

**“NOT TAINTED BY THE PAST”: RE-CONSTRUCTIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS OF  
COLOURED IDENTITIES AMONG UNIVERSITY COLOURED STUDENTS IN POST-  
APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

by

Sardana Nikolaeva

B.A., Sakha State University, 2003

M.A., State University of New York, Albany, NY, 2008

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This dissertation was presented

by

Sardana Nikolaeva

It was defended on

May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013

and approved by

Dr. Noreen B. Garman, Professor, Department of Administrative and Policy Studies

Dr. Macrina C. Lelei, Assistant Professor, Department of Administrative and Policy Studies

Dr. Patrick Manning, Professor, Department of History

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. John C. Weidman, Professor, Department of Administrative and  
Policy Studies

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Sardana Nikolaeva, PhD  
University of Pittsburgh, 2013

The South African coloured identity is a profoundly complex construction that, on the one hand, is interpreted as an ambiguous and ‘in-between’ identity and, on the other hand, its own ambiguity and complexity provides multiple means and strategies of production and articulation within various contexts. This dissertation seeks to examine a production of multiple discourses by post-apartheid coloured youth in order to re-construct and negotiate their identities moving through various social contexts of everyday experiences within diverse university settings. Similarly to other minority and marginalized youth, coloured students produce various discourses and practices as the medium of counter-hegemonic formation and negotiation of their minoritized and marginalized identities. In this sense, coloured students implement produced discourses and practices as instrumental agency to create resistance and challenge the dominant discourses on their marginalized and minoritized identities, simultaneously determining alternate characteristics for the same identities. Turning to the current conceptualizations of coloured identities as heterogeneous, non-static and highly contextual, I analyze two dominant discourses produced by the coloured students: coloured as an ethnic/hybrid cultural identity and an adoption of an inclusive South African national identity, simultaneously rejecting coloured identity as a product of the apartheid social engineering. Additionally, integrating an ecological approach and ecology model of identity development, created and utilized by Renn (1998, 2004) in her work that explores how multiracial students construct their identities in the context of higher education, I develop an ecology model of coloured students’ identity development and present the data to determine what factors and opportunities, provided by microsystems, mesosystem, exosystems and macrosystem of identity development, are significant and how they influence coloured students’ identities

production, development and negotiation in and out of the university environments. The dissertation analysis on coloured identities builds on nine months of ethnographic fieldwork in the Western Cape, South Africa, including limited participant observation and semi-structured interviews with the undergraduate and graduate coloured students of the University of the Western Cape and University of Stellenbosch, the Western Cape, South Africa.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT: COLOURED IDENTITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 METHODS BREDIE .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.3 WHY DID THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE AND UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH MATTER AS THE RESEARCH SITES? .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.4 LIMITATIONS.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: RE/CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF COLOURED IDENTITIES IN PRE- AND POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2.1 REVIEW OF CONCEPTS .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Identity .....	18
Race and Ethnicity .....	19
Hybridity and Hybrid Identity .....	21
National Identity in South Africa .....	24
<b>2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: RE/CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF COLOURED IDENTITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA.....</b>	<b>26</b>
2.2.1 Racialization of coloured identities (19 <sup>th</sup> cent.-1994) .....	27
2.2.2 Ethnicization of coloured identities (post-1994) .....	31
2.2.3 Re-conceptualization of coloured identities in post-apartheid South Africa (2000s) .....	35
<b>2.3 DE/RE-CONSTRUCTIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS OF YOUTH IDENTITIES IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: ‘COCONUT’, ‘NOT A PROPER COLOURED’, ‘PORTUGUESE’, ‘KHOISAN’, ‘SELF-PROCLAIMED COLOURED’, ETC. – A MULTITUDE OF COLOURED IDENTITIES DISCOURSES AMONG COLOURED UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>3.1 PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>46</b>
The University of the Western Cape .....	47
The University of Stellenbosch.....	51
<b>3.2 WHY DID UNIVERSITIES MATTER AS IDENTITY SITES AND/OR SPACES FOR THE COLOURED STUDENTS AND THEIR IDENTITIES? .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>3.3 DISCOURSES ON COLOURED IDENTITIES AMONG COLOURED STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH.....</b>	<b>59</b>

3.3.1 DISCOURSE I: “Eating Chicken for Sunday Lunch”: Coloured Identity = Ethnic/Hybrid Cultural Identity.....	60
3.3.2 DISCOURSE II: “Not Tainted by the Past”: Rejection of Coloured Identity and Adoption of South African National Identity.....	70
SUMMARY.....	76
CHAPTER 4: THE ECOLOGY MODEL OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND COLOURED IDENTITIES: COLOURED IDENTITIES’ DE/RE-CONSTRUCTIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS AMONG UNIVERSITY COLOURED STUDENTS .....	78
4.1 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO MULTIRACIAL/MIXED-RACE DEVELOPMENT.....	79
4.2 THE ECOLOGY MODEL OF STUDENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT.....	82
4.3 THE ECOLOGY MODEL OF COLOURED STUDENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT.....	85
4.3.1 Microsystem.....	86
Friendship Groups .....	86
Involvement in Campus Activities/Student Activism .....	91
Family.....	98
Academic Work.....	102
4.3.2 Mesosystem of Student Activism .....	105
4.3.3 Exosystem .....	110
Home Communities.....	111
Language.....	114
Religion .....	118
4.3.4 Macrosystem of Public Discourses on Coloured Identities and Communities in Post-Apartheid South Africa .....	119
SUMMARY.....	126
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	128
5.1 DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS.....	128
5.2 FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS.....	131
APPENDIX.....	133
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	135

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Model of interpretive analysis of data (Hatch, 2002, p. 181) .....	12
Table 2: Summary of participants .....	55



## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1. The entrance to the University of the Western Cape (2010). .....	47
Figure 2. The Red Square of the University of Stellenbosch (2011). .....	51
Figure 3. The ecology of college student development (Renn, 1998, 2004). Used with the permission of the author. ....	84
Figure 4. The ecology of coloured university students' identity development. ....	85

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT: COLOURED IDENTITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Apartheid South Africa, with its rigid hierarchical racial separation, has garnered a lot of interest from scholars in a number of disciplines. Regardless the prevalence of the current discourse on South Africa as a democratic, non-racialized and multi-cultural state, vestiges of the apartheid legacy of racial separation still persist within the public and private spheres (Alexander, 1995; Barber, 1994; Duncan, 2003; MacDonald, 2006; Posel, 2001a, 2001b).

South African history evolves around the political, economical, social and educational oppression, and racialized classification that perpetuated an ideology of racial segregation and apartheid. The racialized practices of apartheid implemented by the National Party from 1948 to 1994 were built on the foundations of social engineering and “state-sanctioned racial ideology and legislation” (Seekings, 2008, p. 2). Apartheid in South Africa was a very specific legal structure of institutionalized racism that, first and foremost, legitimated economic, social and political disparity and inequality according to racial categories, and systematized the white exploitation of those classified as African, Indian, and coloured. The apartheid ideology asserted the existence of racial groups, attributed specific qualities, abilities and behavior to individuals within their assigned racialized groups, and introduced a legalized practice of racism, racial discrimination and exploitation.

The apartheid racialization process started with the implementation of the Population Registration Act of 1950 by the National Party, according to which each person was categorized as White (also European), Coloured, Native (also African and Bantu), or Asian (also Indian). The subsequent Group Areas Act (1950) and the Natives Resettlement Act (1954) made possible racial segregation of residential areas that also legalized the forced removals of African, coloured, and Indian population to residential areas designated by their racial categories. The

Reservation Amenities Act of 1953 instituted racial segregation of public facilities. The Immorality Act of 1950 prohibited racially mixed marriages between whites and other South Africans (Frueh, 2003, p. 41). In 1951 the National Party established the Eiselen Commission on native education to implement the doctrine of apartheid in the educational system. The essential rationale for educational segregation were the concepts of “inherent racial qualities” and “distinctive characteristics and aptitudes” (Hlatshwayo, 2000, p. 54). In 1959, the National Party passed the Extension of University Education Act that supported the organization of segregated higher education institutions for the Africans, Whites, Coloureds, and Indians/Asians. A subsequent second Act transferred the power over the education institutions from the Department of Education to the Department of Bantu Education that was responsible for creation and development of the ethnic educational system that was based on assumptions of intellectual and academic inferiority of the native population (Abdi, 2002, pp. 47-55). This historically imposed economic, political, social and educational inequality and racialized social order problematized the post-apartheid reconstruction and re-building of South Africa as a democratic and non-racialized society.

The metaphor of the Rainbow Nation in relation to South Africa, first used by the Archbishop Desmond Tutu during the march of church leaders to Parliament in Cape Town in 1989, is a reattributed biblical symbol of peace to represent the unity of the new South African nation (Bornman, 2006). The emergence of the discourse of the Rainbow Nation primarily targeted the anti-racialism goal and united nation-building as the alternative to the apartheid racialized segregation and separation. The non-racialism is particularly important in the case of South Africa since it strived to eradicate the racial categorization imposed by the National Party and insisted on the colour-blind politics. However coloureblindness and romanticized notion of Rainbowism was complicated by the growing ethnic consciousness of the minority groups. The existence of the communities with self-conscious cultural identities and a variation of historical and ancestral experiences, cultural values, religious beliefs and languages problematize an achievement of social, cultural, economic and political equality in the country.

The coloured group, constituting approximately 9 per cent of the total population of South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2009), is comprised of numerous heterogeneous communities differing in religious beliefs, ancestries, cultures, and languages. The members of coloured communities are representatives of the unique group of multiracial or ‘mixed-race’

people: the descendants of African indigenous groups (particularly Khoi and San), other population of African and Asian descent (the Javanese, Malay, and Indian slaves), and the European settlers mainly of Dutch and British origins (Adhikari, 2006; Erasmus, 2001; Pickel, 1997). These particular heterogeneous ancestries of coloured group members influenced the dominating discourse on coloured identities as a product of colonial and apartheid social engineering. Particularly, the 'mixed-race' background of coloured people and historically constructed in-between or intermediate status served as a catalyst for a range of negative and derogatory connotations for coloured identities (Erasmus, 2001; Wicomb, 1998, 2000). The post-apartheid coloured identities still experience a continuous questioning of its legitimacy due to the ambiguous nature, history, and position in the new South Africa. However, the current scholarly work on coloured identities urge to view them as being constantly re-imagined and re-conceptualized by coloured people themselves in their attempts to make meaning of their experiences in post-apartheid South Africa. The previous literature on coloured identities shares the stance that coloured identities were artificially constructed and imposed by the dominant group onto the heterogeneous group of 'mixed-race' people of South Africa. Coloured identities were represented as fixed, essentialist, and lack of fluidity and transformation through the forced racialized classification under the apartheid regime (Carstens, 1966; Dickie-Clark, 1966; Goldin, 1987; Lewis, 1987; Stonequist, 1961). However, coloured identities, "irretrievably heterogeneous" (Spivak, 1988a, 1988b) as any colonized subaltern identity, are constantly re-imagined and re-created by coloured communities themselves.

Drawing on the constructivist approach to the concept of identity (Bhabha, 1991; Calhoun, 1994; Hall, 1990, 1991), coloured identities are re-conceptualized and given meaning in particular historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts in processes that involve coloured people as active subjects/agents, challenging the notion that coloured identities are merely imposed as a racial classification by apartheid politics and passively accepted by coloured people (Erasmus and Pieterse, 2000; Erasmus, 2001). Ultimately, coloured group members, who had little cultural autonomy and controlled construction of self-representation in the colonial and apartheid contexts, currently produce and present particular identities in the context of their relationships to both whites and Africans, as well as to other coloured communities, simultaneously contesting and opposing the colonial and apartheid enforced racialized perception on coloured identities.

These issues and debates constitute the point of departure for my own research: a 9-month long investigation of post-apartheid re-conceptualizations of coloured identities as heterogeneous and constructed by complex networks of certain discourses and practices within specific contexts. I specifically examine how the post-apartheid coloured youth draw on their everyday experiences to culturally and politically situate and negotiate their identities within diverse university settings. Similarly to other minority and marginalized youth, coloured students produce various discourses and practices as the medium of counter-hegemonic formation and negotiation of their minoritized and marginalized identities. In this sense, coloured students implement the discourses and practices as an instrumental agency to create resistance and challenge the dominant discourses of their marginalized and minoritized identities, simultaneously producing alternate characteristics for the same identities. Thus constructions and negotiation of coloured students' identities in the post-apartheid South Africa represent both the efforts to subvert coloured communities' marginalized status and manifest a group mobilization and cooperation in resistance with the dominant regulations over their identities.

Additionally, adopting and integrating an ecology model of identity development by Renn (1998, 2004), who explored how multiracial students construct their identities in the context of higher education, I develop an ecology model of coloured students identity development. I also present the data to determine what factors and opportunities, provided by microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem of identity development, are significant and how they influence coloured students' identity productions, development and negotiations in and out of university environments.

My research elaborates on the literatures of such concepts as race, ethnicity, hybrid or creolized identity, the post-apartheid theorizations of South African coloured identities, youth identity discourses, and student identity development. Through these frameworks, I explore the produced discourses and articulations of coloured youth identities through their life and university experiences, meanings attributed to these experiences, and ways of responding to and interpreting them. My research is guided by the following major questions:

**1) How do the coloured students understand and conceptualize coloured identities, coloured culture and colouredness in racially and ethnically inclusive post-apartheid South Africa?**

**2) What discourses and practices do coloured students produce and employ to construct, develop and negotiate their identities within and outside university settings?**

**1.2 METHODS BREDIE<sup>1</sup>**

This analysis of the coloured identities builds on the 9-month ethnographic fieldwork, including the participant observation, semi-structured individual interviews, and limited archival research in the libraries of the University of the Western Cape and University of Stellenbosch. These methods were intended to provide a snapshot of local and regional discourses surrounding coloured identities/colouredness, its productive articulations, and expressing and negotiating practices.

Through 9-months of fieldwork in the University of the Western Cape and University of Stellenbosch campuses, I examined how coloured students construct, contest and negotiate their identities within various social contexts. I selected the universities as the research sites, believing that universities, as promoters of diversity and multiculturalism in the societal context, perform a critical role in assisting students with identity development and expression (Boyer, 1987; Chickering, 1969). Here, the emphasis is made on the construction and subsequent negotiation of identity, following Hetherington (1998) who argues that “identity <...> is fundamentally about issues of belonging, expression, identification and communication with others” (p. 62). As such, the particular focus on university students and university setting serves as a means of providing a holistic picture of formation and negotiation of coloured identities in a broader context of the post-apartheid South Africa. In addition, the universities selected for the field research are located in the Western Cape, which is a historical hub for coloured communities in South Africa. I believe that the close proximity to the historically important for coloured communities locations in the Western Cape offered a rich cultural and historical background to the study.

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<sup>1</sup> Bredie is an Afrikaans word for ‘stew’. Bredie is referred by many as the staple food of the coloured communities. In this context, bredie describes the mixed method approach that I have utilized during the data collection.



**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.** Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define qualitative research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world” (p. 3). The key points in this definition determine the primary tasks of a researcher, such as to make the world visible and transform the world. The establishment and development of qualitative research were essentially important and vital as it was intended to positively transform situations and conditions of those under study. As such any research is to create an inquiry that transforms research itself to benefit all, despite their differences, including race, class, ethnicity or gender.

The research is expected to construct and expand into more complex and inclusive, for instance, development of studies of specific groups with more selfless involvement, construction of various approaches and research methods to understand postcolonial situations in developing countries, influence of globalization, postmodern studies, and so forth. As a result of the growing complexity of qualitative research, the role of a researcher has been intensively discussed. Ultimately, the role of a researcher has been identified as possessing multiple attributes and characteristics, including history, gender, class, race, social attributes, etc., along with the recognition of research and its process impact onto identity of researcher.

In this sense, qualitative research becomes the arena of research experience influencing both research participants and a researcher. A number of issues and tensions that evolve around qualitative research are subjectivity versus objectivity issues, when researcher’s exaggerated reflexivity can result in interpretation of his/her own behavior rather than of his/her research participants, which questions validity and reliability of study. Next, qualitative researchers express concerns about vocalizing the voices of research participants especially of those from minority and marginalized backgrounds and status that have been and are still silenced and hegemonized. The search for new approaches of expression and interpretation of marginal voices in qualitative research enables researchers to gain more profound understanding of their own experiences, lives, contexts, and situations, which may create a certain transcendent emancipation from traditional research requirements and create a new beneficial research theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

As such current qualitative researchers implement particular techniques, for instance, personal narratives, more open-ended and conversational interviews, humanization of an interviewer, provision of an opportunity for community members to revise the final version

before publication, serious attention to criticism expressed by community leaders and members. In addition, a heavy involvement with community work in general can aid to gain better understanding of what they struggle for and what changes they would like to create, simultaneously participating in empowering of the community not as the subject but as the object of the researches (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005). In this sense a qualitative research and the role of a researcher become more embedded into the community under study, asserting the humanization of research subjects, and resulting in purposeful, collaborative, personal, and critical scholarship that primarily serves to benefit the research subjects rather than only gain academic appraisal for the researcher.

Since this study is concerned with cultural minority and marginalized group members, an understanding of a qualitative research task as making the world visible and transforming it with a research process and results is of particular importance. Moreover it is necessary to select and employ a specific kind of qualitative research that will not only facilitate inquiry and fulfill primary goals of a research and researcher, but also to benefit research participants and their causes. For this particular reason, I employed ethnographic methods to collect research data, as according to Cerwonka and Malkki (2007) “ethnography provides a process of data collection and an epistemology that allows one better understand human agency in the context of social and institutional discourses and that can attend to the influence of history” (p. 14).

Ethnography is “a particular kind of qualitative research that seeks to describe culture or parts of culture from the point of view of cultural insiders” (Hatch, 2002, p. 21). Whilst this generic definition of ethnography more or less provides an ultimate goal of ethnographic study, it is necessary to underscore its primary feature as a process rather than a mere outcome. According to Geertz (1973), the importance is in “understanding what ethnography is, or more exactly what doing ethnography is, that a start can be made toward grasping what anthropological analysis amounts to as a form of knowledge” (p. 5). This suggests that doing ethnography is not only to fulfill tasks involved, such as interviewing, observing, mapping fields, etc., rather it is a process in itself that allows more freedom and improvisation. As Cerwonka and Malkki (2007) put it, “as improvisation, ethnographic research demands forms of flexible intellectual openness and principled efforts to understand, knowledge and competence, and also forms of creativity and imagination” (p. 181).

In this sense ethnographic methodology may serve as particularly productive and efficient in relation to this study of a unique intersection between identity and space, and more importantly expressive identities of marginal and minority group members and their negotiation. The suggested manifestation of openness, efforts to understand, and improvisation according to commonplace social contexts, situations and processes during the fieldwork, can not only produce rich knowledge but also in depth theoretical insights. Ultimately ethnographic fieldwork for this particular study involved participant observation and research informants/participants interviewing from a critical ethnographer perspective, i.e. to contribute principally to communities' development. Below I provide an outline of the main strategies of data collection employed throughout the field research.

**PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION.** An observation is an important systematic technique in an ethnographic research; its goal is to “understand culture, setting, or social phenomenon being studied from the perspectives of participants” (Hatch, 2002, p. 72). The participant observation is particularly attractive for this sort of study, as an ethnographic researcher needs to go beyond a mere status of a non-involved observer and carry out observations from the perspective of an insider (Angrosimo, 2007). Another important factor of selecting a participant observer stance is that an ethnographic research is to be done in specifically and deliberately chosen sites that enable the researcher to understand phenomenon or concept in deep and rich ways. In this case, selection of observation sites depends on the knowledge obtained from research informants or participants and their perspectives on this or that site's importance as social space. Here, a researcher as a participant observer is able to obtain information only if he/she adopts an insider perspective.

Unfortunately, for this particular study I had limited access to the sites that could have become the spaces of identity representation and negotiation. The primary explanation for this can be the fact that as it turned out the coloured students did not actually have a specific place and/or area/s on campus where they spent a lot of time together. Nor did they have an organization or group that was representative of their lives and interests. In addition, the majority of the students were from various parts of the Cape Town area and they did not see any purpose in staying on campus till late unless they were participating in some campus activities. Having realized this unfortunate situation, eventually I made a decision not to rely heavily on the

participant observation as a main technique for data collection. I did, however, attend meetings, activities and/or events organized for all the students within the university settings, but I utilized the gained information only to construct and understand the background for student life on campus.

**INTERVIEWS.** An interview was another source of data for this study. To achieve a variation of responses and perspectives, I employed the blend of informal and formal interviews to collect the research data. The informal interviews are unstructured conversations, hence they are not considered to be of particular importance for data collection, though they are the best strategy to receive the immediate response or reaction from the research participants. In addition they are a great asset for relationship development between a researcher and research informant/participant.

The formal interviews, in this research case, were semi-structured and in-depth, though the interviews' themes and questions remained flexible, and I transformed them in relation to what a research informant/participant found important to talk about or discuss. I encouraged the research informants/participants to talk freely on such topics as the history of coloured communities in South Africa, coloured identities/colouredness, the importance of identities in the context of coloured communities, strategies of identity representation and negotiation, or how they understand and interpret coloured identity in the context of their everyday life experiences before and during attending the university. I was also curious about their thoughts on how they imagine the coloured culture and what coloured culture entails.

As the primary data sources were the semi-structured interviews, it was important to develop appropriate questions based on the research purposes and objectives, conceptual framework and knowledge provided by research informants/participants (Hatch, 2002). The research was to examine the practices and strategies employed by the undergraduate and graduate student who self-identified as coloured to construct and negotiate their identities. I constructed three sets of open-ended questions in relation to the primary research questions. Though the interview questions had been constructed beforehand, their essential characteristics were flexibility and open-endedness, as I preferred improvising, adding or dropping some questions before or during an actual interview. As such, the interview questions served as the generators of more in depth dialogue and conversation between me, as the researcher, and a research informant/participant.

The first set of the interview questions consisted of five questions centered on receiving information on an informant's/participant's background in terms of his/her identity and, how the perspective of identity may have changed within the university setting presumably influenced by the attitudes of others around him/her.

The second set of questions focused on investigating of university experiences and how identity is constructed and negotiated within certain social and cultural contexts. This set of interview questions was of particular importance since it concentrated on the primary objective of the research: to explore re-construction and re-articulation of coloured identities as a symbolic counter-hegemonic resistance to the dominant discourses on coloured identities and communities.

The third set of the interview questions guided an understanding of the concepts of nation and national identity in the context of South Africa and how coloured identities might fit within the general discourse of the new South African nation as a multi-racial and multi-ethnic state. They were intended to seek for the examples of how coloured communities and their members see their complex position and status, and situate themselves within the post-apartheid South African society, considering the historical, cultural and political background of coloured group in the colonial and apartheid South Africa.

**RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS.** In the initial stages of the fieldwork, I did not expect to have a whole group of research informants/participants available for regular and routine conversations. I kept track of social networks among the students and in later stages I recruited the potential research informants/participants through word-of-mouth and snowball sampling in both universities and e-mail advertisement with the help of the representatives of the International Students Office of the University of the Western Cape and the Students Representative Council of the University of Stellenbosch. As for research informants/participants, I attempted to make contact with a diverse cross-section of subjects with respect to class, gender, religion, and age to achieve the representativeness of coloured group and coloured communities, at least in the context of the educational institutions. I recorded the interviews digitally, transferred them to a laptop for storage, and transcribed them for analysis in the later phases of the research.

Ultimately, I conducted twenty-three semi-structured interviews with the undergraduate and graduate coloured students in both the University of the Western Cape and University of

Stellenbosch campuses (however I used only nineteen out of twenty-three interviews as the sources of data for the further analysis, i.e. the interviews that I found to be more resourceful in terms of the research goals and inquiry). The following characteristics guided the respondents' selection: 1) be an undergraduate or graduate student of 18 years of age or older at a designated educational institution, and 2) self-identify as coloured. In addition, throughout the fieldwork I had numerous extensive theme-related chats with the students that were not recorded due to the informal nature of conversations. I also had informal conversations with a great number of the older representatives of the coloured communities in Cape Town (local activists, educators, parents, university alumni among others), whom I had an opportunity to often meet through friends and acquaintances at informal gatherings. However I opted to conduct and record only three of these formal interviews since my primary focus was on the students, and I made a decision not to deviate from the direction that I had taken in the beginning of my research. Still I found the interviews with the older members of the coloured communities to be valuable in understanding the historical background of the topic, since I dealt with such concepts as race, ethnicity, identity and apartheid in South Africa.

**DATA INTERPRETATION.** Upon returning to my institution from the fieldwork in the Western Cape, South Africa, I have completed the verbatim transcriptions of the interviews and started the data sorting, using the qualitative research data analysis software MaxQDA. I further created the codes that involve specific nodes on coloured identities and colouredness, means and strategies of identity formation and negotiation processes, university environment and its contribution to identity conceptualizations, coloured student activism and politics on and outside campus.

Further data examination was an interpretive process with identification and interpretation of specific themes related to the research questions. For Hatch (2002), interpretation is “about giving meaning to data. <...> making sense of social situations by generating explanations for what is going on within them. <...> making inferences, developing insights, attaching significance, refining understandings, drawing conclusions, and extrapolating lessons” (p. 180). As such a researcher needs to go through an intense creative process of knowledge production, taking into account both his/her own perspective and of those being studied/interviewed. Hence a produced knowledge is of descriptive and analytic nature,

grounded in data, conceptually and contextually determined from a pool of data variation. Additionally Hatch (2002) provides a generic model of interpretive analysis of data that will be employed for this particular study during the last stage of the work with the data (Figure 1).

Following the model, I systematically read the collected data, contextually grounded it within the research conceptual framework, and recorded my impressions and interpretations in detailed memos. The interpretation ought to be linked to research purposes (Wolcott, 1994), hence I constructed memos that were helpful for investigation and were further utilized as resources for the research summary and answering the research questions.

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the data for a sense of a whole;</li> <li>2. Review impressions previously recorded in research journals and/or bracketed in protocols and record these in memos;</li> <li>3. Read the data, identify impressions, and record impressions in memos;</li> <li>4. Study memos for salient interpretations;</li> <li>5. Reread data, coding places where interpretations are supported or challenged;</li> <li>6. Write a draft summary;</li> <li>7. Review interpretations with participants;</li> <li>8. Write a revised summary and identify excerpts that support interpretations;</li> </ol> |
|---|

**Table 1: Model of interpretive analysis of data (Hatch, 2002, p. 181)**

### **1.3 WHY DID THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE AND UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH MATTER AS THE RESEARCH SITES?**

I selected the University of the Western Cape and University of Stellenbosch as the primary research sites with a specific purpose to explore the different claims on coloured identities/colouredness in relation to these universities as they are representative of the different class and cultural aspirations and issues: the former is a public research and historically coloured university located in the Bellville suburb of Cape Town, South Africa (15,226 graduate and undergraduate students, the majority of students of which are from indigenous population (Black South Africans); coloured students are the second minority after white South Africans; approximately 2,500 students); the latter is a public research and historically Afrikaans university located in the town of Stellenbosch, South Africa (26,243 students; majority of students are white South Africans; coloured students are the second majority, approximately

4,000 students comparing to the minority population of Black South African students of approximately 3,800).

