements.
- It adopts a divisive tone.

These choices are intentional, as they serve to demonstrate how different representations in the scene can influence its interpretation and make it more accessible to readers.

The objective is to find the best representation that facilitates racially coded conversation and make it digestible for the reader, whilst also respecting the racial identities of the characters.

The dialogue for the scene reads:

Character A: Coloured People make me upset!
Character B: Why?
Character A: All they want to do is drink and party. F*kken gangsters.
Character A: They too lazy to get a job!

Zoomorphic Exploration through Comic Scene illustrations:

Scene 1: Human – Human



Figure 11: Illustration of Zoomorphic exploration Scene 1: Human-Human

The problem I have with Scene 1 (see figure 11) lies in the fact that the characters appear racially ambiguous in a manner that could be perceived negatively.

If readers struggle to identify these characters as two, Coloured individuals engaged in a discussion about Coloured people, the conversation might be interpreted as racist or prejudiced.
To prevent this, I aim to avoid relying on stereotypical depictions of racial features. It's crucial for these characters to be clearly recognizable as Coloured and not mistaken for individuals of a different race.

Scene 2: Anthropomorphic Cat – Human



Figure 12: Illustration of Zoomorphic exploration Scene 2: Anthropomorphised Cat - Human

Scene 2 (see figure 12) presents an intriguing dynamic in which a talking cat voices an opinion and appears as an outsider to the Coloured group.
This scene primarily serves to examine the function of anthropomorphism. It highlights a distinct boundary between people and animals, influencing how the conversation is perceived.

Consequently, readers may ponder the role of animals as observers of human behaviour.

This raises questions about moral authority: should the cat's opinion be regarded as factual due to its detachment from human society?

Scene 3: Zoomorphic Cat – Human



Figure 13: Illustration of Zoomorphic exploration Scene 3: Zoomorphic Cat - Human

In scene 3 (see figure 13), I adhere to the stylistic approach seen in Art Spiegelman's depiction of characters in *Maus* (1986), where the animal imagery is predominantly carried by the face while the rest of the character retains a human appearance.

This choice prompts us to consider animal associations: why is this character portrayed as cat-like? What characteristics are we attributing to this character, and how does it impact the reception of the dialogue?

In this context, cat imagery might convey a sense of assertiveness and aggression, influencing how the dialogue is perceived.

Another thought might arise from the other character being human. What world do these characters live in? Would they be two separate species? Is the human character the Coloured person or the cat-like person? Are Coloured people a separate species then?

Scene 4: Zoomorphic Cat – Zoomorphic Elephant



Figure 14: Illustration of Zoomorphic exploration Scene 4: Zoomorphic Cat - Zoomorphic Elephant

In scene 4 (see figure 14), both characters are depicted as zoomorphic, with one resembling a domesticated animal and the other a species typically found in the wild. This prompts us to consider the identity of Coloured people within this context: do they align more closely with the cat group or the elephant group?

Furthermore, this scene prompts us to contemplate animal hierarchy and power dynamics. Status may influence the perception of the conversation, as we begin to compare the imagery associated with each animal. The cat imagery, for example, may appear diminutive compared to the elephant imagery, based on the associations commonly attributed to each animal.

Scene 5: Zoomorphic Cat – Zoomorphic Cat



Figure 15: Illustration of Zoomorphic exploration Scene 5: Zoomorphic Cat - Zoomorphic Cat

In scene 5 (see figure 15), both characters are depicted as zoomorphic cats, emphasizing that the only distinction between them is their skin tone. This underscores the focus on race rather than speciesism and aligns with the research's aim of utilizing the zoomorphic image to facilitate racially charged conversations without reinforcing stereotypes. However, this scene also brings us back to the challenge of racial ambiguity observed in Scene 1.

Now, the question of status and hierarchy might not be as noticeable. However, animal association still matters and can influence the way the dialogue is received. Are these cat people Coloured individuals discussing Coloured people, or are they representatives of a different racial group discussing Coloured individuals?

Interjection:

Up until this point in the zoomorphic exploration we have achieved the first two goals that we've set for zoomorphic projection to perform:

1. To facilitate racially nuanced discussions without intentionally causing harm.
2. To illustrate individuals' racial heritage without resorting to stereotypical or oversimplified features.

We have established that the best scene that performs these goals is scene 6 as it:

1. Makes sure the characters are read as the same group, thus avoiding speciesism.
2. We can rely on animal features to convey meaning.
3. We can isolate the core matter that sets apart my research subject (Coloured people), which is skin colour. However, this leads us to racial ambiguity which is the exact problem we face when depicting the characters as human, hence the need to explore zoomorphic projection.

There are 2 new issues to address:

1. The choice in animal. Which as we've established aims to align with the author's (my) identity and perspective, given that the author is Coloured and specifically South African.
2. Skin tone, causing racial ambiguity.

To take us back to the concept of the authorial avatar and the narrative "I" in autobiographical comics (Kunka, 2018, p. 7). As I previously discussed, the use of animal imagery as zoomorphic projection must be carefully considered. The choice of animal imagery must not only align with my own comfortability and resonance with that animal, but also serve as a faithful and earnest attempt at depicting and representing the larger Coloured group, whilst also taking into account that I use the same animal imagery to depict other racial groups in the comic as well.

