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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG



"So, what are you?"

Analysing erasure, shame and (mis)appropriation of Coloured narratives in South Africa through social media.

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This research is submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Critical Diversity Studies.

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this research report is my original work. Any ideas in this report that are not my own are acknowledged through proper references and citations. This report is being submitted for a Master of Art in the field of Critical Diversity Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and no part of this report has been submitted in the past, or is being submitted, or will be submitted in the future for any degree or examination at any other university.

_____ _____

Jamil Khan Date

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To my parents, thank you for doing your best to raise me in the shadow of your trauma.

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Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
- Maya Angelou

Abstract

This study examines how Coloured people are constructing Colouredness and by implication, themselves through the Facebook web series, *Coloured Mentality.*Coloured identities have been a very uncomfortable part of South African race politics since colonialism and have carried a range of stereotypes and myths with them. Despite being constructed as monolithic and essential, Coloured identities have long undergone processes of creolisation under conditions of brutality to continue making and remaking themselves as political landscapes change. To explore how Colouredness is being constructed, this research employed critical discourse analysis to evaluate its relationships with history, blackness in post-Apartheid South Africa, language, culture and privilege. In particular, much of the sense making around Colouredness operates through a discourse of origin exemplified by the question: Where do we come from? Through the lens of creolisation theory, this research reveals Colouredness to be introspective in that Coloured identities are constantly negotiating possibilities for change and impossibilities of historical ways of identification that compete with each other for relevance. Coloured identities are sweeping through archives of information to inform a new way of telling their stories.Tensions and contestations within Colouredness are central to their making and remaking, as identities are made sense of through changing discourses which serve as a gateway to social change.

Keywords: Colouredness, creolisation, discourse, identity, social media

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PREFACE

7764 born and raised in this cold
Coke, cheese and crackers and a smile full of gold
Ghetto nirvana, do just what we wanna
We don't care

Oh 1107 born and raised in my hometown
Guns out at the parties
Guns out, man down
Dancing on my F1
Blue lights we're on the run tonight hey

Short skirts and All Stars, Galaxies and Bang Bars
Fireworks on the beach, Guy Fawkes in the streets
Same-same but different, unequal equivalent
We are are, are

Forget tomorrow and live for today
They don't understand the choices we make
We don't need your sympathy
We're different and that's okay, okay (Nevis, 7764, Track 9)

The idea for this research project started with an interest in analysing how self-identified Coloured poets were constructing Colouredness through their poetry. As a form of poetry, the lyrics of the song above by singer Jimmy Nevis, titled *7764*, was one example I wanted to use. When the song was released in 2014, it was the first time I had heard a song documenting, so explicitly, an experience I could relate to as a Coloured person. It is an experience which, I believe, resides at the margins of dinner party conversations around identity politics in South Africa.

Two years prior to the release of this song I had newly relocated to Johannesburg from Cape Town. I started my first job as an assistant to a famous fashion designer and was the object of substantial interest in my first days. A co-worker, upon staring at me for a while, finally

exclaimed: “So, *what* are you?” His interest was in racially classifying me, since I created much confusion with my mere presence – an age old hallmark of the Coloured dilemma of ambiguity and perhaps something indicative of the place Colouredness occupies in the social imaginary of South Africans. When I said I was Coloured, he responded with disbelief. I enquired about why I could not be Coloured according to him and he responded: “You don’t look and act Coloured.” Quite intrigued by the certainty with which he held such contingent qualities, I asked: “How do Coloureds act?” He responded to say we are loud and aggressive people who drink too much and have very little awareness of socially acceptable behaviour.

I present this anecdote, which is one of many similar experiences, to illustrate the way in which Colouredness is still very much overdetermined in South African society. It is a receptacle of myth and stereotype, delved into by all South Africans in the process of meaning making around race, which stems from a long history of slavery, displacement, appropriation and marginalisation.

In contrast, this research seeks to understand what can be seen when looking at Coloured people through the stories they use to construct themselves in the year 2017.

Since embarking on the research journey, this project has defined and redefined itself continuously. My own understanding of what contribution I would like to make evolved, with the help of constant dialogue between me, the research and society. A personal research undertaking from the beginning, this research was inspired by the questioning of my own Coloured identity, confronted with discourses that include essentialist, liberal essentialist, instrumentalist and social constructionist approaches (Adhikari, 2009). The way in which these discourses were simultaneously circulating in society only served to mirror the very fluid, contested (re)negotiation that still remains a feature of Colouredness.

Since I made the decision to explore this topic, Colouredness gained a level of salience in the media I had not seen for a long time. It was partly that preceding silence, in and amongst ever present racial tensions, which informed my commitment to the topic as a neglected area of inquiry. As if responding to my interest, the *Coloured Mentality* web series launched at the beginning of the year, providing the perfect research sample, but a more organic event raised awareness of an element of Colouredness I had not paid enough attention to.

The response of the Klipspruit West community in Eldorado Park, Johannesburg to the appointment of a Black principal in July of 2017 revealed that deep faultlines in the relationship between Black and Coloured people still exist. The community wanted a Coloured principal instead, citing that they needed a role model for their children. The presence of a strong essentialism in this framing of Colouredness (as something that is opposed to Blackness) as something that is imbued with values that are desirable for transmission to the next generation, through role modelling is concerning. The existence of this sentiment in 2017 is yet another testament to the fact that many Coloured people feel strongly about the need to distinguish themselves from Black people for the purposes of preserving a perceived essence, which contradicts the fluidity that characterises Colouredness. From the perspective of scholarship, it is my view that this faultline warrants more exploration if we are to better understand race and identity in South Africa.

Personal reflections on the neglected nature of Colouredness as an area of interest were sparked by an observation I made while reading literature on the topic. I had been in possession of books on Coloured history and identity for over five months during this research. Some of the books I had are the only copies belonging to Wits as a whole and in all that time, none of them were requested. This, to me, is indicative of the general lack of interest in the identities, history and people beyond just research but also for the purposes of self-education. Most self-identified Coloured people I spoke to throughout this time were not aware that the books I used existed.

The politics of Coloured identities which played out on public platforms during 2017 displayed clearly the dilemma which makes the positionality such a precarious one. On the one hand, the feeling of isolation and abandonment by the South African nation building project, which is perceived to foreground a binary understanding of race relations as black and white, alienates Coloured people who see themselves as a distinct group with nuanced struggles. On the other hand, the need to separate Colouredness from Blackness combined with a history of complicity and collusion with white supremacy by Coloured people further perpetuates the alienation. It is my view that if Coloured identity is going to be researched in hopes of calling attention to the perceived unjust neglect it suffers under a binary racial order; it is only responsible of researchers such as myself to hold the call for recognition alongside a historical and current

politics of separatism regarding Blackness and complicity and collusion with a white supremacist Apartheid system in South Africa.

It is my intention to demonstrate how that could be done, with this research, while remaining cognizant of Glissant's (2008) assertion that "…whatever classification is employed to understand our world, and regardless of its usefulness, reality always extends beyond its parameters" (p. 84).

Chapter One: Introduction

> Broadly speaking, the coloured community does not easily accept the idea of being African, despite some attachment to Khoisan identities, which they define as not being black African. One finds that in the 'new South Africa', educated and middle-class coloured people tend to be supportive of the new government and its policies, but do not identify as African because they see the state's conception of Africanness as being narrowly rooted. Hence there is reluctance within the coloured community to identify as African or even South African. It is not a resistance to citizenship but a yearning for full citizenship that drives the coloured community's demand for recognition and acknowledgement. (Ruiters, 2009, p. 114)

The statement above by Ruiters (2009) holds a range of complex tensions and contradictions entangled with multiple histories and lived realities. The statement speaks to a set of expressions and silences I have personally participated in and interrogated with discomfort. The discomfort of embodying a Coloured identity in post-Apartheid South Africa inspired this research which traces the ebb and flow of that discomfort. Historically understood as a racial 'middle point' between what is constructed as white superiority and Black inferiority, Colouredness today remains an uncomfortable subject for interrogation. This research report, limited only by the institutional scope of its form, will speak to the constructions of Colouredness from within and outside, while attempting to bring to life a dialectic between lived experiences of Coloured people as they are shaped by discourse, and discourse as it is shaped by lived experiences.

1.1. Debating Colouredness

The debate around Coloured identity in South Africa has prevailed for years, before, during and after Apartheid (Adendorf, 2016; Adhikari 2004, 2006; Erasmus 2001; Fisher, 2008; McKaiser 2015; Terrence, 2011). The category officially came into existence as a racial classification under the Population Registration Act of 1950 (although it existed socially long before then), and was imposed by the Apartheid government as an overarching category encompassing a sub-hierarchy of differentiators. Under the act, Coloureds and Indians were formally classified into various subgroups namely: Cape Coloured, Malay, Griqua, Chinese, Indian, Other Asian and Other Coloured.

According to the Act:

> A white person is one who in appearance is, or who is generally accepted as, a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance is obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person. A native is a person who is in fact or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa. A coloured person is a person who is not a white person or a native. (Republic of South Africa, 1950)

Under the Group Areas Act 1950 (amended several times up until 1984) Coloured (and Black) people were forcibly removed from their communities such as Sophiatown and District Six and banished to various townships and council estates (Adhikari, 2006).

Separated by classed spatial planning, fragmented Coloured communities produced equally fragmented identities which are still struggling to reach across and reconcile on the basis of a past rooted in slavery, dispossession, landlessness, shame, liminality and violence (Adhikari, 2006; Erasmus, 2001; Gqola, 2010).While the communities were fragmented, where they were forced to make new homes, communities conjured up a new wholeness through narratives which worked to both their advantage and disadvantage (Trotter, 2009). This research seeks to engage the current need of Coloured people for self-determination in asserting Coloured identities, which speaks back to what McKaiser (2015) terms "the arrogance with which other people want to impose on coloured people what they should think of themselves." When conducting a literature search on Coloured identities, people and/or culture in South Africa one is bombarded with an overwhelming body of literature addressing gangsterism (mostly on the Cape Flats), drug and alcohol addiction and related foetal alcohol syndrome. A few scholars such as Erasmus (2001), Adhikari (2004, 2006, 2009), Wicomb (1998) and Gqola (2010) have engaged the topic of Coloured identity in ways that give the subject credibility and historical nuance. The field of study warrants a legitimate investment of research expertise, but remains relatively unattended, which reads as a failure of nerve of scholars to bring the subject to the centre (or close to it) of the very voracious debates around identity politics in South Africa. The marginalisation of Coloured narratives nationally prevails in relation to a history underpinned by vicious stereotypes, misrepresentation, disenfranchisement, and obfuscation (by marginal racial privilege

to Black South Africans) of a zealous history of struggle for the liberation of Black people and people of colour from the oppression of Apartheid.

Mainstream media has hosted debates about whether or not there is such a thing as a Coloured identity to begin with. Writer Lionel Adendorf presents the view that there is no such thing as a Coloured identity. He asserts that:

> there has never been a race called "coloured". There is no coloured culture, no coloured traditions and no coloured customs. And therefore, no coloured people […] denying this or fighting this unfortunate reality would only strengthen apartheid's hold on them as this will mean they accept the dominance and legitimacy of apartheid over their identity, their plight and their destiny. (Adendorf, 2016)

McKaiser (2015) rejects this tendency towards imposing identities on Coloured people. He presents the view that the question of Coloured identity is certainly premised on a very real experience and a complex one at that. Colouredness - on its own and in relation to Blackness is a site fraught with contestation, where the two groups perpetuate racial thinking against each other all the time (McKaiser, 2015). The imposition of a Black identity on Coloured people does little to address the complexities of their history shared by Black people, but also distinctly different to theirs (Erasmus, 2001). It is this differentiation that is fighting for the right to self-determination. As evinced by the dates of the above articles, which engage the question of the Coloured identity, time has done nothing to put this contentious issue to rest.

1.2. Viewing Colouredness through Social Media

The web series, *Coloured Mentality*, on which this research pivots shows yet again that in the year 2017 the appetite for this discussion amongst self-identified Coloured South Africans remains voracious. The Facebook platform, on which the web series was launched, has created a space into which all voices can project on the matter. A space for robust debate, disagreement, questioning, learning and thinking has been created where those who share the common interest of talking about often dismissed Coloured identities, cultures and lived experiences can heal through dialogue and map a way forward.

The tension between McKaiser and Adendorf's views above is highly indicative of the competing understandings of what identity is, with some believing it has a pre-existing stable core, while others understand it to be made up of narratives as experiences. For emphasis, I endorse the latter and will elaborate on my choice in the methodology chapter.

Social media in South Africa has repeatedly shown itself to be a space where robust public debate takes place and often, within that debate, deep fault lines along various axes of difference reveal themselves. Race has been no exception.

Race, over the last year, has been a burning issue on social media in South Africa bringing to light many questions around land reform, reconciliation, constitutional reform, representation and justice. Although a highly polarised and charged space, social media has great potential for creating a participatory culture which has lower barriers to civic engagement than would be found when people encounter each other in society (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison & Weigel, 2009). The ways in which critical debates and incidents go "viral" on social media also speaks to the power of the medium to create spaces for debate where voices, both dominant and marginal, can be projected.

An example detailing the dynamics described above played out after the 400 meter sprinting Olympic victory of Wayde van Niekerk in 2016. Coloured people intentionally claimed the victory as one for Coloured people with hashtags such as #ColouredExcellence, sparking widespread backlash for racial thinking. The critique of the hashtag took two main forms: one invoked a nationalist South African discourse, in which the victory was said to be a South African one which everyone could claim; thereby decentring Colouredness. The other invoked an "anti-black" discourse in which Coloured people were said to be separating themselves from Blackness by highlighting van Niekerk'sColouredness and celebrating him on those terms. The debate, again, highlighted deep fault lines between the two groups, but also fostered talks of unity and healing in light of past historical divisions.

These debates can also spill over into mainstream media as has already been the case with the *Coloured Mentality* web series where discussion has continued outside of the platform (Burgess & Green, 2009). It is important to note that social media use, despite having serious legal consequences, has also enabled the circulation of unregulated misinformation which has incited

violence and hate. In acknowledging this, I aim to demonstrate an awareness of the pitfalls of social media while asserting that this research uses social media as a tool for constructive debate.

The interplay between the social media space as a place for marginalised voices and debates and identity, in light of this research, is an interesting site for analysis of discourse. The discursive immediacy of the debate around Coloured identity, which prevails until today, shows how Coloured people are drawing on ever evolving platforms to engage a historical issue that has still not been able to reach consensus. In this way, the need for legitimacy and self-determination to carry the history and current lived experience appears to remain salient for Coloured people. The means for keeping the debate alive may have changed over time, but it seems that the discussion has remained, in some ways, stuck. The *Coloured Mentality* web series holds great potential for advancing the debate (Burgess & Green, 2009) beyond this cul-de-sac and reaching across divides both within and outside of the Coloured community, as this research hopes to show.

1.3. Research Objectives & Questions

This research seeks to engage the discourses and nuances around Coloured identities as they have existed historically and as they exist now. It also aims to add to a somewhat stunted area of scholarship that engages the questions around Coloured identities and approaches them critically. Evidence for the prevailing contestations around Coloured identity presented above highlights a policing that is at play which serves to further alienate Coloured people by delegitimising an identities which provide comfort and a sense of home and belonging for many (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This also serves to further entrench the shame associated with the identity (Adhikari, 2006; Erasmus, 2001; Wicomb 1998;Gqola, 2010) and alienate Coloured people to margins within the marginalised position they already occupy. This research seeks to add new perspectives to the existing literature and to explore novel methodologies through the use of social media. It also places the voices of Coloured people in an affirming space which accepts them as the experts on their own lived experiences and identity constructions. This way, the research challenges the power structures that have worked to suppress these experiences and identity constructions which have always come into being through agency.