## **1.4 LIMITATIONS**

The primary limitations are the small number of study participants/respondents, along with my own struggle to be a fully participating observer, due in large part to my own identity as a foreign individual. This raises the possibility that respondents may also have been some reluctant to fully candid when talking about such still sensitive topics for the coloured communities as identity and identity politics in post-apartheid South Africa.

For research informants/participants, I attempted to make contact with a diverse cross-section of potential interviewees with respect to class, gender, religion, and age to achieve broad representation of coloured groups and coloured communities in the context of the higher educational institutions I visited. Ultimately, I conducted only twenty-three (23) semi-structured interviews with undergraduate and graduate coloured students in both the University of the Western Cape and the University of Stellenbosch campuses but opted to use the data from nineteen (19) of them, primarily those who were more resourceful in terms of research inquiry.

However, throughout the fieldwork, I had numerous extensive theme-related chats with the students that were not recorded due to the informal and friendlier nature of conversations; I also conducted informal conversations with a great number of the older representatives of coloured communities in Cape Town (e.g., local activists, educators, parents, university alumni among others), to whom I was introduced by friends and acquaintances at informal gatherings. I digitally recorded only three formal interviews since my primary focus was on the students and I made a decision not to deviate from the direction that I had taken in the beginning of my research.

More interviews with the older members of the coloured communities would have been very valuable in understanding the historical background of the topic, because I was dealing with such important concepts as race, ethnicity, identity and apartheid in South African. Also I believe that interviews with a significant number of the older representatives of coloured communities would have provided more data to conduct a comparison between apartheid and post-apartheid



generations' opinions on such specific themes as: life-history perspectives on coloured identities' development, processual transformations of coloured identities and of their interpretations, possible differing experiences that result in accepting or denying coloured classification, differing views on the notions of South African national identity and South African nation. This will have to wait until I have an opportunity to do a follow-up study.

Additionally, I had limited access to the sites that could become the spaces of identity representation and negotiation. The primary explanation for this can be that the coloured students did not actually have a specific place and/or area/s on campus where they spent a lot of time together. They also did not have an organization or group that represented of their lives and interests. In addition, because the majority of the students were from various parts of the Cape Town area and they did not see any purpose in staying on campus till late unless they were participating in some campus activities. However, whenever possible I attended meetings, activities and/or events organized for all the students within the university settings, and I utilized the information gained to understand the student life on campus.

Despite the fact that I had relevant prior academic experiences (Master's degree in Africana Studies from the SUNY at Albany as well as involvement in many intellectual discussions on issues related to Africana communities and the African Diaspora), I considered my own personal background of being an international student and a foreign individual as a disadvantage. Since there might have been constructed interferences with my own difference and "otherness" in terms of ethnicity - being foreign - and being another researcher arriving to conduct a study, I attempted to accept the stance of an ethnographer with a critical perspective. I approached a focus group, first of all, with the objectives of benefiting the participants/respondents rather than me as a researcher. During the formal interviews and informal discussions/conversations, I continued emphasizing the importance of the group and group members' identities, aspirations and agenda through conscious and focused involvement in their social, political and cultural affairs.

## 1.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

In this dissertation, I attempt to explore how the post-apartheid coloured youth interpret their identities, and what specific discourses and strategies they produce and utilize in order to articulate and negotiate those identities. In addition, adopting the ecology of college student development model by Renn (1998, 2004), I examine the ecology of coloured student identity development that determines what factors within microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem influence the students' identity development.

The second chapter starts with a detailed review of the important concepts that are referred to throughout the dissertation, including identity, race, ethnicity, hybridity/hybrid identity, and nation-building and national identity in the South African context. Further, I discuss the historical background of the coloured communities in South Africa as well as offer an observation of several dominant theoretical conceptualizations of coloured identities, including a theorization of coloured identities within racialized terms (19<sup>th</sup> century - 1994), a perspective on coloured identity as an ethnic/within cultural lines identity (post-1994), and the recently emerged re-conceptualizations of coloured identities as hybrid or creole identities (2000s). Additionally, the second chapter discusses the scholarly work on the constructions and negotiations of the post-apartheid generation's identities (children born in the 1990s who did not fully experience the hardships of the rigid racialized apartheid system the same way and/or level as their parents and/or grandparents). The majority of this scholarly work presents a variety of approaches onto an understanding and exploring of South African youth culture and identity, and offers the detailed analyses of identity constructions, contextually situating them within certain institutional settings such as secondary or higher education.

If the second chapter mainly focuses on the highlights of the theoretical background of the dissertation, the third chapter offers an overview of the study's respondents, explaining in detail for what reasons these participants/coloured students and universities (the University of the Western Cape and University of Stellenbosch) were resourceful and important for this particular research enquiry. Furthermore I discuss two main discourses on coloured identities that emerged during the interviews with the coloured students: coloured identities as ethnic/hybrid cultural identities and students' rejection of the category of coloured identities and adoption of a South African national identity.

In the fourth chapter, I draw on the ecology model of identity development, created and utilized by Renn (1998, 2004) in her work that explores how multiracial students construct their identities in the context of higher education. Additionally I present data to determine what factors and opportunities, provided by microsystems of friendship groups, involvement in campus activities/student activism, family and academic work, mesosystem of student activism, exosystems of home communities, language and religion, and macrosystem of public discourses on coloured identities, communities and cultures in post-apartheid South Africa are significant and how they influence coloured students' identity productions, development and negotiations in and out of university environments.

The fifth chapter concludes the dissertation work and present the discussion of the key findings as well as future research suggestions.

## **CHAPTER 2: RE/CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF COLOURED IDENTITIES IN PRE- AND POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

This dissertation research project seeks to examine the production of multiple discourses by the post-apartheid coloured youth to re-construct and negotiate their identities moving through various social contexts of their everyday experiences within diverse university settings. Similarly to other minority and marginalized youth, coloured students produce various discourses and practices as the medium of counter-hegemonic formation and negotiation of their minoritized and marginalized identities. Furthermore, the coloured students implement the produced discourses and practices as an instrumental agency to create resistance and challenge the dominant discourses on their marginalized and minoritized identities, simultaneously constructing alternate characteristics for the same identities. As such, constructions and negotiations of coloured students' identities in the post-apartheid South Africa represent both the efforts to subvert a marginalized status of coloured communities and manifest a group mobilization and cooperation in resistance with the dominant regulations over their identities.

In order to conceptually frame and analyze the distinctive identity discourses and practices constructed by the coloured students, I turn to the post-modernist theorizations of such concepts as identity, race, ethnicity, and hybridity, adopt the current conceptualization of coloured identities as heterogeneous, non-static, fluid, and highly contextual, and utilize the ecology model of identity construction and development. This literature review provides a detailed examination of the concepts of identity, race, ethnicity, hybridity/hybrid identity, national identity in the South African context, and the historical background to the development of coloured identities in the South African context.

## **2.1 REVIEW OF CONCEPTS**

The focus on the concept of identity as well as race, ethnicity and national identity are of particular importance to this research project, as these are the key concepts for understanding and demonstrating the historical background of coloured communities, their resistance to the colonial regulations and apartheid regime, and political and cultural mobilization in the apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. The discussion of the concept of hybridity/hybrid identity is equally important as the current scholarly studies on coloured identities propose abandoning the previous essential and absolutist perspectives on coloured identities and focusing on their hybridized or creolized nature, creating an ultimate organization of a specific anti-racist and anti-ethnic approach that undermines the hegemonic and dominant perspective on socially constructed forms in the post-colonial states, particularly in the post-apartheid South Africa.

### **Identity**

The concept of identity has been a hotly contested topic in a number of disciplines and scholarly discourses, having been transformed throughout the development of social theory. The understanding of identity as an essential and fundamental phenomenon was predominant in the primordial social theory (Chatman, Eccles, & Malanchuk, 2005). In this view, identity was approached as a natural identity, already existing within determined social, cultural, and historical dimensions, and fixed within certain created boundaries. The boundaries are organized within the distinct lines of language, culture, religion, and customs, when one is believed to be born into certain determined identity both personal and group.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a view on identity challenging the primordialist beliefs was developed, abandoning the notion of inevitability and fixedness of identity. The constructivist approach argues that identity is not static, non fixed, but dynamic and fluctuating, constructed, influenced, and developed depending and responding to changes within social environments and processes, ultimately becoming a product of society and of an individual, i.e. a social construct (Calhoun, 1994; Tajfel, 1982). Moreover it is a sociological process that frames individual's belonging to a social group along with his/her self-concept. Traditionally the personal or individual and social identities are differently distinguished, the former refers to individual

identity or representation of self, whilst the latter is of collective reference, i.e. social identity is based on shared characteristics and attributes with others (Chatman, Eccles, & Malanchuk, 2005). Social identity, as derived from membership and identification with social groups, is important for understanding personal or individual identity.

The dynamic nature of identity also suggests that there are many diverse and complex contextually derived means, strategies and resources of identity constructions. Among those means and resources, there should be mentioned: “individuals’ likes and dislikes, attitudes, beliefs, values, ideologies and worldviews, skills and competencies, as well as their social roles and descriptive attributes such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and religion” (Chatman, Eccles, & Malanchuk, 2005, p. 117). These resources are utilized along with construction of identity for the development of agency, a concept particularly important for identity politics and group mobilization. According to Nagel (1994), identity is a result of a dialectical process between internal and external opinions and processes, i.e. individual’s self-identification and outsiders’ identification of an individual (p. 154). In this sense, identity is constructed by individual or group agency through negotiations with outside agents and organizations. Furthermore since outside agents and organizations construct and impose certain boundaries, for instance racial or ethnic categorization or classification, especially in the context of nation and state, an individual or group has limited resources and the extent to which identity can be freely constructed is quite narrow. The suggested deficiency of the resources for identity constructions as a consequence of the institutionalized social, cultural and political boundaries, is still particularly relevant to the post-apartheid South Africa, since the categories, imposed during colonialism and apartheid still serve as markers of one’s group belonging and distinguish one’s identification with group or self-identification.

### **Race and Ethnicity**

In the context of South Africa, the categories of race and ethnicity are of particular importance for understanding identity. The category of race is an essentially primordial identity, based on phenotypical and biological characteristics; the apartheid propaganda of racial division still persists in the South African society. The category of ethnicity is closely related to the category

of race and as well still remains as meaningful and important within identity politics and claims. I will further discuss the conceptualizations of race and ethnicity in a more detailed manner.

Most of the recent scholarship has targeted the conceptualization of race and ethnicity as an important locus for analysis of either individual/personal or collective identity. Especially it is important when one deals with the formerly racialized states or societies, which in most cases still linger in their racialized societal system as a strategy for the growing heterogeneity, multiculturalism and globalization (Goldberg, 1994; Goldberg & Solomos, 2002; Sanders, 2002). The concepts of race and ethnicity are currently theorized as not natural, ambiguous and non-fixed vis-à-vis the previous assumptions as based on particular biological, natural and cultural essences, characterized by fixity and uncontestedness. Being socially manufactured, produced and articulated, race and ethnicity serve as the differential boundaries creating and maintaining phenomena. The differential boundaries are significant in relation to formation, transformation and representation of racial or ethnic group, which in its turn develops a sense of belonging and experiential sharing as the basis of individual identity.

However it is important to remember that both concepts of race and ethnicity are socially and politically constructed. Moreover they are discursively produced and expressed, and change in relation to certain social and political conditions, contexts, and struggles (Gilroy, 1987, 1990; Goldberg, 1993b, 2002, 2006). Particularly the concept of race is to be considered as fabricated and manipulated within social and political discourses. Thus racial identity is not an essentialized category rather the concept is defined as a set of conditions that are shaped within certain social, economic and political contexts. As such race as well as ethnicity can be utilized not only as the tools of domination and power of dominant group/s over subordinate group/s, but also they can be used as foundation for resistance, reclaiming and furthering of one's social identities.

Goldberg (1993a) forwards a new look at the concepts of race and ethnicity, suggesting the new concept of *ethnorace* (p. 74). According to Goldberg (1993a) race is fluid, transforming and a historically specific concept while ethnicity is of cultural identification and distinction; however race is in itself ethnocentric, as it can be one of the criteria for determining ethnicity. Additionally as ethnicity is constructed within boundaries, race may be viewed in terms of boundary formation; this also implies that ethnicity as well as race may serve as a justification for domination and exclusion. Although suggesting the utilization of the concept of *ethnorace*, based on similar characteristics and functional features of ethnicity and race, Goldberg (1993a)

does not insist on merging these two concepts, rather he considers ethnicity to be “one possible contemporary meaning for race” (p. 78).

As Vasquez and Wetzel (2009) show in their recent study, the invention of racial identity among Mexican Americans and Native Americans to recreate the symbolic boundaries represents the act of opposition and resistance against marginalization, discrimination and institutional racism. The scholars argue that members of marginalized groups re-imagine and rearticulate the categories assigned to them by the American mainstream discourse, and “re-inscribe this language with different values” (Vasquez & Wetzel, 2009, p. 1558). The re-inscribed concept, then, facilitates to create racial or ethnic boundaries in a positive sense, for instance, cultural and religious beliefs, community/group values and other practices are emphasized to authenticize knowledge and legitimize their claim to that authenticity. The claimed authenticity here is a specific strategy to produce symbolic boundaries. Moreover the racial or ethnic identity work in this sense is a re-articulation of historically marginalized into positively distinguished identity within racialized hierarchical system (Swidler, 1986).

Hence race and ethnicity are social constructs that are not merely imposed but can be actively implemented as tools against oppression and marginalization. This particular concept of strategic or ‘tactical’ essentialism (Hangen, 2005; Spivak, 1988a; Warren, 1998) can be interpreted as the assertions of essentialist or absolutist identities, such as race and ethnicity, as intentional strategies of political counter-hegemonic mobilization, rather than a mere acceptance of dominant discourses of identity. This also means that racial and ethnic identities are not singular, fixed, coherent, stable, based on essential characteristics, rather they are always in transformation, fluid, complex and sometimes confusing (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992; Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991; Hall, 1996, 2003). Moreover conflict over identity politics, particularly of those within margins, is to be considered as the emergence of groups’ affirmation and recognition of extremely diverse historical, social and cultural experiences, especially in multicultural states.

### **Hybridity and Hybrid Identity**

Abandoning the nineteenth century discourse on hybridity as a negative trope implying the emphasis on the biological essences of cultural forms, the postmodern and postcolonial hybridity



becomes an important keyword in the studies of ethnicity, culture and identity. The term *hybridity* serves as the antidote to the essentialist and absolutist notions of culture, thus of ethnicity and identity; ultimately organizing a specific anti-racist and anti-ethnic approach that undermines the hegemonic and dominant perspective on socially constructed forms in the post-colonial states.

It is necessary to note that the term hybridity is used in many ways, however initially the notions of hybridization and hybridity were concerned with cultural contents, including language, music, and literature. As such Bakhtin (1981) focuses on linguistic hybridization and defines two forms of hybridity: unconscious or organic and conscious or intentional. For Bakhtin (1981), hybridization is the mixture of two languages; an unconscious or organic hybridization is a part of the historical evolution of all languages, whilst a conscious or intentional hybridization is more of an active and conscious transformation that creates an intentional ‘double consciousness’, collision of two differing worldviews (Young, 1995). According to Werbner (1997) applying an organic or unintentional hybridity onto culture and society, it is evident that within the hybridization process “cultures evolve historically through unreflective borrowings, mimetic appropriations, exchanges and inventions” (p. 5). In this sense the hybridization does not disrupt the continuity of cultural process, on the contrary it is an ordinary practice for cultural meanings. This Bakhtinian perspective on hybridity as organic to every social construct is shared by Stuart Hall (1991) who argues that every ethnic identity is of hybrid nature, and is determined by specific historical formations and contexts.

The conscious or intentional hybrids, however, are more important as dialogical and transformative. In terms of group or identity construction, this means that group or identity is formed and articulated through negotiation of difference, critique of dominance and counter hegemony. As such Bakhtin’s intentional hybrid can be represented through spaces of challenge and resistance of subdominant culture against a dominant cultural power. Bhabha (1991) defines these spaces as the Third spaces, *in-between spaces or interstices*, that initiate strategies of “selfhood, new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act defining the idea of society itself” (p. 2). In his theorization of the concept of hybridity, Bhabha (1991) suggests the importance of hybridity within the space of opening where two original cultural forms merge together and a new hybrid cultural form emerges within the Third space. As

such the third space of expression of hybridity gives rise to “something new and unrecognisable, anew area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (p. 211).

Next, in terms of the concept of identity, Bhabha (1991) and Sakamoto (1996) conceptualize the ‘third space’ as a site of translation and negotiation that produces new identities that more notably undermine the authority of the dominant culture. Bhabha (1991), in particular, emphasizes the transcendent essence of identity within ‘third space’ where one feels comfortable in being between the two worlds, and resists the dominant society’s expectations in terms of skin color, political commitments, or cultural preferences. Therefore the third space is a site of an active individual and communal resistance that provides for expression and negotiation of a new identity and new subjectivity that still exists in a state of deconstructive liminality and “articulates alternative practices and values that are embedded in the often-damaged, -fragmentary, -hampered, or -occluded work of minorities” (Bhabha, 1991, p. 229). Hence, self-representation and identity should be conceptualized through the specific notion of hybridity or the third space that engenders a new and positive presence of cultural forms, practices and identities.

In addition the third space occupies an important place in postcolonial discourse as a site of identity negotiation and resistance to the hegemonic discourse on colonized identities, determining them as fixed and essentialistic (Arber, 2000; Bolatagigi, 2004). In fact the hybrid third space is a space of ambivalence where cultural meaning and representation have no “primordial unity or fixity” (Bhabha, 1991; Rutherford, 1990). Considering identities within the third space then acknowledges the importance of an approach that disrupts the perpetuation of binary oppositions and develops not exclusionary and multifolded patterns of cultural exchange.

Moreover as the Third spaces are the spaces of resistance against cultural hegemony in the post-colonial states, they develop interaction between indigenous and colonial culture, where cultural symbols are hybridized, appropriated, translated, re-historicized and read anew (Bhabha, 1991, p. 37). Simultaneously as hybridity requires negotiation and translation, on the one hand it affirms the productivity of colonial power to assert discrimination and domination onto marginal groups, on the other hand it always allows production of a counter-narrative that is a continuous process of differentiation and exchange where marginal challenges the dominant essentialism and absolutism, as well as creating a positive perspective on its Otherness. Melucci (1997) particularly stresses this feature of hybridity to transcend imposed characteristics as an

opposition to essentialism, racism and nationalism, that in turn celebrates cultural forms as boundedless, fluid and heterogeneous (p. 78).

As it appears from hybridity theorization, this notion is most important in terms of identity politics, particularly within power relations and hegemony. The hybrid spaces (Bhabha's Third spaces) are in/formal spaces for organization and contestation of politically infused identities; these spaces are mostly occupied and employed by marginal groups (diasporas, migrants, exiles, refugees, nomads, minorities and such). For Gilroy (1993) this dimension of hybridity is interpreted as DuBois's notion of 'double consciousness' to determine the diasporic condition in relation to the African diaspora. He denotes the perpetual cultural renewal in Africa, the Caribbean, America and Europe as the result of the "flux of ... mongrel cultural forms" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 3) that started with the slave trade. Moreover Anthias (2001) argues that diasporic hybridity presents an important conceptual challenge to static and essentialist notions of ethnicity, culture, and identity (p. 620). Additionally the notions of hybridized diaspora and hybridized groups/communities are to describe the cultural configurations that involve a political nature of identities and power dimensions of social relations. As such the hybridity concerns primarily with culture and consciousness that shape identities and identity based positions.

### **National Identity in South Africa**

The process of nation-building and construction of national identity always involves difficulties especially in heterogeneous and historically divided societies. The vital problem with nation-building and formation of a common national identity within multiethnic or multinational states is the fact that people prefer identifying themselves with certain groups (racial, ethnic, religious) rather than with a larger concept of state, especially if it is a multiethnic or multinational state. However, though usually characterized by a strong sense of a distinct group identity, determining a group's self-identity and autonomy, national minorities do not necessarily deconstruct their belonging to larger nation and strive for allegiance to a state (Kymlicka, 1995). In addition, a strong sense of communal identity among national minorities might indicate and facilitate identification with a larger national community and a state (Mattes, 2002).

The apartheid South Africa promoted the National Party's stance to support Afrikaner nationalism or an inclusive white nationalism (Barber, 1994). The notion of white/Afrikaner

nationalism was based on the concept of race, thus whiteness was a passport to legitimizing one's national belonging and identity. In this racialized formation of nation and its racial caste system, those categorized other than white, i.e. indigenous peoples of South Africa, coloureds and Asians or Indians, were not included in the whole picture of nation-ness per se. This particular exclusion of minority groups along with majority Black South African groups from the Afrikaner national ideology reinforced the economic and political disparities and marginalization.

The post-apartheid South Africa, a racially fragmented society in its past, faces the complex challenge to transcend apartheid, racial and ethnic differences, and become a united political and cultural community. Though the current government seeks to support and instill a sense of common nationalism and a shared common national identity, the racial and ethnic divisions still represent the reality of the new South Africa. The post-apartheid leaders saw the opportunity to construct a national identity uniting disparate communities through the ideal of African Renaissance with an emphasis on African values and 'African-first' consciousness (Handmaker & Parsley, 2001; Moodley & Adam, 2000). However this nation-building project was met with caution and apprehensiveness by cultural minority group members. They doubted whether they were included in the official definition of an authentic South African or African since the new political notion of national identity was focused on African culture.

Another essential tool of nation-building and for creating an inclusive national identity in the new South Africa was utilization of national symbols that celebrated diversity of the South African nation. Among them the symbol of the rainbow was the most important and successful. The notion of the Rainbow Nation, popularized by the archbishop Desmond Tutu, was supported by the majority of South Africans in 1994, 1996 and 1999 (Bornman, 2005; Dickow & Moller, 1999). The concept of the Rainbow Nation represented an ideal political symbol for the new democratic South Africa since it was useful as a tool for reconciliation after the past of apartheid and optimism towards future. Additionally the rainbow as a symbol appealed to the majority of South African society, attracting a significant political and cultural support from various racial, ethnic, language and religious groups. Clearly the 'rainbowness' encouraged primarily a unifying national identity rather than ethnic or racial identities, embracing South Africanness that further extended to Africanness in tune with the idea of the African Renaissance.

However there has recently been a suggestion to change the focus from one-dimensional nationalism (Afrikaner nationalism and African Renaissance nationalism) to the recuperated or revindicated nationalism, “based not on the fictions of imagined unity, but on a shared problematic: a mutual implication in a history of difference, which acknowledges local as well as global affiliations” (Brown, 2001, p. 757). According to Brown (2001), nation-building in pluralist societies is based on the historicized understanding of difference. In the context of South Africa, the political emphasis was historically concentrated on the notion of difference, moreover on creating that difference – particularly the colonial ideology and apartheid regime were based on racialized and differentiating categorization and classification. Hence the new South African nationalism should be understood within the concept of interculturalism and inter-nationalism rather than multiculturalism and multinationalism as it is suggested by the concept of Rainbowism (Brown, 2001, p. 765). Here interculturalism and inter-nationalism are the products of the ways when cultures are constructed in relation to each other (Brown, 2001). As such, the historicized understanding of difference, proposed in the notion of recuperated or revindicated nationalism, suggests primarily the non-essentialist perspective on nationalism and national belonging, abandoning the created false consciousness and imagined unity through the Rainbowism discourse and adopting an approach through “shared problematic – a mutual involvement in a history of a difference” (Brown, 2001, p. 767). Ultimately this approach to nationalism and national identity particularly in the context of South Africa is to be central in the understanding of involvement of both cultural minorities and the majority in conceptualization of questions of nation-building, nationalism, national identity, belonging and difference in their historical and cultural manifestations.

## **2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: RE/CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF COLOURED IDENTITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The current literature on coloured identity presents three major positions: the *first* half of the literature shares the stance on coloured identity as being artificially constructed and imposed by the dominant group onto the heterogeneous group of mixed-race people in South Africa, i.e. fixed, essential and lack of fluidity and transformation (Attlee, 1947; Bloom, 1967; Desmore,

1937; Stuhardt & Le Grange, 1940a, 1940b); the *second* half initializes the conceptualization of coloured identity as a separate and independent historically constructed phenomenon, reimagining it as an ethnic identity rather than a mere racial category (Pickel, 1997); the *third* position treats coloured identity as a product of creolization or hybridization process on the basis of highly eclectic but common cultural traits, social, political and economic experiences, expressing multilingualism, various religious beliefs, and ancestry, i.e. rejecting essentialist perspectives and embracing the post-modern conceptualizations of identity (Erasmus & Pieterse, 2000; Erasmus, 2000, 2001).

### **2.2.1 Racialization of coloured identities (19<sup>th</sup> cent.-1994)**

The South African term ‘coloured’ was not asserted in reference to a specific group initially, rather it was appropriated and utilized as a definition of all people of non-European origins, slaves and people of African and Asian descent. This can be seen in the census of 1865, of 1872 and 1892. However, the census of 1904 introduced three major categories: White, Bantu and Coloured, where the last referred to “all the intermediate shades between the first two” (quoted in Goldin, 1987, p. 13). Similarly, the 1926 Coloured Persons’ Rights Bill defined coloured people as ‘neither native, Asian, nor European’ (Adhikari, 2005, 2006; Brown, 2000).

Complete clarity of the category was never achieved in the colonial state, but the apartheid ideology dotted the ‘i’ of the problem of classification and utilization of this particular term. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950 prepared the ground for forced classification under the Population Registration Act of 1950. The Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Amendment Act focused on barring interracial sexual relationships and marriages as a result of the white obsession with racial purity and religious morality (Adhikari, 2005, 2006, 2009; Cornelissen & Horstmeier, 2002). In order to further systemize monitoring of racial groups within the state administered boundaries, the National Party ensured the segregation and division of the groups according to the racial classification. As such the 1950 Registration Act provided this opportunity and legal definitions of racial groups primarily drawing upon physical appearance/phenotype characteristics of group members. The Registration Act defined the term ‘coloured person’ as neither White nor African; the Population Registration Act of 1959 refined the aforementioned reference of ‘coloured’ to

describe “persons who are, or who are generally accepted as, members of the race or class known as Cape Coloured”. The ultimate descriptive approach to the definition created the exclusive list of the sub-groups (Cape Coloured, Malay, Griqua, Chinese, Indians, other Coloureds) that implied the essentialist perspective on identity as fixed, with a lack of fluidity, as transformless, and functioning within certain cultural boundaries.

Accordingly, the 1950 Group Areas Act served as the direct operationalization of the apartheid ideology that legalized a forced relocation and segregation of majority of racialized communities, including coloureds, from residential and business areas to peripheries of cities and towns. In addition the 1953 Separate Amenities Act specified public places that would be designated for usage exclusively by certain racial groups (Carstens, 1966; Christopher, 2001; Dickie-Clark, 1966; Oakley, 2006). The latter is of particular interest within colouredness discourse, as the Group Areas Act allowed the removal of a majority of coloured communities from the historically appropriated District Six, which served as a symbolically representative place of coloured communities and colouredness.