Looking back to *Maus* (1986), and its use of mice as the primary zoomorphic projection applied to Jewish characters, many have asked, why mice? Spiegelman addresses this in his book *MetaMaus*, where he states that the cat and mouse metaphor of oppression could apply to his personal experience – this imagery became more solidified for him as he engaged in literature that portrayed Jews as rats/vermin (2011, pp. 113–115).

For Spiegelman, drawing on this negative association punctuated the severity of his work. If I were to follow is Spiegelman's footsteps, I'd choose dogs as the zoomorphic image given the negative comparisons that surround Coloured people like being called: "mongrels", "pavement specials" and "mixed breeds". But my research does not aim to create a dichotomy between racial groups using speciesism or bestialization. I also take personal offense with being compared to dogs.

To address issue number 1 as well as issue number 2, an animal that most aligns with me as the author is the pigeon.

My own comfortability with representing myself as a pigeon comes from a positive association between pigeons and good fortune. Growing up in a rural area meant pigeons were everywhere and eventually one fine day you would find droppings on your head or shoulders. When this happened, people would say, “That’s good luck”. This omen has stuck with me despite the many negative associations with pigeons.

My selection of pigeons holds significance as these birds have been a constant presence throughout my life and are not tied to any specific geographical location. They may be considered as rats of the sky, connoting dirtiness. I must note that, without a survey to gauge further opinions on the pigeon in conversation with racial representation, I cannot fully argue that pigeons do or do not hold other positive or negative connotations. It is a risk for the comic if the zoomorphic image of the pigeon is not well received.

In this moment, however, pigeons are arguably neutral animals. And this is what my research benefits from. The supposed neutrality of the pigeon image.

Moreover, the zoomorphic image of pigeons affords me the feature of feathers. Feathers open the creative avenue of using colour as a secondary assist to the zoomorphic projection.

To be more direct, if feathers are the core feature we’re relying on to avoid racial ambiguity, why pigeons and not any other bird?

Pigeons are globally distributed and have a history of being long distance messengers, symbolically this aligns with me as I am using the zoomorphic pigeon image as a messenger to communicate broadly about the Coloured community. Additionally, to me, pigeons symbolize the concept of "peopledome" or community.

Speaking more specific to their feathers, pigeon can appear in varying colours but what interests me is their iridescence around their necks that can be seen shifting from green to purple in different angels. This feature opens up an exciting creative avenue for depicting the multiculturality of Coloured people (this will be showcased in Chapter 4).

Simply put, the pigeon image is a neutral canvas upon which I can depict many different racial groups without explicitly intending to cause offence or insult.

We may now proceed with the zoomorphic exploration:

Scene 6: Zoomorphic Pigeon – Zoomorphic Pigeons (Skin tone)



Figure 16: Illustration of Zoomorphic exploration Scene 6: Zoomorphic pigeons (Skin tone)

In scene 6 (see figure 16), both characters are depicted as zoomorphic pigeons. This choice reflects the overarching goals we've outlined for the use of zoomorphism in this research.

Specifically, I aim to avoid any confusion between race and speciesism, steer clear of negative associations or disrespect associated with the chosen animal imagery, and ensure that the imagery does not carry any particular cultural connotations. Our intention is for the zoomorphic image to facilitate discussions on race without perpetuating stereotypes, while also imbuing the research with a personal dimension, given its autoethnographic nature.

However, the challenge in this scene lies in potential racial ambiguity resulting from the reliance on accurate skin tone representation. This could lead to the use of stereotypical racial markers to identify characters' races, such as depicting Black characters with braids or White characters with straight hair. Such depictions risk being problematic, offensive, and exclusionary, especially considering the diverse range of hairstyles among Coloured individuals.

My aim is to avoid reducing race to simplistic qualifiers and instead embrace the complexity and diversity of Coloured identity.

Scene 7a, 7b and 7c: Zoomorphic Pigeon – Zoomorphic Pigeons (Colour differentiation)

Scene 7a: Colour



Figure 17: Illustration of Zoomorphic exploration Scene 7a: Zoomorphic Pigeons (Colour Differentiation)