The research aims to answer the following question:

How is Colouredness being constructed through the Facebook web series *Coloured Mentality*?

With the sub-questions:

As evidenced on the Facebook page,

- Which discourses are circulating amongst Coloured people in South Africa regarding Colouredness?
- Which signifiers are significant markers for identity amongst Coloured people in South Africa?
- How does identity construct the lived experiences of Coloured people and vice versa in South Africa?

1.4. Chapter Outline

Chapter One has presented an overview of Colouredness and its history as an Apartheid race classification as well as mainstream debates in the media about Colouredness. The literature presented highlights the extent to which the topic has been engaged in academia and provides the motivation for the current study. A section on social media frames the context in which this research explores Coloured identities, namely the Facebook page *Coloured Mentality*. Additionally, this section also presents a brief overview of literature illuminating some dynamics of the social media space. Finally, this chapter presents the research aims and objectives, concluding with the research questions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review builds on the literature introduced in *Chapter One*, giving a more nuanced, contextual positioning of Coloured identities in South Africa. The literature speaks to the historical and current contexts that shaped Colouredness. Creolisation Theory is explored as a framework to understand the conditions under which Coloured people have lived, and how those conditions have influenced identities. Other sections engage Black Consciousness ideology, centres and margins as well as privilege and complicity as it pertains to Coloured history in South Africa. Theory and literature are explored in relation to each other and are used to view Coloured identities from a global and national perspective.

Chapter Three: Methodology unpacks the qualitative methods used in this research and provides an overview of its suitability for the research. The first section frames the understanding of identity used by this research using relevant literature. The next section describes the Facebook

platform from which data was mined as well as some of the strategies employed for working with the data. The section on *Data Collection Techniques* discusses how data was mined from Facebook and presents some literature dealing with the benefits and barriers to using social media as a data source. It then goes further to discuss the use of discourse analysis through discourse theory in relation to the aims and goals of the research and how critical discourse analysis was used to extract meaning from the data. This chapter concludes with a self-reflexive discussion of my own investment in and proximity to the data.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion is the analysis of the discourses emanating from the Facebook web series and the comments by respondents to the web series. It explores how Coloured people are making sense of themselves and Colouredness in relation to the broader South African context. The first section *Where do we come from?* looks at how respondents are using the past to make sense of the present with regards to claiming citizenship and belonging. *Coloured is (not) a thing!*, with subsections *Rejecting Coloured* and *Embracing Coloured,* examines how competing discourses construct "Coloured" as a category through the pride/shame dichotomy and explores the impossibilities and possibilities for Coloured identities in relation to instrumentalist and social constructionist schools of thought. Section three, *Colouredness and the politics of post-Apartheid South Africa,* looks at how respondents are constructing themselves in relation to Blackness and analyses how these constructions relate to the racial politics of Black Economic Empowerment and the binary logic still present in post-Apartheid South Africa. *The Lost and Found* finds meaning in how respondents are relating to the history of appropriation and loss as it relates to the Afrikaans language (with its slave origins) and culture. Finally, *Understanding privilege from the margins* explores meaning making in relation to social and material privilege and how respondents understand their lived material conditions in relation to other South Africans.

Chapter Five: Conclusions brings together the aims of the research and the results of the analysis to position the research in relation to recommendations for further study, based on limitations of the current research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of relevant literature on Coloured identities in South Africa. As mentioned in the introduction, there is a dearth of literature on the topic that engages the intersections and nuances of Colouredness. This chapter is one attempt, however limited, to weave a conversation that allows the literature to explore new possibilities. The theoretical framework outlined here will provide a lens for the analysis of the discourses constructing Colouredness as these emerge on the *Coloured Mentality* page, while remaining sensitive to the differences between this context and the one that birthed the theory. This chapter is an attempt to frame the research within a more integrated, intersectional understanding of the ideas and theories that have come before it, with a hope of starting new conversations on Colouredness in South Africa.

2.1. Coloured Identity

The Coloured community in South Africa finds itself pulling in multiple directions on the topic of identity. Adhikari (2004) states:

> Expressions of Coloured identity have, in contrast, undergone rapid transformation in the post-apartheid environment. The past decade has been a time of flux and unprecedented change in the way Colouredness has operated, and indeed, has needed to operate as a social identity. Not only has the new democratic dispensation brought with it a degree of freedom of association and possibilities for ethnic mobilisation inconceivable under white domination, but it has also undermined, even invalidated, some of the most basic assumptions and practices that had underpinned Coloured identity from the time it had crystallised in the late nineteenth century. (p. 167)

It is this undermining and invalidation that this research seeks to challenge. Such discursive devices serve to make docile Coloured narratives and gives permission for an entire community's beliefs, practices and memories to be dismissed as fictional and irrelevant.

The relationship between the possibilities for freedom of association and the invalidation Adhikari (2004) points out above is well stated by McKaiser (2015) in a 2015 article, which appeared in the Mail & Guardian newspaper, titled "Don't tell me who I am, Black man".

He discusses an incident where the African National Congress (ANC) Secretary General at the time, Gwede Mantashe said that Coloured people should accept that they are also Black. A freedom of association exists, but as McKaiser notes, it robs Coloured people of agency to self-identify in ways of their own choosing. He responds by saying:

> It is not the place of Mantashe, or any person who is black African, to prescribe to coloured communities how they should self-identify. It is a debate that must take place among coloured people because identity runs deep, and it is the shared experiences and histories of coloured people that must inform how they – how we – want to self-identify. To impose political identities on coloured people from outside the community is to rob us of our agency to think through these complex moral and political issues that are implicated in the history of coloured people.

Both Adhikari (2004, 2006) and McKaiser (2015) speak to the shame with which Coloured identities are associated. When shame is a result of who one is, rather than what one does, it becomes very difficult to move on from it. That kind of shame locks one into a perpetual state of paralysing anxiety, only escapable by death. If it is your very existence that warrants shame, it would seem that the only end to that shame comes when you cease to exist. Adhikari (2006) puts this shame into perspective when he shifts the burden from the colonised and repatriates it to the coloniser:

> The import of white supremacist discourse about the South African past was that the coloured people were the unwanted and unfortunate consequence of the colonisation of southern Africa … [the coloured people] were thus a source of embarrassment to the white supremacist establishment as reminders of past lapses in morality. (p. 482)

Adhikari (2006) notes that Coloured people internalised racist values of the dominant society and accepted racial mixture as the defining feature of their identity which led to a widespread acceptance of their community as "indelibly stigmatised by their supposed condition of racial hybridity" (p.482). Coloured people also distanced themselves from Black African people and protected their relative privilege, through emphasising their partial European colonial descent. Ironically, it was precisely that claim that shackled them to the stigma of racial hybridity.

Four distinct and competing approaches to Coloured identity and the history of Coloured identity are identified by Adhikari (2009). Three of these approaches will be briefly discussed to frame the approach of this research.

The first school is the essentialist school, which views Coloured identity as a product of miscegenation dating back to the earliest European settlement at the Cape. This school takes racial hybridity to be the essence of Colouredness and the Coloured 'race' to be distinct. Within the essentialist school, there are three streams. The first is made up of traditionalists, who analyse Coloured identity and history in terms of the racist values of white supremacist South Africa. The traditionalist point of view sees black people as inferior and miscegenation as repugnant, while positioning Coloured people as idle pawns coinciding with the history of South Africa. The second stream consists of the liberal essentialists, whose thinking proposed that although Coloured people were a product of miscegenation, racial segregation was abnormal and detrimental to South Africa's economic development. Coloured people, through this lens, were not seen as inherently inferior, but in need of white tutelage. The third stream within essentialism is termed the progressionist stream. It is accepted here that Coloured people are a distinct race which is socially and culturally unsophisticated, but that this was not a permanent state and could be transcended by assimilation.

The second school, referred to as instrumentalist, viewed Coloured identity as an invention of the white supremacist state, imposed on oppressed and vulnerable people as a tool to further their divide and rule tactics. This school of thought was inspired by Black Consciousness thinking.

The third school, social constructionism, holds that Coloured identity is not given, but exists as a result of human agency which is constantly in a dialectical dance with history, society, culture and politics. This process is also taken to be ongoing, as social realities are made and remade by those who find belonging in Coloured identities. Unlike the previously mentioned schools, the social constructionist school acknowledges the agency Coloured people exercise in the making of their own social identities. This research will engage Coloured identities through a social constructionist lens.

As mentioned previously, the notion of Coloured identity is highly contested both from within and outside the Coloured community. In post-Apartheid South Africa, the assertion of identity by

Black African people became very important for building esteem and pride in Blackness, which was denigrated under Apartheid (Petrus & Isaacs-Martin, 2012). Coloured identity, however, has not managed to engage this project successfully. Petrus and Isaacs-Martin (2012) elaborate on the problems plaguing Coloured identity by stating that:

> The Coloured people, historically defined as persons of mixed racial and ethnic heritage, still find themselves struggling with issues of identity, particularly the meanings that have been attached to their identity. The meanings of coloured identity are often interpreted solely in terms of racial or ethnic characteristics, cloaked in negative stereotypes of Coloured people as a group. (p.187)

In reflecting on the above-mentioned failure of Coloured identities to assert themselves in post-Apartheid South Africa, Trotter (2009) provides a useful analysis of memory and narrative in relation to the aftermath of the Group Areas Act and the forced removals from District Six in Cape Town. Before engaging this analysis, it must be said that a pervasive critique of the work around Colouredness until now has been its Western Cape focus. Keeping in mind that the historical events of forced removals and land dispossession in District Six do not serve as a blueprint for the similar events experienced by Coloured people in other parts of South Africa, I engage the following analysis as one way of thinking about some of the forces that shaped Coloured identities at the time.

> Communities often cohere around memories of historical suffering … For coloured South Africans, a people whose diverse ancestry experienced enslavement, dispossession, genocidal extermination and apartheid degradation the question of historical memory is fraught with difficulty. (Trotter, 2009, p. 49)

In interviews with over 100 Coloured forced removees, Trotter (2009) found that Coloured removees coped with their trauma by recalling better times in their demolished communities. In many ways, the perceived homogeneity of Coloured people is a result of the way Apartheid spatial planning lumped them together on the basis of race. Township living forced residents to seek each other out for support, in rebuilding a humanity that was lost through displacement and dispossession (Trotter, 2009).

Narrative still forms a big part of Coloured meaning making. In many instances, the convention of storytelling has been shaped by the experience of traumatic dispossession which necessitated the glorification of a time preceding such trauma. Trotter (2009) identifies comparative memory (the role of removals in bringing about current hardships), commemorative memory (idealisation and omission of negative memories before eviction) and counter memory (countering the official transcript) as themes of remembering that Coloured people use to situate themselves within the history and present of South Africa. A significant theme that could be used in understanding Colouredness today, in relation to Petrus and Isaacs-Martin (2012) above, is counter memory. It seems that Coloured people, still in the throes of the trauma of removal, have invested in the idea of countering the official transcript so much that such opposition has remained. The official post-Apartheid transcript has not presented a very nuanced appreciation for the distinctions between Coloured and Black African people. This lack of nuance has left many Coloured people unable to identify with the post-Apartheid transcript. I propose that without explicit recognition, Coloured people have been prone to hold onto a familiar stance of opposing an official government sanctioned transcript that is perceived to erase them through the narrow conception of Africanness noted by Ruiters (2009) above. Here again, one can see the yearning for full citizenship which is often misconstrued as rejection of citizenship (Ruiters, 2009).

Adhikari (2004) writes critically on the liminality expressed in the experience of many Coloured people after Apartheid. The sentiment expressed in statements such as "first we were not white enough now we're not black enough" captures a bind many Coloured people find themselves in and highlights the "perennial predicament of marginality" (Adhikari, 2004, p. 168).

Marginality provides a useful way to think about Coloured identity formation, since it was the most significant feature of the everyday conditions under which the identity has to exist. Further to that, the response of Coloured people to the experience of marginality became integral to the way the identity manifested itself socially and politically (Adhikari, 2006). Applying the counter memory (discussed above) differently, the spurned assimilationist aspirations (Adhikari, 2006) held by Coloured people under Apartheid and ensuing economic and political impotence post-democracy leaves many Coloured people trapped within a cycle of frustration and anger. Ironically, there is anger at a government and society that does not recognise them, despite a need to distinguish themselves based on a pattern of opposition to the official transcript.

Fisher (2008) addresses a resurgence of the use of "Coloured" as a category of identity, after many people classified as such under Apartheid chose to identify as Black, in accordance with Black Consciousness ideology. The issue of commonality amongst Coloured people seems to provide the basis for rejecting Colouredness, as the markers for identity do not provide overwhelming grounds for a uniform group whose members identify in the same ways (Fisher, 2008). This research begs the question: Why are uniformity and commonality such important criteria for claiming identity and group membership? Is the tendency to dispossess people of a chosen identity, whatever the problematics around the historical context, and impose an equally insufficient identity that flattens out nuances of lived experiences and history not an act of violence? The dynamics of Coloured identities formed under conditions of marginality will be further addressed in the section on Creolisation Theory.

2.2. Creolisation Theory

Central to the understanding of Coloured identities in this research is creolisation, which refers to "cultural creativity under conditions of marginality" as stated by Erasmus (2001, p.16). Her argument states that "creolisation involves the construction of an identity out of elements of ruling as well as subaltern cultures. This bricolage does not invalidate such identities" (p.16). Adding to this, Strauss (2009) states that creolisation is a process of being subjected to social norms that leave room for agency. From a South African perspective, this argument will feed into the following arguments to give meaning to the term when referring to Coloured identities.

In her work examining human biogenetics as a site of meaning making Erasmus (2013) states:

> I have suggested elsewhere Erasmus (2011) that 'coloured' identities in South Africa are not about 'mixed race', 'mixed ancestry', 'mixed heritage' or 'mixed origins'. Instead, the term 'coloured' refers to those South Africans loosely bound together for historical reasons such as slavery, processes of creolisation (Erasmus 2011), and a combination of oppressive and selective preferential treatment under apartheid. 'Coloured' is neither a common ethnic identity nor a biological result.(p. 45)

In her theorisation of the topic, Erasmus draws on Édouard Glissant's creolisation theory to engage Coloured identities and their various historical trajectories. Glissant's framing is rooted in the experience of the Caribbean creole people whose ancestry is largely enslaved West

African people who were displaced to the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade. In using creolisation theory to discuss Coloured identities, it is important to understand how they are different from the Caribbean identities from which the theory emerged. Adhikari (2006) eloquently states:

> Contrary to (now perhaps increasingly outmoded) international usage, in South Africa the term 'coloured' does not refer to black people in general. It instead alludes to a phenotypically diverse group of people descended largely from Cape slaves, the indigenous Khoisan population and other people of African and Asian descent who had been assimilated into Cape colonial society by the late nineteenth century. Being also partly descended from European settlers, coloured people have popularly been regarded as being of 'mixed race' and have held an intermediate status in the South African racial hierarchy, distinct from the historically dominant white minority and the numerically preponderant African population. (p. 468)

I will now engage Glissant and others with a view to situating creolisation theory as a tool for understanding the making of Coloured identities in South Africa, given their imbrications with displacement and slavery at the Cape.