The District Six was the sixth inner city district of Cape Town; its population consisted mostly of working class members of white, African and coloured backgrounds. Though coloured people comprised the majority of the District Six residents, the district was of a very heterogeneous and eclectic nature; peoples of various backgrounds, cultures and religions interchangeably mixed and shared the same experience of discrimination, neglect and marginalization (Farred, 2000; Jeppie & Soudien, 1990). This particular heterogeneity of the District, the epicenter of working class communities of different backgrounds, underdeveloped living conditions and infrastructure catalyzed the antagonism of the ruling white minority. As a result, starting as early as 1901 there were forced removals first of those of African ancestry and further of members of coloured group. According to the racialization of area and promoting privileginess of whiteness, the District Six was declared a ‘white’ area by the National Party. By 1966 the District Six was destroyed to the ground, but this physical space still bears a symbolic meaning of the lost community and memory, particularly the lost community and memory discourse is prevalent within coloured communities.

The symbolism of the District Six and its role in defining and shaping coloured experience is intensely salient in the literary works of the writers and poets of coloured background. The most prominent, Richard Rive (1981, 1983), implements his own memory of

the District Six to portray hopes and fears of the disenfranchised and marginalized coloureds. Though his works present extreme polarity of perspectives on colouredness and coloured identity, the importance of the District Six as a literary symbol is evident and recognizable in his works. Richard Rive, an organic intellectual, rejects the very notion of separate coloured identity embracing blackness, opposing the apartheid racialized population stratification in South Africa. However his own experience in the District Six and witness of coloured communal experience was reflected in his envision of the District as an organic social unit. Moreover Rive recognizes the close ties of the District Six residents' experience of marginalization with the created cohesiveness of local cultural practices and activities as products of stability and solidarity aspirations. As such the District Six was the symbol of opposition and resistance to an apartheid regime and its imposed racialized divisions; the residents of the District succeeded in creating the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) but not accenting colouredness as an exclusive notion rather transcending it and creating the broader District community of disenfranchised South Africans.

Aside from the legitimization of segregation, discrimination, marginalization, relocation and other racist practices, the 1950 Population Registration Act also perpetuated the assumed exclusiveness of the sub-groups that then resonated in the organization and justification of the exclusiveness of coloured group through claiming of ancestry with the European settlers. Coloured elites, mainly consisting of petite bourgeoisie, upper strata and intellectuals, specifically emphasized this assimilative feature of coloured identity under apartheid as the means of persisting the 'white-mindedness' of the coloured community. The 'white in mind' discourse was supported by the belief that the coloured culture was essentially the appropriated white culture or derived from the Afrikaans or English origins; the dominant religion of the coloured people was believed to be Christianity, thus socially and politically separating Muslim religious communities from the general discourse on coloured groups (Adhikari, 2005, 2006; Jung, 2000; Morsey & Peele, 1974). The so-called 'whitemindedness', i.e. dynamics of attachment and assimilation to white settlers, at least within the scholarly discourse on coloured identity, persisted till the 1980s. This discourse of being situated and situate oneself between White and Black, leaning more towards whiteness rather than blackness, was perpetuated by the apartheid practices when a coloured group enjoyed relative position of privilege vis-à-vis Black South Africans. For instance, coloured people were often privileged in certain work positions,



provided with a range of welfare and health services, unemployment benefits, more access to secondary and higher education institutions, there were also somewhat better housing options though still limited, and so forth. This regime constructed advantage over Black South African communities would later echo the intergroup perceptions and relations, particularly after the April 1994 elections, when the majority of lower strata coloureds supported the National Party in fear to lose those symbolic privileges if the ANC won (Brown, 2000).

Another important symbolic expression of exclusionist nature was the referring to oneself as 'bruinman' (brown man) and 'bruinmens' (brown person), also translated as '(Cape) Coloured man' and '(Cape) Coloured person' from Afrikaans (Adhikari, 2006, p. 478). The very color of 'brown' implied the mixture of white and black, symbolically representing the mixed-raceness of coloured person and was accepted as his/her indication and description. Moreover the color brown was an intermediate color between white and black (not black enough not white enough), and this fact was also representative of the inbetween and intermediate social and economic status in the racialized hierarchy of the apartheid regime.

The second half of the 1980s and early 1990s were characterized by the emergence of the resistance discourse to the apartheid racist ideology and the notion that coloured identity was merely a production and reproduction of the apartheid state. Coloured South Africans, particularly those of middle class background aligned with coloured organic intellectuals and politicians, expressed the preference to embrace the Black Consciousness movement and Black identity as it represented the politically infused identity of the transnational oppressed struggle against racism, apartheid and its ideology (Biko, 1972, 1978).

To claim the authenticity of sharing of a broader Black experience, coloureds turned to their ancestry with indigenous communities, manifesting their indigenuity within the Khoisan Revivalism movement. The Khoisan Revivalism movement simultaneously possessed the exclusionist and rejectionist nature; exclusionist, in the sense of exclusion those of ancestry other than Khoisan, for instance Malay and Muslim communities, and rejectionist, since the revivalists (small groups of intellectuals and grassroots community activists) rejected coloured identity as the colonial and apartheid production, nurturing the recognition of native ascendancy and ancient pedigree (Adhikari, 2005, 2006, 2009; Erasmus, 2001). By and large the Khoisan Revivalism movement was episodic and symbolic, with limited influence, and achieved only moderate

support from coloured masses, mainly the apolitical or politically marginalized and underrepresented.

This particular appeal for unified Black South African identity reflected in the discourse of denial, defined by Erasmus and Pieterse (2000), and was openly manifested by such coloured intellectuals as Neville Alexander and Norman Duncan, the vanguards in opposition politics against an apartheid regime in the 1990s. They shared the view that coloured identity was “white imposed; racist and reactionary; an apartheid relic best left behind in apartheid era; basis for ethnic nationalism” (Erasmus & Pieterse, 2000, p. 177). Nevertheless Alexander and Duncan’s articulation of the argument that coloured identity does not exist per se ignores the important feature of identity as being based on everyday experience within particular historical, social and political conditions. Furthermore the denial of existence of coloured identity and culture because they are lacking of essence is in itself a manifestation of the similar discourse that has been implemented by the National Party in an attempt to impose the ‘divide and rule’ ideology and create the ethnic divisions among indigenous South African communities (p. 179).

Similarly the 1994 and 1999 elections served as the catalyst for strengthening antagonism, stigmatization and rejectionism of coloured identity within the Black South African majority when the overwhelming number of coloured group members voted for the National Party and support for the apartheid system (Jung, 2000). Those politically supportive of the National Party were of predominantly coloured working class communities who politically alienated themselves from the anti-apartheid movement and African majority and allied themselves with their oppressors to pertain and reinforce the symbolic privilege. This particular action was perceived by many South Africans as a betrayal and reinforced the debates over coloured identity per se, and problematized coloureds to be included into the larger post-apartheid South African societal umbrella.

### **2.2.2 Ethnicization of coloured identities (post-1994)**

The post-apartheid coloured identity is still experiencing a continuous questioning of its legitimacy due to its ambiguous nature, history and position in the South African milieu. Coloured identity is understood as opportunistic, artificial, marginalized, disenfranchised, and intensely contested despite its being constantly re-imagined and reinvented by coloured people

themselves in their attempts to make meaning of their experience within particular social, economic, and political context. Here the re-imagining and reinvention factor is important as it supposes the reconceptualization of coloured identity as an ethnic identity, providing agency to coloured people and orientation on culturally relevant values.

According to Eriksen (1993), the term ethnicity refers to certain inter/relationships organized among members of group within a group or between groups that consider themselves to be differentiated. The inter/relationship is of particular importance here as the notion of ethnicity is primarily created and developed through contacts with non-members. Moreover the relationship must be founded on the belief that groups are different in terms of specific shared cultural traits, religion, language, or customs. As those differences are socially constructed, as well as the notion of ethnicity itself, ethnicity is then defined as a social identity. As such ethnicity can be manipulated by group members/agents themselves according to the level of importance and significance in relation to certain social situations.

When studying an ethnicity as a social construct, it is necessary to focus on the social component of ethnicity, such as social interaction, organization and boundaries (Barth, 1998; Eriksen, 1993; Lamont & Molnar, 2002; Nagel, 1994). The ethnic group is defined by relationships, i.e. interaction, with others through emphasis on boundaries that are not necessarily physical or territorial but social as well. By demarcating social boundaries, group distinguishes their ethnicity or ethnic identity vis-à-vis other groups; however while organizing boundaries it does not isolate itself, on the contrary it maintains its boundaries through social processes of continuous contacts with other groups. In this sense it is clear that social processes change that influence changes in social boundaries, ultimately ethnicity or ethnic identity is fluid, in continuous transformation and complex. Furthermore as boundaries can be ideological, a space within boundaries can represent a space of expression, negotiation, and struggle for a group. Here ethnic resources, such as culture, language, customs, religion, etc., can be used as the tools of articulation of a group's claims and identity contestation.

In addition, a re-invention of common identity, among such historically marginalized groups as coloured communities, through recreation of symbolic cultural boundaries can represent an act of opposition and resistance against marginalization, discrimination and institutional racism. The members of marginalized groups re-imagine and re-form the categories assigned to them by the mainstream discourse, and “re-inscribe this language with different

values” (Vasquez & Wetzel, 2009). The re-inscribed concept, then, facilitates a creation of racial and/or ethnic boundaries in a positive sense, for instance, cultural and religious beliefs, community/group values and other practices are emphasized to authenticate knowledge and legitimize their claim to that authenticity. Moreover, the racial and/or ethnic identity work, in this sense, is a re-formation of historically marginalized into positively distinguished identity within a hierarchical system (Swidler, 1986). Hence, the assertions of essentialist or absolutist identities, such as ethnicity, i.e. strategic or ‘tactical’ essentialism (Hangen, 2005; Spivak, 1988a, 1988b; Warren, 1998), are interpreted as intentional strategies of political and cultural counter-hegemonic mobilization, rather than a mere acceptance of dominant discourses of identity.

The approach to coloured identity as an ethnic category has developed in the post-apartheid literature as a challenge and resistance to the discourse that coloured identity has been merely imposed by the racialization ideology so common in the apartheid literature. There is a respectable amount of scholarly work that discusses coloured identity as an ethnic identity, but I focus on a study by Pickel (1997) that is most explicit with its attempt to ethnicize coloured identity.

Pickel’s (1997) study presents the most explicit argument for framing coloured identity and colouredness as an ethnic construction. Pickel (1997) argues that conceptualization of coloured identity within ethnic lines gained particular attention after 1990 and strengthened after the 1994 national elections (p. 6). According to Pickel (1997), the important reason for the growing interest in the ethnicization of coloured identity (and/or other minority identities in the new South Africa) was two-fold: firstly, the post-apartheid South African population got an opportunity to deconstruct previously racialized categories, hence assumed to be not fluid and fixed, and reconstruct new identities reflective of their social, economic, political and historical experiences and conditions; secondly, the ethnic consciousness could be exploited within the opportunistic circles of political entrepreneurs to gain power by claiming ethnic authenticity in the South African political milieu. The very notion of ethnicization is attractive since it presupposes historicization of identity. In this sense, ethnic identity as a construct is formed, specified and articulated within particular societal and most importantly historical contexts that requires the analysis of identity’s “historical origins, its economic, political and social development and how these factors contributed to the shaping of a particular culture, values, traditions, attitudes and behavior” (Pickel, 1997, p. 13).

In addition Pickel (1997) criticizes the primordial traditional approach on ethnicity and ethnic identity as based on an essence of common ancestry, blood ties, culture and language, and adopts the social constructionist notion of ethnicity as a social construct expressed through group consciousness and awareness analyzed in the context of politics and on a cultural level. As such coloured identities are formed “in the course of socialization in a particular environment that differed from Whites and Africans”, where “class background, religious affiliation, and value systems” are “important factors shaping personal as well as social identities” (Bickel, 1997, p. 17).

As it appeared from the study, there is no one homogenous coloured identity imagined and created during apartheid, rather coloured communities are quite heterogeneous in terms of class, language and religion. However the apartheid regime succeeded in the organization and maintenance of the racialized social, cultural and political division of coloured and Black South African communities that shaped and influenced the specific intergroup perceptions and relations that persist till now. Coloured communities were additionally lacking of single group consciousness and awareness in the context of shared history as one of the ethnic markers; there was a prevailing assumption that the South African history was primarily white and black and excluded coloured. Despite these pessimistic findings, Pickel (1997) suggests that the approach of deemphasizing differences, stressing commonalities, and promoting group consciousness and awareness within heterogeneous coloured communities would facilitate the social and political mobilization to address personal and group anxieties and fears as a result of prejudice and stereotypes constructed by the apartheid ideology (p. 114).

This study is of great importance in further conceptualization of coloured identity as it has prepared the ground for further theorization of coloured identity and colouredness as a historicized construct within particular context rather than a product of apartheid ideology and regime. Moreover with her study Pickel (1997) successfully presents an example of how the apartheid ideology and racialization discourse should be challenged and deconstructed for the social, cultural and political empowerment of marginalized communities, particularly in the post-colonial states and nations.

### **2.2.3 Re-conceptualization of coloured identities in post-apartheid South Africa (2000s)**

Abandoning the essentialist perspective on coloured groups and coloured identities as the result of miscegenation processes, current researchers deconstruct previous assumptions and propose approaches to explore coloured identities from a positive and, more importantly, a historicized perspective (Erasmus & Pieterse, 2000). Drawing on the identity theories of such scholars as Craig Calhoun (1994), Amina Mama (1995), and Stuart Hall (1989, 1991, 1993), they see coloured identities as constructed and given meaning in particular historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts.

Mama (1995) conceptualizes identity as dynamic with multiple subjectivities, collectively and relationally produced and negotiated (p. 98). She argues that there is no single or universal subjectivity or identity, rather there are subjectivities or subject positions that are located in discourses of culture and history. Discourses are understood as transmitting regimens in a Foucauldian (1986, 1989) sense that shape and are shaped by thought and action; they also reflect power relations, relations of oppression, subordination and resistance. As such discourses provide a particular space that is fluid and in constant transformation due to their dependence on social and historical knowledge and experience (Mama, 1995, p. 99). For Mama, people make sense of their world through contestation, negotiation and recreation of their positions, hence subjectivities, as complex and multi-layered social constructs.

Similarly Hall (1989, 1991, 1993) and Calhoun (1994) argue that identities are constantly re/negotiated and are represented as ambivalent and non-fixed forms. As Hall (1989) puts it, “we have to re-conceptualize identity as a process of identification, and that is a different matter. It is something that happened over time, that is never absolutely stable, that is subject to the play of history and the play of difference” (p. 22). In addition Calhoun (1994) notes that it is important to abandon seeing identities in terms of fixed categories and to rather conceptualize them as constantly renegotiated when individuals “present one identity as more salient than another, and within which individuals achieve some personal sense of continuity and balance among their various sorts of identities” (p. 26).

Thus coloured identities, previously defined as a singular racial category by the colonial and apartheid ideology, are currently seen as re-produced and re-articulated as heterogeneous by various ways as an effective counter to the essentialist models. The process of hybridization

involves coloured people as active subjects and agents, while challenging the notion that coloured identities are merely imposed by white slave-owners and apartheid politicians and passively accepted by coloured people. According to Erasmus (2001) the re-imagining of new coloured identity will require “moving beyond the notion that coloured identities are ‘mixed race’ identities”, and focusing on coloured identities as entailing “detailed bodies of knowledge, specific cultural practices, memories, rituals, and modes of being” (p. 21). In this sense, coloured group, which had little cultural autonomy and controlled construction of self-representation in the colonial context, produced a particular hybrid culture in the context of their relationships to both whites and Africans, as well as to other coloured communities.

Ultimately, the notion of colouredness should be understood as the accumulation of the unique experiences, history, culture, and traditions of coloured group members (Farred, 2000, p. 14). Hence it cannot be merely incorporated within the discourses of blackness or whiteness, rather colouredness is reproduced as the discourse of fluid difference dependent on historical moments and time frames. Colouredness is then in constant reproduction and transformation under various social, economic, and political conditions. This particular permanence of articulation and negotiation is understood as hybrid in nature, thus positioning colouredness and coloured identities as hybridized.

### **2.3 DE/RE-CONSTRUCTIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS OF YOUTH IDENTITIES IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

Along with the scholarly focus on post-apartheid minority communities’ identities, constructions and negotiations of the post-apartheid generation’s identities (the children, born in the 1990s, who did not fully experience the hardships of the rigid racialized apartheid system the same way and/or level as their parents and/or grandparents) have recently become a hotly discussed topic. A great number of the post-apartheid scholarly work has been focused on the processes of how the contemporary South African youth forms and represents their identities as well as what discourses and strategies they produce and utilize in order to negotiate these identities in the post-apartheid South African social and cultural terrain. The majority of this scholarly work presents a great variety of approaches onto an understanding and exploring of South African

youth culture and identity, and offers detailed analyses of identity constructions, contextually situating them within certain institutional settings such as secondary or higher education (e.g. Dolby, 1999, 2001; Goldschmidt, 2003; Hammett, 2009, 2010; McKinney & van Pletzen, 2004; McKinney, 2007; Pattman, 2007; Soudien, 2001; Walker, 2005a, 2005b; Vandeyar, 2008).

Soudien (2001) argues that there is a need for studies that focus on the relationship between identity construction and the role of schooling (secondary and higher education) in identity shaping and development processes, specifically within the post-apartheid school and university. In his study of youth identities' discourses in post-apartheid South Africa, Soudien explores the complex relationship between school and identity, arguing that the new South African youth still struggle with how they understand their identities, receiving "the disparate messages about who they are and who they ought to be" (p. 312).

Using the concept of discourses in the Foucauldian sense - "as regiments that both shape and are shaped by thought and action" (p. 312) - Soudien (2001) develops an analytical framework and determines three kinds of identity discourses: the Official, Formal and Informal that provide fluid, changeable and non-fixed identity spaces. The Official discourse is a representation of the dominant political discourse that is shaped "by the ideologies, views and perspectives of whichever political group is in power" (p. 312). As such Soudien's Official discourse is essentially an embodiment of the political landscape at certain time periods within the country. Soudien started his research when the National Party was still in power, however completed it already within the post-apartheid South Africa that influenced the changes in the social and educational terrains.

Since 1951 the Nationalist Party supported the Eiselen Commission on native education to establish the doctrine of apartheid within educational system. The essential rationale for educational segregation was the concept of "inherent racial qualities" and "distinctive characteristics and aptitudes" (Hlatshwayo, 2000, p. 54). In 1959, the National Party passed the Extension of University Education Act that supported the organization of segregated educational institutions for the Africans, Whites, Coloureds, and Indians/Asians (Abdi, 2002, p. 47). As such the overall educational system was developed through the prism of social and racial segmentation of Black and White populations of South Africa. The former was offered the inferior curriculum with certain academic restrictions. For instance, historically Black and coloured universities were not allowed to teach classes in science or technology due to the racist



bias that Blacks and coloured were not good in sciences, whilst the latter had no academic restrictions, was provided with better research equipment, better funding, and boasted highly qualified faculty members (Cloete, Pillay, Badat, & Moja, 2004, p. 55).

The post-apartheid South African National Commission on Higher Education considered educational equity and racial/ethnic integration as the most crucial objective for the educational development of the new democratic South Africa. The *1997 White Paper: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* strongly emphasized equity for students, staff and institutions; educational efficiency; research output; and a performance-related funding and planning system (Cloete, Pillay, Badat, & Moja, 2004, pp. 51-53). On February 11, 2002, the framework of restructuring plan of higher education in South Africa was adopted by the National Working Group and primarily focused on a discourse of de-racialization and democratization.

Despite these important attempts to de-racialize and democratize not only educational but also social, economic and cultural spheres in the new South Africa, the official order of apartheid still insisted and influenced the everyday experiences of the post-1994 youth. Soudien (2001) makes an argument that the students came across various incidents that impacted how they understood themselves in terms of their identities and in which “they either had to assume a particular status themselves or to accept a status conferred upon them by the Official discourse” (p. 316). As such the students were highly aware of the existence of the Official discourse and how it racially categorizes them and their identities; most of the students in Soudien’s study opted to reject the Official discourse altogether though they could not fully escape its effects and realities, likely the same way as the post-apartheid society could not shake off the dominant discourse of race from the new system.

As important and influential as the role of the Official discourse in identity formation and development is, Soudien (2001) also highlights the crucially oppositional impact of the Formal and Informal discourses that exist and operate along with the Official discourse. Soudien (2001) defines the Formal discourse as that of the educational institution, “a stance or an approach that the school itself develops as a mission for its educational work” (p. 312). The Informal discourse is “the world of social relationships which young people inhabit, associated with their social, cultural and leisure interests” (p. 312). The Formal and Informal discourses offer young people more space and a multitude of opportunities to re/construct their identities as profoundly heterogeneous, ambiguous, changeable and fluid. For instance, many of the African and coloured

students who were attending the previously only for whites schools at the time of the study, were frequently reminded of their inferior status by the Formal discourse of the schools; however most of them re-defined and manifested their Africanness or colouredness with a pride and positive attitude, implementing diverse identity representation tools, from the popular culture products to being involved in relevant political and student activities. Soudien (2001) concludes that there is a distinct relationship between schooling and identity where school/university is an important site of constant identity contestation and negotiation. The South African youth recognize the continuing impact of the racialized past of South Africa and operating official discourses on their identities. Yet, the students' everyday experiences provide a complex network of strategies and practices that are consciously implemented to re/construct, articulate, contextually situate and negotiate their identities.

Soudien's research on the post-apartheid South African youth is one of the pioneering studies that primarily focuses on youth identities and the role of schooling in identity formation, underlying the importance of schools as sites and/or spaces of identity. In like manner, Dolby (1999, 2001) in her ethnographic study of youths' identities in one of the high schools in Durban, South Africa, examines how the South African youth of different racial and ethnic backgrounds construct their identities while engaging in the processes of global popular culture commodification and simultaneously forming its localized versions. Dolby (1999) argues that, for the students, popular culture becomes "a site of identity" (p. 292), an important tool to construct and negotiate new identities, however still within the racial and class boundaries persistent in the larger South African society.

Similarly, Hammett (2009) explores the identity formation practices produced by the high school students in Cape Town, specifically how the global forces influence and shape locally constructed identities. In his study, Hammett (2009) primarily discusses the importance of 'taste' in such international cultural products as popular commercial rap and hip-hop music, fashion, foreign programming on television and radio, as well as mobile phones among a diverse group of high school students. For instance, the examination of coloured students' fascination with American hip-hop and rap music, specifically the African American singers' expressions of marginalization and oppression by the white majority in the United States, suggests that coloured students' own acceptance and simultaneous rejection of coloured identity as a racialized category may serve as a representation of their conceptualization of African American musicians as *black*

and *not black*. Hammett (2009) explains this ambiguous position as such: “these students appropriate and rework claims to marginalization and exclusion made in Western hip-hop and rap music against white hegemony, instead locating these claims in a local context against white economic power and black political power” (p. 413).

Hammett’s view on the vital role of ‘taste’ and consumption in re-defining oneself in terms of identity and social position mirrors Dolby’s conclusion that popular culture products serve as efficient tools to negotiate “racialized selves” because for the South African youth, popular culture is “a site that is dynamic, constantly fluctuating and remapping itself” (p. 305). Students make meaning of their ‘racialized’ identities by maneuvering through the global and local social and cultural influences, essentially constructing new discourses and practices for identity performance and negotiation. As Hammett (2009) argues “individuals simultaneously resist and embrace different aspects of these influences, creating new vocabularies and expressions of identity in a continual process of self-identification” (p. 406). Hence the South African youths become actively involved in forming and claiming a multitude of identities, at the same time contesting the assigned and/or imposed social and cultural particularities and constraints that are still potent in the larger societal system of South Africa.

These studies demonstrate that the youth of the new South Africa harbor an intense anxiety over the concept of identity in general and discourses of race and identity in particular. Though it seems that young people attempt to leap over, deconstruct and contest the largely accepted categorized identities, specifically the concept of race continues to dominate as the most significant factor in post-apartheid identities. In the recent studies on the use of racial signifiers in post-apartheid South Africa, the argument prevails that although racialized identity claims remain central in the everyday life of young people, “a more complex view of these identities as involving simultaneous and strategic claims upon and rejections of race” is imperative (Hammett, 2009, p. 247).

For example, Pattman (2007) explicitly underlines the problem of race and its effect on how the students of the recently merged University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa, create associations and groups on campus, shape their attitudes towards students of other races, and form their own identities. As he demonstrates in his study, the UKZN students celebrated the discourse of the Rainbow Nation and envisioned new South Africa as inclusive, democratic and non-racialized, however they simultaneously constructed their social lives within and outside

campus using the race as its marker and determinant (Pattman, 2007, p. 479). This contradiction over the metaphor of the Rainbow Nation is significant in itself. The metaphor was first used by the Archbishop Desmond Tutu during the march of church leaders to Parliament in Cape Town in 1989, and is a reattributed biblical symbol of peace to represent the unity of the new South African nation. The emergence of the discourse of the Rainbow Nation primarily targeted the anti-racialism goal and united nation-building as the alternative to the apartheid racialized segregation and separation. The non-racialism of the Rainbow Nation discourse strived to eradicate the racial categorization imposed by the National Party and insisted on the colour-blind politics. However, these notion of colourblindness and the romanticized vision of the Rainbowism are seen to be complicated and contested by an insistence of race as a social marker among the UKZN students and its role in their everyday experiences.

In the same manner, Walker (2005a, 2005b) focuses on the intertwined relationship between the discourse of inclusiveness of the new South African nation and Rainbowism and identity and race in the lives of the Black and white university students of the post-apartheid South Africa. Focusing on the narratives of the students, Walker (2005a) analyzes the discourses of race and of racialized identities and how they are reproduced and/or transformed within the new democratic South African realities. She interprets discourse similar to Soudien's understanding as "socially organized frameworks of meaning, a way of thinking, speaking and acting that presents particular relationships as self-evidently true; it allows for certain things to be said or thought and not others" (p. 134). The particular characteristic of Walker's (2005a) inquiry is her focus is on the white and Black young people who are the current students of the former historically white Afrikaans university that offers classes both in Afrikaans and English. Analyzing such discourses as default racism - "reinscription of racism" - on campus veiled within the discourse of the liberal commitment to freedom of speech (for instance, Afrikaner Students Bond (ASB) – white Afrikaner students only group – presented the posters such as "Proudly Afrikaans, proudly white" (p. 136), "minimization of racism" (for instance, when Black students complained about the racist victimization, the University responded with the minimization of racism suggesting that the reasons of victimization might be explained in different ways (p. 137), and an additional analysis of the social interaction and friendship patterns, Walker (2005a) argues that the university campus displays an existence of "a complicated picture of both rainbow nation and new racism" (p. 142). The everyday experiences

of both white and Black students are marked by race, racialized identities, and racism as the results of the previous racialized past. The study notes that there are emerging attempts to transform the racialized discourses and structures of race, however Walker (2005b) also concludes that young people in the new South Africa have limited resources and possibilities for a racialized identity deconstruction and formation of new identities that would be more suitable within the Rainbow Nation discourse (p. 52).