Scene 7b: Grey

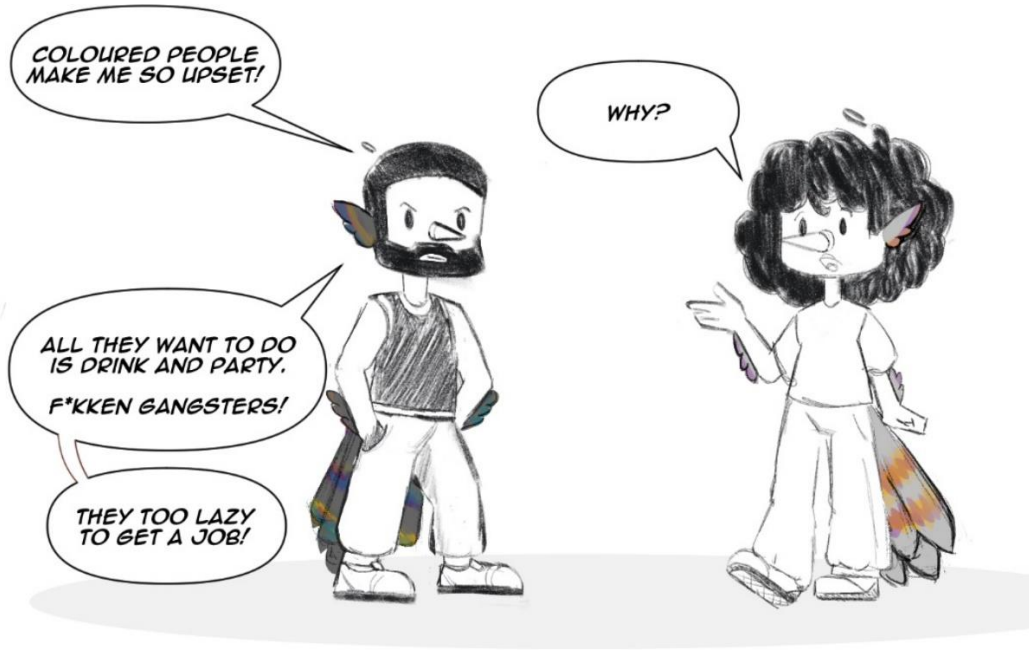

Figure 18: Illustration of Zoomorphic exploration Scene 7b: Zoomorphic Pigeons (Grey)

Scene 7 c: Lightness and Darkness.



Figure 19: Illustration of Zoomorphic exploration Scene 7c: Zoomorphic Pigeons (Lightness and Darkness)

In scenes 7a (see figure 17) and 7b (see figure 18), we tackle the challenge of skin tone reliance by introducing the use of colour to depict different racial groups, leveraging the qualities of bird characteristics.
Instead of solely using browns, we incorporate hues of reds, blues, and yellows. This approach allows us to indicate various racial backgrounds, including biracial individuals while remaining consistent with the bird imagery, as feathers naturally appear in diverse colours.

In Scene 7a, characters are portrayed in distinct colours, representing different racial groups. For instance, Red might signify a white person, Yellow a Black person, and the blending of these colours might produce an orange hue, symbolizing biracialism.

Scene 7b presents characters as predominantly grey, with accents of colours interspersed. This aims to identify Coloured individuals as those with mixed heritage and multicultural backgrounds.
When looking at 7b, this is where the imagery of pigeons truly starts to resemble reality, as pigeons often exhibit iridescence with colourful feathers against a grey body.

Utilizing colour in this manner offers several advantages. It enables easier identification of different racial groups without relying on racially reductive qualities such as hair or facial features, particularly within a simplified drawing style like that of this comic. Additionally, we can leverage variations in colour brightness or darkness to discuss colourism within the narrative. This can be seen in Scene 7c (see figure 19).

Chapter 4 – Birds of a Feather.

In this chapter I undertake an examination of the final comic output. The comic book is an application of the zoomorphic exploration and a product of the autoethnographic study of my Coloured experience.

To reiterate, my research objectives are to discuss the complexities of my Coloured identity in post-Apartheid South Africa and investigate the use of zoomorphism as a means of representation in an autoethnographic comic.

This research addresses the question:

How can zoomorphism be used to explore the Coloured Experience in Post-Apartheid South Africa, through an autoethnographic comic?

In this chapter I provide an overview of the autoethnographic data, providing a summary of the process and presenting key themes. I engage in an analysis of the zoomorphic application in the comic, first looking to earlier drafts of characterisation to discuss how the zoomorphic pigeon image developed to its final iteration. I also discuss the effectiveness of colour as a secondary assist to the zoomorphic image.

Thereafter, I discuss the comic form and the affordances gained from the semiotic resources made available, talking specifically to embodied aspects, inhabitation and body-sensory perception.

Addressing key inquiries such as:

- The treatment of language and slang within the comics form.
- The impact of zoomorphism on the portrayal of my Coloured experience.
- The specific components within the comic that intricately engage with the nuances of the Coloured identity.

Autoethnographic data:

The guided journaling process consisted of eight exercises designed to stimulate memory recall. Each exercise involved reflecting on personal experiences, collecting, sorting, categorizing, and evaluating significant personal events within the broader context of the Coloured identity.

There are four significant events that serve as pivotal moments in shaping the narrative of the comic namely:

- My introduction to the concept of race.
- My relocation to Cape Town.
- Heritage Day celebrations at primary and high school,
- And living in Braamfontein during my time at Varsity.

These events form a narrative thread for the reader to follow and for the authorial avatar to host a discussion about their relationship with Colouredness.

These journaling exercises revealed to me:

- How prevalent the Old Apostolic Church has been throughout my life as it truly dictates many of the religious celebrations and social events myself and my family participate in. For instance, gathering during Easter for Confirmations of the Sunday school children into the Youth and larger congregation.
- How creative, emotive, and fascinating Coloured people are when sharing advice through proverbs of common saying.
- How Coloured people share culture while also uniquely interpreting rituals or celebrations that may be practised by outsiders in their own communities.