When considering the lens through which I wanted to view Coloured identities, the idea of hybridity, or what I interpret Glissant's (2008) *métissage* (cross-breeding) to mean, seemed attractive. The problem with hybridity as stated by Young (1995) is that it simultaneously makes "difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different" (p. 26). This constellation of qualities constitutes a "bizarre binate operation, in which each impulse is qualified against each other, forcing momentary forms of dislocation and displacement into complex economies of agonistic reticulation" (p.26). Simply put; hybridity forces difference into sameness in a way that does not allow for true integration and becoming, and negates the agency of those concerned (Deleuze, 1995). In contrast, the etymology of the word "creole" provides perhaps the clearest justification for the use of the term in the South African context. Young (1995) notes that the term "creole" is made up of two Spanish words, *'criar'* (to create) and *'colono'* (a colonist) to form '*criollo'* (one

who is native to the settlement though not indigenous to it). This etymology links both creole people and creolisation directly to colonisation (as in South Africa), which hybridity does not.

Creolisation theory offers more possibilities for varied existences – something this research is interested in exploring. Glissant's thoughtful consideration of the experiences of enslaved people and their descendants provides useful ways to think past the binary of race, so often lost on Coloured people in South Africa who frequently express experiences characterised by liminality.

According to Ortiz (1995), creolisation honours a pivotal reality of enslaved people in the form of displacement. He posits that the creole people of all races, classes and cultures share the experiences of shock at being ripped from their place of origin and the ensuing pain of a severe transplanting. In some cases, they were not relocated, but made alien within their places of origin. Under such conditions the only goal was to survive and enslaved people had to adapt to a new life in the abyss (Mulira, 2015) with only fragments of their past and a dominant culture imposed on them, by force. The moment of collision between these cultures and the ensuing violent cultural exchange is referred to as *relation* by Glissant (2008). The development of creole culture happened unconsciously under these terrible conditions of slavery and cultural annihilation because Caribbean people, like Coloured people, have had to remain strong and adaptable to ensure the survival of the then future generations, who live today. Their adaptability denotes, importantly, their agency in the process.

Cultural and racial politics in South Africa is often pinned to the mast of origin and, surprisingly, purity of roots which is synonymous with authenticity, culture and tradition (Ruiters, 2009). There is often a yearning for tracing people to an identifiable, undisputable root in order to determine the legitimacy of their identity which is framed as singular. It is a conversation closed off to possibilities of diversity and multiplicity. Glissant (2008) draws on the concept of the *rhizome* introduced by Deleuze & Guattari (1980). The rhizome is a modified stem of a plant which sends out roots and shoots from its nodes. This intricately enmeshed root system nourishes a plant appearing to be self-contained and singular above the ground (Mulira, 2015). The roots below the ground are so intertwined they could never be disentangled from each other, but they do not kill what is around them, as a unique root would, and instead establish communication and relation (Glissant, 2008). Coloured culture is made up of various root elements from Asian,

African and European ethnic groups which were woven together. The way in which these various elements are woven, today still, differs by location making creolisation amongst Coloured people unique in that the poetics[1] (Glissant, 2008) are varied. Unlike in the Caribbean, the Asian and African roots are not considered to be from the source due to the Apartheid politics Colouredness was imbued with, while the European roots are known to have become part of the rhizome through brutality and force.

This brutality is what necessitated the assimilation spoken of earlier by Adhikari (2006, 2009). Mulira (2015) explicates assimilation in relation to the French Caribbean aptly enough to apply to Coloured people in South Africa:

> Assimilation requires that there be a single culture better than the rest, a culture that all should strive to gain acceptance into. To become an assimilated French Caribbean person, one must deny the Caribbean and African plurality of their nature and live within the confines of the singular French culture. (p. 118)

In very much the same way, Coloured people have been through a process of denying their own Asian and African plurality to live within the confines of either English or Afrikaner culture. With this denial comes much shame for their Blackness (Adhikari, 2006) which was defined by colonial discourse as a state of "laziness, indolence and idleness" (Mulira, 2015, p. 118). When constantly trying to distance themselves from Blackness and its cultural connotations, the wounds of displacement can never heal, placing historically enslaved Coloured people in a discordant relationship with their own reality (Mulira, 2015).

Glissant's work on creolisation theory helps one understand identity and culture in complex and varied ways, the details of which cannot be fully explored here. As I apply it to Coloured identities, Glissant presents creolisation as ambiguous, discontinuous, impure, impartial and

[1] Because historical climates differ across the countries to which enslaved people were displaced, their cultural foundations are different. There is no single diasporic experience and so the creole cultures that emerged are highly varied. This history that shapes the cultural growth is marked by moments that Glissant calls relations. The outcomes of these moments are the poetics (Mulira, 2015).

diverse. It rejects the dependence on filiation to legitimise identity and brings to life the possibilities of a constant becoming (Deleuze, 1995) that does not find itself stuck midway between two "pure" extremes. According to Burns (2009)

> creolization is the impossibility of legitimate lineages, pure racial origins, or reified cultural affiliations. Glissant's critique of colonialism allows him to characterise creolization as a becoming that refuses to settle into a fixed, essentialised identity, however, it is also important to acknowledge that this becoming is a transformation'into something different, into a new set of possibilities. (p. 102)

Strauss (2009) offers the view that creolisation is both transformations of group identities and everyday decisions that people make in response to demands of cultural difference, power imbalances and inequalities.

In his own words, Glissant (2008) suggests that creolisation is unpredictable, unlike cross breeding, and produces results [2] rather than direct synthesis. He challenges the thinking associated with conquest and states, poetically, that "creolization is not an uprooting, a loss of sight, a suspension of being. Transience is not wandering. Diversity is not dilution" (p. 82).

As a creolised community of people, Coloured South Africans start to open up to different worlds of meaning making around lived experiences and identities when viewed through the eyes of Glissant.

2.3. Black Consciousness and Blackness

The various schools of thought around Coloured identity highlighted by Adhikari (2009) above, includes the instrumentalist paradigm, which was adopted by a small, but vocal minority of activists associated with the anti-Apartheid movement during the latter years of Apartheid. Instrumentalist thinking, as mentioned above, considered the Coloured category an invention of

[2]Translated from the original use in French "*résultantes",* which by Glissant's (2008) definition means "something else, another way".

the white supremacist state which used it as a tool to divide Black people. The response to this tactic was to adopt Black Consciousness philosophy, which states that being Black is not about pigmentation but rather a reflection of an ideology. It also states that by describing oneself as black, one has set off on a journey to emancipation from oppressive forces that rank Blackness as inferior (Biko, 1987).

Strauss (2009) offers an interesting discussion of Chris van Wyk's (2004) memoir *Shirley, Mercy and Goodness*, in which blackness is explored. Van Wyk's narrative is presented through the metaphor of eavesdropping – a device he used to learn about what it meant to be a Coloured person in a township where political consciousness was discouraged. Eavesdropping became the way in which he gathered information about his lived reality and finally realised that he "was not as good as a white person" (p. 33). In the cramped Coloured township of Riverlea, the dynamics of intra-black racism are also explored, bringing to light a practical example of the dissociation from Blackness noted by Ruiters (2009) and Mulira (2015) and the ensuing confusion about what it meant to be Coloured. For Van Wyk, Black Consciousness offered a refuge from racial self-loathing and confusion and opened up possibilities for interracial identification in unity with the goal of resisting white domination collectively. Interestingly, he discovered the ideology through writing and poetry. I discovered it through social media, which again reminded me of just how much the online space is a politically charged space, holding closely the concerns of this research.

As mentioned above, the Black Consciousness movement gained purchase amongst Coloured people, but lost support since it failed to acknowledge the reality of racial divisions in Black South Africa and of Coloured exclusivism[3] (Adhikari, 2009). Gqola (2010) writes that although the unifying effects of the ideology contributed to the successes of activism, it enabled the policing of Blackness, which silenced certain experiences of Blackness and paid little attention to distinctions in gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity and geographical location. These are the

[3] Also referred to as exclusivity in Akhikari (2006), the terms denotes tendencies amongst Coloured people to set themselves apart from Black Africanness through essentialist and other schools of thought.

nuances that seem to be missing from the broad conception of Blackness, and limit Coloured people's resonance with the ideology. Erasmus (2001) calls for engagement with the multiple ways of inhabiting Black and African identities, by unfixing the meanings that essentialise them. The essentialism with which Blackness is sometimes imbued, according to Erasmus, works to exclude Coloured subjects from indigenous and Black identities, representing another form of policing. Destabilising any perceived essence opens up the possibilities for the various performances of Colouredness to be recognised as forms of Blackness. This analysis by Erasmus is, however, validly critiqued by Gqola for overlooking the ways in which policing of Blackness also works to invalidate some black communities. For the purposes of this research, I take Erasmus's point to be illustrative of relations between Colouredness and Blackness.

Returning to the significance of creolisation when discussing Coloured identities and their relations, an intricate picture of history and agency takes shape when tracing the rhizome in which Coloured and Black identities are entangled. At this point in the discussion, we are no closer to resolution, but yet immersed in an ongoing reality of becoming which might offer a glimpse into what is possible.

Erasmus (2013) states that "… sometimes 'coloured' identities overlap with 'Black' as a political identification, and, given that processes of creolisation are constitutive of cultural formations in some parts of Africa, 'coloured' always overlaps with 'African'" (p. 45).

Eavesdropping, according to Strauss (2009) is the perfect metaphor for the creolisation process as it requires a person to "listen attentively, learn, unlearn, resist and negotiate the information gleaned from overheard exchanges and to shape this knowledge into performances of identity that range from being self-directed to being coerced" (p. 35). Further to this, the eavesdropper is always hiding, and constantly at risk of being exposed and shamed. This analogy is probably one of the most sober representations of the Coloured person's relationship to both Blackness and whiteness under conditions of oppression.

Although Blackness, like Colouredness is a site fraught with contradiction; I agree with Erasmus that Coloured, Black and African ways of being do not need to be mutually exclusive. While Black Consciousness at the time was a strategic essentialism which strove to attain an urgent

political goal, we are now faced with the task of remaking Blackness to accommodate more ways of being Black.

2.4. Centres and Margins

Colouredness has always had a peculiar and precarious relationship with both the centre and the margins (Adhikari, 2006; Erasmus, 2001; Ommundsen, 2010). Being marginally privileged during Apartheid saw many Coloured people, who were assigned second class status in the racial hierarchy, assimilating into the dominant white societal structures (Adhikari, 2006). This created a division between Black African and Coloured people as many considered themselves to live on the margins of whiteness, and further from the "inferior" centre of Blackness. In a democratic South Africa the dynamics have changed, whereby the legitimacy of whiteness and association with it is constantly challenged in favour of asserting and legitimising Black pride. This dynamic then becomes a confusing space for Coloured people who feel they are misplaced while inhabiting an in-between space (Bowler & Vincent, 2011). Despite assertions by theorists such as Erasmus and Glissant debunking the notion of creolised identities existing halfway between two "pure" extremes, the grip of Apartheid racial hierarchies still chokes many South African psyches.

When race is spoken about, discussion often invokes the black/white binary (Kondo, 1997). Bowler & Vincent (2011) discuss that instead of rejecting the "biological determinist assumptions and binary logic inherent in race thinking … in post-apartheid South Africa for some Coloured people it has become important to claim inbetweenity and to assert an unqualified blackness" (p. 6). There is a political complexity to this choice characterised by dynamics operating around the post-Apartheid context. Blackness now characterises a space which is both continuous as well as stratified, as discussed in the exchange between Erasmus (2001) and Gqola (2010) earlier.

A pivot on which the precarious relationship with the centre hinges is language. For Coloured people an uncomfortable relationship with Afrikaans exists due to historical appropriation of the language from its slave origins. Van der Waal (2012) discusses creolisation and purity regarding Afrikaans and brings to light an example of the margins Coloured people occupy. Referred to as a dialect, Kaaps, is considered the non-standard form of Afrikaans spoken mostly by Coloured

people in the Cape. Other non-standard forms also exist in other locations. Afrikaans is widely considered a white language which was historically used as a tool for ethno-nationalist domination during Apartheid. What is not widely discussed or acknowledged is that the language emerged in relation to the structural violence of colonialism, during which Dutch masters, Indonesian slaves and African herders collided (Van der Waal, 2012). A creole language, Afrikaans was appropriated (Gqola, 2010) and developed into a core symbol of white Afrikaner nationalist pride. A standard white Afrikaans, opposed to hegemonic English, emerged as *suiwer* (pure) while "substandard" and "impure" forms were cast out as bastardised dialects placing its speakers at the margins of culture (Van der Waal, 2012). These boundaries were always raced and classed as Afrikaans was and still is strongly tied to the racialised identity, Afrikaner. As Gqola (2010) points out, the appropriation mentioned above has disenfranchised Coloured identities by foreclosing certain possibilities of identification.

> In a country where 'Afrikaner and 'Afrikaans' have been appropriated and reserved exclusively for white people of Dutch descent, it is not entirely accurate to speak of a stable category that is marked 'African'. This is especially so given that … there are pathways into identification with Africa which are always foreclosed to indigenous South Africans of any kind. There are certain expressions of 'African', for example 'Afrikaner', which are foreclosed to indigenous Africans, be they Black or Coloured. This remains the case, even amidst assertions that there is such a category as 'bruin Afrikaners', whose very naming demonstrates the racism of what Afrikaner means. (p. 38)

In the face of a policed African blackness and a foreclosed white Africanness, Coloured people find themselves in a precarious place of marginality in spite of historical privilege.

The notion of zones of being and zones of non-being becomes interesting when considering creolised people, within the historical context of the South African racial hierarchy. According to Grosfoguel (2016) "the zone of being and zone of non-being are not specific geographical places, but rather a position within racial structures of domination that operate at a global scale between centers and peripheries, but that are also manifested at a national and local scale against diverse groups considered as racially 'inferior'" (p. 12). The complexity of inhabiting zones of being in a zone of non-being (Fanon, 1967) and zones of non-being in a zone of being is further

elaborated within the statement that "notions of inbetweenity, 'mixture' and miscegenation, of course, rely on the discredited idea of biological race as well as on a binary understanding of race which posits whiteness and blacknessas opposite ends of a continuum" (Bowler & Vincent, 2011). Stated differently, being in-between the binary, which lives on in the South African imaginary, potentially enables privilege in a zone of oppression and oppression in a zone of privilege. However, within the narrow confines of the racial binary the Apartheid system employed the Coloured category, devoid of its identities, to solve the quandary of how to deal with what Marike de Klerk, the wife of former Apartheid President, F.W. de Klerk, referred to as "non-person(s)…the people who were left after the nations were sorted out. [They are] the rest" (Maclennan, 1990, p. 59).

As a racial category, the label has been a tool of violence, but as discussed through the work of Gqola, Strauss, Erasmus and Glissant above, Coloured people have exercised agency in making and remaking their identities. Many people have chosen to claim Coloured as an identity around which they have organised their social worlds that encompass nuanced and complex ways of being. Navigating the margins of privilege, while existing at the centre of oppression where further policing of authenticity and validity endures, remains treacherous. Despite difficulty, Coloured people have always adapted to conditions of marginality. Coloured identities implore us to question what it means, politically, to celebrate survival in the face of erasure and dispossession (Gqola, 2010) while exposing us to the possibilities of navigating marginality and privilege in ways that bring us closer to Édouard Glissant's "something different".