The previously discussed studies primarily focus on the discourses of race, racialized identities and racism within educational institutions settings promoting the argument that the role of race is still profoundly significant in youth identities' formations and conceptualizations in the post-apartheid South Africa. However, the most recent studies on post-apartheid youth identities have ventured different approaches to understanding how identities are formed, framed and negotiated, underlying an emergence of new interpretations of identity categories. For instance, in her study of identities of minority students who attend formerly white Model C schools of Pretoria, South Africa, Vandeyar (2008) explores Critical Race Theory (CRT) and post-colonial theory as valuable approaches that acknowledge the multiplicity of realities and identities as well as the role of the dominant discourses in education (p. 289). In addition, she underscores the concept of hybrid and hybridity in the post-colonial theory that she refers to "the integration (or mingling) of cultural signs and practices from the colonising and colonised cultures" that accentuates "the false sense that colonised cultures – or colonising cultures for that matter – are monolithic or have essential, unchanging features" (Vandeyar, 2008, p. 289). Vandeyar (2008) determines three major approaches to identity production that student undertake: 1) *the "white way" is the "one way"* when the minority students are essentially expected to assimilate and behave "white" if they want to "fit in"; 2) *student commitment versus institutional culture* shows that despite the permeating institutional racism, students opt for confronting injustices and promoting social and educational integration; and 3) *shifting selves: the emergence of new self-identities* examines the refusal of the minority students to conform to the racialization of their identities by constructing new meanings and interpretations to those very identities that go beyond the essentialist identity characteristics, ultimately creating heterogenous and fluid hybrid identities (pp. 291-293). Despite the study being only exploratory in nature, Vandeyar (2008) argues and points out that the contemporary South African youth re-form the assigned to them categorical identities from fixed and essentialist into contingent and fluid, contextually situating

them in their everyday experiences. Moreover youth experiences in terms of their identities within higher education institutions seem to be the most crucial and critical since issues relevant to identity such as language, religion, gender, class and power become more salient within university settings.

Summing up, it is evident that there is a need for studies on post-apartheid youth identities within higher education settings, since universities are important locations of identity work where new discourses and practices on identities are produced, contested and articulated. In addition, a focus on post-apartheid youth identities may shed light on how they engage with the issues of identity, race, ethnicity, and culture in the new democratic South Africa, as well as how their new identity opportunities within university settings may provide a better understanding of multiculturalism and diversity within educational and other social settings.

## **SUMMARY**

This chapter presented a detailed review of the key concepts employed throughout this dissertation, including such important concepts as identity, race, ethnicity, hybridity/hybrid identity, nation-building and national identity in the South African context.

Additionally I discussed the historical origins of the coloured communities in South Africa in connection with the dominant theoretical conceptualizations of coloured identities: the theorization of coloured identities within racialized terms, prevalent from the 19<sup>th</sup> century till the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, argued that coloured identities were a product of colonial and apartheid social engineering and determined them as multiracial and/or mixed-race identities; the post-1994 theorization conceptualized coloured identities as heterogeneous ethnic/within cultural boundaries as the coloured communities strategically ethnicized and culturally re-invented their identities to oppose discrimination, marginalization and institutional racism; the recently emerged re-conceptualizations of coloured identities as hybrid or creole identities emphasize the heterogeneous nature of coloured identities and employment of an agency by the coloured people, therefore opposing the dominant discourse on coloured identities as artificially constructed and imposed by the dominant group onto the heterogeneous group of people.

To theoretically situate the main focus on coloured youth and youth identities in post-apartheid South Africa, I further discussed the scholarly work on the constructions and negotiations of the post-apartheid generation's identities (children born in the 1990s who did not fully experience the hardships of the rigid racialized apartheid system the same way and/or level as their parents and/or grandparents). This part of the chapter presented an overview of the approaches onto an understanding and exploring of South African youth culture and identity and offered the detailed analyses of identity constructions, contextually situating them within certain institutional settings such as secondary and higher education.

In the next chapter, I will shortly introduce the study participants and explain in detail why the participants (undergraduate and graduate students who self-describe as coloured) and universities (the University of the Western Cape and the University of Stellenbosch) were important and resourceful for this particular research enquiry. I will also highlight and discuss two main discourses on coloured identities that emerged to dominate during the interviews with the coloured students (coloured identities as ethnic/hybrid cultural identities and students' rejection of the category of coloured identities and adoption of South African national identity).

### **CHAPTER 3: ‘COCONUT’, ‘NOT A PROPER COLOURED’, ‘PORTUGUESE’, ‘KHOISAN’, ‘SELF-PROCLAIMED COLOURED’, ETC. – A MULTITUDE OF COLOURED IDENTITIES DISCOURSES AMONG COLOURED UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

As the previous chapter suggests there is a steady rise in epistemological studies on coloured identity constructions and negotiations as well as a particular focus on post-apartheid youth identities that adopt post-modernist and post-colonial perspectives and approaches on identity, identity construction, development and negotiation. Combining both research trends, this study seeks to explore the produced discourses on coloured identities by the post-apartheid coloured youth based on their experiences within university settings in the post-apartheid South Africa. As such this research attempts to develop a closer look into how contemporary coloured youth understand, form, and negotiate their identities, simultaneously confronting the rigidly racialized categorizations of the past that are still prevalent in the present South African society.

In this section of the dissertation, I will introduce the research participants<sup>2</sup>, their stances and interpretations of coloured identities, how they define themselves, how their current views on their own identities changed at the university, compared with those they had in high school, and so forth; additionally I will discuss two major discourses that emerged to be dominant in the students’ interviews - coloured identity as ethnic/ hybrid and/or creole identities, and an overall rejection of coloured identity and adoption of an inclusive South African identity.

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<sup>2</sup> To ensure the anonymity of the interviewees, I use pseudonyms for all the research participants throughout the data discussion in this dissertation study.



### 3.1 PARTICIPANTS

When I searched for the universities that would be appropriate for this dissertation study, first and mostly I developed an interest in two major universities in the Western Cape province that were located in close proximity to Cape Town – the University of the Western Cape (the UWC) (*Figure 1*) and University of Stellenbosch (the US) (*Figure 2*) (see the introductory section for an explanation of the selection of the Western Cape and Cape Town as the research locations).

The University of the Western Cape campus is located in a segregated area near the small town Bellville, more of a suburb to the larger Cape Town, whilst the University of Stellenbosch campus is spread out over the bigger town Stellenbosch territory that is located in distance from Cape Town. As a researcher with a specific topic in mind, I prioritized these universities as the research locations as a result of these factors: the University of the Western Cape is known as a historically coloured university and still boasts a large number of coloured students enrolled in its undergraduate and graduate programs; the Stellenbosch University is a historically Afrikaner university and the majority of its students even now are white Afrikaners, however its student pool also contains a higher number of coloured students in comparison with other universities in the Cape Town area. Having heard of my research project, the coloured students at both universities, whom I had pleasure to meet and converse with, expressed a great enthusiasm; their interviews served as the primary sources of the data for the study. Here I will shortly introduce the students and their backgrounds from both universities who have participated in the study to experientially situate their identity claims in further discussions.

## The University of the Western Cape



**Figure 1.** The entrance to the University of the Western Cape (2010).

**Bryan** – an undergraduate student in his Honours year/English. Bryan came from a lower class family that resided in a small town outside Cape Town. Bryan strongly argued for regarding coloured identity as an ethnic identity and not as a racialized category. Though he did state that it is really complicated to pinpoint what the coloured culture is because of its eclectic and hybrid nature, however he insisted that coloured people have their own culture distinct from other cultures. The UWC was not the first choice for Bryan when he was applying to the universities, he wanted to attend the University of Cape Town (the UCT), but because of the higher tuition fees of the UCT and the fact that he received some financial aid from the UWC, he made a decision to enroll to the UWC program.

**Carlie** – an undergraduate student in her Honours year/Social Sciences. Carlie was one of the several students that I had encountered who adopted multiple identities, particularly a coloured identity within the cultural lines, and strived for a South African national identity. She was also one of a few students who had a chance to travel outside South Africa and had a very diverse and open-minded upbringing due to her parents' social status. She came from a middle-class family; when she was younger she lived in Pretoria and only eight years ago her

family moved to Cape Town. Carlie was a second generation UWC student; both of her parents attended the UWC and she explained that it was her parents' wish for her and her sister to become students of the UWC. At the time when I met her, Carlie was involved in development of an artistic and cultural project on the UWC campus that focused on the coloured culture and coloured identity expression through art.

**Daniel** – a graduate student in his second year of MA degree/Sciences. Daniel was from the Mitchell's Plain, one of the notoriously known poverty stricken areas in the Cape Town area. Daniel went to the predominantly coloured high school and lived in a predominantly coloured community – two main reasons why he was profoundly impressed the first time he faced the racial and ethnic diversity on the UWC campus. Daniel determined himself as coloured however within the cultural lines and he mentioned several times that the nowadays coloured youth have more opportunities in identity determinations unlike their parents or grandparents who had to accept the certain categories that had been imposed on them.

**John** – an undergraduate student in his first year of studies/undetermined major. John was probably the only student who gladly and proudly accepted the term “coloured” without hesitation during our conversation, as he described himself: “self-proclaimed coloured”. John was originally from the Northern Cape area, and when his family moved to Cape Town, he attended one of Model C schools (former white schools). John mentioned that because of his good academic standing and involvement in sports and student activism during his high school years, he could have attended any university in the Cape Town area considered to be of a better quality than the UWC, but he made a conscious decision to apply to the UWC as he felt comfortable here because of the large number of coloured students of the UWC. John was a member of the Student Representative Council (SRC), one of the students who were responsible for the entertainment and cultural events on the UWC campus.

**Lana** – a graduate student in her second year of MA program/Sciences. Lana was a very ambitious graduate student from Mitchell's Plain's lower-class family. She was the first generation in her family who had ever graduated from the higher education institution and continued with a post-graduate program. Lana was a unique participant in this study because of her religious background – she described herself as “Muslim first and coloured second”, clearly her religious identity was more important to her than her racial or ethnic background. However she also recognized the importance of coloured identity and she interpreted it in

terms of culture rather than relating it to race. Lana was also one of a few students who confessed that her community in Mitchell Plains considered her to be “different” mainly because of her ambitious attitude towards education and open-mindedness towards Black South Africans – she explained that it was unfortunately unusual for children in her community to continue with their higher education schooling and that a lot of people whom she knew harbored racist views about Black South Africans.

**Lennard** – an undergraduate student in his last year of studies/Economics. Lennard was from a middle class family residing in Mitchell’s Plain. Lennard determined his identity as of coloured background in terms of culture rather than race; he also recognized the differences among coloured communities in various areas. He defined himself as a Cape coloured. Lennard was actively involved in the student leadership group on campus that worked closely with the communities of Bellville and other close by located townships. He was very passionate about his leadership experience and he emphasized an important role of the group in his identity development as a coloured person.

**Miranda** – an undergraduate student in her third of year of studies/Accounting. Miranda firmly described herself as a South African, rejecting any categories that were assigned to coloured people throughout the history of South Africa. Miranda came from a middle-class family from Durbanville. She attended a Model C school in Cape Town, and the US for one year but had to transfer to the UWC as a result of her choice of studies – the UWC offers an accounting program whilst the US does not. She shared with me that because of her middle class background, having attended a Model C school, the fact that she had mostly white friends, other students used to call her “coconut” (brown outside and white inside), which she utterly disliked. Miranda was highly interested in political activism and was involved in political activities on and outside the campus. She was an avid supporter of the Democratic Alliance (DA) of South Africa, a major oppositional party to the African National Congress (ANC) right now.

**Nadia** – a graduate student in her second year of MA/Sciences. Nadia was older in comparison with other research participants so her experiences as a coloured person was quite different. She grew up actually knowing and witnessing the hardships of the apartheid regime. Interestingly enough, she was of very fair skin color and she remembered the instances when she was favored only because of her skin color by her teachers in high school. She was

from a middle class family in one of the coloureds only townships, finished high school in 1989 and attended the UWC as an undergraduate student till 1994. Because of her experiences during the apartheid, she favored an inclusive South African identity, however she confessed that the older she got the more she felt a need to accept a coloured identity based on culture but not necessarily on race.

**Patrick** – an undergraduate student, in his Honours year/Business, when I interviewed he was working with the student leadership office of the UWC. Patrick was from a lower middle-class family from a small town close to the UWC. Patrick described himself as a heritage wise and culturally coloured however as he told me he would sometimes adopt a South African identity upon necessity. Unlike other interviewees in this study, Patrick was from a multiracial/multiethnic family, his mother was white Irish woman and his father was coloured. His parents respectively kept and taught their children about their distinct cultures, though when they were younger, they experienced a harsh scrutiny over being a multiracial couple during the apartheid. Patrick decided to attend the UWC because of the financial reasons: his family could not afford sending him to the University of Stellenbosch or University of Cape Town as he initially wanted. But having studied at the UWC for five years and especially being involved with the Student Leadership Center, he became very appreciative of the university and his academic as well professional experience.

**Sarah** – an undergraduate student in her third year/Political Science. Sarah was from a lower income family residing in Cape Flats. Sarah was probably one of a few interviewees who simultaneously accepted and rejected coloured identity. She did not perceive herself only in one category but as she explained she established her identity based on her former and current experiences. However she also noted that if people identified her as coloured, she would not object because it would make sense for them since the South African society is still racially fragmented and defined. Sarah was also enthusiastic about a unified South African national identity as she saw it as more inclusive and fluid in comparison with other categories. She was heavily involved in political activities within the UWC campus and she was a leader of the Independent Student Body (ISB), the student group that she had founded as an opposition to the Student Representative Council (SRC).

**Walter** – an undergraduate student in his last year of studies/Law. Walter was from a middle class family from Klipfontain. His identity definition was rather unique since he defined

himself as a coloured person but he also aspired to adopt an indigenous KhoiSan identity. Walter explained his position noting that indigenous identities and cultures ‘made sense’, had legitimate right to exist and belong to South Africa, and were not as heavily debated as coloured identity and culture. He also expressed a feeling of disappointment and disdain over such issues present in coloured communities and neighborhoods as high criminal activity, alcohol and drug abuse, and a lack of educational aspiration.

### The University of Stellenbosch



**Figure 2.** The Red Square of the University of Stellenbosch (2011).

**Benjamin** – a graduate student in his last year of MA/International Studies. Benjamin was from a middle class family residing in Cape Flats. Benjamin identified himself as coloured, arguing for the existence of a unique coloured culture. His response was interesting because he recognized the existence of a quite negative perspective on coloured communities, coloured culture and coloured identities, however he stated that people should create and provide positive meanings to their culture and identity themselves. Despite the fact that Benjamin accepted coloured identity, of course in his own terms, Benjamin was also very critical of the community where he grew up in. He openly stated that coloured people were

digging the hole for themselves because most of young people in his community were not interested in education or in any kind of development. Benjamin was involved in political activities on the US campus, he used to be active in the Student Representative Council during his undergraduate years, and recently he participated in the campaign to include student representative into the Stellenbosch town municipality.

**Jacob** – an undergraduate student in his last year/Social Sciences. Jacob grew up in a lower class family residing close to Stellenbosch. He described his identity as a South African, rejecting any categories altogether, defining them as the government impositions. Jacob was a student of the US for five years and spoke passionately about Stellenbosch town and the US, though he recognized the problematic past and present of Stellenbosch. He was involved in the Student Representative Council and when I interviewed him he was living in the Live and Learn Initiative housing on campus, which he described as the housing to bring together international and local students.

**Laura** – a graduate student in her last year of Honours, however she took some time off from the school right after her undergraduate studies/Anthropology. Laura grew up in a middle class family, residing in the area very close to the US and her decision to attend the US was somewhat obvious and expected. Laura was one of the students who transformed her identity preferences over the time; though she did not call herself coloured, she was not opposed to other define her as such. In addition she had a phase when she identified herself only as a South African, but currently she expressed her willingness not to accept any categories and classifications since they change the same way as she changes. Laura also identified herself as a lesbian and was active in the LGBT group on campus even trying out to be a group president,

**Nicole** – an undergraduate student in her last year of studies/Communications. Nicole was from a middle class family from Cape Town. Despite the fact that she clearly understood the issue with race and its socially constructed nature, she defined herself as coloured and of mixed-race background. Nicole was also one of two interviewees who had a chance to travel internationally (Germany, the Netherlands, the USA), and because of her parents' social status and level of education (they both graduated from higher education institutions), she attended an excellent former Model C school that was hosting international students (children of expats from various countries who resided in Cape Town and students who participated in

study abroad programs). As a result, she had more diverse life and school experience comparing with other interviewees. Nicole's decision to attend the US was based on the fact that she received a financial aid and she generally wished to attend the US. Nicole was actively involved with the student activism on campus, the Student Representative Council, and she served as a leader in the student residence where she had been living for several years.

**Noah** – a graduate student in his second year of MA program/Social Sciences. Noah was from a small town located close to Cape Town. He was from a lower middle class family. Noah determined his identity as coloured however as most of the interviewees he opted for providing a cultural connotation to his identity rather than basis it on race. He attended a former Model C school that had quite a diverse environment. Noah told me that he had really hard time growing up in his community because of his disabilities (he had eczema and could not see with his one eye as a result of unprofessional medical treatment when he was a child), it was certain that those experiences impacted him more than he could have admitted to himself – he talked passionately about acceptance of all kinds of differences either racial, cultural or based on disability. Because of these experiences, he was also actively involved in the campus student activities that were promoting equal rights for people with disabilities, and he was also a part of the student group Urban Scapes that dealt with the development of urban youth culture.

**Nikolas** – an undergraduate student on his last year of studies/Psychology. Nikolas grew up in a middle class family in the Eastern Cape, and his family moved to Cape Town when he was in primary school. Nikolas defined himself as coloured in terms of identity yet very apprehensively because as he told when he was growing up and until now he associated himself more with Black South Africans rather than with coloured students, though accepting towards other racial/ethnic groups as well. He explained it with his experience of growing up in the mostly Black community of the Eastern Cape and his best friends being Black students throughout his childhood, adolescence and student life. Nikolas was involved with and served as a chairperson of the Black Management Forum (the BMF) student chapter on campus (the BMF was a group focused on academic excellence and community outreach programs in Cape Town that worked with the underprivileged communities in the area).



**Robert** – an undergraduate student in his first year of studies/Physical Education. Robert was Nikolas’s younger brother but interestingly he had a very different point of view on his identity and generally coloured identities. He identified himself as proudly being coloured and insisted that coloured people had their own unique and distinct culture and traditions. Robert had a very ‘ambiguous’ appearance and because of that he told me that he used to introduce himself as Portuguese just to see how people would react –people believed that he was of Portuguese background and they generally were very confused about his identity and where he was from. Robert’s decision to attend the US was based on the fact that his brother was attending the same university

**Sebastien** – a graduate student in his last year of studies/Social Sciences. Sebastien was one of the students who was transforming his identity perspectives over the time, depending on the social contexts. He was from a middle class family and went to private Muslim school with mostly Muslim coloured and Indian students. After high school, he attended the UWC for his undergraduate studies and came to the US for his graduate studies – his decisions to attend both schools were based on the financial aid that he received. Sebastien shared that when he was attending his high school he felt more Muslim because of the school student population and Indian at home because his father was Indian; at the UWC – he felt more coloured because the local Indian student groups did not accept him because he was half-coloured and half-Indian; at the US he felt more Indian because he happened to have more Indian friends there, but he also switched to defining himself ‘coloured’ when he felt it was necessary or appropriate. Sebastien called his switching from one identity to another as “accepting multitude of identities” depending on circumstances and he defined it as a normal attitude among coloured people because of the general ambiguity of coloured identities.

The composition of the participants, consisting of undergraduate and post-graduate students of diverse social, cultural, religious, class and academic backgrounds at both the University of the Western Cape and University of Stellenbosch (*Table 2*), suggests a rich variation of responses, points of view on one’s identities based on the life and schooling experiences, identity discourses, strategies and negotiations, as well as one’s understanding of coloured identities’ constructions and development within the new democratic South African society. Further I will present discussions on how the students’ current views of their own identities changed at the university compared with those they had in high school, what factors impacted those changes,

and two major discourses - coloured identities as ethnic/hybrid cultural identities and a rejection of coloured identity and adoption of an inclusive South African identity - that dominated the interviews and discussions on coloured identities with the post-apartheid coloured youth.

<b>Name</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Self-Description</b>
1. Bryan	UWC	Undergrad/Senior	coloured/culture
2. Benjamin	StellenboschU	Grad/MA	coloured/culture
3. Carlie	UWC	Undergrad/Honours	coloured/culture/South African
4. Daniel	UWC	Grad/MA	coloured/culture
5. John	UWC	Undergrad/Sophomore	coloured ('self-proclaimed coloured')
6. Jacob	StellenboschU	Grad/MA	South African
7. Lana	UWC	Grad/MA	coloured/culture/Muslim
8. Lennard	UWC	Undergrad/Senior	coloured/culture
9. Laura	StellenboschU	Grad/MA	South African
10. Nicole	StellenboschU	Undergrad/Senior	coloured
11. Noah	StellenboschU	Grad/MA	coloured/culture
12. Nikolas	StellenboschU	Undergrad/Senior	coloured/culture
13. Miranda	UWC	Undergrad/Junior	South African
14. Nadia	UWC	Grad/MA	coloured/culture
15. Patrick	UWC	Undergrad/Honours	coloured/culture
16. Robert	StellenboschU	Undergrad/Freshman	coloured/culture
17. Sarah	UWC	Undergrad/Senior	coloured/culture/South African
18. Sebastien	StellenboschU	Grad/MA	coloured/culture
19. Walter	UWC	Undergrad/Senior	coloured/culture, Khoi-San indigenous

**Table 2: Summary of participants.**

### **3.2 WHY DID UNIVERSITIES MATTER AS IDENTITY SITES AND/OR SPACES FOR THE COLOURED STUDENTS AND THEIR IDENTITIES?**

The dynamic nature of identity (Calhoun, 1994; Tajfel, 1982) suggests that there are many diverse and complex contextually derived means, strategies, resources and sites of identity formation and negotiation (Chatman, Eccles, & Malanchuk, 2005). These resources are utilized for the development of an agency - a concept particularly important for identity contestation and negotiation – therefore identity politics. According to Nagel (1994), identity politics is a result of a dialectical process between internal and external opinions and processes, i.e. individual's self-

identification and outsiders' identification of an individual. The vast majority of campus life and activities is associated with racial and/or ethnic struggle, i.e. identity politics, particularly among underrepresented minorities, and reflects university students' commitment to social justice, equity, diversity and plurality of voices. Conway (2004) states that university experience is created and organized within very salient sites of "practical experimentation and innovation and the production of new knowledges" (p. 21), as well as new identities and practices (Rhoads, 2000; Altbach, 1968, 1970, 1989; Quaye, 2007).

For the interviewed coloured students, the diverse university settings served as specific identity spaces, which provided with the multiple opportunities for identity re-articulations and contestations, as well as constructions of an instrumental agency to identities negotiation. In this sense, the students were able to contextually produce certain practices and knowledges as the medium of counter-hegemonic formation and negotiation of their minority and marginalized identities. This constructed resistance, subversion and challenge of dominant discourses on their marginalized and minoritized identities produced alternately positive characteristics for the same identities.

As such, many of the interviewed students originated their more or less intensive identity work when they started attending the university. It was clear that the students' personal search for identity was triggered by the diversity and multiculturalism of the university campus, university residences, classrooms and such, that lacked in the high schools' environment for most of them. For instance, Carlie, who was attending the UWC at the time of the interview, described her life before the university as "sheltered" from any salient manifestations of difference, particularly of racial difference, as she explained:

When I was growing up in Pretoria we were in a primary school that the principle was very sure that race was not an issue, that race didn't count. It was not a big thing because it was just after 1994, South Africa has just become a democratic country and a lot of focus was put on race, so his intention was to make sure that there was not a big focus on race, yeah. So he wanted to make sure that the students were comfortable and that's why I grew up and I didn't know like color, you know, and it was very cool, it was nice, and, obviously, my parents had different experience growing up so for them to send us to school like that was completely like they were oblivious to it, but they made sure that we were equal and it was not, you know, like inferior-superior complex, it was

interesting so I had that growing up and I went to similar high school so it was not really something that I thought about in terms of what or who I identify myself as, it was always just like that, you know... So I started thinking of that (*identity*) maybe later in life even when I started studying at the university, it just comes about, you know, the talks about the identity become more prominent, you know, and that kind of forces you to think where you fit in and how you fit in, and what role you play in the society, that's kind of thing.

In the same manner as Carlie, Nicole, who was one of the most students of the US and came from the similar "sheltered" middle class background, recognized that "race still matters in South Africa" discourse after she had left her community:

You know in my life it (*race*) became more of a question when I came to the university: when I came to Stellenbosch, race became a question in my life because I speak English like a white person, so I will be classified as a 'coconut' because my upbringing and my understanding of the world was very western, very 'coconut', you know, so it was not a question because people just didn't understand how and also they couldn't understand which race I would belong to: Was I Indian? Was I coloured? Because I had straight hair and all - so it doesn't curl, so those kinds of things became an issue.

Carlie and Nicole's cases were quite different comparing with other students', not only because of their class and family background (middle class, both parents received higher education, they resided in middle class professional communities in more affluent neighborhoods) but also both of them grew up in the color-blind, or at least aspiring to be color-blind, environments. They called it as being "sheltered" from the outside racialized world that allowed them to stay unfamiliar with the racialization impact and its consequences until they faced the class, racial and ethnic diversity of the university campus.

Other students, who mostly came from the lower income families or grew up in the poverty-stricken neighborhoods that still stay racially segregated, did not have the opportunities to experience impact of diversity before they enrolled into the university, nevertheless as I found out that they did not think or question their identities either. Contrary to Carlie and Nicole's color-blind and identity-blind childhood and adolescent experiences, those students grew up being already categorized and not being able to question that because everyone in their communities was 'just like them'. For example, Sarah who came from the lower class family,

went to mostly coloureds school, and lived in coloured neighborhood, said:

Definitely it (*university*) influenced and now I understand myself much more because when I was younger and growing up in the coloured community I was one of those girls who define themselves as whatever else defined myself. When I came here to the university I interacted with all other racial groups, so I sat in the class and I was listening to, and I got feedback from, all those knowledge, and I did my own research. And I was sitting in the class and there was something I was not in agreement with, I would read on that more if it was actually what it is and if there is a room for my own perception. And as I did that at the end of I critically analyzed things, I found that that helped me a lot to define myself and who I was... So coming to the university does change you... It influenced me to shape myself... I always knew that I had this raw talent or the ability to do what I do and my thinking was not as racist, but there was some instances of racism in my thinking because of the background that I came from, there were tendencies of discrimination from the background that I came from. Once I came to the university, it was like it shaped me and it shaped how all these tendencies that I had, left me and made me the person who is actually I am. When I came to the university I came to understanding that things are totally different actually, you are in situation when you find that things are totally different.

Here Sarah mentioned that she passively accepted the identity that had been applied to her, meaning that she had been considered “coloured” as others in her community and neither them nor her questioned this categorization. Only when she started her higher education experience, she had a chance to critically analyze her position and identification in the larger South African society. Moreover because of her new exposure to learning more of other racial and ethnic groups experiences within and outside university campus, she started recognizing the mechanisms of racism and discrimination that existed within her own community. As such her experiences at the various university sites influenced how she understood herself and her identity as well as how she conceptualized others’ identities.