Some common themes expressed throughout the guided journaling exercises is the feeling of discomfort at my not having any Coloured mentors and finding out that I only have two remaining grandparents. Another theme that pops up is the feeling of nostalgia, bred from a shift in my own understanding of culture and what constitutes a cultural artefact/object.

Moreover, much of what was unearthed during the guided journaling process, did not make an appearance in the final comic. There is no showcase of baby showers, no depictions of knives or use of the proverbs or common sayings. This may cause a disjoint between the comic and the journaled content, however I must note that although these aspects do not make a literal appearance, there is certainly inspiration taken and reinterpreted to fit within a discussion for a broader audience to engage with.

The comic's narrative is presented as a discussion that mostly concerns itself with coloured stereotypes and my journey with assimilation and coloured pride. It is a discussion about how difficult it is to talk about Colouredness and how complicated it can be to encapsulate the tiny details and nuances.

While the guided journaling effectively narrowed the focus and collected memory data, its structured nature limited wider exploration. Despite consulting friends and family during the exercises to clarify certain routines or sayings, enhancing the depth of collected content would have been made possible by incorporating consultation with more introspective artefacts such as pictures, recordings, or field notes. Another alteration I suggest for future iterations would be to follow more than eight exercises and expand the field of questioning.

Zoomorphic application.

During my exploration of zoomorphic projection, I found that using pigeon feathers as a core characteristic offered several benefits for making clear racial distinctions between characters. As stated before I adhere to the stylistic approach seen in Art Spiegelman's depiction of characters in *Maus* (1986), where the animal imagery is predominantly carried by the face while the rest of the character retains a human appearance.

One challenge I faced was incorporating the distinctive features of pigeons onto the characters while ensuring they remained identifiable as pigeons and no other birds. It was crucial to consider the concept of the icon, where the zoomorphic image needed to be clear and simple, to ensure readability.

I underwent a drafting process (see Figure 20) to refine the zoomorphic image, aiming for iconic simplicity while bearing in mind the iterative nature of cartooning in comics making. This process involved simplifying features for quick drawing and easy recognition.



Figure 20: Zoomorphic character design process.

A critique I have is regarding the final character design (see figure 21), in regard to the pigeon tails as the characters' key feature. To maintain clarity in close-up shots where full body details may not be visible, additional traits like feathered ears and feathered forearms were added to ensure the zoomorphic projection and racial identification remained intact. Initially, feathers on the shoulders were considered, but they posed issues with clothing choices. Another iteration included feathers in the hair, but this added unnecessary complexity.



Figure 21:Comic insert showing structure of feathers and colour placement.

It's worth noting that only the feathers of the characters are coloured, while the rest remains blank, devoid of any skin tone. This deliberate choice emphasizes the zoomorphic image.

The feathers provided a creative avenue where colour could serve as a secondary and supporting mechanism.

This mechanism manifested in the character designs through the use of feather colours to differentiate individuals of different racial groups, rather than relying solely on realistic skin tones. Outsiders of the Coloured community were depicted with "pure" colours, while Coloured individuals were represented with grey feathers accented with iridescence (see Figure 21).

I assigned colours to different races without any symbolic tie or specific connection between the colour and the race (see Figure 23). These “pure” colours were chosen randomly, but there was deeper thought behind the assignment of grey feathers to Coloured individuals, aligning them more closely with the pigeon.

Here's how the colour assignment works:

- Blue: Black individuals.
- Purple: Biracial.
- Red: White individuals.
- Orange: Biracial.
- Yellow: Asian individuals.
- Green: Biracial.
- Grey: Coloured individuals.

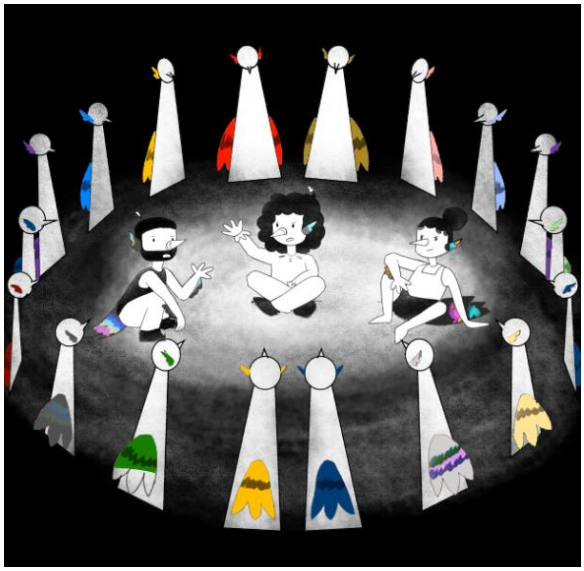

Figure 22: Comic insert showcasing colour assignments

This approach creatively highlights the concept of purity versus multiraciality. In the comic, where the focus is on Coloured people, characters of other races stand out more, echoing the marginalization of the Coloured community.