2.5. Privilege and Complicity

It would be irresponsible to address Coloured identities in South Africa without engaging the dynamics of privilege over and complicity with oppression of other Black people.

During the 1870s assimilated colonial blacks (freed slaves) in the Western Cape and an array of African people who were recently allowed to participate in the capitalist economy were set up to compete for employment opportunities (Adhikari, 2006). In response to these circumstances, colonial blacks sought to assert a separate identity on the basis of closer relation to European colonists and western culture in hopes of claiming relative privilege. The descendants of "mixed-race" slaves later became the beneficiaries of Coloured Preferential Employment policies in the

Western Cape due to their in-between status that was considered superior to "pure Blacks" (Gqola, 2010).

According to van der Ross (2005) it must be remembered that slaves at the Cape were imported for purposes of labour in agriculture, construction and domestic servitude and as such became associated with labour. Without the ownership of land and property which was reserved for white people, slave descendants then became the lower working class, but in relation to the dynamics presented above, a preferred form of labour.

During Apartheid, Coloured people were evicted from their land and moved into townships across the country, mostly in very close proximity to Black townships. Despite living together, clear distinctions in the quality of living conditions and amenities illuminated the workings of a successful Apartheid system (Strauss, 2009; Trotter, 2009). The resultant difference in political realities also highlights a privileged existence in relation to Black African people during times of turbulence. The journalist, Sylvia Vollenhoven, noted in the 1980s: "The politics of a relatively calm Mitchell's Plain is not the politics of a burning Spine Road…" (Adhikari, 2006, p. 474).

Speaking on assimilation and complicity in the colonial encounter between colonisers and creolised people, Glissant (2008) brings an interesting perspective on complicity when asking who the real people of the soil are, for which a battle was waged:

> For example, no matter how cold-blooded and fierce the thought of Father Labat, the chronicler of the Antilles in the seventeenth century, one sees an underlying curiosity-fixed, troubled, and obsessive – every time there is a question about the slaves that he is struggling to pacify. Fear, fantasies, and perhaps a scant flicker of complicity, are the undercurrent to rebellions and repressions. The long catalogue of martyrs is also a long, slow creolization, whether involuntary or deliberate. (p. 85)

Whether involuntary or deliberate, complicity of oppressed people with brutally oppressive systems cannot be reduced to simple enactments of self-interest and betrayal of a cause. Complying with a system that seeks to annihilate you is a way of ensuring survival. In a world where your existence is forbidden, survival is resistance. In this way, complicity can be understood to be resistance in creolised communities whose goal, historically,was survival.

With specific reference to Coloured South Africans, it is important to hold the paradox of privilege, complicity and even collaboration alongside oppression, marginalization and dispossession up to the light in the aftermath of a brutal history of colonialism and Apartheid. For perspective, it is also important to note that complicity and collaboration with the Apartheid state is not unique to Coloured people.

Gqola (2010) critiques one example of a totalising discourse that alludes to complicity as inherently Coloured. This discourse is carried by the construction of something called "the Coloured vote". In response to a large proportion of the Coloured population in the Western Cape voting for the National Party (and against the African National Congress) in the 1994 democratic elections, the voting pattern was referred to as "the Coloured vote". Connotations attached to the "the Coloured vote" include having a "slave mentality" and being anti-Black. This is problematic because the same view is not held of people who were never classified as Coloured but voted for parties with a history of collaboration with the Apartheid state. It also conflates "Coloured" with "Western Cape Coloured", which "occludes other coloured subjectivities that are constructed differently, both from within and in public discourse" (Gqola, 2010; p. 28).

The above example points to a tendency towards oversimplification of Coloured identities, experiences and realities, which are instrumental in bringing about feelings of disenfranchisement and marginality. As mentioned initially, it is simply responsible to hold the issue of privilege and complicity up to the light when speaking about Coloured identities, but we must remain mindful of the intersections that history implores us to recognise.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The aim of this research is to explore how discourses are constructing Colouredness on the Facebook web series *Coloured Mentality*. The use of social media makes for an interesting analysis of discourse and approach to methodology. This research offers a novel take on researching Coloured identities through social media pages dedicated to the subject. There are few such sites, if any, besides the *Coloured Mentality* Facebook page. Qualitative research methods are most suited to exploring the ways in which discourse is constructing Coloured identities and to illuminate how power is operating to privilege and/or marginalise. .

As stated in the previous chapter, Coloured identities will be viewed through the lens of social constructionist and creolization theory. A critical stance on diversity offered by Steyn (2015) will further guide the use of critical discourse analysis which aims to uncover how power is operating through discourse in this research.The theoretical frameworks employed in this research are concerned with the ways in which meaning is constructed through power as well as how identities come into being and are shaped through the use of agency in spite of unequal power relations. Engaging the ways in which Coloured people are constructing themselves and making meaning of their lived experiences in relation to the national and global dynamics of difference and Otherness at play opens the floor for conversations about how diversity is understood.

The aim of the study as mentioned above makes it highly suitable for using a qualitative research method which will allow the exploration of how Coloured people are constructing their social lives through discourse (Gill, 2000). A qualitative research method will allow for engaging the complex realities without "burying" the voices of the research subjects under endless mounds of data. Finally, qualitative methods are better able to contend with the "messiness" and "openness" of real social life which entails managing the intersecting positionalities we all inhabit and which consequently affect the lived experiences of respondents (Alvesson 2002; Oakley 1981). This speaks to one of the core aims of this research– understanding the lived experience.

Qualitative research is knowledge produced from a continuous flow of exchange between theory and methods and between the researcher and research participant. The outcome of these reflexive, process-driven interactions is culturally specific knowledge which is closely tied to theory (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). A more detailed discussion of the specific qualitative

methods used in this research will be discussed below, in relation to theoretical frameworks I have introduced as the lenses through which I will approach the research.

A useful framing of qualitative research, as it relates to the aims of this study is offered by Roberts (2014):

> … qualitative researchers believe that social scientists need to understand those human actions and meanings that individuals and groups attach to their everyday lives, objects, and social relations so that we come to understand how they evaluate their lives through their beliefs and meanings. An "emic" (insider) view of society therefore assists the qualitative researcher to gain in-depth contextual information about a case study along with the symbolic practices, meaningful beliefs, and ordinary emotions that inscribe themselves in everyday interactions. (p. 4)

When looking at how people are constructing Colouredness through discourse, how they make meaning of being Coloured is ultimately of interest. Attached to a social identity, such as Colouredness, discourse can reveal how people's social relations are understood and how those relations give rise to their lived experiences. Conversely, people's lived experiences also shape discourse by creating new meaning out of everyday interactions. This is especially true of Coloured identities, which for the purposes of this research are understood to be going through a constant process of creolisation in which people exercise agency in making and remaking their social realities and identities. The social construction of reality as an object of inquiry opens itself up to qualitative explication.

To reiterate, this research takes the definition of qualitative research above to offer the opportunity to uncover the operations of power through evaluating meaningful beliefs, symbolic practices and ordinary emotions as power constructs Coloured identities through discourse.

3.1. Framing Identity

The use of the term, 'identities' throughout this research is informed by Yuval-Davis' (2006) articulation. She posits that "identities are narratives, stories people tell about themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)" (p. 202). The stories people tell are directly or indirectly related to the self and/or others', perceptions of what it could mean to belong to

particular groups. Identity narratives can be individual or collective and can be passed from one generation to the next (always selectively), and can shift, change and be contested and multiple. Narratives can be related to the past, a myth of origin, used to explain the present or project a future (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Easthope (2009) discusses the impact of mobility and place on identity through the socio-historical approach of Giddens (1991) and Bauman (1997, 2001). Bauman (2001) states that in the post-modern period there is no stable position to aim for while constructing identity. People find themselves having to constantly redefine their goals, because the goal would have moved by the time they get there and so will the path they needed to follow to get there. This fluidity and redefinition is highly resonant with the creolisation processes Coloured identities undergo.

Another perspective is offered by Rutherford (1990) in his framing of identity as fluid: "Identity then is never a static location, it contains traces of its past and what it is to become. It is a provisional full-stop in the place of differences and the narrative of our own lives" (p. 24).

These understandings of identity capture perfectly, the work that this research will try to do with the narratives of Coloured people. When referring to identities throughout this research report, these understandings will frame the meaning.

3.2. Data Sources

According to Roberts (2014) "'method' alludes to those techniques adopted to accumulate and collect data about an object of inquiry. Questionnaires, interviews, observation, ethnography, and so on, all represent different types of 'method' in this respect" (p. 1). A multi-method data collection process was initially intended for this study, using a semi-structured, in-depth interview as the first set of data and a focus group discussion as a second set. The actual web series and the textual responses to the web series by members of the Facebook communities created on the host platform, would have served as a third set. Upon considering the scope of the project, I decided that the proposed volume of data was excessive and that only the web based responses were sufficient for a rich analysis. The data sources for the study were thus limited to the engagement with the topics put out episodically by the web series. Each of the five episodes, which were approximately between three and four minutes long, centred on a question relating to Coloured identities and experiences, featuring respondents who were all public figures. Once

published, the Facebook community could then engage the topic, the interviewees' views on it and each other.

The data set for this research will comprise of both video and text responses to questions posed by the *Coloured Mentality* web series. Access to these sources have been made easy for me, since the data basically generated itself and became available to me as it did to any other member of the public through social media. I had refrained from spending too much time watching the interactions unfold on the page, ahead of mining the data for analysis. I did this in order to minimise the risk of having my own views, as a Coloured person too, dictate my choice of responses that possibly only affirm my beliefs. I also did not want to become too desensitized to the data before the analysis, for fear of blurring my vision for nuance and depth.

Choosing these data sources presented no challenges and aided in making data collection, which will be discussed in the next section, very easy.

3.2.1. Site of Study

Observing the growth of the *Coloured Mentality* Facebook page, which was set up at the time the research started, has revealed it to be somewhat of an online town hall meeting. It could also be considered an organisational space which becomes the workplace for doing work around identity as a community. As more people became aware of the page, they attended to the conversations which dealt with various aspects of Coloured history, identity and lived experiences. In the space Coloured people were the experts on topics and provided their views, experiences and critiques of the content being discussed. People not only engaged the content, but also each other, in the process of working through complex and sometimes painful debates on identity. Conversations were all centred on topics of debate, in the form of web series episodes.

The page is still open to the public and invites engagement from anyone interested in the topic. The environment created is interesting in that people can express their views and tell their stories candidly, without sharing physical space with the other people using the platform for the same reasons. People may find it easier to share personal information when not in the physical company of others, while learning and connecting at the same time. It is also possible that people may find it easier to express less popular or prejudiced views when not confronted with the reality of physical confrontation from others (Schmalz, Colistra & Evans, 2015).

3.3. Data Collection Techniques

As stated above, data was mined manually from the *Coloured Mentality* Facebook page in the form of video and text responses to the questions posed through each of the five episodes of the web series.Watching the episodes myself required me to transcribe the audio for each episode. Text responses ranged from forty six to four hundred and twenty nine per post, all of which were not responses to the topic presented. Since respondents were not directly contacted and interviewed, the questions posed through the web series also served as the questions that generated the data for analysis. Not being in dialogue with the respondents meant that I had no control over the conversation and could not probe any further than what was shared on the platform. In this way, the data could not be manipulated or influenced by me, which I believe is beneficial. In one way, no physical interaction eliminated the researcher/participant power dynamics[4] that sometimes influence the responses offered. In another way, power dynamics were reinforced by the lack of interaction, allowing the participants no opportunities to influence my analysis or conclusions. An ethical clearance application was approved by the Non-Medical Ethics Board through the Wits Centre for Diversity Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand[5]. Below I detail additional considerations I made in the way of ethics.

When extracting the data, in the form of Facebook comments I chose to use the first names of people as they were presented, because they are already in the public domain. As such, anonymity would serve no purpose. I also used the terms by which people self-identified in the text posted on the page. Lastly, I did not edit any of the comments posted and as such they are presented as they were posted.

This research focuses on the online space, namely Facebook, as a place where discourse circulates and constructs realities and communities. Discourses that are already circulating in

[4]Harvey (2003) states that researchers are powerful in ways that most of the people they research cannot match. As a result research participants may perform their positionalities in ways that that deliver what they think researchers expect, or that are respectable. These performances often obscure their truths.
[5]The ethics clearance code for this research is: DIV/17/04/18

society come to occupy the online social media space which shapes discourse in specific ways. After being shaped by the social media space, discourses also extend back into society to shape social worlds and lived experiences. Since discourse shapes social reality and consequently social change (Dabirimehr & Fatmi, 2014), social media can be considered a space that can drive social change. Benzinger (2014) states that:

> Social media possess an important potential that is grounded in the congruent philosophies of the two concepts 'social media' and 'social change.' Social media express a new mindset that distinguishes this evolved media species from the so-called traditional media. This social media mindset is expressed in six core ideas which I call the six Cs of social media: connectedness, community, content, conversation, collaborating crowd and collective action. (p. 275)

The six Cs mentioned above provide a framework through which to observe the dynamics of the online space created by *Coloured Mentality* and how these dynamics influence offline behaviour signalling the social change mentioned above.

The *Coloured Mentality* Facebook page is dedicated to exploring the social realities of people who share social group membership. The content is highly political in its focus on identity, language, culture and history and can be said to encourage political debate and action. On Facebook, groups or public pages provide a communal space where users can interact with others to share common interests, engage those interested in the same topics, share information and have public debates and discussions about those topics much the same as in the town hall analogy presented above (Benzinger, 2014; Conroy, Feezell & Guerrero, 2012). Furthermore, groups can connect people who are not friends but share political interests. This kind of political activity is especially relevant amongst the youth who "are engaging with alternative forms of political subactivism that work at the margins of the dominant public sphere" (Bosch, 2012, p. 119). Conroy, Feezell and Guerrero (2012) present some useful insights into how social media operates as a political space below:

> Group membership is thought to encourage political engagement though a number of mechanisms. First, group membership can provide an opportunity for members to discuss politics. Discussion is thought to be integral to feelings of efficacy among

> citizens, leading to higher rates of political activity. Discussion in a group setting can also promote learning by necessitating the expression of views and forcing more thoughtful consideration of viewpoints. (Conroy, Feezell & Guerrero, 2012, p. 1536)

In this space, people are compelled to think about qualifying what they say with information in anticipation of counterpoints offered by other members of the group (Eveland, 2004). Reasoning this way, according to Cho et al. (2009) encourages learning. It must be said that, although not a focus of this research, social media is not without negative effects. Conroy, Feezell and Guerrero (2012) note that homogenous, one-sided discussions are "detrimental to knowledge gains" (p. 1536).

Schmalz, Colistra and Evans (2015) explored how the use of social media became a means of coping with a threatened social identity. In relation to Coloured identities which are often perceived as threatened and persecuted, by some Coloured people, this framing is useful in understanding the space created by *Coloured* Mentality as it operates at the margins of the dominant public sphere.Schmalz, Colistra and Evans (2015) showed that people use social media spaces for information sharing, which includes staying up-to-date with news and new information and access to varied perspectives. Secondly, they gain a sense of connection/social support which includes connection to like-minded others. In contrast, a third finding revealed that hateful and defamatory interactions were negative experiences which discouraged some people from using social media. This echoes the findings of Benzinger (2014), but provides insight into what can go wrong with social media interactions.