The similarly serious identity work was experienced by Walter, an undergraduate Law student of the UWC, who found himself being interested in his KhoiSan heritage because of friends he had made in the university. During his secondary school years, he as well never contemplated over his identity and being categorized as coloured, however when he was during

his second year of the university program, Walter made friends with students who embraced an indigenuity and defined themselves in terms of indigenous KhoiSan identity, and he did the same:

I came closer to my KhoiSan identity here at the university when I became more exposed to different cultures and I was wondering how to identify myself and where I fit in, and what kind of person I am and where I fit in this racial barrier, you see, I have to come to terms with my identity as an individual.

Walter's case is particular because unlike other students whom I had interviewed, he was the only one who embraced and was dedicated to promoting the indigenous identity among coloured students. This case clearly ascertains how being exposed to relatively open-minded and diverse university environment can influence one's identity re-formation and contestation providing with multiple resources for identity re-constructions.

As I have discussed earlier university and on campus sites play an important role in minority students identity determination and negotiations, though there are numerous factors that influence one's identities, yet university impact seems to be more crucial as an identity site since it offers more independence for self-discovery and construction of new and contesting discourses and knowledges.

### **3.3 DISCOURSES ON COLOURED IDENTITIES AMONG COLOURED STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH**

During the data examination, a number of discourses on coloured identities emerged as dominant, primarily constructed and operated within the university environment and sometimes maintained outside the campus. In this section of the fourth chapter, I will discuss two major discourses on coloured identities, crystallized during the analysis of the interviews with the coloured students, that I suggest to be representative of the existing dominant discourses on coloured identities in a larger post-apartheid coloured society. These coloured identities discourses are: discourse of coloured identities as heterogeneous ethnic/hybrid cultural identities, and a discourse of rejection of coloured identity as a racialized category of the past and non-

appropriate for the new democratic South Africa, therefore an adoption of the inclusive South African national identity. I argue that development of multitude of discourses and conceptualizations of coloured identities among post-apartheid coloured youth may reflect and/or shed light on the transforming landscape of coloured identities and culture debate in post-apartheid South Africa. Moreover, the predominant stance among the coloured youth to abandon the previously widely accepted discourse on coloured identity as a fixed racialized category may generally show the shifting attitudes and perspectives on the concept of race in South Africa, of course, on a very small scale but nevertheless.

### **3.3.1 DISCOURSE I: “Eating Chicken for Sunday Lunch”: Coloured Identity = Ethnic/Hybrid Cultural Identity**

In the previous chapter, I discussed the approach on coloured identity as an ethnic, culturally distinct identity that represents the general attempts of coloured community members to abandon an apartheid engineered viewpoint that coloured identity is fixed, unchangeable, constant and racially categorized. Yet, as the recent studies argue coloured identities need to be explored as re-imagined and re-constructed by coloured people themselves as cultural agents, inscribing differently heterogeneous characteristics to coloured communities, culture and identities. The same stance and ventures of creating own differentiated identity and culture transpired in my conversations with the coloured students from both universities. However, they did not interpret their attempts to culturally differentiate themselves from other racial and/or ethnic groups on campus as negative and segregationist. On the contrary, recognizing and asserting the existence of their own cultural difference and uniqueness, the coloured students simultaneously contributed to the acknowledgement and understanding of cultural diversity within the university settings. In this sense, the coloured students make both the efforts to undermine the discourse that coloured communities are marginalized and lack of agency, and to manifest a group mobilization and cooperation in resistance with the dominant regulations over their identities. As such, the discourse that coloured identities are foremost constructed within cultural borders was prevalent in the students’ interviews. When asked how they would describe coloured identities, several of the students found it necessary to accentuate the contrasting conceptualizations of coloured identities of the past and present. For instance, Nicole, an undergraduate student from the US,

told me that she had done some research on coloured communities for one of her classes and she was very aware of the existence of the differing views on coloured identities. She said:

The coloured was determined as a race in the beginning but then people internalized it and it became more of a dominant culture, and for me it is especially evident within the Cape coloured. And there are a lot of things that Cape coloured people came up with, you know, other people can make it, but they don't do it as well as we do, for example the food that we eat and all things like that, because I am very much aware of Cape coloured identity I can speak for that... And I think that the coloured identity is currently like an ethnic identity.

Here, it is important to underscore two statements that Nicole has made: firstly, Nicole asserts that coloured identity was categorized as a racial identity in the apartheid racialized system, however people, i.e. coloured people, re-constructed it into a cultural/ethnic identity, implementing an agency to determine their own identities; secondly, Nicole mentioned the Cape coloured, which is also particularly significant, since as it has been discussed earlier that coloured identities as well as communities are highly heterogeneous and there are differences among coloured communities in various areas of South Africa – Nicole comes from Cape Town so she identifies with the one of the Cape coloured communities. In the same manner as Nicole, Bryan, a graduate student from the UWC, refers to the past classification of coloured identity as race when asked about how he interpreted his identity:

I personally believe that coloured even if it is from the complicated things in South Africa, I believe that the state was using it as a racial term, but I would rather identify it as cultural, as a way of identifying a person in terms of culture.

As such, the previously accepted discourse on coloured identities as a racialized category is questioned and contested by the coloured students. Additionally to contesting the dominant discourse on coloured identities, as it has been underlined in Nicole's response, the post-apartheid coloured youth recognizes the existence of an agency among coloured communities and their aspirations to re-invent the historically marginalized identities through the re-creation of the cultural boundaries. For example, Patrick, an undergraduate student at the UWC, argues:

You can basically create your own, you have the ability to create your own culture, your heritage, you can choose. Do you want to be associated with that? Is what you personally feel? Is it yours or not?



For Patrick, culture and cultural heritage are fluid, flexible, renewable and re-constructable – one simply needs to be able to choose and create. His suggestion is clearly in unison with the post-modernist perspectives on identity, culture, and cultural identity, where they are represented as dynamic, diverse and complex with contextually derived meanings, strategies and resources of constructions. Similarly, Benjamin, a graduate student of the US, emphasized a dynamic and flexible foundation of coloured identities in particular and identities in general. When I asked him how he would describe himself, he affirmatively answered:

I identify myself as being coloured, I know that many old people have problems with using the term coloured but I don't have any problems because for me it has no baggage or connotation, negative connotation, so many people say Cape coloured but I refer to myself only as coloured. Meaning is created so I create my own meaning of what the term means to me, and meaning is also created by the society, and the society I am in - we always created a positive identity of what coloured means.

Evidently for Benjamin, coloured identity is changeable and it is possible to re-construct it in a more “positive” manner with a more “positive” connotation – but why is it necessarily in a positive meaning? It has been noted before that coloured identities as well as coloured communities are unfortunately harshly stigmatized and marginalized, bearing numerous stereotypes. When asked about the coloured stereotypes, the students brought up a number of typical ones. For instance, Nadia from the UWC said:

There are lots of negative stereotypes about the coloured communities, for example that they are in gangs, I think that there is some truth in that if you look at that very poor communities where people live and their surroundings and how where they live is a direct result of the apartheid government, and I think some of those people have a lot of anger towards people in general, so a lot of those people are in gangs. But I think that perception that coloured people are lazy, I think, it is horrible and misconstrued and incorrect. I think you will see for yourself that coloured people are very diverse and we come from different backgrounds, we are nowadays because of equal opportunities we are employed in different fields and I and some other fellows here we are employed as researchers, we are all engaged in post-graduate studies so we work very hard in our field.

The same ‘gangsterism’ stereotype was mentioned by Sarah from the UWC:

A lot of people coming from coloured communities they would say our heritage is drugs and gangsterism, so people living in coloured communities think that this is their heritage but if you look back at the history it is really not our heritage and it is actually given them by the government propaganda during the apartheid and they just adapted to the fact that this is my heritage, but they truly should know where the gangsterism and drugs and alcohol come from the past government. And for years, they were living like that and now that's their heritage - all that gangsterism and the drugs and alcohol, but not my heritage.

It is clear that the stereotyping of coloured communities and identities have been entrenched into the everyday discourse and easily recognized, experienced and as much as possible contested by the coloured youth. There are a number of studies that focus on the popular stereotyping of coloured communities and suggest that the racial stereotyping has become a part of the popular discourse since the apartheid racialized policies towards coloured communities as well as Black South African communities (Adhikari, 1992; Adhikari, 2006; February, 1981; Martin, 2000b). Additionally it is argued that coloured communities were particularly vulnerable to negative stereotyping since "being a racially defined and marginal minority" (Adhikari, 2006, p. 142). As I have noted that the coloured students are aware of this historically and socially constructed coloured communities marginality since it still permeates their lives when they become the targets of the demeaning stereotyping in different sites of Cape Town area. For instance, when I asked Robert, a first year undergraduate student of the US, about whether he had had experiences with being stereotyped, he shared:

I had the situations when because of people's assumptions that coloured people are violent, they would assume that I am violent too and when I walk and bump into someone then they would be the first to say "oh, I am sorry, I am sorry", and they would look scared because they think that all coloureds are violent and stuff like that. And it is funny to me because I am not a violent person at all, and it happened a lot in Stellenbosch.

Robert was able to laugh about people's ignorance who would consider him to be violent only because he was coloured, but it was evident that he felt uncomfortable of being stereotyped. Similarly, Walter from the UWC was profoundly affected by how easily people would characterize him as 'violent criminal' only in relation to his racial identification. He said:

I know that the coloured communities are associated with the crimes and if people don't know us they judge us and that's why I don't like approaching people on the streets because they assume that I would try to rob them, there were several situations when I just approached people on the street and they looked shocked like "what are you trying to do?"

Being racially attributed the traits of being violent, criminals, lazy, drinkers, and drug users, on the one hand, the students attempt to ignore it and/or prefer avoiding certain situations and areas on purpose where they would encounter of being stereotyped against; on the other hand, most of the interviewed students displayed a clear grasp of the historical background of these stereotypical constructions, rejected them as non relevant to them as individuals. Nicole from the US explained:

I think it is that how you treat who you are. Of course, there are students who have stereotypes on every particular group in the society, but you don't have to prescribe to them. At the end of the day, it is about the individual, who you are, and for me it is important, sometimes we joke about that with my friends - that is far as it goes. I can tell to them "oh, you are so coloured!" or "you are so ghetto, what a hell!", and you laugh about it.

The same critical attitude as well as a conscious aversion of people's false beliefs about coloured communities by personal example, was manifested by Patrick from the UWC:

Half of the time people say that all the coloured communities are gang infested, and if people don't have to work, they end up stealing, they end up doing drugs, they end up joining gangs; the other half of them say that coloured people, the certain coloured people, they have direction in their life or they will get out of that situation. So it is just like half and half. And you know it is very funny because like some of the people there, they are coloured but they are at the university and they have the position that all coloured people are gangsters, but if they are in the same university - aren't they supposed to be in gangs themselves? So I am coloured and I can say "oh, all the coloured people are gangsters", but I am coloured and I am sitting here and I am not a gangster, no, I am an university student.

Hence, the coloured students confirm the existence of a numerous historically constructed negative stereotypes about coloured communities, however as I have pointed out before the

coloured youth express their aspirations and attempts to freely re-construct connotations of coloured identities the same way as they freely maneuver and attach one identity in one context and another identity in another, simultaneously accepting and rejecting the assigned to them categories. Benjamin, who has asserted that he applies his own meanings to his identity, also recognizes the reality of the categorical system, yet he opposes it by implementing his agency to interpret his identity as he finds it appropriate for him individually:

For me it depends on person, I see myself as a South African, but I see myself as coloured South African - that fits for me, because we all don't want to be placed in categories and stuff. But we have to be realistic, making the life easier by putting the people in categories - we anyway do it, anyway anything we do, we do for reason, and doing this we make life easier just identifying stuff. But you know as a person you identify yourself and you don't have to worry about people trying to put you in the box, because people are going to put you in the box anyways.

Benjamin's reference to "being put in the box anyways" (*categorized or classified*), yet still possessing an ability and agency to deconstruct and reformulate one's identity in one's own terms, is homogenous with the recent scholarly arguments that coloured communities, being externally assigned the certain and distinctly racialized identity, re-invented the same identity and original culture in a historicized manner. Here, the group and individual agency become of particular importance in reconstructing of cultural particularities and boundaries for coloured communities, and the students audibly recognize it. For example, Noah adopted the similar standpoint:

I think they need to step out and accept their culture and identity as it is their own, even though they have come from mixed-race, their culture is their own, accept it and make it your own culture. If you can't find one, you know who you are, what you are. And now they are trying to find the place with the whites or the blacks, and this is not about that if they can't find place with whites or blacks, but you are not black or white, it is just a behavioral culture, we joke about these things, but I mean it is true, we eat gatsbies (*deli sandwich*)... So, I think why would you go and search for another culture when you have something like that. You just need to search and find your own place. So it is like make your own culture, make it yours, why are you looking a side of the other?

The instrumental agency of an individual and a group for re-construction of coloured identities,

highlighted in the interviews with the coloured students, is furthermore significant in cultural production. Erasmus (2001) argues that although “coloured cultural production has always been precarious and marginal, making it difficult to claim and mark a space powerfully” (p. 22), coloured culture is determined as “a very particular ‘mixture’ comprising elements of Dutch, British, Malaysian, Khoi and other forms of African culture, appropriated, translated and articulated in complex and subtle ways” (p. 21). As such, coloured cultural production is characterized as a cultural fusion or hybridity, shaped under certain conditions and contexts. The coloured students, whom I had interviewed, were familiar with this very specific description of coloured culture as hybridized or creolized, however produced with a determined agency and control over one’s self-representation:

You cannot talk about coloured culture in isolation, you have to mention, you know, all the influences, European influences, you know, that actually combined in producing it. At the same time, there is also acknowledging the fact that coloured people were able to also create something out of it of their own, so it is not like something just imposed from the outside you know it is also something that coloured people were able to do through time and over time actually develop and produce (Carlie, the UWC).

It is a sort of melting pot of different like European cultures and black cultures, so the coloured culture is a sort of mix of this sort of things (Lana, the UWC).

I have never been able to pin down, like the people from other cultures, what my culture entails because I feel that my culture has borrowed so much from other cultures. In a way it becomes hazy so I can’t look at my culture and say ‘this belief belongs to me’, ‘this belongs to my culture’, so in that way it is difficult to establish what your cultural identity as a coloured person (Bryan, the UWC).

Additionally I requested the students to elaborate on what cultural productions and practices they would identify in reference to coloured culture and shared by, maybe not universally, but majority of coloured communities:

We do have something that we all do, for example, every Sunday we have the Sunday brunches, lunches, food. And I think it is also the way we speak also that identifies us as coloureds, also Cape Coons Carnival on New Year’s eve. Lots of coloured people are

involved in that in the beginning of the year, and they burn lights and each area has its own three or four different bands for parades, so it is a part of our culture (Lana, the UWC).

I think there are a lot of fixed traditions for example for Christmas we would go to the sea area, and during the Easter we eat the pickled fish, and also like for your first confirmation you would have a huge celebration and it is a highlight of your life, and so on (Robert, the US).

I always sort of grew up listening to jazz music in the house, and when we go to the parties and jazz music would be played. So I would listen to one radio station that I listen all the time that is Heart Radio, because they play the jazz music all the time and there is a very strong coloured identity on the radio, all the DJs are coloured, and most of the audience that listen to that radio station are coloured - so that is, for example, is the one thing that I identify with. If I want to go to dancing to a nightclub, I would prefer to go to the jazz night club where most of the people would be coloured. So that's just subtle things. That's the one thing that appeals to me and helps me to identify you know where I come from and which group I strongly affiliate to, and that's the music that sort of binds us together. Yes, I think so, I would say that it is very subtle, but we definitely have our culture (Nadia, the UWC).

I would say that there are certain things in my coloured culture that other person might find weird in a sense, so things like Sunday lunches that is common in South Africa. So in my culture for the most part Sunday lunch will always include chicken, and in that way just to use a blunt observation I would have to say that eating chicken on Sunday for lunch is a part of my culture, you know. We would have meat but chicken would never be excluded from the meal, so something like that, for instance (Bryan, the UWC).

It's like little things, like a lot of related to food, like a lot of coloured people know how to prepare a certain dish, so a lot relates to food. I think language as well but it is in my context that I grew up in mostly Afrikaans speaking area and people who were around me

they speak Afrikaans, and my cousins or younger people spoke English (Laura, the US). As it is illustrated in the students' responses, there is an ascertained confidence among the coloured youth that coloured culture exists and it is not a passive and marginal adoption of other local and global cultural traits, on the contrary it is an active, continuous and highly creative process of re-construction, re-definition and re-appropriation. One of the most significant examples of the creative cultural re-appropriation by coloured communities can be the cultural phenomenon, the Cape Coon Carnival, which was enthusiastically mentioned to me by many coloured students as well as other people whom I had conversations with. The importance of the Coon Carnival is in its resistance and confrontation to the dominant culture, authority, and system, reattribution of the communal feeling of belonging and expression of pride of belonging to coloured communities, attempting to defy the dominant ideologies of inequality and marginalization.

The Coon Carnival has been organized and celebrated by coloured communities from the 1880s, when the Cape slaves were given a holiday on New Year's Eve, and various bands and groups of singers, dressed up in special costumes and faces painted black, marched singing and dancing in streets of Cape Town. The Carnival's inspiration was the American minstrel shows that served as stages to express the fears and hopes of African American community within the racial relations arena within the United States. In the American context, the Coon was a caricature of African American southern slaves brought to the stage by the white comedians, based on the racist bias, prejudice, and belief that African Americans were somehow inferior. The very association of coloured group with the Coon was to express ambivalent feelings about the coloured background as of mixed race, signifying self-depreciation, subordination and marginalization of the underprivileged (Baxter, 2001; Martin, 2000a).

The current role of the carnival is sometimes interpreted as a manifestation of disappeared individual component of coloureds expressed through, as Martin (2000a) puts it, "humorous and sarcastic, sometimes obscene, speeches and songs, that <...> generate particular bodily behaviors and, most of all, revive social links through consumption, sometimes excessive, of food and drinks and participation in troupes or bands of disguised revellers" (p. 365).

The Coon Carnival's content emphasized and produced the anti-authoritarian, counter-hegemonic and rebellious actions of the coloured group members against the white minority domination and the social, economic and racial situation in apartheid South Africa. Martin

(2000a) notes that the Coon Carnival was a privileged occasion “for singing satirical songs and ridiculing those in power” (p. 377) expressing the disappointment and discontent with the social and political status of coloured group members. The Carnival also served as the basis for identity contestation within expressive identity-based public spaces: an active participation in the expression and contestation of coloured identities was primarily an act of counter-resistance to the prevalent belief that the government engineered coloured identities reinforcing the stereotypes and biases about coloured people. As a result, the Carnival created the different discourse that “was counterbalanced by a feeling of belonging” (Martin, 2000a, p. 378) and attempted to discontinue the political and cultural powerlessness of coloured group. As such, the significance of the Coon Carnival’s practice in the context of the new South Africa is in intentional organization of resistant and counter-hegemonic spaces, as well as in determining the discourse of belonging to coloured communities, simultaneously accentuating the eclectic and hybrid nature of coloured identities through intense representation of its original culture as well as blending with the cultures of the groups historically existing in the Cape area.

In this sense, the constructed discourse of belonging, hybrid organizations and representations of coloured culture along with the conscious manifestation of resistance to the hegemonic characterization of coloured identities emerge through implementation of creative agency not only among the coloured students but in larger coloured communities as well. This constructed resistance and refusal to be constrained by the externally imposed meanings and assumptions over coloured identities and coloured culture are entrenched in the coloured students’ discourses on taking pride in being coloured and determine their identities as of coloured background. For example, Lennard, John, the undergraduate students from the UWC, and Robert, an undergraduate US student, stated:

I will say coloured is very unique. <...> I would consider myself coloured, I am not ashamed of it , you know we’ve got a lot of heritage (Lennard, the UWC).

We are the self-proclaimed coloured guys. What I mean by ‘self-proclaimed’ is, I don’t know where the term comes from, I don’t know the history or whatever, all I know is that as I have said I don’t care what my background is I know who I am (John, the UWC).

I identify myself as coloured and I am actually proud of being coloured because we are



unique and we've got our own culture and all other things, for me I classify myself as coloured not because of race but because we have our own culture and traditions (Robert, the UWC).

Unlike the previous respondents, Walter was doubtful of coloured culture existence primarily because of the widely spread general public discourse on coloured culture's illegitimacy in South Africa and opted to turn to indigenous cultures and indigenous identities as an identity resource:

I have not met a lot of coloured people who would claim the KhoiSan identity, because for me I look at that more from the historical point of view when we were not coloured, we were Khoi and San, but not coloured. And if we use it in the race context, I don't agree with that, but if you go to the roots of the KhoiSan then it makes more sense because it attaches us to some kind of identity. But I also know that in terms of KhoiSan identity, coloured people distance themselves from it, even though it is our roots, and I don't know why because I think that's where we are originated and I am sure that if we promote more and give more meaning to the KhoiSan or indigenous people I think they will be able to relate more to that. But there is no clarity in regards to that topic but for me, it makes more sense to trace back from a historical context.

Similarly to several older proponents of the KhoiSan cultural revivalism movement, who I had opportunities to converse with, Walter emphasizes his KhoiSan heritage that he can relate to since it seems to be more attainable and tangible unlike coloured culture which is considered to be as extremely fluid, eclectic, more abstract and fragile. Yet, Walter's reaching out to his indigenous heritage is not supported by many students as he states himself; this may be the result of the uneasy and antagonistic relationships between coloured and Black South Africans that has been perpetuated by the apartheid policies of social, economic, political and cultural fragmentation.

### **3.3.2 DISCOURSE II: "Not Tainted by the Past": Rejection of Coloured Identity and Adoption of South African National Identity**

South Africa has always been a highly heterogeneous country, and as in any racially and ethnically diverse country, the nation-building, determination and definition of a national identity are very problematic. The existence of several subnational cultures and identities problematizes

not only the establishment of an uniting national identity but also achievement of social, cultural, economic and political equality. This can occur as a result of variation of historical and ancestral experiences, cultural values, religious beliefs and medium languages. As such, in plural societies, there are always dominant group/s in power and minority group/s that are marginalized especially in terms of nation building.

The metaphor of the Rainbow Nation in relation to South Africa, first used by the Archbishop Desmond Tutu during the march of church leaders to Parliament in Cape Town in 1989, is a reattributed biblical symbol of peace to represent the unity of the new South African nation. The emergence of the discourse of the Rainbow Nation primarily targeted the anti-racialism goal and united nation-building as the alternative to the apartheid racialized segregation and separation. The non-racialism was a primary goal of the new democratic South Africa since it strived to remove the entrenched racial categorization imposed by the National Party and insisted on the colour-blind politics. However the colourblindness and romanticized notion of the Rainbowism was complicated by the growing ethnic consciousness of the minority groups, comprised of communities with self-conscious cultural identities.

Another problem that evolved in constructing of an uniting national identity was an expectation that it would be inclusively representative of the majority and minority groups within the new democratic state. However a South Africanness as a national identity was perceived by the minority groups as a representative of the overarching Black South African identity rather than the cohesion of all the communities and subcultures (e.g. Alexander, 1986; Alexander, 2001; Brown, 2001; Christopher, 2002; Dickow & Moller, 2002; Erasmus, 2003; Mattes, 2002; Moller, Dickow & Harris, 1999). Thus, many members of cultural minority groups shared the sense of being excluded from the South Africanness discourse and doubted whether they truly belonged within the official definition of the South African nation (Moodley & Adam, 2000). This sense of being excluded from the new South African national discourse was frequently expressed by coloured people as a result of the ambiguous and hotly contested position of coloured communities in apartheid as well as post-apartheid South African society. Under the apartheid, coloured communities and coloured identities were defined by their intermediate status and inbetween position in the racial hierarchy, characterized by the aspirations of assimilation with the dominant white society, resistance to be associated with Black South African communities, resulted in the widespread feelings of shame and marginality (Seekings,

2008, p. 6). Vladimir, who worked at the office located on the UWC grounds and who identified himself as a Black South African since he was actively involved with the Black Consciousness movement back in his student years, had a chat with me on the topic of coloured identities; we were discussing the reminiscent coloured aspiration of assimilation with the white and therefore symbolic opposition to the Black, and he said:

I think for coloured people, in terms of who they are and where they fit in, the impact of that was that they don't see themselves as part of the new in many ways, and for most of people, but especially in the Western Cape, people are really down to not feeling like benefiting from this participant session. So in terms of coloured identity, there is also the reemergence of the separate identity, the estrangement and disaffection for coloured people in relation to the ANC, so they feel that they are inbetween, so they yearn for this, for the bad old days, and those old days they were bad, on the one hand, there was the apartheid, on the other hand there was the opportunity to be seen as the part of the Queens people. So it is interesting if you go to the coloured areas and you go to the homes, you will find in their lounges the pictures of some of the members of the royal family, the Queen and her husband, and their children. And many coloured people will be able to tell you in detail who sits where, and who is connected to who, that expresses the embrace of the British royal family, and the aspiration to be considered to be the part of the people of the Queen.

This, described by Vladimir, claim of the kinship with the white South Africans, 'the people of the Queen', was supported by the racialized preferential politics of the colonial and apartheid governments in favour of coloured communities vis-à-vis Black people (as it has been discussed earlier in this work) (Bickford-Smith, 1995). However, the apartheid system, where the dominance of the white minority, political and social marginalization of the Black, coloured and other minority groups were justified, drastically changed after the collapse of the National Party and declaration of South Africa as a new democratic state. As such, the post-apartheid deracialization and democratization policies towards education, labour and business markets as well as the introduction of policies of the affirmative action (e.g. the 2003 Black Economic Empowerment Act) produced the growth of the Black South African elite and middle class. It is vital to note though that white South Africans still remain economically privileged and majority of Black South African population remains poor and disadvantaged after the apartheid. Yet, this

post-1994 phenomenon, combined with the political domination of the African National Congress (the ANC), a political party considered largely as for and by Black South Africans by many coloured and white South Africans, became the main factor of the perseverance of the marginalized and inbetween status among coloured people, as Sebastien and Noah, two interviewed coloured students, put it:

This country was not ours before, it was for the whites and now it is for the blacks, so we are always in a sort of liminal stage, being sort of in the middle, not having a sense of home, just sort of, in a sense, of renting that we are facing in the country (Sebastien, the US).

Yes, too white or too black, coloured people always feel in the middle and they feel that they are not white enough and they are alienated that way, and then they are not black enough and then they are alienated this way. And they always think ‘oh, we are in the middle and where we must fill in?’ (Noah, the US)

The continuing existence of the sentiment of being intermediate, in-between, in the middle, not belonging or owning but “renting” in South Africa has been acknowledged by many interviewees, younger and older, however most of them were quite critical of this discourse and found it as a result of a general public anxiety over the problematic persistence of racial categorization and consequently social, political, and economic separation and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. As such, despite the popular discourse of the liminality and in-betweenness of coloured status, several coloured students, interviewed for this particular study, underscored the importance to embrace a national identity and opted to identifying primarily with the inclusive South African identity (nevertheless, sometimes simultaneously constructing separate coloured identities in terms of culture depending on contexts and circumstances):

I consider myself to be an Afrikaans person of colour, so basically I am a person of colour in South Africa. But when I have to look and define myself in my own terminology, I consider myself to be a South African person, and I don’t want to accept how the past present and future government has decided to determine me (Jacob, the US).