The iridescent feather bands, where the depiction of Coloured people differed, showcased another mechanism facilitated by the use of feathers and blending modes in the illustration software. These bands also served to illustrate familial bonds and lineage. For instance, in the author avatar, their feathers took on the colours of their parents in a pseudo-scientific manner.

The colours on the banding on the Coloured character's tail feathers, follow the rules established by the same race-to-colour assignment I've mentioned before, to echo their heritage.

For instance (See Figure 23):

My mother who has German, "Boertjie" and "Hottentot" blood, as she would say, follows this colour scheme:Red, Purple, Yellow.

My father who is Capetonian and says his family is filled with Portuguese blood. Follows this colour scheme: Blue, Yellow and Orange.

Which results in my sister's colour scheme being: Red, Blue, Yellow and Green.

And my author avatar's colour scheme being: Red, Purple, Yellow and Green.

This approach applies to all the characters who's heritage I am familiar with and stays consistent throughout the comic.

However, this clear colour scheme is not depicted because of the use of blending modes used to make the colours appear iridescent to echo the colouring of pigeons.

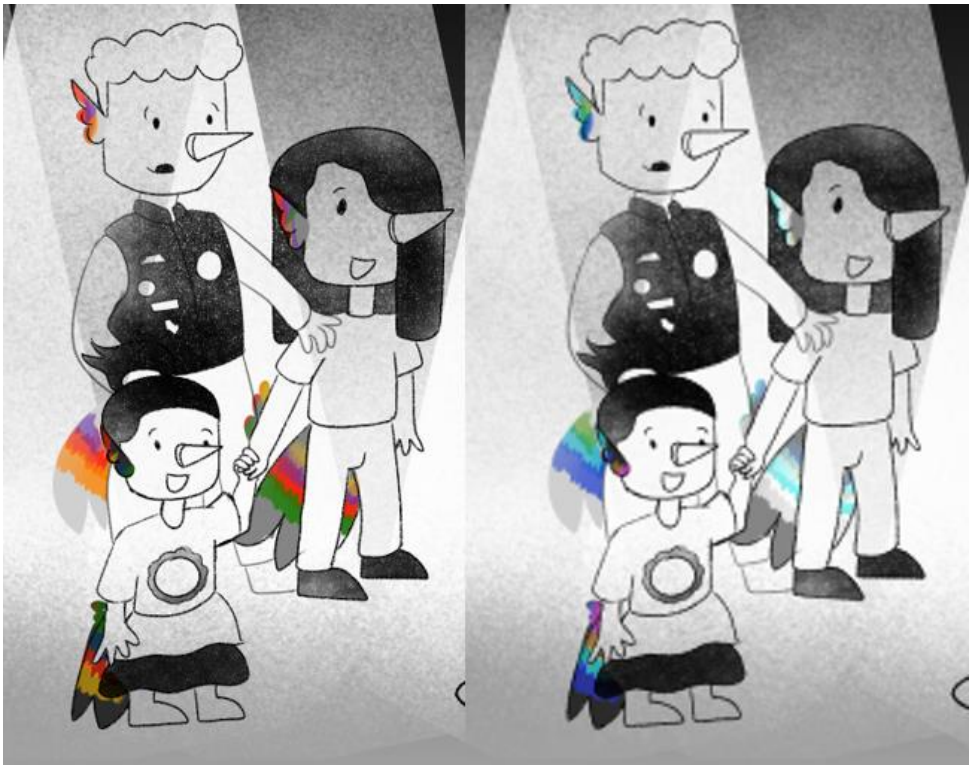

Figure 23: Comic insert showcasing lineage linking colours versus adding a blending setting.

What I appreciate about this character design is:

- The simplicity of the characters makes them easy to draw.
- The design allows for flexibility in hair and clothing changes, particularly for my authorial avatar, which is significant in identifying my relationship with Colouredness. Being able to depict different hairstyles and reflect on how my hair has evolved over the years is personally meaningful.
- The design is memorable, with characters maintaining clarity and consistency throughout the comic. Additionally, the peripheral zoomorphic imagery serves as a crucial feature for identifying each character's race.
- The subtle nature of the zoomorphic projection prompts readers to pay close attention to the characters and confront their own perceptions of race. I mentioned before that people often ask if I'm Coloured - now the comic begs the reader to ask, is that a Black character? a White character? an Asian character? Even though all characters are depicted using the zoomorphic image, the pigeon colouring only applies to Coloured individuals makes it so very clear who is Coloured. There is no ambiguity on that front.

A drawback of adopting a non-speciesism approach to zoomorphic metaphor in graphic depictions of race is the reliance on other distinguishing features, such as colour, which may weaken the effectiveness of the projection if inconsistencies arise. An alternative approach could involve using zoomorphism in a more fantastical and abstract manner by assigning non-human attributes to humans, such as objects like cups or pencil nibs, which could offer new creative avenues for exploring racially coded narratives and inquiries.

The Coloured self and the comics form.

The comics making process commenced after the zoomorphic exploration. I am familiar with comics production and the process follows a simple, script to thumbnail to digital lining and colouring.