It is important to consider that Facebook in terms of this analysis became a place where people could construct their identities. Roy (2012) explored identity construction on social media websites in the context of intercultural studies. The following points made by Roy (2012) prove useful in characterising the Facebook space that houses the data used in this research. Social media websites are public forums for cultural exchange of which identity construction forms an integral part. Social media websites offer a relatively safe space where people can define who they are and who they are not. Conflicts and misunderstandings can be dealt with alternatively on social media versus the messy face-to-face altercations that often arise in society. Lastly, the ways in which people use social media can give insight into their cultural background. Although

this research is not concerned with the dynamics of social media interaction, the literature above does provide a framework with which to read interactions and encounters on the *Coloured Mentality* platforms that influence how and why people interact.

The literature presents a strong case for the benefits of social media as a platform to foster community and to create a dialogical space in which to grapple with difficult issues such as identity. This platform then provides a foundation on which to model the public debate, as the *Coloured Mentality* web series and page has done. This research analysed to which extent the dialogue has developed online and what it achieved to inform the content and form of the ensuing public debate it hopes to inspire.

3.4. Data Analysis

This research is concerned with understanding how people construct their social worlds through discourses, interactions and social practices. Discourses, as viewed through the lens of social constructionism, shape (lived) realities and in turn those realities shape discourses. This research is critical in its approach in that it seeks to hold the contradictions of positionalities up to the light, while also critiquing dominant power structures within which these positionalities operate. This research is also concerned with laying a foundation for constructing a different conversation around social justice, framed by the ten criteria of Steyn's (2015) Critical Diversity Literacy[6].

Applying a critically diversity literate lens to social justice when doing research reveals that it is not simply enough to describe what we see. It requires us to thoroughly unpack and analyse power relations.Through understanding critiques of power relations as normative we may open up possibilities of social change (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

This research will use discourse theory and discourse analysis to extract and explicate meaning from the data presented in *Chapter Four*. This section will discuss discourse theory as it relates

[6] See Appendix A for a list of criteria.

to the theoretical orientations of this research introduced in *Chapter Two*, and the method of discourse analysis used to work with the data.

3.4.1. Discourse Theory

Discourse theory understands that social life is constructed through discourse and therefore all social phenomena can be studied through discourse analysis. Social phenomena, according to discourse theory, turns into language which becomes an object for discourse analysis (Pedersen, 2009). When referring to discourse theory here I am referring to Laclau and Mouffe's principle work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (1985)* which is interpreted by Jørgensen & Phillips (2002) in summary, stating:

> The overall idea of discourse theory is that social phenomena are never finished or total. Meaning can never be ultimately fixed and this opens up the way for constant social struggles about definitions of society and identity, with resulting social effects. The discourse analyst's task is to plot the course of these struggles to fix meaning at all levels of the social. (p. 24)

According to Gill (2000) discourse theory does not understand language as merely describing the social world, but rather as constructing it. This construction has implications for the lives lived within that social world. The discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe is underpinned by:

> (1) A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge, and a scepticism towards the view that our observations of the world unproblematically yield its true nature to us; (2) recognizes that the ways we commonly understand the world are historically and culturally specific and relative; (3) knowledge is socially constructed— our current ways of understanding the world are determined not by the nature of the world itself, but by social processes; and (4) exploring the ways that knowledges are linked to actions/practices. (Gill, 2000, p. 173)

Finally, Gill (2000) offers ways of thinking about discourse analysis as organised around four themes which include: "a concern with discourse itself; a view of language as constructive and constructed; an emphasis upon discourse as a form of action; and a conviction in the rhetorical organization of discourse" (p. 174).

Discourse theory has been interpreted to mean that everything exists in discourse and that there is no reality. According to Laclau and Mouffe, this is not true, because social and physical objects do exist, but we can only access them through discourse. Objects do not have meaning unless we ascribe it to them through discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

The act of naming is an act of power. To ascribe a name and consequently a meaning (or multiple meanings) to something requires power. This power itself comes as a result of historical tensions that exist between competing discourses which vie for fixity. Foucault's theorisation of the *power/knowledge* couplet, which informs discourse theory, posits that power does not remain in the possession of particular individuals or entities, but exists within and through various social practices. In this way, "power should not be understood as exclusively oppressive but as productive; power constitutes discourse, knowledge, bodies and subjectivities" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.13).

This research is concerned with the construction of subjects. The idea that the subject comes into being through discourse resonates strongly with Deleuze's concept of becoming, discussed in *Chapter Two*. In the same way that one discourse can never become so established that it becomes the only discourse used to structure the social, the subject never quite becomes itself. The subject is also fragmented in that it occupies multiple subject positions simultaneously and so contends with competing discourses that serve to organise the social space within which the subject is positioned (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). The contentions and contradictions noted here are easily reconciled with the contradictions within Coloured identities that position them so precariously in relation to both the centre and the margins. With this in mind, subjectivity must be understood as constructed through processes as varied and in*complete as the discourses they involve.

In researching literary practices of gay men, Vicars (2012) invokes the Deleuzian idea of a rhizomatic methodology which calls for writing in ways which echo much of what has been said to describe creolisation in this research report. Writing as a rhizomatic performative act is about observing worlds that are still to come and acknowledging that "… the complexity and richness that is afforded by opening up new possibilities of understanding is made available by drawing on multiple and overlapping histories" (Vicars, 2012, p. 476).

The multiplicity and fluidity of creolised identities, is well served by a method of analysis that values contingency and rejects fixity. As stated by Glissant (2008), becoming is the constant transformation into something different, into a new set of possibilities. These are the possibilities that Steyn (2015) holds onto when envisioning the creation of a more just society. They are the possibilities that sustain the subversive hope (Giroux, 2004), which continues to challenge and deconstruct power, be it oppressive or productive.

3.4.2. Discourse Analysis

Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory provides guidelines and presents possibilities for analysing discursive practices. In analysing discursive practices, the researcher seeks to critique ideology and not individuals. Jørgensen & Phillips (2002) provide useful insights into the aims of ideology critique as a function of discourse analysis, one being that discourse analysis should expose ideological representations and aim to replace them with "more adequate representations of reality" (p. 181). Following from that, the researcher doing discourse analysis is also tasked with revealing ideology to be distortion so that people may see beyond it and possibly be inspired to change reality. Discourse analysis, as used in this research serves to understand how discourses come to be in relation to historical processes of meaning making through language (verbal and non-verbal) and spatiality. It is the aim of critical discourse analysis to engage with language in its various forms to uncover the work it does, and the ensuing consequences of that work. Alternatively, critical discourse analysis is concerned with the "linguistic discursive dimensions of social and cultural phenomena and processes of social change" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002. p. 61).

In approaching the analysis, I used the structure of discourses presented by Laclau and Mouffe to frame my reading of the data. Discourses are chains of meaning invested in words and symbols. In analysing them, researchers seek to undo those chains in hopes of understanding how the links were put together – retracing the steps in a sense. In social terms this undoing translates into finding out how we came to understand words, objects and ourselves in particular ways.

Discourses are made up of various key signifiers, made up of nodal points which organise discourses, master signifiers which organise identities and myths which organise social space. Key signifiers on their own have no meaning until they come into contact with other signs which

invest them with meaning, to form a chain of equivalence. Interacting within a chain of equivalence, different words, expressions, mannerisms, and statements work together to create broader meanings. In the organisation of discourse, nodal points are the central signs around which other signs are organised and through which they derive meaning by excluding other possible meanings. Differently understood, the signs relate to each other to create a net of discourses that hold the larger discourse in place (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). If discourse operates to say that something is 'this' because it is not 'that', then the discourse analyst must ask, how did it come to be 'this' instead of 'that'?. What is the relation between signs and signifiers and what are the possibilities for rearranging the links within the chain of equivalence that they form a part of? Finally, how all of these connections and linkages come to produce meaning in the way they do is of utmost importance (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

In working with the data, which consisted of transcribed web series audio and text responses on the Coloured Mentality Facebook page, I started identifying words and phrases which recurred throughout the data. Once identified, I compared how these concepts were being used to construct Coloured people and by implication, those who are not considered Coloured. In working with the data the questions guiding the analysis were: how does speaking in this way serve them? Who benefits from this mode of sense making and who does not? Which identities are included and which are excluded within this construction of Colouredness? What are the consequences for the lived experiences of Coloured people when constructed in this way? Which possibilities for social change does this form of sense making open up and close down?

As stated previously, I decided not to engage with the data until it was time for the analysis, to try and distance myself from it. In handling the data, I encountered very familiar themes and concepts which have permeated my social world for many years. It is recommended that one distances oneself from the data being analysed, but I came to realise quickly that as a Coloured man from Cape Town, I am firmly embedded within the discourses I have analysed. I am constructed by them and I too have constructed and participated in them. In acknowledgement of the near impossibility of disentanglement Jørgensen & Phillips (2002) note:

> The discourse analyst is often anchored in exactly the same discourses as he or she wants to analyse. And, under all circumstances, the discourse analyst is always anchored in

> some or other discursive structure. Although discourse analysis is about distancing oneself from these discourses and 'showing them as they are', in this kind of theory there is no hope of escaping from the discourses and telling the pure truth, truth in itself being always a discursive construction (p. 49).

As difficult as distancing myself was, being implicated in the discourses under analysis allowed me an opportunity to interrogate my beliefs and unquestioned psychic investments which may have attenuated the rigour with which I conducted the analysis. Being so closely tied to the topic, in that I am ultimately studying myself, may have blinded me to how my common sense understandings of certain concepts feed into the hegemony around Coloured identities. However, remaining self-reflexive and in some ways using the theories presented to reconceptualise my understanding of the topic was useful in attempting to limit such bias. In addition to the above note on self-reflexivity, I would like to state that I have chosen to infuse moments of reflexivity through this report, where it relates to the content, instead of writing a standalone section. This is purely a stylistic choice.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion

Coloured people (as self identified or interpellated by the webseries), who have engaged with and through the *Coloured Mentality* web series, are making sense of Colouredness in a variety of complex and conflicting ways. Contestation and ambiguity run as golden threads through the discourses used to construct them and reveal that Colouredness in itself is not monolithic despite the way it was historically constructed. This research aims to locate and explicate meaning embedded in the stories that Coloured people tell about themselves and their lived experiences, and so this chapter looks at how they are making sense of embodying this positionality called 'Coloured'.

4.1.Framing the Data

While doing the analysis, the following questions served as guides: How do respondents make sense of difference and sameness? How are respondents using language to open up and close down possibilities for holding multiple identities simultaneously? How does power influence the possibilities for identification within and outside of Colouredness? Discourse analysis helped me to look beyond the words respondents used, and into the underlying meanings of their inputs on the various topics posed by the web series which included: What is a Coloured? Is Afrikaans a white language? Are Coloured people Black? What is Coloured culture? Does Coloured privilege exist? These questions served as the interview questions which generated the data I analysed. My analysis was also strongly tied to the theoretical frameworks used in *Chapter Two* which positions Colouredness within its relationship to the legacy of slavery, apartheid and the power implications those legacies have for the lived experiences of marginalisation and privilege in South Africa today.

Consistently recurring themes and images which emerged from the respondents were used to group the data. As mentioned at the start, the restrictions placed on one for a report of this size limit, considerably, the extent to which data analysis can be unpacked. Of course the analysis could have been deeper, but in order to confine it to the limits of a Masters project, I am aware that depth was sacrificed slightly, in favour of succinct nuance. The themes are: *Where do we come from?* which explores the way in which respondents make sense of themselves as a function of the past particularly with regards to ancestry and heritage. This section looks at the

tensions between competing accounts of what the "root" of coloured people is and the multiplicity of understandings around the concept of origin. *'Coloured is (not) a thing!'* centres on the ways in which respondents make sense of the racial signifier "Coloured" and how they navigate the historical connotations attached to the word as it currently exists. Two sub-sections follow, namely: *Rejecting Coloured* and *Embracing Coloured.* The fourth section *Colouredness and the politics of post-Apartheid South Africa* explores how being Coloured is experienced in relation to broader race politics in South Africa and the legal framework of affirmative action which is perceived as a new racial hierarchy. Section five, *The Lost and Found*, deals with two elements of identity which centre on the Afrikaans language and culture, and the contestations which echo previous patterns of non-consensus around which cultural and linguistic practices respondents are participating in and the consequences of that participation. The final section *Understanding privilege from the margins*, analyses how respondents conceptualise the idea of privilege and how they make sense of the lived experiences of Coloured people in relation to privilege. Sections two to five all operate as subsidiaries of the nodal point *Where do we come from?* as they all revolve around the contestations and questions aimed at holding the nodal point in place. Interestingly, the nodal point is not a statement. It is a question which was strategically chosen to illustrate the inconclusive character of the discourses constructing Colouredness, however passionately they may be asserted.

4.2. Where do we come from?

The South African nation building project, got underway shortly after 1994, and was exemplified in the "I Am an African" speech of former President Thabo Mbeki (who was Deputy President to Nelson Mandela at the time). The drive to reclaim an African pride which was denigrated under colonial and Apartheid rule gave credence to the idea that it is identification with Africa that makes one African, regardless of origin or skin colour. Despite giving careful consideration (through the speech) to the histories of the various peoples who contributed to South Africa and Africa, it seems that the discourse of indigeneity appealed to many, as a gateway to claiming legitimacy in post-Apartheid South Africa. As Adhikari (2004) noted in *Chapter Two,* the democratic dispensation has created freedom of association not previously possible, but has also undermined some basic assumptions and practices on which Coloured identity has rested. As a Coloured South African, who has experienced race relations in South Africa, I have often

experienced the pressure to “root” my identity, as illustrated in the anecdote I related in the preface of this research report. It has been especially hard to unshackle myself from the weight of stereotypes which have become so sedimented in the South African social imaginary that they lock people into their bodies and shut down opportunities for identification outside of and across them. In light of this long shadow cast by the stereotype, many respondents engaged the discourse of indigenous roots from different perspectives.

For a large proportion of respondents, the need to trace themselves back to a place of origin informed how they made sense of themselves in relation to Colouredness. This sense making can be seen to have three tracks which will now be explored. The first track is the pull towards an indigenous Khoi/San heritage which is seen as the origin of Coloured people as demonstrated by the following comments:

Clinton, a Coloured man:

> Coloured people don't want to embrace their Khoi and San heritage. Simple. They are ashamed of it. Rather clinging to a European or Malay ancestry. I am a proud bushman, I know where I come from.

Kenwyn, a Coloured man:

> We as coloured people need to embrace our identity. Embrace that we are the indigenous people of southern Africa. Embrace our Khoi heritage. Our Dutch heritage. Our British heritage. Whatever background we come from. Do DNA genetic testing to find your background.

Hilton, a Coloured man:

> If you look in our current constitution the Khoi and San people don't have much rights. Their language isnot even recognised by our country yet they were the first people here. The Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal are claimed to be the land of the so called black but you as a Khoi or San descendent need to recognise that the very land you walk on was walked on by your ancestors and they fought to keep this land yet we turn a blind eye to this.

Cedwyn, a Coloured man:

> Us Coloured folks or Khoi or whatever were *the* people in the Cape Province.