I personally do not identify my personality and my culture based on the colour of my skin and I don’t feel that it should be. I am a South African (Miranda, the UWC).

Here, both Jacob and Miranda clearly recognize the existence of their selves, racialized by the outside system such as government, however they refuse accepting that classification and prefer self-identification within the deracialized national identity. As these interviews' excerpts display it is important for the coloured youth to abandon the previous terminologies, 'the terms of the past', associated with the apartheid past of South Africa and reminded to them by their parents and/or grandparents' persistence with racialization of selves and others. For example, Carlie, an undergraduate student from the UWC, stated:

I think it (*South African identity*) is a concept that a lot of people are striving for. We strive for the national identity, so we've actually wholeheartedly embraced it and accepted, you know, who we are, but again it is difficult. But people are definitely moving away from race, it's overdone and people are tired of hearing about it, they want to be and they want to be known as South Africans over and above of being black South African or coloured South African, they want to be South Africans and it should be sufficient, you know. So we are all definitely striving for, and it will take a lot of work, and I think it will take a younger generation who perhaps weren't so a part of apartheid, who don't have the scars, who are not that tainted as the older generation, to carry that forward and, obviously, to teach their and our children, so that one day they will be able to be just South Africans but not having any other titles.

Carlie firmly differentiates the old and young generations, describes them as the apartheid and post-apartheid generations, and mentions their contrasting views on categorized identities in South Africa. For her, the older generation has been 'scarred' and 'tainted' by the apartheid racialized past, hence race continues to play a greater role in their lives and retains in their everyday experiences. Whilst for the post-apartheid generation who did not experience the apartheid regime, race remains present and their lives are still racialized to a certain level, yet they are able to deconstruct racialized identities, re-negotiate them in multitude of dynamics, producing very different discourses for the same identities; or the younger people are able to completely disregard any categorical identifications and adopt the transcendent identities that are far inclusive and accessible. Nikolas, an undergraduate student from the US, juxtaposes South African national identity to race and recognizes it as a solution to "race problem":

Some of friends label themselves as South African and not as coloured people, and for me it is like: I don't have race as a South African, so yeah. It is a potentially strong label

that probably can dispel the racial divide. If you want to identify with South African nation, that can help things and then maybe you can get pass that (*race*) and find out about the culture of a person. So if you start grouping the population as a South African nation then it also could change the perceptions and stereotypes that certain races have about others.

Therefore the students see the claim of South African identity as the resolution to the existing problem of race in post-apartheid South African society that is profoundly shaped by the apartheid experience. Even so, most of those who have been interviewed as well as the scholars who have written extensively on the national identity and generally identities in South Africa (e.g. Hammett, 2010; Pattman, 2007; Seekings, 2008; Walker, 2005a, 2005b) recognize that race is continuously salient in the country's reality. This is how Sebastien, an MA student from the US, put it when asked about South African national identity to replace categorized identities:

It is nice but it is impractical in reality. Like move away from racial identity or move away from ethnic identity, but it is still when you see a black person you say that he is black, so you still use the racial classification. So I would say, maybe we should move away from the idea that others who sit over us can rule us, and also how we handle that, how we handle how we can control our outcomes not other way around. So even if you make a statement 'oh, we are all South African' - it doesn't work, and you can see media is still practicing the races, etc.

In sum, the coloured youth see the potential of South African national identity to become a possible solution to the race problem lingering from the past, at least in their life experiences, however they also acknowledge how problematic the concept of national identity is in such a multicultural society as one of South Africa and with its apartheid background. So, as Erasmus (2001) asserts: "the realization that no one South African can claim a moral high ground, that all of us have been profoundly wounded and shaped by the past, is more likely to provide the ground for creating new identities" (p. 26).

## SUMMARY

In this chapter I introduced the study participants, nineteen undergraduate and post-graduate students, who self-identified as of coloured identities and at the time of the interviews were enrolled in the University of the Western Cape and the University of Stellenbosch academic programs.

Through the data analysis, two dominant discourses on coloured identities emerged among the interviewed coloured students: first, the discourse on coloured identities as ethnic/constructed within cultural boundaries identities; and second, discourse of an overall opposition to coloured identities as products of colonial and apartheid social engineering and adoption of a national identity. The data revealed that most of the interviewed coloured students questioned and contested previously accepted discourse on coloured identities as a racialized category and emphasized its dynamic and flexible foundation as well as its cultural boundaries.

Although many coloured interviewees acknowledged continuing existence of the sentiment of feeling intermediate, in-between, in the middle, not belonging or owning but “renting” in South Africa, a majority of the coloured students expressed a critique of this discourse and explained it as being a result of a general public anxiety over the persistence of racial categorization and consequent social, political, and economic separation and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. Despite the general discourse of liminality and in-betweenness of coloureds in South Africa, the interviewed coloured students underscored the importance of embracing a national identity and opting to identify primarily with an inclusive South African identity. However the data also showed that the problematic conceptualization of South African national identity compelled a majority of the coloured students to embrace particularistic coloured identities within cultural lines rather than adopting a national identity.

To comprehensively understand how coloured students re-construct their identities and negotiate identity discourses, it is necessary to examine an identity formation and development process and most importantly determine what contextual factors influence identity productions and development particularly within university settings. Consequently, in the next chapter, I will draw on the ecological approach and ecology model of identity development, constructed and utilized by Renn (1998, 2004) in her work that explores how multiracial students construct their identities in the context of higher education, and present the data to determine what factors and

opportunities, provided by microsystems (friendship groups, involvement in campus activities/student activism, family and academic work), mesosystem of student activism, exosystems (home communities, language and religion) and macrosystem of the public discourse on coloured identities, communities and cultures in post-apartheid South Africa, are significant and how they influence coloured students' identities productions, development and negotiations in and out of the university environment. I believe that an application of Renn's ecology model of identity development to specifically examine coloured identities constructions and development may assist in emphasizing a contextual nature of identity and generally understanding of the concept of identity as well as to focus on identity developmental possibilities that are provided within the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystem



#### **CHAPTER 4: THE ECOLOGY MODEL OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND COLOURED IDENTITIES: COLOURED IDENTITIES' DE/RE-CONSTRUCTIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS AMONG UNIVERSITY COLOURED STUDENTS**

The term 'coloured' in the South African context refers to a specific group of people of assimilated African, Asian and European descent, hence coloured people are historically regarded as of '*mixed race*', and, consequently, because of their origin, were and are marginalized and associated with a number of negative attributes, such as immorality, sexual promiscuity, illegitimacy, impurity and untrustworthiness. In this dissertation project, I support the recent conceptualization stance that coloured people have to experience the reshaping process of the group as well as individual identity, involving the production of positive self-affirmation, constructed by shared positive cultural values and practices, religious beliefs, and shared interests in the context of relationships within the coloured community and to other ethnic groups (Erasmus & Pieterse, 2000; Erasmus, 2001). As such, this study attempts to examine how students reconstruct and negotiate their identities within diverse university settings by producing certain discourses and practices on their identities and how their sense of self and their identities are influenced by various factors in and outside the university environments.

A study on coloured identities and/or colouredness may be quite problematic and different in contexts other than South Africa, since the research deals with *historically* 'mixed-race' communities. Yet, for the present research I find it useful to refer to a recent study on mixed-race or multiracial identities conducted by Renn (1998, 2004). Her research specifically deals with the mixed-race or multiracial students' identities constructions and development in the college settings. Renn pioneers the approach of studying mixed-race or multiracial student identities through an ecology of multiracial identity development model, which she creates by applying Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1993) ecology model of human development during her data analysis. I find the ecology model of identity development to be conceptually appropriate for

examining both mixed-race/multiracial and coloured identities due to the similar complicated and confusing processes of determining and understanding one's identity, the experiences of marginalization and stigmatization among students, as well as the shared sense of being inbetween and in the middle and non belonging to a specific majority group.

Though it is important to remember that coloured identities need to be examined with a focus on historical and cultural experiences, de-emphasizing the mixed-raceness of its members, I argue that incorporating the ecology model of identity development, created by Renn to understand mixed-race or multiracial identities of young people in relation to their college or university experience, may be useful to assist in understanding what factors affect the constructions and negotiations of coloured identities among university students in the post-apartheid South Africa.

#### 4.1 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO MULTIRACIAL/MIXED-RACE DEVELOPMENT

Renn (1998, 2004) creates the ecology model of multiracial student identity development based on the previous studies that utilize various approaches in understanding mixed-race or multiracial identities constructions and development. Currently, there are four main theoretical approaches that focus on multiracial identity development: the *problem approach* that emphasizes the problematic social position and marginalized status that is marked by tragedy (Park, 1928, 1931; Stonequist, 1937), the *equivalent approach* following the assumption that monoracial and multiracial individuals were equivalent (Williams, 2006; Cross, 1971), the *variant approach* that views multiracial identity as separate from a monoracial category (Gibbs, 1989; Herring, 1992; Poston, 1990; Thornton & Wason, 1995) and the *ecological approach* that focuses more on the context surrounding identity development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993; Root, 1990, 1996; Renn, 2004).

The **problem approach** in its historical context emerged as reflective to the social environment when 'one drop rule' was a social norm in a racially segregated society. Thereby, the problem approach as a theory of muliracial identity development focuses on "deficits, dilemmas, and negative experiences associated with the position of being mixed-race",

emphasizing “rejection, isolation, and stigma experiences” (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009, p.16). Park (1928) and Stonequist (1937) argued that the mixed race individuals were in a constant state of mental crisis. Having accepted this assumption, Stonequist (1937) developed a marginal man theory where mixed race individuals had to go through three stages of racial identification: (a) introduction, when an individual tries to adjust to both culture; (b) crisis, when feelings of confusion, conflict, shock, and estrangement occur; and (c) adjustment, a cultural and social adjustment upon acceptance of one’s own mixed-raceness, in most of cases it is an adjustment toward the dominant culture.

The **equivalent approach** was introduced in the 1960s within the context of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, the time of deconstruction of racially defined marginality and an urge to develop a positive sense of Black identity. In this sense, mixed-race individuals were oriented to develop an understanding of their racial identity as Black. Hence, according to Rockquemore, Brunsma, and Delgado (2009), the equivalent approach to identity development addresses mixed race individuals as equivalent to Blacks and the approach itself is derived largely from Erikson’s (1968) developmental framework of ego-identity formation. They suggest that progressing through vigorous stages of ego-identity development is similar to the formation of racial identity, which culminates in various commitments within different social spaces (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). The equivalent approach is depicted through several conceptual models of Black identity construction, for instance, the Nigrescence model (Cross, 1971). The important feature of the equivalent approach is its promotion of involvement in expression of one’s meaningful Blackness and Black identity.

The **variant approach** may be observed as being influential through the 1980s and 1990s, and it is characterised by the conceptualization of mixed-race identity as separate from other racial groups. The studies utilizing the variant approach primarily focused on biracial or multiracial identity construction and development as “healthy, integrated sense of people’s multiple racial ancestries, culture, and social location” (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009, p. 18). Gibbs (1989) and Herring (1992) suggest that multiracial individuals must learn both to integrate dual racial and/or cultural identifications and develop a positive sense of self. Moreover, they must organize a synthesis of identification into one stable sense of self and a positive racial identity. Hence, this framework raises an argument that an integrated biracial or multiracial identity is the healthy goal as opposed to the single Black or White identity. Here, the

most prominent identity theory is the variant approach in Poston's biracial identity development model (1990), which focuses on development of integrated multiracial identity through the following stages: (a) personal identity (identity development is influenced by family and peer interactions); (b) choice of group categorization (enforcement to choose identity which may cause a crisis); (c) enmeshment/denial (a stage of confusion and guilt with further denial of aspect of identity); (d) appreciation (learning to appreciate multiple identities); and (e) integration (creation of integrated multiracial identity) (Poston, 1990).

The **ecological approach** is the most recent of all the mentioned multiracial identity development approaches. It suggests that people with multiracial backgrounds construct different identities based on various specific contexts, thereby, there is no linear process of identity development as well as there is no a single optimal outcome. Hence, there should not be any privileging of one racial identity over another, which was insisted on in previous models. Additionally, the ecological approach focuses more on the context surrounding identity development than on any one particular identity outcome (Rocquemore, 1999), as such, suggesting the existence of four strategies for the resolution of the "other" status that is assumed and forced on the multiracial individuals by the dichotomous society. These strategies do not progress into each other as it was discussed in the previous approaches, neither it implies that there is a certain inclusiveness of the strategies, hence, they can exist simultaneously.

The first strategy is when people with multiracial backgrounds can accept the identity society assigns to them, thus, it shows the intimate dependence of the identity construction on the environment and more particularly on the external forces created by the society. The second strategy involves identification with both of racial groups. This solution seems to be widely utilized by the majority of the multiracial individuals. Although, there is a positivity within this strategy, Root (1990) notes that the multiracial person might need to cope with social resistance in both groups in order to avoid psychological pressure. The third strategy is identification with a single racial group, which is similar to the first strategy, however it differs from it with its active nature rather than mere acceptance of the identity assigned. The fourth strategy for resolution of "other" status is identification as a new racial group, which is utilized when multiracial individuals feel a strong relation to other people of multiracial background because of their mutual struggle with marginal status. They may move between the racial groups but still feel disconnected from any of them.

As such, the main concern for most of multiracial individuals is a search of acceptance and feeling of belonging. Along with that, the diverse environment of diversity can create a safe space for the multiracial people to accept themselves and their multiracial identity. Thus, they usually find themselves in an in-between space where they cannot choose this or that side of their dual racial identity, and it is difficult for them to associate and create reference to one particular group. Ultimately, the liminal space is preferred, though, there is an undeniable expression of eagerness to belong to a group of multiracial people, as it is still necessary to associate with some group to feel fully accepted and share the important feeling of belonging. Hence, as it has been stated in a number of works, identity construction and development are much dependent on the sense of belonging and association with a certain group that facilitates the understanding of selves as individuals and members of the group and occupying the spaces to associate themselves with.

Furthermore, Root's (1996) model describes the ways of 'border crossing' to cope and resolve the "other" status, including: (a) existing in both groups and holding multiple perspectives simultaneously; (b) shifting between and among social contexts defined by race; (c) "sit[ting] on the border" and experiencing a hybridity and border identity; (d) creating "a home in one camp while visiting other camps when necessary" (Rocquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009, p. 20). As such, this "border-crossing" paradigm suggests that there is a possibility for individuals of multiracial backgrounds to consciously choose and negotiate their identity in the racial borderlands constructed by the larger society.

## **4.2 THE ECOLOGY MODEL OF STUDENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

Renn (1998, 2004) develops Root's (1990) ideas, and utilizes Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *Person-Process-Context-Time* (PPCT) model which creates a unique developmental environment for each individual's identity construction. *Person* refers to the individual, his/her current state of development, and the characteristics that allow being engaged in particular ways with particular environment. *Process* represents the interactions between the person and the environment, including how they influence each other. *Context* is the immediate environment and setting that developmentally influences the individual, including the larger socio-historical environment.

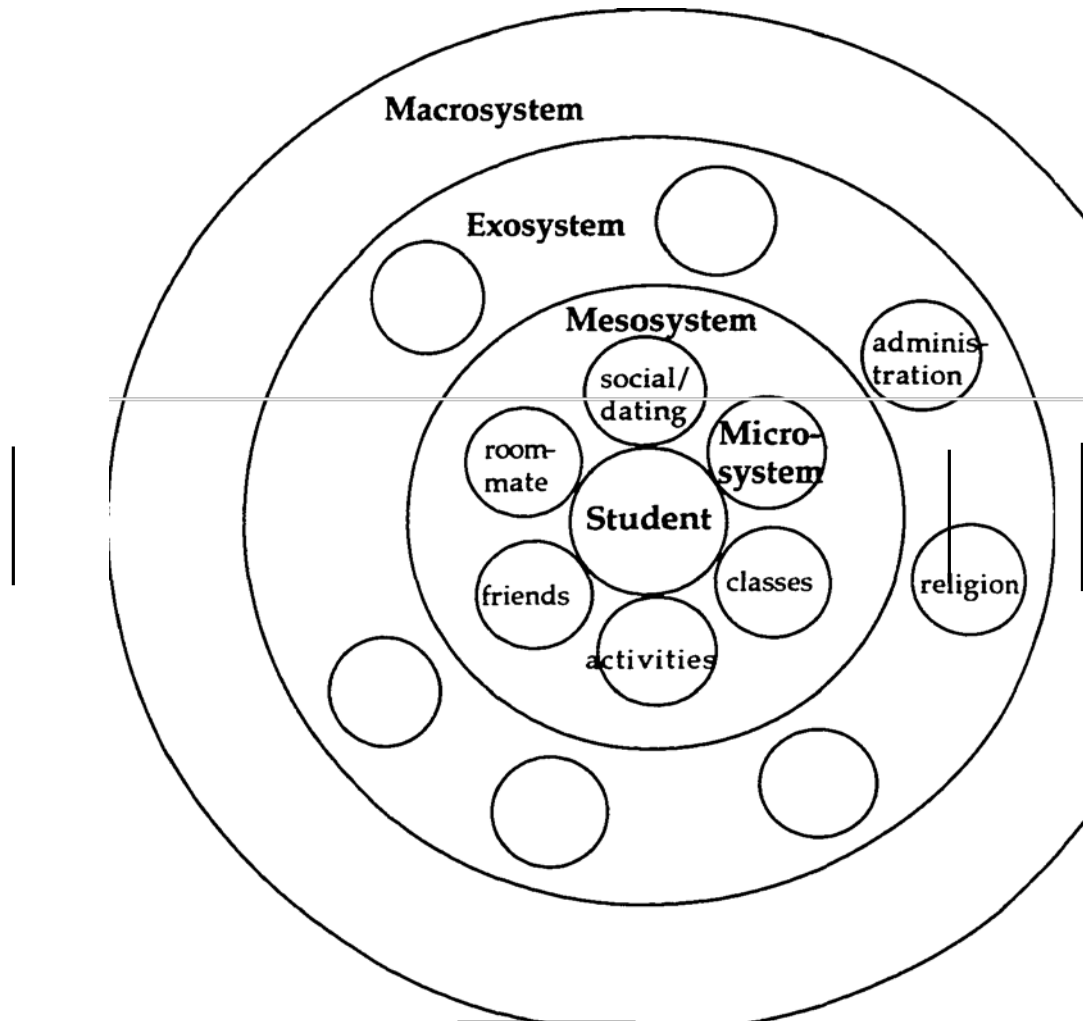
*Time* represents the time of events that impact identity construction throughout the life of the individual (pp. 29-31). These four components of the PPCT model create a developmental environment where the social, cultural and historical contexts are taken into account. Thus, the ecological approach is defined as a flexible and context oriented alternative to other identity development theories, particularly within student identity development.

Additionally, it is necessary to note that Bronfenbrenner's ecology model calls attention to how individual differences and histories "interact with dynamic environments to create unique patterns of developmental opportunities and outcomes" (Renn, 2004, p. 49). Thence, it provides the possibility of continuous identity construction and development in complex environments, where individuals shape environments and environments shape individuals. Ultimately, Renn (2004) argues that identity construction is not static but an ongoing dynamic process, and the ecology model provides a framework that enables the examination of processes "that happen when students encounter campus cultures created through the interactive web of academic, cocurricular, and social mycrosystems" (p. 52).

As such, Renn notes the emergence of various factors and identity development opportunities through micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems in the overarching ecology of student development model (*Figure 3*). In Renn's understanding, *microsystems* are the micro-environments that students are embedded into in their everyday lives, such as residence halls, classes, student activities, friendship groups, and social/dating life. These particular microsystems become connected in multiple ways and, according to Renn, these interacting microsystems form the *mesosystem of peer culture*. Unlike the microsystems existing within the mesosystem of peer culture, *exosystems* in the student development model consist of environments and elements that impact students' lives and identities in which students are not directly involved, such as campus administrations, religious communities, government agencies, families, and home communities. In their turn, the micro-, meso-, and exosystems create macrosystems that, as Renn (2004) finds: "provided for certain types of developmental opportunities while omitting others" (p. 82).

Furthermore, Renn identifies two themes that emerged from her analysis: the notion of space (including public spaces of social groups, formal student organizations, and physical space where students felt as belonged, and private space of students' perceptions of who they are in terms of their identity) and the impact of peer culture (referring to the forces that shape life on

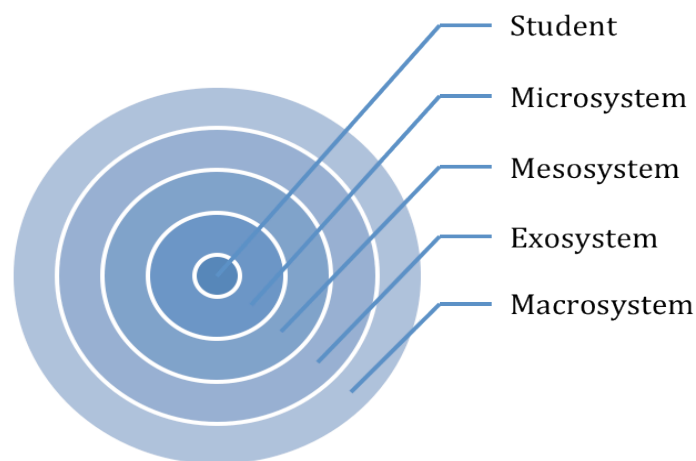
campus in terms of group membership, acceptable discourse, and desirable behaviors) (Renn, 2000, p. 405). In this sense, according to Renn (2000), the mesosystem of peer culture was responsible for students' interactions between and among public spaces on campus, and the experiences of these interactions in order to fit into public spaces influenced the construction and development of individual identities (p. 405). Moreover, the necessity to construct and perpetually develop one's identity required the creation of new identity-based spaces to express multiracial identity. As such, Renn argues that organization and occupation of identity-based spaces is a crucial part of identity construction and development, as it refers to the importance of reference group and immersion in that particular group, sharing the same experiences of a multiracial background and creating necessary communal sustainability (Renn, 2000, p. 410, 416).



**Figure 3.** The ecology of college student development (Renn, 1998, 2004). Used with the permission of the author.

### 4.3 THE ECOLOGY MODEL OF COLOURED STUDENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

In this study, I previously stated that the majority of the current scholars researching coloured identities insist on the processual and contextual construction of coloured identities in relevance to shared cultural, social and political experiences. Therefore, an ecology model of student identity development that focuses on the contextual and continuously fluid nature of identity seems to provide a better understanding of the coloured students identities formation and development. In adopting and integrating an ecology model of identity development, created and utilized by Renn (1998, 2004) in her work that explores how multiracial students construct their identities in the context of higher education, I will present data to determine what factors and opportunities within the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem of identity development, are significant and how they influence coloured students' identity productions, development and negotiations in and out of the university environments (*Figure 4*).



<b>Microsystem</b>	<b>Mesosystem</b>	<b>Exosystem</b>	<b>Macrosystem</b>
Friendships	Mesosystem of student activism	Home communities	Public discourses on coloured identities and communities in post-apartheid South Africa
Student activism		Language	
Family		Religion	
Academic work			

**Figure 4.** The ecology of coloured university students' identity development.



### **4.3.1 Microsystem**

Microsystems are understood as “the most basic unit of the [ecology] model and are the location of the proximal processes considered central to development” (Renn, 2004, p. 34), such as: academic settings (e.g., classes, laboratory and recitation sections, study and project groups), residential and/or family settings (e.g., residence halls, student apartments, family homes), formal co-curricular and/or community settings (e.g., student organizations, intercollegiate and intramural athletic teams, performance groups, faith communities, community service sponsors), and informal social settings (e.g., friendship groups, dating or partner/spousal relationships). The microsystem level is crucial because it is comprised of the settings where important identity processes of formation, development and negotiations more frequently take place. Additionally, one of the main features of the microsystem, identified as the most instigative for students’ identity development, was that those processes being voluntary, so the development processes are more or less of a positive and continuous nature.

Renn (1998, 2004) selects the microsystems of academic work, friendship groups, social and dating life, and involvement in student activities as primary for the multiracial students she has interviewed, however she argues that the microsystems may differ for other student groups. As such, from my own interviews’ data with the coloured university students, I determined four significant elements for their development: friendship groups, involvement in student activities/student activism, family settings and academic work. These microsystem categories were of particular importance for the coloured students since they underscored how strongly their identity development was affected by these environments in their everyday experiences inside and outside university settings.

### **Friendship Groups**

Friendship groups as a microsystem were identified as particularly significant by the coloured students, since friendship groups formed the core of their social life and were vital in not only constructing, but more importantly in asserting their identities. Additionally the friendship groups on campus provided very diverse environments where the students produced specific practices and strategies to negotiate their identities, while simultaneously recognizing and

accepting the diversity of the student population in the universities. Benjamin, a student from the US, told me that he has a very diverse group of friends and he also lives in the international house on campus, which consists of several local students and visiting and/or international students studying in Stellenbosch:

So, what I am doing, I am taking my white friends to my house, because that is could be their first time of going to coloured community and coloured family, that's how I build a relationship with my friends. I have a diverse group of friends, black and white, because I stay in the house that is a student house and it is different from the residence, because it is smaller and we eat in our house, we cook together every evening, we cook together a meal, and by eating together we debate and learn, so it is mixed with girls and boys, English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, yeah, different cultures.

Clearly, for Benjamin as a passionate proponent of coloured culture, it was important that his friends would learn about his family and community's cultural practices and elements to recognize that coloured identities legitimately exist as independent and separate cultural entities in the new South African landscape. In a way, Benjamin also strategically negotiates his identity through asserting the existence of the coloured cultural differences and introducing them to his friends. In addition, the diversity of his student housing and group of his friends obviously provides a very fertile environment for identity development as well, as he is able to accept his cultural and identity differences and those of others.

Most of the students whom I interviewed were more or less exposed to a similar degree of diversity in their university settings, however for some of them it was difficult to integrate into the diverse environment for various reasons. For example, Walter and Daniel, students from the UWC, shared:

I only associate myself with certain type of people with whom I can identify myself, and this kind of people, they refer to themselves as coloured. I think coloured people they tend to associate people with their class or generally stereotype people that is how we go about and we would associate ourselves with people who are more appropriate friends, mostly coloureds, so I have mostly coloured friends, and whites, and a few African friends but not many (Walter, the UWC).

You are also open for being friends with black people, for example, but it seems like you

have more coloured friends - this is just because you can relate easier to them and you have the same experiences, and it is not really cool. All of my friends are different but in my hometown all of my friends are coloured because of the community there, so my friends are generally very different (Daniel, the UWC).

A similar sentiment of being friendly with people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds but feeling more comfortable with other coloured students was expressed by Robert, a freshman from the US. Robert and his brother were originally from the Eastern Cape, where the majority of the population is KhoiSan, so they grew up speaking Xhosa and attending the primary school where most of the students were KhoiSan. As a result, sometimes they felt a closer connection with the Black South Africans rather than coloured people. And Robert found himself relating and being friends more with the Black and coloured students on the Stellenbosch campus:

I think it is because I can speak Xhosa their home language, but I do have white friends and I get along with them, but in general situation I get along more with coloureds and blacks, and it is easier for us to interact than with whites, I think it is because we have similar experiences and backgrounds but I do have white friends as well.