After I developed and established the approach I would take to character design, I treated the content produced from the guided journaling as the inspiration and overarching flow of the comic.

An aspect of the comics creation process that broadened my understanding was the act of roleplaying, body-sensory perception and inhabitation (Flowers, 2017, pp. 31, 32) of the author avatar and other characters, allowing me to authentically capture the essence of the depicted moments.

The comic's form and the image-text complex within the medium allowed me the reactivation of dialogue. To capture things like accents and slang and even a particular handshake (see Figure 24), I verbalised the lines of the characters, my body also enacting the movements of the characters to get a feel for the words. My entire self was engaged in the depiction and meaning making process. I feel this is an extension or an added layer to the autoethnographic inquiry which requests the author to deeply reflect and reimagine personal events. Simply put, these are accents and slang words that I use in my everyday life, yet there I sat, needing my body and other senses to help me remember and capture the nuances.

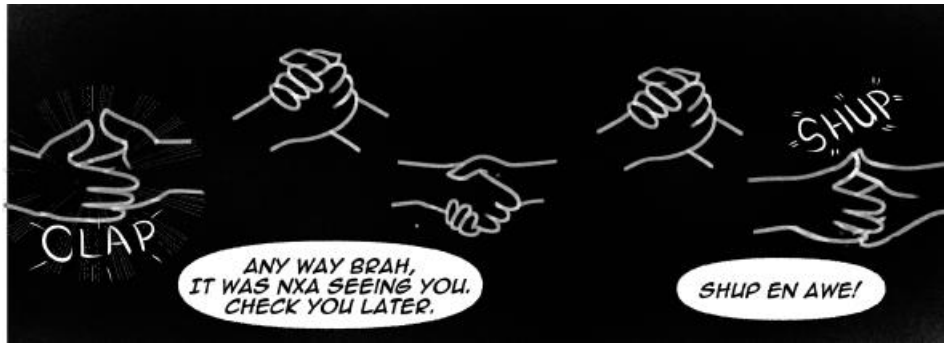

Figure 24: Comic insert showing handshake.

The comics format provided a creative avenue for me to explore my voice. This not only helped to characterize individuals but also presented an enjoyable challenge in accurately spelling out accents for readability. Additionally, I found it fascinating to transcribe and represent Coloured slang, as it was something I hadn't previously considered (see Figure 25). Moreover, the portrayal of different Coloured accents and slang in my comic was a point of liberation for me. Initially, I found myself instinctively wanting to write in a more formal tone, but I had to challenge that instinct and embrace the way I speak. Showing different instances where the author avatar swaps between speaking with a thick Coloured accent and using slang, versus speaking more formally, allowed me to reflect on how I adapt my speech depending on the social context (see Figure 26).



Figure 25: Comic insert showcasing Capetonian accent..



Figure 26: Comic insert showcasing author avatar voice.

Another affordance of the comic form is the ability to use and depict sonic event (sound effects). One particularly intriguing aspect of working with dialogue was treating slang as sonic events. This approach vividly captured the local flavour of Coloured communities, adding depth and authenticity to the narrative (see Figure 27).



Figure 27: Comic insert showcasing slang words as sonic events.

Another valuable resource afforded to me by the comics medium is the use of pictures. The versatility of images in comics allowed me to incorporate real-world photographs alongside the illustrated cartoon style used throughout the rest of the comic book (see Figure 28). This approach not only saved time during production but also provided the comic with a connection to reality. By blending real-world images with illustrated elements, I was able to ground the subject matter of the comic, further reinforcing the authenticity of the discussion on Colouredness.



Figure 28: Comic insert showcasing real world pictures used in comic

In sharing these personal stories and reflections, I hope to shed light on the complexities of the Coloured experience and contribute to a richer understanding of Coloured culture and identity. It's been a journey of self-discovery and acceptance, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to explore these themes through my research and creative expression.

I found the comics medium to be particularly effective in showcasing the content derived from my autoethnographic journaling. Frankly speaking, creating this comic book was cathartic and filled me with a sense of pride. While this 20-page comic is not enough to fully encompass the complexity of the Coloured experience, I believe that if the research scope had allowed for more pages, I could have delved much deeper into various aspects of my Coloured identity. Utilizing the imagery of pigeons as the zoomorphic projection – with the assist of colour - was an effective method to represent multiracial heritage. The use of zoomorphic projection provided a sense of coverage and safety within the comic, especially when addressing racially charged events.

Overall, engaging in this practice of creatively exploring my Coloured identity through inquiry was profound and had a deep impact on me.

This research responds to Adhikari's (2009, p. 1) observation that there is a significant gap in the portrayal of Coloured people, and a tendency towards sensationalized, and politicised narratives, by producing a comic book that talks about Colouredness in a creative way from an insider perspective.

This dissertation has established that zoomorphic projection serves as a valuable representational tool in graphic narratives. By carefully and intentionally selecting the zoomorphic image authors can extend metaphors to effectively communicate cultural themes. Zoomorphism enables authors to leverage the rich symbolism and associations of animals to describe human experiences, behaviours, and traits, thereby conveying complex narratives such as racial identity (Petrenko and Petrenko, 2021, p. 720).