All the participants above highlight the Khoi and San people as central to Coloured identities. Clinton lambastes Coloured people who do not embrace their Khoi and San heritage and interprets that perceived reluctance as a result of shame. Stating that he knows where he comes from because he is a "proud bushman" also positions having Khoi and San ancestry as the only way of identification that is knowable and rooted to South Africa. Hilton, similarly, calls for strong identification with Khoi and San ancestry as the ultimate claim to land in South Africa. The land debate in South Africa, which is not fully explored in this research report, is often framed in terms of who is indigenous enough to claim the rights to it. By this reasoning, a claim to land must always be backed up by a claim to indigeneity.

Cedwyn, uses the words "Coloured" and "Khoi" as interchangeable terms, which evades the frameworks for racial classification created when the term was institutionalised by the Apartheid government. Coloured was in itself an erasure of people's diversity. At the same time, his use of a third possibility denoted by "whatever" leaves space for alternative forms of identification, but leaving it unnamed somehow diminishes the importance of these possibilities.

Kenwyn also calls on people to embrace their Khoi heritage, but also allows for identification with non-African ancestry. His conceptualisation pulls the discourse back into an essentialist frame with the assertion that DNA testing can help in finding a background, as if the cultural and biological are intertwined (Gqola, 2010).

The implications of these statements indicate the treacherous task of striking a fine balance between essentialising a creolised identity and reclaiming a denigrated history which has much potential for empowerment. Erasmus (2013) reminds us that Coloured is not a biological result, but yet the need for identifying with a biological root as a gateway to pride seems to remain firmly in place. The discourses above demonstrate that a claim to indigeneity is central to feelings of validation and belonging within the prevailing social relations in South Africa today.

The acknowledgement that other ancestries also exist amongst Coloured people, leads to the second track of sense making which draws on discourses of slave ancestry and mixed European descent. The following responses indicate an alternative narrative constructing origin:

Nadine, a Coloured woman:

> Well... Khoi people actually get annoyed being thrown together with coloured people because they reckon it's not the same thing and I have to agree. Especially as a Cape Coloured we have nothing in common, not culturally, not in terms of cuisine, language, etc... This is why I'm so passionate about it and write about all the time. Coloured people are generally (in the Cape at least) mostly Asian... Hence, the term Cape Malay. Mix that with some Dutch and there you have it.

Tasneem, a Coloured woman:

> I like the part where Jitsvinger says the term coloured doesn't say where we come from or who our people are. Because our heritage is actually so diverse and so beautiful but as individuals we don't truly know that because we were given the label "coloureds", in between, anybody that's Brown. Not black not white, so much of our true heritage and DNA is discarded. Our lineage can be traced to the Khoi San, Malaysia, India, other parts of Africa even the Philippines, because of the slave movement 1000s of years ago. But we don't know this. However, what we have developed as a "coloured" community is also a beautiful thing.

Carol, a Coloured woman:

> Some of us are mixed with Khoi, others have European descendants. Others have Malay, Indian and so many backgrounds and cultures.

Tercia, a Coloured woman:

> Our ancestry and heritage has long been purposefully excluded from or washed down in our history books. How messed up is it that at the age of 58, my mother (born and raised in Cape Town) never knew about the slave lodge?! History never taught her enough about

> our mixed origin of slaves, Europeans and most importantly INDIGENOUS Khoi ancestry!

The respondents above all demonstrate the multiplicity of Coloured ancestry and consequently the effects of that multiplicity on identity. Interesting to note is that, in identifying slave heritage hailing from Malaysia, India, the Philippines and other places these respondents don't seek to preclude Khoi ancestry as suggested by Clinton above. A key tension between indigenous and slave discourses emerge here, which brings the need to choose one history or lineage into question. The insistence on foregrounding Khoi ancestry as a means to reclaim lost pride introduces the risk of reinforcing the shame which was always associated with slave history and identity (Adhikari, 2009).

It is important to note that other respondents also mentioned other African tribes indigenous to other parts of the continent which also form part Coloured ancestry. The way this distinction is made does, however, highlight the observation made by Ruiters (2009) that Coloured people don't generally see the Khoi and San as black African. This is a tension that will be explored more in the section called *Colouredness and the politics of post-Apartheid South Africa.*

It was not intentional that the responses which spoke to the two tracks above were separated by gender. This gendered pattern emerged organically from the data and provides an interesting point for analysis. Men generally tended to assert the singular Khoi identity, which legitimated claims to land, resources, and original status, whereas women asserted a more complex, fragmented subject position in relation multiple ancestral identities. The territoriality of the Khoi narrative echoes a very capitalist/patriarchal impulse to assert identity in terms of dominance and entitlement to socio-economic resources (Besten, 2009). In those terms, it seems that the experience of womanhood in a patriarchal world is synonymous with the experience of fragmented subjectivity akin to Du Bois' (1903) double consciousness. A double consciousness would make one more sensitive to the complexity of embodying multiple subject positions simultaneously and more adept at holding the complexities together versus erasing some in favour of others.

A third track, which reads as evasive of complex diversity issues, is articulated through the humanist discourse expressed by some respondents:

Andrewlene, a human:

> I just want to know one thing, why is there still an issue of colour, can't we all be classified as humans...just seeing all these people made me think that we all go through the same struggles and challenges, all people are built with aspirations but depending on their upbringing that's where you get split views.

Alec, a human:

> Stop clinging to racial classification rather start adopting and adapting to a nationality because that define you. Stop holding onto the apartheid segregation ideologies. The acceptance of racial classifications emphasise your second hand citizenship. We belong to a nation and not a race. start to free yourself from racial labels. Stop promoting apartheid please end it within your mind and believe. You are human and that's the only classification of your being. You are a human being born in South Africa and that adds your nationality. Please stop supporting the classification of a skin. It only makes you a sub person of a white skinned person.

Jonathan, a human:

> Actually we are all part of the human race.....we are taught to divide - class - envy - submit. We are not born that way. These things make us weak, it makes us hate and intolerant - when we realise that we are all the same as one human race maybe we can start to turn things around.

Courtney, a human:

> I'm first human, then African the rest well...and saying this does not mean that we are not faced or don't identify with the evident struggles of both black and coloured people.

The thread running through the responses on this track, to varying degrees and contradictorily, call for a denial of all difference based on race and by implication, class. Respondents want to be commonly identified as simply African, South African or human. Although these pleas to be freed from labels and boxes are ignorant to the power implications of embodying alternative

identities tied to the continent and/or the country, they also concede the presence of these power dynamics.

Alec for example, sees race as an invention of Apartheid and something that is not of consequence, but simultaneously acknowledges the reality of a second-class citizenship and sub-personhood in relation to what he terms a "white skinned person". Alec seems to have developed an alternative vocabulary for addressing the very real power dynamics of race in an attempt to avoid naming himself racially. This response highlights the near impossibility of engaging power without naming it and the fallacy of colour blindness.

Courtney rejects any racial labels, but acknowledges and identifies the struggles of Black and Coloured people. Again, an acknowledgement of the racial inequality present in South Africa is evident, but an impulse to escape it through humanism drives the investment in denialism. This denialism echoes the ambiguity often found in creolised identities (Glissant, 2008).

The question of where we come from is clearly highly contested from within Colouredness. Competing narratives of indigeneity, creolisation and humanity are constantly colliding around the topic. In many cases, these comments were also in dialogue with each other. There is a policing at play too, with some respondents instructing and others imploring fellow Coloured people to identify with one possible route back to a common origin. None of the discourses seem to have been sedimented and continue to pull and push each other. The second track named above, that engages the multiplicity of origins emerges the most accommodating of new possibilities as is characterised by creolisation (Glissant, 2008). The tone with which these discourses are expressed also read as more serene, in contrast to the anxiety usually present in race dialogue. Origin serves as the main nodal point from which all other forms of sense making around Colouredness on the Facebook page emanate. With this framing, respondents are able to choose how they navigate the other complexities around race and identity, even choosing whether to identify as Coloured or not, as discussed in the next section.

4.3. Coloured is (not) a thing!

The contestations noted in the previous section are ultimately a debate about how and where to locate the origin of Coloured history. Many participants do, in fact, make sense of themselves through the past. Many responses centre on reclaiming an erased history, and in some ways it is

fair to say that Colouredness today is conjured up from its past. Adhikari (2009) put forward the schools of thought through which Coloured identities have been understood, as discussed in *Chapter Two.*The instrumentalist school posits that the category Coloured is an invention of the Apartheid state used to separate people of colour. The essentialist school posits that Colouredness is the result of miscegenation, while the social constructionist school posits that Colouredness is made and remade through human agency.

Although some of these schools of thought have a long history, dating back to the 19th century, they still retain currency today, and clearly still structure sense making strategies used by respondents in articulating Colouredness. The ensuing tug of war between identifying with the racial signifier and rejecting it altogether is structured around its historical context and the affective load it carried and continues to carry.

4.3.1. Rejecting Coloured

A painful history of displacement, brutality and shame (Adhikari, 2006; Erasmus, 2001; Gqola, 2010) is inevitably a part of Coloured identities and for many people the term bears the mark of destructive stereotypes created collaboratively by a white supremacist Apartheid society and state. A particularly painful construction of Coloured people by former First Lady Marike de Klerk as a "negative group" and "the leftovers" (Maclennan, 1990) still attaches itself to many Coloured people's memories of living as Others. The symbolism that the term carries for many is a justification for rejecting the identity and the term as imposed.

The responses below show that there still remains a strong disdain for the terms and its historical connotations. For many, it is not indicative of where they come from:

Ikeraam, a man:

> I am not 'n vuilgoed[7] (Coloured). My book is almost done. It gives you the definition of the term coloured, the history and why it was given and what we lost in the process.

[7]An Afrikaans word which literally means "dirty things". In this context it is used to mean dirt or soiled goods.

> Believe it or not, we were land owners, we were farmers with an indigenous identity, language and culture.

Denise, a Coloured woman:

> I come from the era where we talked about “so called Coloured” and we would put it in inverted commas because I railed against that title that was given.

Elias, a man:

> Wow, I disagree. I don't think they should be okay with the term. If it was something given by non-colored people to them. I believe they should just be black. Not colored. But that is just me.

Grant, a Brown man:

> Coloured is not a thing. At a basic conceptual level it is problematic and exemplifies racism in a way that almost nothing else does. Why do we try to free ourselves using our chains? Our identity is heavily influenced by culture, and for a lot of brown people our culture is heavily influenced by oppression. It is important to tell that story. But we can't tell that story through colouredness without ignoring the nuance and difference between me and another brown person. Our oppression is different and has something unique to teach everyone about liberation. We need to stop trying to reclaim words. Whiteness is still normative and by extension more powerful than any of us. Coloured is always going to be a given term, find your identity elsewhere.

Here, respondents express clear instrumentalist thinking which takes the word “Coloured” to be a given term, with no basis in reality. As an invention of the Apartheid state, the term is considered to signify an erasure of nuances between Coloured people and a forced, false sameness on which the stereotype was nurtured. For these respondents there is no way of claiming or even forming identity within the oppressive confines of the term. For them, it is an impossibility which can only be rescued through non-identification or through embracing a Black identity. The contestations against this wholesale abandonment of Colouredness in favour of Blackness or Khoiness, ironically, try to foreground the preservation of nuance in identity.This rejection for

some, offers alternatives that others deem inadequate, while some don't offer any alternatives. Some respondents also expressed negative sentiments attached to the term, for its lack of definition and culture. One participant even expressed embarrassment at being called Coloured. All these sentiments internalise the "negative group" narrative and position Colouredness as irredeemable. Remaining a blank slate in a highly politicised society such as South Africa hardly seems feasible. In most instances, these expressions of rejection read as rejection for its own sake, with a refusal to consider new possibilities that do not essentialise racial identities. At the same time, one respondent invoked the 'Coloured vote' to invalidate Colouredness as inherently racist. This brings to light the impossibility of the blank slate fantasy, as Coloured people are still locked into their bodies based on a past event that does not accurately represent them and which by its very construction is ignorant to similar practices of non-Coloured Black people.

Other respondents framed Coloured people as lost, and hence Colouredness as loss. Being lost for some, signals a dead end. For other it signals possibility:

Christopher, a Coloured man:

> Ignorant coloured people... "I'm not black I'm actually better than that, but a white person will probably still call me kaffir" Because in their mind that's what we always were, you're the only one that believes the fallacy, or they wouldn't have put you a street next to the "Black townships", if you were so damn special! Oh my word, coloured people are so lost shame, but in their confusion, can vehemently disassociate from blackness. The epitome of stupid! And in no way am I denying my Colouredness. I'm simply saying that coloureds are black people with a different culture.

Clint, a Coloured man:

> At some point I accepted that we are the lost people, the people with no real identity other than a melting pot of assumptions, status quo and what we have been fed. The one thing I used to wonder is whether there is an accurate history of coloured people (As told by coloureds). How could we truly figure out who we are when we are not sure where we came from? Now I have realised that we (coloureds) are a blank slate, we have the freedom to create and define ourselves around how we feel and what drives us forward as a people.

The two perspectives above articulate the "lost" narrative from different perspectives and lead to different places. To clarify, the line quoted above by Christopher, is taken from an episode of the webseries which he is responding to. For Christopher, the exclusivism through which Coloured people separate themselves from Blackness can be interpreted as being confused and lost. He invokes the imagery of Apartheid spatial planning to illustrate how closely Black and Coloured people were positioned in spite of the fallacy of separate development amongst non-white people. This imagery serves as a reminder of how white supremacy does not imagine Black and Coloured people as separate at all, thereby invalidating the fantasy of superiority or being "so damn special". In spite of his disdain for Coloured exclusivism, he does however acknowledge his own Colouredness as a signifier of culture. Christopher's views highlight some important tensions between modes of identification within the spectrum of Coloured, Black and African subjectivities and the implications for social construction they hold. Erasmus (2001) argues that these ways of being do not have to be mutually exclusive and by Christopher's admission, it seems they cannot be.

Clint on the other hand sees being lost as an opportunity for redefinition and agency. He also invokes the nodal point of the discourse through reverting back to finding out "where we came from" in order to move forward as a people. He also notes his inquiry about whether an accurate history of Coloured people has been told by them, denoting that he acknowledges that Coloured narratives have been erased and misappropriated throughout history. He interprets the inheritance of erasure as the chance to start again as a blank slate with freedom and creativity. I stated above that being a blank slate in South Africa does not seem feasible, but with a view to creating something new it could serve as a useful metaphor which reaffirms Erasmus' (2001) definition of creolisation as "cultural creativity under conditions of marginality". The idea of basing this creativity on what "drives us forward as a people", as if all Coloured people are driven by the same things, remains blind to the differences between Coloured people that were erased by the very history he seems to be raging against. Here again, it is evident that even in the articulation of more progressive views, the complexities of Colouredness present themselves as non-negotiable in the process of navigating the multiple identities which are constantly colliding.

4.3.2. Embracing Coloured

In light of the painful history mapped throughout this research report, some respondents feel it is important to embrace being Coloured as a way of speaking back to that pain. These articulations speak to a reclaiming of pride and a rejection of shame that comes from a repression of slave memory. According to Wicomb (1998), shame undergirds the absences of slave memory for Coloured people who are the descendants of slaves. On the repression of slave memory, Wicomb (1998) says that it

> presumably has its roots in shame: shame for our origins of slavery, shame for the miscegenation, and shame, as colonial racism became institutionalised, for being black, so that with the help of our European names we have lost all knowledge of our Xhosa, Indonesian, East African or Khoi origins. (p. 100).