Despite having some friends from other racial and/or ethnic backgrounds, Walter, Daniel and Robert still end up associating themselves with coloured groups in and outside the campus, and as an explanation they underscore the similar experiences and backgrounds as being from the generally marginalized and minoritized groups. Here, I find Walter's preference of having mostly coloured friends peculiar because Walter is the only student who was curious about his indigenous background and he felt that he needs to learn more of his KhoiSan heritage. However, it seems that Walter consciously chooses to associate himself with mostly coloured groups on campus, since they are the majority in the UWC student population. Additionally, he might not want to find himself rejected by Black South African student groups because of the existence of salient racialized groupings and, therefore, tensions between students of different backgrounds on campus. The reality of the rigid racialized groupings within the university settings has been noted by other students as well, for example, Sebastien, who studied at both the UWC and the US and who was of Malay coloured and Indian backgrounds, said:

When I was in the UWC I felt more coloured and here (*Stellenbosch University*) I felt more Indian. In the UWC, you had several clicks, for instance, Indian groups that were called 'Bombay' and 'New Delhi's', they were always hanging out in the library, you

know, and they told me “you don’t mix with us, you are not pure Indian”. The group Bombay people, they were fine with me but in a sense they were too afraid to accept me, and when I came here because most of people recognized me as an Indian rather than coloured, people with whom I was hanging out, so I felt more Indian than coloured.

Sebastien, similar to Walter, opts to making friends and associating himself with those student groups who accept him and in turn they obviously impact how he identifies himself. Being of Malay coloured and Indian background, Sebastien defines his identity as more flexible and changeable. As he describes it: “ I shift between ethnic identities, chameleon in a sense”. He finds his identity of *an ethnic chameleon* to be comfortable individually for him because it allows him to actually resist the assigned to him classification and blur it by shifting and maneuvering between various identities.

The influence of friendship groups on the identity development is represented as one of the strongest and most profound elements at the microsystem level in the model of coloured student development. The friendship groups not only increase the exposure to diversity and expand networks, facilitate students’ identity development through shared experiences and cultural practices, but also recognize and accept other groups’ differences. For example, for Sarah, who grew up in mostly coloureds neighborhoods and attended a high school of mostly coloured students, the diverse environment of the UWC was quite overwhelming in the beginning but eventually she grew to appreciate it and even re-constructed her own identity:

When I got into campus and I saw these different people, all I saw was this group can be, for example, the church group here, and other group there, and another group there. And I saw that after the second year, closer to the end of my third year, I found the group of people with whom I started to get associated with them. And I still associate myself with them now which shows that I matured a lot, I have found a group where to fit in, and the people that I want to associate myself with, and we are still the same people and we are still growing, but we are still the same people. I think the reason why I had so many different friends is that I didn’t know myself back then, I knew myself but I didn’t know what identity I wanted, and what I wanted for the future and everything. So sort of if I didn’t know myself, how could I know the group of people with whom I wanted to associate myself - that’s why I was going from group to group, but now I know myself and I know what I want to associate myself with, I sort of found myself more settled and

with one group only, and associating myself with a particular group of people.

For Sarah, her friendship group choice was mainly based on her social interests; when she started attending the UWC, she had already developed an interest in student politics, therefore she was readily accepted by the UWC student activists. Sarah did not necessarily consciously select friends according to her racial or ethnic background, as several other students did, on the contrary she associated herself with a group of students of various backgrounds but with the same social and political interests. The importance of the student activities in selecting friendship groups and the coloured students coming to terms with their identities was also underlined by Lennard, who was Sarah's friend as well as a member of the student leadership group she belonged to. Lennard said:

I got involved with the leadership group because I am not really good with education, but I wanted to do something else not only studying, and I ended up here, and at the end of the day, I don't regret that, the people are amazing, and it is also a diverse group of Black, coloured, white students, but we have common purposes: community development and power to the communities, and that what brought us together at the end of the day, not the culture or religion, just the common goal.

The importance of the student activities and student activism will be discussed in more detail further on, yet it is necessary to note that for students who happened to select their friendship groups according to their racial or ethnic markers, it was also critical to belong to a group that accepted them for their primary identities as student activists. Sarah and Lennard, for example, described themselves as coloured but when we had conversations, they emphasized their student activist identities as more important to them.

I already mentioned that the coloured students described their experiences with their identities in the university settings to be profoundly different from those at high schools. The majority of them stressed the racially and ethnically diverse environment of the universities and how it shaped their identity construction and understanding. However, the fact that the majority of the student population was coloured or white in the universities was appealing for some students because of their previous experiences. For example, John, a second year student at the UWC, who attended a Model C school with mostly white Afrikaner students, was excited to be at the university that had more coloured students than any other university in Cape Town. He explained:

I didn't feel myself, and I was just forcing myself, and I was only studying there (*high school*). After I could have gone to any university like the University of Cape Town, but I feel like home here and I am feeling satisfied here because I have more people to whom I can relate. But the first year was hard, because I didn't know the insides and outsides, and then during my second year I became involved with the Student Representative Council (SRC) and I am excited to serve next year as well. And I think we (*coloured students*) are in the middle and we can use these resources to empower ourselves and we just need to stay together and work together and stay by each other's side.

Similarly to Walter, Daniel and Robert, John opted to keeping closer to the coloured students because of his previous experience of being from the minority and marginalized coloured community during his high school years. Being the part of the university community, which was mostly comprised of coloured students, was important to John since he felt he finally found a group that accepted him as a 'self-proclaimed' coloured, and where his colouredness could be celebrated.

### **Involvement in Campus Activities/Student Activism**

The microsystems of involvement in campus activities and student activism for the coloured students were closely connected with the friendship groups microsystems, however they also offered additional important resources for identity development and negotiation. The majority of the interviewed coloured students was involved in various political, cultural and sports activities, student governments and academic groups. For each of the coloured students, there were different rationales for joining various student groups and being involved in student activities on campus. However as I found out the students were mostly motivated by how they viewed themselves and where they were from (coloured communities) and how other students, faculty and staff viewed them and their backgrounds – as such, identities negotiation on campus was a strong rationale for the students. Several of the interviewed students expressed very specifically their decision to become active on campus in order to promote coloured students' agency and politics on campus, yet within the discourse of minority student affairs. For example, Benjamin from the US was involved in student politics and student activism for seven years and explained:

Fighting so that I would say issues and challenges of minority students being seen by the

university, because we knew, unfortunately, when you come from a different background it is difficult for you to see persons like a black person, how he perceives the place, how he struggles in the place.

The student politics and establishing support for the minority students (Black South African and coloured students) in the US campus were of particular importance to Benjamin. Mainly because he was a minority student from the Cape Flats, an impoverished area in Cape Town, but also since he was highly critical of his community's passivity in politics and of their lack of social and political agency:

It is self-perpetuating cycle that happens, especially for coloured people, actually it was one of my big fears and contents. Their parents (*other coloured children's parents in his community*) didn't complete school so this is a complete cycle continuing, now we have the next generation that doesn't have education, and now education makes a difference of what type of job you have, what type of opportunities you create for yourself, and your general input into the society. Without the education, it is difficult for you to create a constructive contribution to what is happening in the country, so I feel that coloured people actually digging the whole for themselves with not completing schools, and a lot of coloured people do not complete schools, and there is a lot of drug abuse in coloured communities, and teenage pregnancies are also big.

Despite being critical towards his own community in particular and coloured communities in general, Benjamin was one of the students who proudly identified as coloured and promoted the existence and legitimacy of the coloured culture as much as he could. Clearly, Benjamin recognizes the marginalized status of coloured people in South Africa, and by being actively involved with the student activism and minority student politics, he overturns the self-marginalization discourse present among coloured people. As such, Benjamin utilizes an affirming discourse on coloured communities, which remarkably differs from the prevailing negative ones. He does so by embracing his colouredness and positioning himself as a well-respected and valued student activist on campus. Benjamin was associated with a number of the student groups and activities on campus, he noted among them:

I've been involved first with the Student Representative Council (SRC), which is the highest decision-making student group here - I've been there for three years. <...> I was also involved with the first generation students, something new, it started a few years

ago. The first generation students have never started the tertiary education experience at the institution, that's why that kid needs help at different challenges. What I try to do is how we can make the mechanisms to help that student succeed at the university so that student can be successfully in least amount of time, because what happens is that the black and coloured students they study longer than the white students because of first adapting to the university, not coming from the good school, lack of good solid base, all mixed up. Besides I fight the black students to be heard in mainstream in mainstream meaning by management by big student organizations. <...> We started a new political party that's going to campaign for municipal elections, these coming local elections. It is not like the mainstream politics where there is a specific ideology our main focus is to see how students can be on a management of Stellenbosch municipality because we are 20,000 students at this university, 20 thousand students so it makes 5% of the community and we don't have a representation on the local council and we feel that the people who are in council they don't see our needs, they don't attend to our needs, because we are just students and we are going to move away from that and we are also grown ups and youth, and people want to make a difference in the community and that's why we want a direct representation on the council, and that's why we are competing in the election. At the moment, we are 100 students who are involved in, 20 of us are involved in management and other students are members so far. We have students from KwaZulu Natal to Malay students, it is a big diverse group people who vote for the ANC, people who vote for the DA, a whole diverse group of students. It is going to be representative of the student population and actually we are a really diverse group of students from all aspects and what is also strong is we have a lot of ex-leaders, people who have a lot of influence.

Benjamin's support of student politics is not limited to coloured students on the US's campus, but extend to minority students' grievances in general within the university. In a similar way, Sarah from the UWC was heavily and successfully involved with various student activities on the UWC campus. At the time when I interviewed her, she was one of the leaders of the UWC Student Leadership Center, however even before the center, she proved herself to be an avid activist:

Before the Leadership Center, I was involved in so many student organizations already so



I continued to do what I was involved in, for example: I was a project manager of the Science Students Enterprise, and in the Project of Efficiency Challenge, I was also doing the Youth Summit Organizing Committee, I was one of the two delegates who were selected to go to the African Leader Students Summit. I was more involved on campus projects rather than outside projects, but at home I am the part of the church and the community project that church runs, so I am involved in the Soup Kitchen project that we are running at home, so I help with that, also I help the church and a non-profit organization, the one where they have the afterschool programs with the children from the area, where they help them with their homework, help them to read, with social activities, sports. And recently we decided to start an organization the Independent Student Body and we are going to run for the student elections.

For Sarah, whose parents were not “political at all” or activists and who was also a first generation university student, being a student activist was critical in how she viewed herself and determined her identity. She said:

I think this sort of involvement in politics is crucial for us (*coloured students/communities*) as ordinary citizens, because it gives us the opportunity to formulate our own identity.

Sarah, who describes herself as coloured within cultural terms but who also shifts from coloured identification to embracing a South African national identity, was another example of a student for whom involvement in inside and outside campus activities was most important because it facilitated her understanding of identity and provided opportunities in identity representations. As I learned from the interview with Sarah, her particular involvement with the Independent Student Body (ISB) was highly representative of how she viewed herself as a member of a marginalized and minority group. With her friends, she established the Independent Student Body organization, running against the Student Representative Council (SRC) during the student elections. The SRC was the largest student government group on campus, which mostly consisted of the Black South African students and supporters of the ANC. Sarah explained:

We have a very standard sort of student government and it is not very good one, it is a negative group of government, because it is one group of people constantly in the student government, in the student leadership positions in the SRC elections, and it is along racial lines, particularly one race. That’s why a lot of students don’t want to get involved in

student leadership or student government because they fear it is only racial and there are no other demographics, only racial. We want the apolitical organization at the UWC because of the racial distribution on this campus and the racial diversity on this campus, it is very easy to get caught up in the racial or political struggling, so we want students to come here and feel that this is the place where actually they are not faced with all the racial and political drama that exists on the national level, they should feel like this is the place where they can focus and study, and meet new people without the perceptions of race and political drama that they see at the national level.

Here, Sarah clearly sees herself as a member of a minority group underrepresented at the university level as well the national level, which parallels how the coloured communities see themselves in South Africa in general. After identifying the racialized ideological politics of the SRC, her friends and she established an oppositional apolitical and non-racialized discourse to subvert and contest the one dominated in the SRC. Sarah's identity as a coloured student is represented in this ideological opposition as an identity of a minoritized and marginalized group in the democratic South Africa that lacks its own social and political agency. I encountered several students who expressed the same feelings of marginalization and lack of social, cultural and political representations because of their coloured backgrounds. Moreover the similar sentiment was expressed by the older coloured people I had informal conversations with. The lack of coloured cultural representation on and outside the campus was the main rationale for why another coloured student became involved with student activities. When I interviewed Carlie, an Honours student from the UWC, she was among a group of students who started an initiative to organize a cultural event on the UWC campus. The focus was on coloured cultural representations and aimed towards coloured youth specifically. Carlie told me:

The idea was firstly: to focus on reviving art and culture in the Cape, and secondly the focus would be on coloured youth. So, we went to the great platforms for young artists, musicians, whoever who was artistically inclined in any way, to have an audience and have people to collaborate among themselves as artists. And of course the focus was on great alternatives, because we feel that they are old enough to be good positive models. We want to show that there are alternatives to being on the streets, you know, that you can be something you love and you can be good at it, and also that celebrating your talents and your abilities - so the focus was on the youth in particular. We feel that there

is the culture of artists in the Western Cape but we also want to try and reconstruct or construct an identity that is celebrated amongst coloured youth and youth in general. We want to prove something to people, because one of the guys came up and said that an accepting and celebrating something: does it mean that it is accepting an identity? And if it does, what we have accepted? You know, are we complacent to the something that has been perhaps imposed or constructed externally or are we saying that we want to break down and start from scratch have something new and embrace that? So it is something that has came up and I think it is a matter of dignity, the matter of restoring the dignity, the things that you need to grasp with. We haven't got the answers yet but all we know that at the end of this, we will empower people and we don't necessarily want to bring them down to race, because we are not excluding anyone. But we do feel that it is time that we can get recognition. It's also about creating spaces for artists here and for the youth, for young coloured people, so they can have positive role models, so they can break away from stereotypes, so they can be themselves in their own right, and be confident in their identities, so they don't have to resort to gangsterism, alcohol abuse, substance abuse. Yeah, so that's we have in mind.

For Carlie, the cultural aspect of coloured identity was of particular importance since she was highly interested in the arts and was involved in the modern dance ballet group on campus. The project that her friends and she initiated focused on the coloured cultural representations in the Western Cape, and they were thinking of involving not only coloured students but also well-known cultural activists who operated in Cape Town. It is evident that for Carlie, identity is a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon that can be de-constructed and re-constructed in multiple and diverse ways. As such, she explicitly stated: "we want to break down and start from scratch, have something new and embrace that". This statement mirrors the recent arguments to re-conceptualize coloured identities through "making and remaking of coloured identities as a fluid process involving agency" (Erasmus and Pieterse, 2000, p. 180) since the coloured identities and cultures are "less about what was lost culturally along the Middle Passage and as a result of genocide and more about the articulation of these diverse identities and fragments of cultural formations" (Erasmus and Pieterse, 2000, p. 182). Moreover, Carlie considers their project to have a potential to produce a symbolic space where other coloured students could feel as they belonged and could freely define their identity as coloured without feeling marginalized

and minoritized, but on the contrary their identities and cultures being recognized and celebrated. This point is particularly significant since as I discussed earlier the legitimacy and existence of coloured culture have been hotly debated and contested, however there is evidence that the coloured youth acknowledges and promotes their culture and its development in the new South Africa.

The interviews presented thus far demonstrate how the coloured students – as minority students and members of a marginalized group in South Africa - negotiate their identities within the university discourses. It is important to note that the students opted to contest the formal discourses on them, utilizing different strategies to contest their marginal status and identity, and construct new ones based on their student activism practices. However, as I stated earlier, by recognizing and emphasizing the uniqueness of their identities and cultures, they simultaneously assert the existence of cultural diversity on campus and put themselves in lines with other marginalized student groups. For example, Nikolas, an undergraduate student from the Stellenbosch University, whose distinct experience of being raised in the Eastern Cape and being able to speak Xhosa prompted him to feel closer to the indigenous group of South Africa (KhoiSan), was a member of the Black Management Forum (BMF). He told me about the complicated status that the BMF had within the University of Stellenbosch because of the racialized connotation of the word ‘black’ in its title:

The BMF is open to all the races but when we have our recruitment drive in the Neelsie (*the student center on campus*), firstly we get weird looks from white people because of its name ‘Black Management Forum’, and I respect any white person who comes up and asks ‘can I join?’ because it means that they are willing to learn things. What happened in this recruitment drive is we couldn’t sit in the same place because we couldn’t get 260 people, so we would go to people passing by and actually stop them, and tell them that this is the BMF but you can join.

In this interview excerpt, Nikolas mentions how white Afrikaner students, who are a majority in Stellenbosch, prefer ignoring the groups that might not necessarily target certain racial or ethnic student groups but for some reason are regarded as such. Here, Nikolas’ membership in the BMF and participation in other diverse campus activities, both specifically for minority students and generally for all the campus students, are to delineate and challenge the racial and/or ethnic boundaries existing among student groups. This conscious challenging of the campus racialized

discourse was obvious among all the interviewed students when they contested the marginalization status of their communities and identities strategically emphasizing their uniqueness as well as aligning themselves with other minority student communities. Moreover there was an urgent necessity to challenge the dominant discourses and raise a diversity awareness on campus, because as Sebastien, the US graduate student, poignantly points out in his interview:

If I speak about certain things it is very much like they (*white Afrikaner students and faculty*) are blind towards it, maybe because they don't want to be associated with it, or they completely step away from it, and they don't recognize it, and it's like *ostrich technique* - sticking the head in the sand. But also, in other terms, in our department for example, everyone is in a seminar and apartheid and race are brought up and they sort of quiet up and look at each other, and turn over, and pass it - they don't engage with it, in a sort of silence of un-engaging.

### **Family**

From the interviews data, I determined that the family microsystem for the coloured students identity construction and development were of particular importance because families overall are foundational to an individual's heritage and cultural consciousness. Additionally where families are located also define in what community and environment children are raised, what schools they attend, and even sometimes what university they enroll in. However, even taking into consideration the great impact of the family microstructures, the data suggest that a particular characteristic of the coloured students' identity formation and development within the family microsystem was created in opposition to those of their parents or other older members of the communities they grew up in. For example, Lennard, an UWC undergraduate student from the Cape Flats, explained this constructed generational differences in identity conceptualization:

We weren't directly affected by the apartheid. We were too young to understand really what was going prior 1994, because in 1994 I was 6 years old and I didn't understand really what apartheid was.

Similarly, Daniel, a UWC graduate student, mentioned the apartheid experience and the lack of that experience as the main factor in the generational differences in interpreting coloured

identities in the new South Africa:

I didn't feel any of the apartheid, I was born in 1989, I was 5 years old when the apartheid has ended. So, what do I know? So I didn't feel anything I would feel that people treating me different but I wouldn't just care.

The interviewed coloured students' discourses on the apartheid past and how their current experiences were different from the apartheid experiences of their parents and other older family members were similar to those of the students who participated in McKinney and van Pletzen (2004) study on South African students perceptions on apartheid. McKinney and van Pletzen (2004) distinguished three main student attitudes towards the past: "that students tend to place apartheid firmly in a historic past that they see as detached from (and therefore irrelevant to) their experience of the presents", "that they want to avoid confrontation with the apartheid past", and "that they have a strong desire to 'move on' to better things" (p. 165). The coloured students, who participated in this study, also expressed their desires to move on and leave 'the past to the historic past', however their perceptions of the past and present were in line with their determined disruption of the politics of racialization as remnants of the apartheid legacy still prevalent in coloured communities. Particularly, the students were critical of some of their older family members who supported the discourse on coloured people being situated in the middle – better than blacks but worse than whites, and constructed mistrust of black South Africans. Sarah and Lana, both from the UWC, shared:

In fact you will find a lot of coloured people in South Africa between the ages 55 and 65 who lived during the apartheid, they sort of, they don't know how to see themselves they were always in the middle of this huge battle between whites and blacks so that's how they see themselves. They don't have a direction, they don't see themselves as better or worse, they just there that's how they see themselves. And there are a lot of negative perceptions like coloured people are more better than blacks, and my parents still have that, and not only my parents but also my aunts, my uncles, my grandparents - they do have the perception that they are better than blacks. And we will be in public places and they would do the remarks not to them but mostly for themselves or company that is there 'oh, why must they be so loud?' (Sarah, the UWC)

It was the time when I was growing up and my grandparents used to tell me 'you can't

play with them, you cant play there, and it is a black man, a black man was a boogie man kind of'. Whenever we played outside, my parents were always saying 'no, come inside, you can't, a bad man will steal you', and that's why I think we identify black people like scary or because you don't really understand them or maybe because we didn't see them, we only had the bad side of the poor people, we didn't see other side, we were not exposed to something different, I think that's why I think people treat them as a low grade and have that separation because they didn't understand (Lana, the UWC).

The racism coloureds had against black South Africans is defined by Besteman (2008) as "an uncomfortable truth" (p. 177). In fact, these racist attitudes, still permeating in coloured communities, are the consequences of the apartheid policies, which constituted a medium status of a racialized coloured identity in their social, economic, political and cultural hierarchy that resulted in the constructed distrust and animosity of coloured communities towards indigenous groups of South Africa. When I asked Noah, a graduate student from the University of Stellenbosch, and Lana, a graduate student from the UWC, about an uneasy or non-existent relationship between coloured and black South Africans, Noah and Lana commented:

I really think that it exists. Look at my parents for example they still think that this is this and that is that, they don't see overlapping, and they can't be friends with blacks, and it is limited, not very much like before, but still limited (Noah, the US).

I think coloured people feel like during the apartheid they were ruled by the white man and now they think they are ruled by the black man. They always feel like they are always in between, they were too black to be white at that time and now they are too light to be black. That is always in here, my family always saying stuff, for example if there is someone in the family who couldn't get a job and then they would say it was because of black guy, only because of the skin color so they could get the opportunities only because of skin color. People in my immediate social group, I think, they are still, I don't want to say it, but they are still racists, they are still against black people. So, there is a word '*kaffir*' which is a derogatory word for black people, and my family is still using it, and they can say "oh, this 'k....'", if they see the black person doing something negative or something they don't like and call them that word (Lana, the UWC).

All of the interviewed coloured students recognize the existence of racism among older coloured

community members, resist it, and attempt to subvert it by creating oppositional identities to those of the older generation identities, based on the inclusiveness and open-mindedness. As Jacob, a Stellenbosch student, Carlie and Miranda, both the UWC students, put it:

If we are smarter and somewhat educated, and we will do the same exact things that someone else does, then maybe we are not smart and maybe we should be less stupid. If we can't learn from the mistakes of our parents, where we are going to be? I grew up in a home where my dad is not ok with black people, he is not ok with them quite often. I am not going to be like my dad, I am not going to hate black people and white people to begin with, I am hopefully not going to think in terms of these terminologies, I am going to be the person that I choose to be, and love and respect people for who they are, but not what they have (Jacob, the US).

I think that the youth in general is more open-minded, more liberal, like I said earlier they are not tainted by the past like our parents, like our grandparents, so yeah, they are much more open to changes that are happening, they are lot less aware of what I think racial differences or of differences that are based on the colour of your skin, so they can see people kind of as people and not see color first, as for our parents it is something so almost conditioned even if time has changed, people have changed. So, there is a difference between older and younger generations - the apartheid experience (Carlie, the UWC).

I realized it myself that my parents they have their own values and their values are not our values (Miranda, the UWC).

It is clear that the post-apartheid youth desire to construct the new South Africa where the racialized terms no longer dominate, however they also recognize the fact that race still lives in the present and they encounter it in their everyday experiences. During the interviews, I asked the students if they thought they would have an opportunity to live in South Africa that does not racially identify its citizens. Most of the students' responses presented, whilst acknowledging the current situation with race in South Africa, an optimistic view about South Africa's future as a non-racialized society:

I think a younger generation would change the things the way around, because of our age



- parents influenced us, but younger than us generation will be different. I think the younger generation would have different views because their environment will be much more diverse when we were younger, so that's why they will be able to say 'ok, I will be a South African' because they will be exposed to much more than us (Lennard, the UWC).

I think they do have different understanding of coloured community and I am very excited I think the younger generation is really have the totally different perception of color and the identity, they know that there is a thing called race and people are classified to racial groups, but they also know that it is not that defines them, so I think that give it a few years. In 20 years the things will be a lot different because right now, the older generation, they still have the memories of apartheid, all the time replaying in their mind, so whenever they look at someone they are not looking at with the fresh perspective, they are looking with that at the back of their mind, and they can say that they are not, but they still do and they always tend to do that. Whilst, me and my generation, we never lived in the apartheid and we have nothing to keep replaying what our parents are telling us (Sarah, the UWC).

As such, the family microsystems played a double role in the coloured students identity constructions and development: firstly, families generally influenced student identities during their childhood and adolescence, choice of community and family environment, education, and overall construction of who they were and where they came from; yet, secondly, the coloured students opted to delineate from their parents' interpretations of coloured identities and colouredness rigidly in a racialized discourse, and constructed their own identities, based on the recognition of equality and multiculturalism, however acknowledging the problematic past of South Africa but willing to go forward as 'not tainted by the past'.

### **Academic Work**

According to Renn's (2004) findings, the microsystem of academic work (e.g., classrooms, laboratories, study groups, courses, examinations, faculty members, etc.) in colleges and universities commonly influence students' identity development by "contributing to their

knowledge about the cultures of their heritage, by providing a forum for students to write and speak about their experiences, and by helping students to develop cognitive skills and models to understand the construction of identity” (p. 84). Similarly to Renn’s research participants, the coloured students I interviewed recognized the impact of higher education on their identities and their development, though these students did not underscore the microsystem of academic work as highly significant in their identity development. Yet, most of the respondents did admit that the university environment initiated their pondering over, and to some degree shaped their identities. For example, Carlie, a UWC student, who according to her words had ‘a sheltered life’ before enrolling to the UWC, said:

So I started thinking of that (*identity*) maybe later in life, even when I started studying at the university. It just comes about, you know, talks about the identity become more prominent, you know, and that kind of forces you to think where you fit in and how you fit in, and what role you play in the society, that’s kind of thing.

For Carlie, her identity construction was the result of the faced diversity within the university settings such as classrooms and student groups, while for Sebastien, a graduate student of the US, his enrollment in the anthropology graduate program was of particular importance as he learned more about the past and present of South Africa from an academic and critical perspectives:

I can say it was awakening of a more liberal consciousness, not only learning and being aware, but also implications about the apartheid, and also on campuses I assert myself in not only the past South Africa but also in the current South Africa.

For some students, their experiences within the academic work microsystems encouraged them to explore more of the cultural aspects of their identities by emerging themselves in the cultural activities on campus. For example, Nikolas from the US stated that his high school interests and his first year at the university circled only around academics, but later on he found himself involved in working with cultural events that strongly influenced his identity development:

My identity at the university got altered a bit because I went back to cultural stuff, my first year I was extremely academic. It was a big change because at high school it was sort of rating system, so I could see how I was performing in terms of how other people were performing. But at the university you don’t know where you are ranked, there is no top 10 in your class. Then my identity, my leadership was a part of and became the

prominent characteristic of myself, so I saw myself as a leader which I never did before so that became the part of my identity. I also got involved with the group which is called Urban Scapes to bring more street culture to the university, like graffiti, poetry, floetry, spoken words, stuff like that.