Moreover, this research has established that the comics form provides semiotic resources (Kuttner, Weaver-Hightower and Sousanis, 2021, p. 197) that grants scholars,

autobiographers, and artists alike the ability to utilize both writing and drawing as tools for documenting, reflecting, recording, and communicating scholarly outputs. Additionally, this dissertation relies on guided autoethnographic journaling as a base plate for gaining insight and collecting memory data in a controlled and focused way.

This research's limitations suggest that the autoethnographic guided journal could benefit greatly from and expanded questionnaire as well as a consult with other artefacts that would prompt memory recall such as pictures, old journals, recordings and fieldnotes. Moreover, the zoomorphic projection aiming to avoid speciesism, in graphic depictions of race results in the reliance on other distinguishing features, such as colour, which may weaken the effectiveness of the projection if inconsistencies arise.

This research aimed to address and showcase the misperceptions surrounding Coloured people by creating a creative artifact using comics and employing zoomorphic projection to extend animal allegory, enabling the safe exploration of racially charged narratives. For future works, it is recommended to carefully consider intentions when selecting animal imagery and to acknowledge the scope of the comics medium.

Zoomorphism in graphic narratives, works as a visually stimulating tool for representing the concept of race, by drawing on visual metaphor, animal association and allegory, in combination with the comics medium, and an engagement with guided autoethnographic journaling, this research produced a comic book where I was able to host a discussion on my experience as a Coloured person in a safe, visually stimulating and creative way.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion.

Adhikari (2009) highlights a tendency for narratives about Coloured people to be oversimplified, sensationalized, and politicised. This gap in how Coloured people are portrayed shows that there is a lack of genuine approaches to understanding the Coloured community.

I see value in having a conversation about Colouredness, and that being Coloured in South Africa is an experience that deserves to be documented and presented. As a Coloured person, I am motivated to write stories that highlight other aspects of Colouredness outside of the plight of the "poor Coloured child". Aspects that creatively:

1. Bring visibility to the perception of Coloured people South Africa (both positively and negatively).
2. Highlight us as a people and community beyond stereotypes.
3. Share the complexities of our culture and language we have and my struggle with identity.

Taking inspiration from Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1986) my research uses zoomorphic projection and the comics medium to host this discussion on Colouredness. Zoomorphism is the assignment of animal characteristics and traits to humans, it is a very common practice to project animalistic characters on people to metaphorically align them. This happens in everyday conversation, storybooks, animated movies as well as in comics.

In my research zoomorphism works as a visually stimulating tool for representing the concept of race, drawing on visual metaphor and allegory to discuss my Coloured experience.
It must be said that achieving a more comprehensive representation of Coloured identity requires access to a broader spectrum of Coloured experiences, hence why my research methodology is grounded in autoethnography which allows me to leverage my own experiences as a means of collecting data.

For my autoethnographic process, I follow eight guided journaling prompts set out by Heewon Chang (2008) to identify experiences specific to being Coloured and to collect and store these memories in a structured and organised manner.
My exploration into zoomorphism as a representational strategy is assisted by the comics medium which my research is presented in - and this forms my creative component. I use the comics medium for this research because of its inherent visuality and history with autobiographical writing.

Overall, my research is an attempt to produce an artefact that discusses Colouredness in a creative and personal way, injected with research, self-study, and reflection.

Colouredness and autoethnographic inquiry.

With regard to Coloured people, the discussion of the term "Coloured" reveals a complex interplay of historical, social, and personal factors that shape its meaning and significance. Adhikari sheds light on the detrimental effects of oversimplified narratives and racial stereotyping, as well as the enduring legacy of apartheid-era discrimination.

The dehumanizing characterization of Coloured people by Marike de Klerk as "no-persons" or "leftovers" highlights the profound societal attitudes that perpetuated division and inequality (Adhikari, 2005b, p. 13). This underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of Coloured identity that transcends simplistic categorizations.

Furthermore, Adhikari's discussion of assimilationism, shame, and rejectionism within the Coloured community provides valuable insights into the internalized biases and struggles faced by individuals navigating complex racial dynamics (2005b). The pressure to conform to societal expectations, whether through assimilation to Whiteness or rejection of Colouredness, reflects the ongoing legacy of racial discrimination and marginalization. As is reflected in my own journey with expressing my Colouredness.

This research has examined stereotyping and culture within the context of the Coloured community revealing deep-seated biases and complexities that shape perceptions and experiences. Stereotypes, as Adhikari (2006) and February (1981) discuss, perpetuate harmful narratives that portray Coloured individuals as inherently inferior, lazy, and immoral.

The quote "You can take the Coloured out of the bush, man, but you cannot take the Bushman out of the Coloured" encapsulates the stereotypes that are associated with Coloured individuals (Adhikari, 2006, p. 160).

Similarly, February's depiction of Coloured people as lazy, alcoholic, and immoral reflects the pervasive nature of ethnocentric stereotypes that continue to shape societal attitudes (1981). These stereotypes not only affect external perceptions but also impact internal dynamics, influencing employment prospects and societal acceptance. Unpacking and discussing these stereotypes candidly is an act of reclamation in this research and is crucial in unpacking the multifaceted identity of the Coloured community.