This framing of how shame operated to keep memories repressed echoes Ahmed's (2004) framing of emotions as social in the way that they circulate in society and get attached to certain bodies. This colonial attachment of shame to Coloured bodies, was also articulated by Adhikari (2006) who reminds us that Coloured people were evidence for the colonisers' past lapses in morality.

Respondents below are speaking back to that shame with unequivocal pride:

Lisa, a Coloured woman:

> I really love these discussions. I feel like this topic hasn't been given much thought & kids need to know & be proud of their race, culture & traditions. There's nothing black or white about coloured people, we are just 100% different in every single way. I can meet any coloured anywhere & say or do something to that only they would understand because somehow we are all connected in many ways, in what we do & say. Good or bad, I'm proud to be a coloured.

Renee, a Coloured woman:

> I've always identified as proudly coloured, we are a mixture of everything great.

Erwin, a Coloured man:

> I think regardless of the negative stereotypes associated with the origin of the term. It's having enough self-worth as a people to rise above that kak[8], claim it and renew it, so it will, in generations to come denote a heritage to be truly proud of in spite of all that was perpetrated against us. I'm truly a proud coloured and always will be because we are a unique and beautiful people.

Lance, a Coloured man:

> I hate the fact that we don't own the racial distinction "coloured" or take pride in the fact that the term literally means you are so unique that you can't be defined and put in a box. Our definition and individuality is up to us to define collectively. I don't see it as a disparaging term, and we need to stop feeding into the hype that it is. This video is very biased and does little to support unity within our ethnic group. We also need to stop promoting stereotypes which harms the image and our association with our culture. We are not black or white, but proudly coloured!

The respondents above are articulating pride in interesting ways which are not wholly unproblematic. For Lisa, her pride is tied not being white or black, but completely different. Erwin articulates this difference as being unique. For Coloured people, a long history of separatism and exclusivity haunts articulations such as these for potentially reinforcing binaries. This pride is also expressed in terms of what Coloured people, racially, are not instead of what they are. Within this expression is also the construction of "Coloured" as a separate race to Black and white, which is also highly contested in the next section. The avoidance of race talk when discussing Colouredness also reads as an avoidance of engaging the intersections between Colouredness and Blackness in defiance of the hierarchical relationship they still have today, constructing Colouredness as superior to Blackness. The narrative of mixture on the other hand,

[8]The Afrikaans expletive equivalent of 'shit'.

used by Renee, reads as a dilution of the complex social and material realities that make up Colouredness.

Here again, the idea of a monolithic Colouredness with which all Coloured people can identity is presented by Lisa and Lance which differ from other responses that note that Colouredness can't be defined by one standard, since regional differences influence identities differently. Throughout the data set, many have accused Capetonian Coloured people of universalising Coloured experiences to foreground the Cape Town experience. These contestations demonstrate just how unstable the category is, despite sweeping stereotypes that construct it as monolithic.

Lance, and other respondents, bring to life one of the hallmarks of creolisation – survival. His pride is conjured up in the wake of "everything that was perpetrated against us". As people constantly going through a process of becoming through creolisation, this discourse of survival blows the lid off one of the muted truths buried under the nodal point *"where do we come from?"*A history of brutality, displacement and dispossession is illuminated through this pride that, like Coloured people, exists in spite of it.

4.4. Colouredness and the Politics of post-Apartheid South Africa

The data presented thus far has painted a pretty clear picture of how sense making for Coloured people happens in close relation to the past. It is considered a past that has not been sufficiently addressed and engaged with care and consideration, which remains an important point. As discussed in *Chapter Two*, a clear record of oppression as well as privilege has been written into Coloured narratives, which still have repercussions today. Black and Coloured relationships remain fraught and struggle to reach each other. Coloured people continue to perceive themselves as marginal, due to what Farred (2001) states: "whereas 'full blackness',or Africanness has translated into full citizenship of and belonging to the post-apartheid state, colouredness has retained its historic ambivalence" (p. 182). As mentioned by Ruiters (2009), the assertion of Colouredness as something that cannot be subsumed under Black Africanness is a yearning for full citizenship, rather than a rejection of citizenship. What is perceived as favouritism for Black Africanness could be reinforcing a separatism amongst Coloured people. In turn, the historical perception of Coloured identity as Anti-African (Ruiters, 2009) is reinforced by this separatism. Navigating these dynamics in post-Apartheid South Africa remain

as difficult as before, and this section examines how discourses are constructing Colouredness in relation to Blackness, the nodal point of this discourse.

Relationships to Blackness were articulated differently with some not identifying with it at all and others identifying in various ways:

Cindy, a Coloured woman:

> I identify as a coloured not a black –I don't understand why any mixed person in this world is called black, why should there only be either white or black, we are a people of colour.The world is full of mixed races, to be honest if you do your research - Blacks are mixed also and so are whites- there is no pure race anymore, everyone has mixed with everyone, we are all mixed people of the world.

Justin, a Coloured man:

> It may be individually specific but I do not see myself as black, especially when I'm in the minority bracket of being fair skinned and often see as white/European or even certain features which identify me as Malay. When everyone says know your history, as though it's an answer to see coloured as black, it just bypasses the other part of our heritage - whether it be from Malay, Asian, European or Arab heritage.

Craig, a Coloured man:

> I don't and won't ever see myself as black; I'm coloured. Blacks won't see us as black, whites won't see us as white. Just do something great then like magic you would hear a 20 year old black man did this great thing, do something bad then you're coloured again. So people, if you're coloured and proud, stop trying to think you're black because you're not!

Jason, a Coloured man:

> NO! Coloureds are not black, in the same way Black is not Coloured...or white! Any way you spin it, we are unique in our own way, and in that, is all our strengths and weaknesses. Coloured people for the longest time have their own style, social attributes, mannerisms that essentially make us who we are, COLOURED!

The reluctance to identify as Black is explained in different ways by the respondents above. Cindy identifies as Coloured based on the grounds that she believes she is mixed, but concedes that all races are mixed. In acknowledging that even Black people are mixed, it would follow that she would not object to being Black, but she insists that she is Coloured. This sentiment is in conflict with itself and indicates that there is more to being Coloured that resonates with her. Craig refuses to ever identify as Black, as a result of not feeling accepted by Black people. He feels that Colouredness is subsumed under a generic Blackness only when there is something to gain from the achievements of Coloured people, but is rejected as soon as Coloured people do badly. As a result of this perceived ulterior motive by Black people to use Coloured people, he instructs Coloured people to stop trying to be Black. Jason believes it is a Coloured essence that must be preserved and emphatically rejects the notion that Coloured people can be Black. The issue of colourism crops up for Justin, who believes he cannot identify with Blackness because he has fair skin and is identified as European.

These respondents bring many interesting dynamics operating between Black and Coloured people to light. Colouredness seems to retain a certain kind of social currency in post-Apartheid South Africa, even when understood as no less pure than any other category. This speaks to the privilege attached to Colouredness and its construction as being better than Black. There is also a mistrust for Black people being articulated, which can be traced through history. Social divisions created by inequality (Payne, 2000) still prevail between Coloured and Black people today and create barriers to social integration, even if only in the imagination. The policing of Blackness, related to the somatic, is illustrated by the point about fairer skin precluding the respondent from Blackness. This is of course not exclusive only to Coloured people, but highlights just how entrenched the idea is that the somatic holds the key to meaning making (Gqola, 2010).

For some, legislation holds the key to the gate which keeps Colouredness out of Blackness:

Lee-anne, a Coloured woman:

> The law in the country tells us that we're not black, so we can't define ourselves as being black.

Merle, a Coloured woman:

> Yes we are black or at least non-white because of apartheid. We are a variation of black or African. However I have a problem with being black as when BEE comes in to play, we are considered as not black enough though.

Frederick, a brown man:

> If you are coloured tell me: What colour were you before you were coloured? We are Brown People look at yourself do you really see a black woman or a Black man. Are you black in complexion or are you black in culture? Please tell me what makes you black? Are you really black? You know why the government want us to accept the black identity? Because they want to steal our heritage. That is force assimilation, forcing us to accept an identity that is not ours.We are brown and we are the descendants of the Khoe and San people of this land.

Here respondents exclude themselves from Blackness, through feelings of marginalisation by the law and the government. A pervasive idea that permeates this discourse is that one needs to be allowed into or invited to Blackness. The idea that not being classified Black within the framework of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) precludes one from accepting Blackness as a social identity, reinforces feelings of marginalisation. The last response by Frederick, engages a conspiracy theory that the South African government wants to forge a collective Black identity to steal brown people's heritage, which is framed as tied to the Khoi and the San. His use of the signifier "brown", in opposition to "Black", takes on the form of essentialising noted by Gqola (2010) in her analysis of the "Kleuring Weerstand Beweging"[9] and its attempt to fix "Brown" as a third pure race. This again invokes the mistrust and enmity expressed above, but also makes an attempt at sanitising Coloured history through the assertion of a singular point of origin. The sentiment expressed through this discourse is one of victimhood. This victimhood enables a

[9] Translated as "Coloured Resistance Movement" – the movement emerged shortly after 1994 calling for self-determination in a separate state for Coloured people, who were believed to be a pure third race. The name echoes the right-wing, white supremacist "Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging" (AWB) in nomenclature and ideology.

denial of agency to participate in the making and remaking of identities and perpetuates marginalisation.

In contrast some respondents gladly claim Blackness in interesting ways:

Gemaen, a culturally Coloured man:

> I identify being black by race & coloured by culture. According to the "South African Book" my race – coloured but to me I'm black wherever I go around the world but culturally I'm 100 percent coloured.

Sherlin, a Black, Coloured woman:

> Personally I am a black South African, I am a coloured South African, so I think you can be both. I am both.

Jill, a Coloured, Black woman:

> But for me within black there are lots of different possibilities and coloured for me is a possibility within black, which is a larger frame which is how I look at my identity.

Justin, a man living the black narrative:

> Black, white, coloured, these are all constructs. Blackness refers to all people who have experienced oppression by the system that gave us these constructs. And it still prevails today. By this measure, of course coloureds are black. We live the black narrative, though somewhat less violently than our darker brothers and sisters.

For most respondents here, there are possibilities for inhabiting both Black and Coloured identities simultaneously. They understand Colouredness as a cultural difference within the spectrum of Blackness – a social experience they all share. Gemaen highlights the disparity between South Africa and the rest of the world, where the term Coloured has no significance. He shows how one has to navigate identities which bear relevance for the different experiences one has in South Africa. The freedom of association noted by Adhikari (2006) is clearly at play here and he does not feel he needs permission to identify with Blackness. His experience is one of confident ownership. Justin positions Coloured people in relation to the larger system of white

supremacy which subjects Coloured people to the same experiences as Black people. He alludes to protective factors that attenuate the severity of the experience of Coloured people, but identifies with the Black narrative.

These respondents highlight the possibilities and opportunities for inhabiting multiple identities, without killing off any of them. They see themselves fed by the Deleuzian rhizome that allows for multiple modes of identification within history and the present. The most striking feature of the rhizome is its ability to nourish the plant through an interconnected network that works together to anchor the plant to the ground. In the same way, creolised identities such as Colouredness, are made up of multiplicities which open up ways of identification that borrow from ruling and subaltern cultures in ever changing formations. The discourses presented here are no less contested amongst themselves than those presented in earlier sections, and so contestation in itself seems to be emerging as a theme of this research. The idea of being culturally Coloured has pervaded responses up until now. The next section explores the concept further.

4.5. The Lost and Found

Up until now, respondents have displayed patterns of sense making around Colouredness through recurring themes of loss and creativity – the latter often a consequence of the former. This section will engage these dynamics as they pertain to two very sensitive topics related to Colouredness namely, language and culture. Following the mass Apartheid protests of 1976 against Afrikaans being enforced as a primary medium of instruction in schools, Afrikaans was widely understood as the oppressor's language. Although today, there are more non-white Afrikaans speakers than white Afrikaans speakers, the language remains firmly in the clutches of Whiteness and is not associated with its slave origins. For many Coloured people, Afrikaans is a mother tongue, but like me, they have a complex relationship with it which over time has been characterised by shame, disavowal and ownership. The pull towards history is particularly important here, since the domination of Afrikaner nationalist ideology which appropriated the language from enslaved peoples, erased and obscured that very history (van der Waal, 2014; Gqola, 2010). The appropriation of the language also facilitated the foreclosure of pathways into identification with Africa to indigenous people, be they Black or Coloured as noted by Gqola

(2010). It becomes clear then how the history of the Afrikaans language is central to understanding Coloured identities today.

Respondents engage their relationships with the language through these motifs of loss and reclamation:

Justin, a Coloured man:

> Again my friend as much as people want to claim this language it is indeed white! It is mutually intelligible with Dutch the language it derives from. I've been to the Netherlands and had full blown conversations with people. Them understanding me more than I them at times. It's not our language, well it ain't mine. It's like The United States taking credit for the English language, where they just tweaked it to become its own dialect.

Gielmie, a Coloured man:

> Apartheid is an Afrikaans word. If you want to associate with this Afrikaans language makes you a racist. Remember 1976.

Emile, a Coloured man:

> Kaaps was the original version of this language and contains our heritage of slave, colonizer and Boesman within the language you call Afrikaans. 1976 was not against Afrikaans, but against being taught in the language and not our own versions of it ... Still till today the original version is spoken on the Cape Flats and those same children drop out of school because they are forced to speak to "white" version of the language, which is in fact a foreign language to their / our tongues.

Hilton, a Coloured man:

> The pride I have in knowing my forebears were fundamental to the establishment and development of the Afrikaans language is second to nothing. I find it problematic that there are vast amounts of our brothers and sisters that still think of it as the oppressor's language when in fact the oppressors stole the language in the same way the stole the term 'Afrikaner'.

Ziyana, a Coloured woman:

> I think that Afrikaans got appropriated by white people in an attempt to make themselves natives of South Africa.

Respondents share many divergent perspectives on the relevance of Afrikaans to Colouredness. For some, like Gielmie and Justin, the language can have no relation to Coloured people as they believe it to be an invention of Dutch colonisers and a tool of racism. Again, this disavowal shuts down possibilities that are opened up by the engagement with the history of Afrikaans. In this case, the respondents do not associate the language with the nodal point of the discourse, despite acknowledging that for some it is a form of identification, however false they believe it to be. The other respondents engage the history of the language with delight, with the intention of severing it from false ties to Afrikaner national identity. The reality of how the language was appropriated or stolen from and ultimately lost to the descendants of enslaved people, who identify as Coloured today, is acknowledged with a sense of pride. In contrast, sentiments of disavowal are expressed with a sense of shame and panic. This pride/shame dichotomy echoes a historical dilemma that has plagued Coloured identities for centuries, as discussed throughout this research report, and is also a metaphor for the possibility/impossibility dynamic at play with creolised identities.

The lost here presents an opportunity to move towards finding something new. The creativity, for many, is enacted through a culture that was said to be non-existent.

Respondents expressed images of culture that so accurately describe the poetics of creolisation:

Denise, a Coloured woman:

> A lot of laughter. There’s a lot of humour that masks the pain.

Cleavon, a Coloured man:

> That's the big question isn't it? What is coloured culture? To be honest there's no definitive answer in my opinion, which is why I think we get so much flak, but there really couldn't be one. The different sources from which coloureds come from are too diverse for there to be one. Growing up you'd be strongly influenced by many, but not all,

> and even less will make it into your everyday experience which isn't wrong at all. Coloured culture to me is the amalgamation of a select number of cultural norms from the different sources that make up the coloured identity and this obviously differs from person to person.

Lauren, a Coloured woman:

> I think there definitely are aspects of our culture that transcend provincial limitations. Meeting coloured people from other provinces, I always find that there are similarities between most coloureds., I think we have a very colourful culture of story-telling. You will find a lot - and I mean a lot - of coloured people getting involved in theatre. And many people say we are dramatic and we like to exaggerate, but often it makes for a better story. Writers, actors, artists, performers, comedians...we basically find any manner of telling stories. And we all have that in common. At a braai, there will always be a coloured person talking the most and telling stories and making people laugh. I think it's quite ironic that we all like telling stories, but we have such a poor record of oral history and passing things down.

Respondents make some very important ties to history through describing culture. Denise notes that humour has been used to mask the pain of a brutal history. Despite surviving brutality, coping with the trauma of brutality and marginalisation has become a feature of culture. The implications of that statement alone for sense making amongst Coloured people are significant. It raises questions about what kinds of identities can emerge from such traumatic existences where people have single-handedly managed their own persecuted mental health. The other two respondents mention a plethora of factors that influence Coloured culture as diverse and varied. Their framing of diversity as rich and abundant echoes Glissant's (2008) assertion that diversity is not dilution. This statement is important since it provides a powerful theoretical place from which to speak against the erasure of Coloured culture as undefined and even non-existent. A last point by Lauren, notes that storytelling, despite existing alongside a poor record of oral history, is central to Coloured culture. This speaks back to a past of erasure and shows that Coloured people have found creative ways of writing and speaking themselves into existence, but also speaks to a future of possibilities for speaking new ways of existence into being.

4.6 Understanding Privilege from the Margins

As discussed in *Chapter Two*, privilege will remain relevant for some time to come when engaging Colouredness. This analysis is no exception. The idea of privilege becomes complex when attached to a marginalised subject, with a brutal history of colonial and Apartheid domination. Privilege, according to MacIntosh (2003), exists when a group of people have access to valuable things that others are denied, simply because of their membership to that group. In other words, it is unearned. The complexity of privilege in the context of Colouredness is that it came with very few of the material benefits and luxuries often enabled by privilege. Nevertheless, privilege has influenced Coloured lived experiences in South Africa and respondents engage with this in varied ways.

For some respondents, privilege is engaged through the professional or work context:

Darrel, a Coloured man:

> What I have, I worked very hard for, and against all odds... I often imagine where I would have been if I was born with a silver or gold spoon. The sky would have been the limit...but, I am contented that I made the most of the limited resources I/we had. I do not believe in freebies and handouts. It is called hard work, discipline, integrity and focus, and not settling for less.

Merle, a Coloured woman:

> Only privileges we get is when we have worked super hard as individuals in our craft.

Keeno-Lee, a Coloured man:

> In terms of positions of power, work and so on, I think coloured people do have a little bit of an advantage in this province specifically.

Emile, a Coloured man:

> Definitely exists. Coloured people was considered the blue eye kids of white people in the apartheid era and were given preference in jobs and promotions over our black

> brothers and sisters. And that is exactly where this arrogance of "I am better than the black man" attitude stems from...

Most respondents deny privilege through the neo-liberalist discourse of hard work and merit. Their understanding of privilege is framed completely in relation to capitalistic gains through gainful employment. Based on this framing, they do not see any kind of prosperity as a result of privilege, which is completely ignorant to Apartheid era social engineering that allowed Coloured people better access to jobs and education. Keeno-Lee and Emile acknowledge that this privilege does exist, particularly in the Western Cape where Coloured Preferential Employment policies were put in place during Apartheid. The denial of privilege, especially in terms of professional life, highlights a silence and complicity which reframes privilege as entitlement. An acknowledgement of this privilege might however open the door to more feelings of marginalisation, since Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) recognises South Africans' eligibility for employment on the basis of historical disadvantage. In this instance, a lack of privilege is beneficial. Alternatively, the hard work narrative distances Coloured people from the notion that they are equity appointments, who have no real competence, as is often synonymous with BEE in some imaginations. Respondents here are keen to individualise their achievements.

For others, the privilege speaks more the social realities that shape people's lived realities:

Daryn, a Coloured man:

> How privileged could I have been if I lived in a flippen garage with a family of four. That's like five by five meters. How privileged is that?

Yaseen, a Coloured man:

> Yes we do, a racial hierarchy was set up with black South Africans at the very bottom. Coloured communities, together with South Asians (Indians) and Asians were built up above blacks in South Africa. We still benefit from this hierarchy. Coloured communities are incredibly anti-black and racist. Always ready to throw black people under bus by siding with white supremacy in South Africa. We gain from it, so we continue to do it.

Rory, a Coloured man:

> This is a complex topic because it depends on the way you look at it or the context you use to answer the question. For example, if you consider Coloured people in comparison to Black people then yes some form of privilege exists. It doesn't mean Coloured people were not oppressed, it just means the oppression was not the same. If you consider the Coloured community itself one can also draw the conclusion that middle class Coloured people from the Suburbs are more privileged than the average working class Coloured person from the Cape Flats. I'm not sure if calling it "Coloured privilege" is necessarily accurate though because for many (if not most) Coloured people, privileged is the last thing we'd call ourselves.

Davina, a Coloured woman:

> Of course the ruling class would hand over special privileges to their bastard children and loyal slaves who kept the masses in check. This is why all coloureds are traditionally despised and generally just labelled "tarbrushed coconuts and houseboy lackeys". So yes a minority in the coloured nation have selfishly benefited above others, yet the majority of coloureds are those who have worked their fingers to the bone against all odds to prosper with all probability set firmly against them. But show me any group that doesn't have this split between self-serving opportunists and the honest hardworking.

Complex social realities are brought to light within the responses above. Daryn speaks to the experience growing up in poverty where no material privilege seemed evident. Yaseen highlights the social privilege of being constructed as more worthy of humanity by the system of white supremacy, noting that Coloured communities accrue social benefits from enacting anti-black sentiments. Rory acknowledges that Coloured people were given more access to material resources during Apartheid, but also calls out the class hierarchy within Coloured communities which complicates the idea of privilege and asks what it is defined in relation to. Davina, confirms the internal operation of privilege combined with the reality of complicity and collaboration with the ruling class.

Respondents present a more nuanced engagement with privilege as not only something that benefits Coloured people over Black people, but also some Coloured people over other Coloured

people. The intersections between race and class create a stratified Othering facilitated by historical privilege handed down by a white supremacist state. When looking at the social experience of existing in a state constructed as racially superior, respondents point out that Coloured people still benefit from privilege which maintains the boundaries between Black and Coloured. This division in itself is more of a disadvantage than a privilege in relation to the need for unity and solidarity in the face of white supremacy and related systems of oppression. The arguments for and against the existence of privilege can all be engaged through the nodal point of the discourse by acknowledging the history of Coloured people. The idea of Coloured privilege deserves thorough analysis as it begs the question: How privileged could such a brutalised, stigmatised group of people really be and what does it amount to in reality? The historical fact of privilege as an invention of the Apartheid state remains, despite any attempts to explain it away. Looking critically at what that privilege enabled for Coloured people as a whole seems to paint a different picture which tends to resonate with one response that positions it as a distraction from the real privilege; white privilege.

This analysis has shown that Coloured identities are still going through many processes of negotiation, while opportunities for dialogue in service of social change keep presenting themselves. I agree with Farred (2000) when he states that:

> The concept of colouredness and its effects, the way in which it informs the thinking, political responses, the voting tendencies, the cultural particularities, the divided, bifurcated racial consciousness, of this South African constituency can only be understood if it is publically 'debated', 'extended' (in the sense that it is subjected to a demanding intellectual interrogation) and 'quarrelled' over and over again. (p. 8)

This analysis served as one such interrogation and will hopefully spark many more quarrels that lead to better understanding.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Coloured identities in South Africa have had an uncomfortable air about them, since they were first marked by colonialist discourses of miscegenation. Recent events in South Africa have publicised Colouredness and the fraught relations it holds with Blackness. In some ways the ensuing discussions on the topic have confirmed the stereotypes and suspicions surrounding Coloured people, but in other ways it has also opened up opportunities for exploration and introspection. Coloured identities, often problematically framed as singular, have always been sites of contestation and negotiation throughout South Africa's convoluted political history which has shaped them in very significant ways. This shaping has had profound impacts on the lived experiences of Coloured people who until today are still plagued by the social and material legacies of marginalisation. This research aimed to interrogate how Coloured people are constructing Colouredness and as a consequence, themselves in relation post-Apartheid South Africa. A complex range of discourses emerge from the sense making strategies used by Coloured people, with a key feature being contestation. Discourses constructing Colouredness echo the creolisation process Colouredness has gone through, with both impossibilities and possibilities vying for legitimacy. Within these contestations, a discourse encouraging discovery of "where we come from" places Colouredness in the past, from where it can start over and tell the stories of Coloured people properly. Respondents in this research find themselves up against time, space and ideology which emanate from the constructions effected from within and outside of Colouredness. This research thoroughly complicates the relationship between the centre and the margins, as Coloured people navigate their lived experiences straddling the lines of power which distinguish oppression from privilege.

Post-Apartheid Coloured identities are contending with the historical imposition of uniformity while constantly undergoing processes of creolisation in which agency is used to continually remake and open up new possibilities for identification across the policed lines of race, culture and class. This research shows that Coloured identities are emerging from the monolith that Colouredness was constructed to be and are somewhat divergent in relation to each other. Coloured people are engaging history in nuanced ways that resist new forms of dominance and silencing. For some indigeneity defines history, while others prefer engaging more nuanced

narratives that revive slave memory and reframe the historical shame associated with it. These engagements with history do very different work, but represent the multiplicity that has always existed within Coloured identities to the extent that its history cannot exist singularly. There is a power in engaging our histories from marginal positions, that is starting to destabilise the hegemonic power hold that white supremacy has put on our narratives. This destabilisation remains a slow process in light of the relationship Colouredness has had with whiteness for centuries, but it is a start.

In certain parts of this research, Colouredness was engaged through the framework of non-existence for respondents who rejected it for its instrumentalist connotations. Colouredness is constructed as an impossibility in a democratic South Africa, which has devastatingly annihilating effects on the identities of people who have not known anything else. The refusal to engage the discomfort also reads as a refusal to engage history, which contradicts the pull towards a search for origin. Here another form of erasure is at play. For others, Colouredness epitomises possibility and is highly capable of redemption in the face of stereotypes that attach phobogenic qualities to it. It is here that we see optimism amongst Coloured people for shaping their own social and material realities through agency.

One of the most consistent points that emerged from the analysis was that Coloured does not mean the same thing to everyone and that a reimagining of Coloured identities is needed, in order to truly understand the complexities of race, outside of the binary logic created by white supremacy. The mistrust and enmity that exist between Coloured and Black people highlights one of the most painful legacies of Apartheid, which still prevails today. In a society where Blackness has gained social currency, many Coloured people feel that they are disenfranchised by binary logic once again. This feeling of marginalisation is also linked to feeling locked out of a policed Blackness. Here the power dynamics operating between marginal subject positions trouble mainstream understandings of how power works. The lines between privilege and oppression become more blurred within these dynamics.

This research reveals that Coloured people are doing work amongst themselves to challenge and resist the yoke of complicity that has always constructed them as anti-African, anti-democracy and anti-South African. There is a movement of self-education and information sharing which aims to put certain misrepresentations on trial for the damage it has caused to the self-images and

national pride of Coloured people. Further, what can be derived from the contestations evident in the data is that Colouredness is definitely not the monolith it is constructed to be. More research into the differences within would prove to be a worthy endeavour.

The discussion of privilege reveals many painful truths and harmful fallacies about the ways in which Coloured people see themselves positioned in South Africa. Understanding the distinction between privilege as a product of social engineering and privilege as economic benefit proved somewhat difficult for some respondents who clung to liberalist meritocratic frameworks valorising hard work in the wake of severe economic disadvantage. This defence echoes the aftermath of competition for scarce resources set up between people of colour by colonialism in that it manifests as loathing for the retributive justice enabled by BEE. This research reveals just how long the shadows of colonialism and apartheid are and how the legacies still shape our social and material conditions today. These conditions remain poor for the majority of Coloured people who suffer under class hierarchies within their own communities.

This research reveals that Coloured people are imagining themselves anew and are currently going through a new process of creolisation which employs agency to redefine the boundaries of identity. Some of this redefinition serves to put new boundaries in place to the detriment of others. Other forms of redefinition are more invested in the engaging survival under new social norms that structure social relations. This process of change, which calls on history and the present, is urging changes in discourse which have the potential to change social realities and lived experiences.

This study was framed solely within the milieu of responses housed on the *Coloured Mentality* Facebook page. The web series presented Cape Town based Coloured identities, for which it was heavily criticised. Nevertheless, this encouraged responses from those familiar with the context and as such represented only a small sector of Coloured people in South Africa. Another limitation also presented itself in the one sided nature of data mined from social media. I was not able to probe responses, since I was not interacting with respondents, but in some instances conversations between respondents proved helpful for expanding on responses. Based on these limitations, this study will inform a larger PhD study which aims to compare constructions of Coloured identities across most South African provinces. The study hopes to explore the nuances

alluded to during this research and to further erode the monolith that is constructed as Coloured identity.

Working with identities in South Africa remains a delicate task that requires care and attention. Post-Apartheid identities will remain relevant for years to come, but I believe that it is now the task of researchers such as me to keep finding new opportunities for freedom of association rather than to pursue fixity. In light of this research, I understand the acknowledgement of agency to be a powerful tool in the achievement of social justice for people who have previously been locked into their bodies by hegemonic dominant discourse. When your entire existence has been forcefully attached to an identity that erases your humanity, illuminating that humanity is one of the most important works of social justice.

In moving ahead with this work, I reiterate the caution provided by Glissant (2008) to understand that any classifications we use to understand the social world do not accurately capture "the realities that always extend beyond its parameters". These classifications, however, remain intertwined with those realities and it is that relationship that this research will continue to invest in.

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Appendix A: The ten criteria for critical diversity literacy

Steyn (2015) states that critical diversity literacy is an analytical orientation that allows a person to read social relations as one would read a text. The following are the ten criteria for critical diversity literacy:

1. An understanding in the role of power in constructing differences that make a difference.
2. A recognition of the unequal symbolic and material value of different social locations. This includes acknowledging hegemonic positionalities and concomitant identities such as whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity, cisgender, ablebodiedness, middleclassness etc. and how these dominant orders position those in non-hegemonic spaces.
3. Analytic skill at unpacking how these systems of oppression intersect, interlock, co-construct and constitute each other , and how they are reproduced, resisted and reframed.
4. A definition of oppressive systems such as racism as current social problems and (not only) a historical legacy.
5. An understanding that social identities are learned and are an outcome of social practices.
6. The possession of a diversity grammar and a vocabulary that facilitates a discussion of privilege and oppression.
7. The ability to 'translate' (see through) and interpret coded hegemonic practices.
8. An analysis of the ways that diversity hierarchies and institutionalised oppressions are inflected through specific social contexts and material arrangements
9. An understanding of the role of emotions, including your own emotional investment, in all of the above.
10. An engagement with issues of the transformation of these oppressive systems towards deepening social justice at all levels of social organisation.