Coloured culture, as described by Martin (1998), is a dynamic and diverse amalgamation of influences from various ethnic groups and religious practices. While some may view Coloured culture as problematic, perpetuating racial divisions, others recognize it as a unique and valid expression of identity and heritage.

In my observations, Coloured culture is fluid and ever evolving, shaped by individual experiences and community dynamics.

Zoomorphic Projection:

The exploration of zoomorphism within the context of graphic narratives offers valuable insights into its representational functions, distinct features, and ethical implications. In this research we have established a foundational understanding of how zoomorphism operates as a literary and visual device and have delineated it from anthropomorphism.

Zoomorphism, as a practice that attributes animal forms, qualities, or behaviours to humans, allows for the conveyance of complex ideas and nuanced meanings through familiar animal imagery(C. Sly, 2021). It serves as a powerful tool for abstraction and simplification in visual storytelling, enabling effective communication of iconic figures and extending metaphors to convey cultural, social, or political messages.

However, it is essential to navigate the use of zoomorphism with caution, particularly when discussing racial differences. Although zoomorphism and anthropomorphism are different, they both describe the process of using animals for human storytelling, and so to understand the implications thereof we look to Leslie Bow's (2019) exploration of anthropomorphic animals in multicultural children's literature highlights the risks of inadvertently perpetuating racist caricatures or instilling animal associations with specific racial groups. Additionally, Thomas Lamarre's (2008) concept of speciesism warns against the dehumanizing effects of using animal imagery to strip individuals of their humanity, particularly in wartime propaganda.

To address these concerns, careful consideration must be given to how zoomorphic representations are employed and the potential impact on audience perceptions. Through zoomorphic exploration and critical reflection, it is possible to create representations that respect the complexity and diversity of racial identities while avoiding crude depictions that reinforce harmful stereotypes.

In my autoethnographic comic, I leverage zoomorphism as a means of creatively communicating my personal understanding of being Coloured. By integrating animal imagery and abstraction, I strive to enhance the portrayal of Coloured individuals while fostering deeper engagement and understanding among readers.

After my zoomorphic exploration the animal choice landed on that of a Pigeon, thus providing me with features like feathers affording me the secondary feature of colour to portray Coloured individuals and racially identify other characters without relying on stereotypical depictions to distinguish characters from one another.

Comics and autoethnographic expression.

We've established that comics as a method for research inquiry and autobiographical tool unveils a rich tapestry of possibilities for scholars, artists, and storytellers alike. Throughout this discussion, we've delved into the unique qualities of comics that distinguish them from other visual media forms, such as their multimodality, sequentially, and openness to creator style and voice (Kuttner, Weaver-Hightower and Sousanis, 2021, p. 200). These qualities afford researchers a flexible and dynamic platform for inquiry and expression.

The affordances of comics, as highlighted by scholars like Paul J Kuttner, Marcus B Weaver-Hightower, Nick Sousanis (2021) - offer powerful semiotic resources for scholarly exploration across disciplines. Through a combination of textual, visual, and structural resources, comics enable researchers to capture and communicate complex ideas, narratives, and experiences in ways that resonate with diverse audiences.

Moreover, the history of autobiographical writing paired with comics provides a unique avenue for individuals to explore and represent their own lived experiences. By embodying themselves within the comics form, authors can engage with issues of representation, memory, and identity in dynamic and visually compelling ways.

This research takes this approach, grounded in autoethnography, allowing for a nuanced exploration of personal narratives within broader social contexts, contributing to a deeper understanding of my Coloured identity.

As I reflect on my own research journey, I recognize the inherent limitations of my perspective as an insider within the Coloured community. While I aim to provide a comprehensive representation of Coloured identity through my autoethnographic inquiry, I acknowledge that my experiences only offer a small glimpse into the diverse tapestry of Coloured experiences. Nevertheless, I seek to give witness to my own existence as a Coloured individual, while also contributing to a broader conversation about identity, representation, and belonging.

Ultimately, the research on Coloured Identity underscores the importance of recognizing and affirming the diverse experiences and identities within the Coloured community. By challenging stereotypes, embracing cultural heritage, and confronting systemic injustices, I am able to bring visibility to my Coloured experience. Zoomorphic projection offers a rich and versatile tool for graphic storytellers to convey complex narratives and explore diverse perspectives. By approaching its use with sensitivity, intentionality, and ethical consideration, we can harness its potential to foster empathy, challenge stereotypes, and promote understanding in the world of graphic narratives. The comics medium then, serve as a powerful vehicle for storytelling, inquiry, and self-expression, offering nearly limitless possibilities for representation and discourse. Through their unique combination of text and image, comics facilitate a dynamic interplay between words and pictures, inviting readers to engage actively with narratives and ideas.

Throughout this research journey, I was excited because I have harnessed the creative potential of comics and zoomorphic projection to explore and illuminate the complexities of my Coloured identity, one panel at a time.

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