In a similar manner, Walter, an undergraduate student from the UWC, arrived at the university without a definite self-identification and with a cultural knowledge deficit, however his enrollment in social sciences classes and his encounter with the diverse and multicultural university environment prompted him to embrace an indigenous identity:

I came closer to my KhoiSan identity here at the university when I became more exposed to different cultures, when I was wondering how to identify myself and where I fit in, and what kind of person I am, and where I fit in this racial barrier. You see, I have to come to terms with my identity as an individual.

If for Walter, whose acquired knowledge of the indigenous cultures of South Africa led him to embrace an indigenous identity, Bryan, also a student of the UWC, found himself in a different position. When he learned more of the historical background of coloured communities in colonial and apartheid South Africa, Bryan re-constructed his perspective on colouredness:

Well, I mean, if you had asked me for instance a year ago, I would probably say that I don't refer to myself as a coloured person because I found the term derogatory and highly offensive. <...> But the term coloured can be changed and reshaped as a form of cultural identity and now I gladly refer to myself as coloured.

Here, Bryan refers to an important function of the academic work that allows acquiring theoretical knowledge and practical strategies of re-constructing and re-shaping of one's identity. Through university classes, Bryan's understanding of the concept of identity changes from fixed, static and unchangeable to non-fixed, fluid and changeable, and this particular learned knowledge impacts the re-evaluation and re-construction of his own identity – from considering coloured identities as derogatory and negative to re-shaping them as culturally significant and positive. In all of these cases, the microsystem of academic work is presented as valuable and significant for the coloured students' identity constructions and development, as the various academic settings provided the additional resources and strategies for the students' understandings of their identities within the diverse university settings.

#### 4.3.2 Mesosystem of Student Activism

According to Renn (1998, 2004), microsystems do not exist and operate separately from each other. They interact at the mesosystem level. Mesosystems are defined as “a web of involvements that comprises linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person. Special attention is focused on the synergistic effects created by the interaction of developmentally instigative or inhibitory features and processes present in each setting” (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 22). In her study, Renn (2004) recognizes the mesosystems of interactions between academic, social, co-curricular, and familial microsystems (p. 37) within college and university settings, and emphasizes the created mesosystem of peer culture as the most significant influence on college student development. However Renn also admits that the peer culture mesosystem is not the only one predominantly operating and impacting student identity development. On the contrary, interactions within and outside campus (e.g., friendship groups interacting with family or academic work interacting with religious community) also have potential to produce significantly influence student development and identity (p. 38).

Departing from Renn’s identified mesosystem of peer culture, I will focus on the mesosystem of student activism as student activism/involvement in student activities was underscored by the interviewed coloured students as the most significant in their identity development. This particular mesosystem is originated through the interactions and mutual operations of the microsystems of friendships, involvement in student activities/student activism, family and academic work. For most of the students, their involvement in student activities/student activism, or holding membership in student groups with various goals and objectives from political to cultural, were interconnected with their family backgrounds, community experiences and, of course, friendships. For example, Carlie’s being one of the organizers of the cultural event on the UWC campus to promote awareness about the coloured culture started from a conversation with her friends where they discussed where they would fit as coloured people within the diverse South African society and whether they have something to add to the cultural development of coloured people. Carlie told me:

A group of us got together and it was myself and I was talking to one of my friends over the coffee, and I put out this idea, and I told him the idea and he was like, well, he was

thinking something similar, so we actually decided to combine and work together as opposed to doing on our own and competing for funding or whatever. That's how we actually ended up working together. <...> There are already projects that are orientated on the arts, but ours is not only about arts but as I have said it is about empowerment, it is about upliftment, so I haven't found anything similar or as holistic as ours. There are, of course, the projects that are geared for youth but this isn't as holistic as ours because we are trying to get all the aspects together.

Here, the mesosystem of student activism, supported by the interactions among microsystems of friendship and student involvement/student activism as well as academic work, influences Carlie's identity development as a coloured student and an artist. Additionally, since the event is targeted towards coloured youth inside and outside the UWC campus, it seems that the mesosystem has the potential to expand its influence onto other students as well. Similarly to Carlie's case, Sarah was also influenced by her friend, who was her academic tutor, to participate in student activities and even establish the student group, Independent Student Body:

In my second year, I met one person, he was actually my first year tutor in politics and when I met him I think it was a life changing experience for me because my entire perception changed, because he was very much into politics, and he was very active on campus, he was active in SRC, and he knew a lot of people in student organizations and when he asked me what I want to do, and when I told him what I want to do, so he asked me 'Why aren't you involved?' I answered that 'I don't want to be here' but he asked me again 'Don't you want to make a most of it?', and he gave me a very long speech, and he introduced me to Tanya, who was in charge of Leadership Academy, and after meeting her, she threw me the details of being involved in student organizations and at that time myself and my student guide, his name is Kamilio, two of us, we started our own organization. That's how I got involved on campus and from the time when I got involved I actually found a lot of things that I am interested in.

In Sarah's case, the mesosystem of student activism was revolving around the microsystems of friendships, academic work and student activism, and it assisted her in not only changing her mind about the university she was attending (as she disliked being at the UWC during her first year), but she also transformed herself and her identity from a regular student to a passionate leader and student activist. The same friendships, involvement with student activities, and even

family microsystems impacted Laura's involvement with the LesBiGay group on the University of Stellenbosch campus and played a great role in her becoming a member of the group advisory committee. Laura told the details of her development as a group member and leader:

I was in administration and now I am in advisory position. I have been involved with the society for so long. I seemed to have met a lot of people along the way. First, I started going to the events and I joined the group in my first year of university, and I really worked with people who were in charge, and I was friends with the previous chairperson and vice chairperson. Because the group was much smaller, I could get to know everybody, now the group is quite big, so we have over 120 members. Most of people who I came across they don't have any issues, but the thing is that I don't know people who doesn't like the society or who is homophobic and I don't really spend time with people like that because I think I wouldn't feel comfortable, but most of people are supportive, for example I invite all of my friends to events and stuff. The society has been established over 12 years ago and the person who established it was one of my very good friends and friends with my sister.

When asked about who or what influenced them to show interest in student politics and become a student activist, some of the interviewed students mentioned their family members as well as family legacy. Nicole, an undergraduate student from the US, said:

My activism basically started very early, like I was born an activist because I came from family of activists, because my parents were non-white, they were against apartheid system in the country, and when they were my age they were doing all sorts of things to see the democracy to come to South Africa. My dad was a professional football player but he was a DJ as well, so he moved in with a lot of hippies and he had a diverse group of friends as well. My dad always used to tell me 'If you are a champion, people always want to associate with you, people always want to be associated with a champion and that automatically eliminates what race you are, what class you come from'. So for me it was what was important, you are trying to be best in what you are doing, and people would always want to be associated with you and forget about race and all that kinds of things.

Nicole's parents' involvement with the anti-apartheid movement and a general politically conscious stance generated her interest in activism and resulted in her becoming involved with several student activities while attending the US. When I asked her to describe herself, she self-

identified as of coloured identity, yet culturally positioned, and it seems that her being actively involved with the student activities and positively representing her home community and family makes her a great role model for other coloured students on campus. Similar to Nicole's parents, Miranda's parents were also avid anti-apartheid activists and they consciously guided their children's interest in the local and global politics and encouraged them to become involved with various activities in high school and university levels. Miranda said:

I honestly don't know, but I think that why I am involved, it comes from the home and the environment that you grew up and I think that's a family thing. I think that's what you are exposed to, that makes you who you are and I think I wouldn't be as politically active as I am now if not parents. My political consciousness comes from my parents, like my mother would tell me once in celebration of Nelson Mandela's release from prison 'You know, we took you with us, we carried you with us', you know, things like that. My parents are politically conscious and my house is full of political books. We have family friends in the ANC so that comes from them too. Yeah, my dad and I have lots of conversations, and we'll discuss politics.

It seems as the friendship and family microsystems are particularly influential and frequently referred to as they played principal roles in the students' identity development as activists inside and outside university settings. However I found some instances when home community or the environment where the students grew up in (not only that of immediate family and friendship groups but of the larger community scale) appeared to be crucial in student development. For example, Nikolas, an undergraduate student from Stellenbosch University, who was involved with the Black Management Forum student branch on campus, attributed his initial interest in this group to someone who grew up in a predominantly Black South African community in the Eastern Cape:

The organization that very much influenced me and my development as a leader is a Black Management Forum (BMF), it started as a party in 1976 during the apartheid by black managers who thought that they need the black managerial leadership in South Africa. And when apartheid was fading out, they thought that this is a perfect opportunity for black people to develop and grow as a population. In 1986 the student chapter was founded and that's where the body moved to tertiary level. They got involved to bring that message down to student bodies, and now there are 38 branches in South Africa out

of 43 universities, so we are basically everywhere. I was introduced to BMF through my friend, who was a chair, and we got along very well. Sometimes I regard myself as being black because all of the stuff that I do, because I easily identify with black people and majority of my black friends they call me 'my coloured black friend' because I can speak the language that they speak, I understand what they speak, and it is just so casual.

For Nikolas, his home community environment, predominantly consisting of the KhoiSan South Africans, was prominent in his identity development. He frequently associated himself with the Black South African community, he spoke their language, and his Black friends even referred to him as 'our black coloured friend'. Here, it is evident if Nikolas had not experienced being raised in the Eastern Cape area, he would not have been able to construct a close relationship with the local communities and become a member of the Black Management Forum group. Although, it is also clear that the microsystems of friendship groups and, to some degree, family, interacted within the mesosystem of student activism, yet it seems that Nikolas found his experiences with the home community influence more critical in his development as a student activist. In like manner, Daniel from the UWC also noted his initial involvement in home community church as influential in his further being involved in student activities on campus:

I got myself into a lot of leadership work at the church, for example, I am a youth leader, and I believe that you cannot treat another person based on the color because they have the same abilities as you so we need to accept other people's differences and accommodate their differences and they will do the same to you. So when I came to the university, I got involved with the student enrollment unit and we go to schools to promote studying at the university and other issues as well, so we try to be involved with the communities close to the university campus.

Just as Nikolas, Daniel identifies his home community experiences and particularly his responsibilities as a youth leader in his community church as initiation to evolve as a student leader on campus. Interestingly, Daniel, himself being a first generation university student in his immediate family from an impoverished township of Mitchell's Plain, also utilizes those personal experiences to promote education among other community youth. Here, Daniel's development as a student activist is impacted by the interactions among such microsystems as family, academic work and involvement in student activities within the mesosystem of student activism. Similarly, Bryan from the UWC attributed his personal experiences as another first



generation university student attending higher education institution in his family to his development as a student activist through his involvement in the student program that was created to assist first generation university students in transitioning from high school to a university environment on the UWC campus. He said:

I am the only child, the first generation person to go to higher education, my parents I'd say that they are very proud and that's why I got involved with this program and I worked with them for a long time. What we do is we assist students in transition from high school to university, we help them socially, and also we assist them academically. So basically we work with the first years academically but we work on the residences, that is why our offices are situated in the residences, so this is basically what we do and I joined the program in my second year and I've been here ever since.

Evidently, each student's identity development was impacted by various factors within the mesosystem of student activism through the interactions among various microsystems. However it seems that their positioning themselves as student activists was the main theme that dominated their discussions on how they would interpret their identities; their involvement in student activities was presented as the primary instigator of their identity development. Thus, in this particular study, the mesosystem of student activism is determined as playing a significant role in the coloured student development within and outside university settings.

#### **4.3.3 Exosystem**

The interactions at the exosystem level are defined by Bronfenbrenner (1993) as "the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives" (p. 24). Renn (2004) emphasizes the importance of the exosystems in student identity development "because they shape developmental possibilities and pose a variety of forces and resources to the individual" (p. 40). In her study, Renn (1998, 2004) included the aspects of student's life that occurred prior the college experience, and focused on the exosystems such as: family, including religion and cultures learned at home, high school and community. In a similar manner, I determined the

exosystem factors of home communities, language and religion as the frequently referred by the interviewed students as those of importance, therefore the most noteworthy.

### **Home Communities**

I found the exosystem factor of home communities to be the most influential in students' identity development. The primary reason why the students emphasized home community environments was that, similarly to the students' construction of oppositional identities to those of their parents and other older community members, the students regarded their home communities to be stuck in the apartheid past and not willing to develop and go forward. Moreover, a number of students felt rejected by their home communities only because of their differing life choices and goals. For example, Lana, a graduate student from the UWC who comes from a highly impoverished neighborhood in Mitchell's Plain, said:

In my community where I lived for 4 years, I am seen as an outsider because I am studying. People think that I am like something that I am not. They always make remarks when I walk down the street because people in my area are very poor, girls having children at the young age. My father thinks they are just having children to get the grant from the government, so they will have like 4-5 children, the children are playing in the roads and mother doesn't care, she gets the money and uses it for drugs instead of spending it on food, and children ask for food from the neighbors - so that's most girls in my area, guys are the same into drugs. And then I come home, I dress different, I don't do drugs, I am in school, and they look at me with judgment and I am scared to walk on my own road because I am holding my laptop and stuff like that. I don't feel like I am in my own community, you know, that is supposed to be your safe environment. But in my grandmother's area where I grew up, I know everybody, and it is also the same situation, but I grew up with them, so I know where they live, so I am not that afraid, so I will walk with more confidence. I am fearful because I know that they are involved in drugs but at least I know where they are. In the beginning of the studying, I traveled by bus, but then I was robbed two times in my area walking to the bus, so my mother said I should rather take a lift. I have several friends from Mitchell Plains and one guy has a car, and we, four girls, are driving with him everyday, so he drops us in front of our houses, so I don't have

to walk to the bus stop anymore, it's safer.

Unfortunately, Lana's feeling as an outsider in her own community was not a singular example. For Walter, an undergraduate student from the UWC who also came from one of the poor townships in the Cape Town area, his disappointment towards his own home community was a catalyst to embrace a South African indigenous identity, particularly KhoiSan. He explained this attitude through a specific recent incident:

I've been assaulted, I've been robbed that's why I am very cautious, it is just a bad experience, and it was your own people so it was something that I couldn't understand, because we are the same race, and that's why I think that a lot of coloured people are selfish, like every man for himself. But if you go to the African communities, you will see this warmth, and the same is with white people and they have this support. And I think in our culture we don't have that support. When I was robbed I was on the sidewalk of the road and other side of the road there were other people, walking coloured people, and they just ignored me as if nothing happened, it was not in my neighborhood though because I went to the barber to cut my hair, but I knew the person who was passing me and he just ignored the accident, and we went to the same school and I could recognize him by his face, but he was like just nothing happened, and that is something that concerns me in today's society as well. And I think that's why we don't have anything that promotes our interest we don't have that unity.

Walter's feeling of disappointment towards people in his home community and generally coloured communities in general, who, according to him, 'do not have support and unity' is the result of the critical conditions of the impoverished township communities all over South Africa. The poor townships surrounding Cape Town are permeated by crime, violence, drugs, alcohol abuse, lack of education, unemployment and socially, economically, politically, and culturally marginalized. Certainly, Lana and Walter recognize the detrimental realities of their home townships but refuse to be the part of that reality by constructing discourses and realities for themselves, which drastically contrast those of their former peers and other community members. Similarly to Lana and Walter, Benjamin, a graduate student from the US, expressed a harsh critique of his home community and, in general, coloured communities:

I think the state is trying to do something, but it's almost like a parent trying to feed a child but child doesn't want to open its mouth to eat. And it also depends on the

community, you have to will to change, you have to will to do something. I feel that our community doesn't have a big will to get out of the circumstances. This was especially in the community where I stayed my first year, a very-very poor community. And I can see that a lot of people fall into the same cycle as their parents because that was the only example that they saw of. Then think 'my parents are only working for 200ZAR a week and they also did not complete schools, and my parents are surviving on it, and I can also survive on it'.

Benjamin's comparison of coloured communities to a child who does not open its mouth to be fed by a parent and his statement that coloured people do not have will to change and develop in the new South Africa are particularly worth mentioning because, clearly, the interviewed coloured students recognize the fact the post-apartheid coloured communities still lack social, economic and political agency. This agency deficiency is a direct outcome of the apartheid politics and practices of domination, including racialized segregation and social inequality that fed into the communities' lack of education and any sort of developmental prospects. However, despite the frustration expressed by a number of the coloured students about their communities and open critique of its residents, there were those who described their communities as being tightly interconnected, neighborly, helpful and supportive of each other. Lennard, an UWC undergraduate student who came from the Cape Flats, a similarly impoverished area as the previous students' home townships, had a positive view of his home community because of the coloured cultural features:

I would say that there is a coloured culture, coloured people are very family orientated in a sense where it doesn't mean where you belong, but you are still a family, especially in a coloured community, you look out for your neighbors for their children, and you look after them. If your neighbor sees something wrong with your child, that person helps the child, so it is like a family. So there will be always a close family regarding to coloured community, everybody always knows everybody. And, you know, sometimes you go to other neighborhoods and some people don't even know their neighbors, they only stay in their places, and if they go out they will take their car and go somewhere else, but where I grow up we used to go out and play soccer for example just go out and play other games with neighbor's kids.

Evidently, the students developed feelings of frustration and disappointment towards their home

communities or sustained positive and close relationship with their neighbors and other community members that strongly impacted their identity construction and development. Several students, having not found resources and options for identity development in their home communities and not being satisfied with the identity inscribed to them as the members of certain coloured communities, opted to deconstruct those identities and recreate new ones within the university settings. However, there were also a number of students who blended their positive community experiences with their university experiences and it further developed their identities. In sum, the degree of the impact produced by the exosystem factors of home communities was highly dependent on the students' individual experiences within their home communities.

### **Language**

The exosystem factor of language background and its influence on the identity development of students is imperative as language background is considered to be an important identity marker. Weedon (1987) states: "Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet, it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed" (p. 21). However, I found that, despite the primary role of native language on identity formation, the interviewed coloured students did not emphasize language to be of particular importance in their experiences related to identity. Most of the coloured students, who participated in this study, were bilingual and some trilingual: they were fluent in English and Afrikaans languages, and some students additionally spoke Xhosa language. The primary spoken language was dependent on the family and community language background and sometimes medium of instruction in schools and universities. For example, Lana, an MA student of the UWC, mostly spoke Afrikaans at home and within the community but was also comfortable with speaking English while at the university (the UWC is an English medium institution) and with some of her friends. She explained:

The community where I am from they mostly speak Afrikaans, a very few speak English. Most of my friends speak English and also mixed, some of my friends cannot speak Afrikaans at all even if they were raised in Cape Flats or Mitchell's Plain - their parents only spoke English to them. But you get exposed to Afrikaans in your school and your

classroom so you have some Afrikaans. I would speak English but I would use some Afrikaans terms but not a lot, and some friends they can only talk Afrikaans, they can't speak English so it is adapting kind of thing. Some of my friends some of them can only speak English and some of them can only speak Afrikaans, and someone will ask something in English and another one answers in Afrikaans, so it is interesting. Sometimes I will speak in English, sometimes I will answer in Afrikaans, so its very mixed but its not very conscious thing that 'oh, I will speak English now' or 'I will speak Afrikaans now', it just happens you know.

Lana grew up as bilingual so it was not difficult for her to switch from one language to another. However, as I found from the interviews, some of the students had to learn or practice either English or Afrikaans for academic purposes. Daniel, also a UWC graduate student, said:

My home language is Afrikaans, in high school I did everything in Afrikaans. When I came to matric (senior), there were five students who wanted to do the physics of a higher grade and also wanted to do the math and accounting, and we formed one class, which was in English. I am bilingual but before that all I did was in Afrikaans, and I used to speak English to my cousins, whose first language was English, and I felt that I needed to speak more English rather than Afrikaans. That is why my English is more improved now for an Afrikaans person. And also all of my teachers were telling me that English is a teaching language in most of universities except Stellenbosch University.

Daniel consciously and independently made a decision to speak and practice his English as he considered it to be more appropriate for his academic goals.

Jacob, a student from the University of Stellenbosch, made the same decision to replace Afrikaans with English. However, unlike Daniel who chose English because of his academics, Jacob's decision was strongly personal and manifested his determination to change, evolve as an individual and develop his identity after some personal issues he had in the beginning of his academic career. He explained:

The first year was rough, and the second year was rougher because it was only me, and I was in a place where I was not in charge, where I could never be in charge, and where it is never going to be easy to be in charge. So I was quiet and I just kept it inside, but after the first month I was like I am moving on, and I am not speaking Afrikaans anymore, and I need to change this, so I turned off the Afrikaans after my first year and haven't been

back yet. I was raised Afrikaans so I can understand it. But I consider myself a South African person who chooses to converse primarily in English.

Jacob regarded Afrikaans as one aspect of his past life that drastically changed when he left his home community, whilst English was a representation of a new life. Interestingly, his language preference altered in the same manner as his identity determination did. He used to consider himself as a coloured person while in high school but adopted a South African identity while in the university. It is evident that Jacob's decision to speak primarily English was a marker of the South African identity inclusivity as a world world spoken language.

For Lennard, an undergraduate student from the UWC, English as his primary language was his parents' choice:

Afrikaans is my second language, English was my first language because my parents thought it would be better for my sister and me to be English speaking, and that's how we ended up with English. I had to take the Afrikaans classes but I didn't enjoy my Afrikaans classes, so I don't talk much Afrikaans. But we also speak a slang of Afrikaans and even my sister yesterday had an experience when someone asked her 'you speak coloured?' It is kind of slang, kind of Afrikaans.

The slang Afrikaans, mentioned by Lennard, also sometimes referred as 'kitchen Afrikaans', is frequently described as an important marker of coloured identity and represents a hybridized language that is a mixture of a transformed version of formal Afrikaans, indigenous languages elements, and English language elements. Additionally, every community historically adapted and appropriated Afrikaans to their local needs, therefore the coloured Afrikaans differs from area to area. For instance, Sarah from the UWC said:

My first language is mixed because I came from the Cape Flats, so we don't have one first language we interchange between English and Afrikaans, speak English or Afrikaans or even combined. The Cape Flats Afrikaans is totally different from the formal Afrikaans, which is why we can't interchange and sometimes understand each other.

Benjamin from the US, who also grew up in the Cape Flats, mentioned the same difference in formal and the Cape Flats Afrikaans:

When you come from the Cape Flats you speak a certain dialect of Afrikaans, and here they speak a more formal dialect. So it is one of the other things that influenced my language, because when I come home I speak and my friends look at me weirdly because

I feel I speak more upper class Afrikaans which is different.

Here, Benjamin's identity development was clearly affected by his adopting a more formal version of Afrikaans, which is the main language of instruction in the US. For Benjamin, who already expressed his feelings of being rejected by his home community, his preference of the formal Afrikaans vis-à-vis Cape Flats Afrikaans seems to become another consequence of his discontent over his home community and its residents' situation. Yet, I would not conclude that Benjamin was willing to entirely break away from his community and past experiences by adopting a formal Afrikaans or being critical towards coloured communities. For Benjamin, his identity, attitudes and therefore choices and decisions he makes are more flexible, fluid, and adaptable. He tends to maneuver through different contexts, identities and identity markers, as he still develops his own personal identity.

If for some students, language choice was more of a convenience and usefulness issue, for others, it was a politically motivated choice, either of their own or their parents, and a choice that reflected the social and political moods of that time frame. For example, Sebastien, an MA student of the US, shared:

When I was in primary school I was struggling with Afrikaans and I don't even have an excellent Afrikaans right now, but the school I went to was English and they taught Afrikaans as a second language. So I struggled with Afrikaans and my parents would tell me 'Oh, don't worry Afrikaans is going to go away soon because of the new government and all' and I was like 'OK, I am not going to worry about this, if this is going to go away, who needs it?' So I didn't bother with Afrikaans, that doesn't mean that I didn't work hard in the subject, so I was basically OK through the high school career. But I was not very much in learning Afrikaans. And my family was like 'it is a white language', you know, language of the apartheid past, so Afrikaans generally was seen as an oppressive thing, that's why in my family we spoke English.

Similar to Sebastian's parents, most of South Africans consider the Afrikaans language to be the language of oppressors and of apartheid past. Miranda, an undergraduate student from the UWC whose parents were actively involved in the anti-apartheid movement, also grew up in a predominantly English-speaking environment, though she was fluent in Afrikaans as well:

Afrikaans language was not an issue to me because at the moment my current friends are Afrikaans, so we kind of speak the mixture of English and Afrikaans. Not in the same



sentence, but they ask me something and I will speak in English, and they will ask in Afrikaans. I can speak Afrikaans fluently. What I have noticed, at school as well, is that educated coloured people and my parents they raised their children as English, and it was like a political statement because the Afrikaans was connected to the National Party, the National Party was Afrikaans, so my children will not speak Afrikaans. And what I have discovered when I got to school is, I did go to coloured private school, the Afrikaans classes were poor children that's another thing that I have noticed, the Afrikaans classes were the poorer students.

Here, interestingly enough, Miranda associated English with the political stance of her parents, but also she noted that the lower class children in her school were speaking Afrikaans as their primary language, whilst her friends and herself, being from the middle class and more affluent families, spoke English as their first language. Comparing with the previous interview excerpts of Lana, Benjamin and Sarah, who grew up in the lower class families and spoke Afrikaans, it is obvious that language served as a marker of not only ethnic or racial background but also of a class background.

These interviews display that the language as an exosystem factor was important for the identity development primarily as it was representative of their home communities and families, however there were some instances when the coloured students replaced one language with another (for example, Afrikaans with English) to form a new identity or develop their identities in a different direction due to academic or personal circumstances.

## **Religion**

Religion as an exosystem factor was not frequently mentioned by the interviewed coloured students unless the religion played a significant role in the students' lives. During the interviews, I directly asked whether the students' religious backgrounds influenced their identity development, and for most of the students religion was not an important aspect. Lana, a graduate student from the UWC who self-identified as Muslim, and Jacob, an undergraduate student from the University of Stellenbosch who self-identified as Christian and was thinking of studying theology and eventually becoming a priest were the exceptions. Lana and Jacob asserted:

I knew I was coloured and I was Muslim so I identify myself in these categories, but

Muslim first and then coloured. I am aware of different things in my religion, but I think I am different because my father is Christian, so I think I was raised differently, not typical Muslim way. I am not wearing a headscarf now and I am not dressed that way. But I do believe my religion identifies me and I do believe in rituals and all that but I still think that I am different because I was exposed to other religions (Lana, the UWC).

I consider myself to be a Christian and that defines who I am. So, being South African is a part of who I am but not the fundamental part of me. And I say to myself to be Christian, and what it teaches us about people, and loving them, and accepting them, and not tolerate but love and accept, not relate but somewhat understand what is happening and I think because I know Christ I was able to or at least enabled to try much harder than everyone else do and be what you are at the moment (Jacob, the US).

Despite the seemingly insignificance of religion in the exosystem for the majority of the interviewed students, it was influential for some of them. Just as language affected several students and was secondary for others, religion was a particularly influential factor for Lana and Jacob's development and provided them with additional developmental possibilities and promoted personal characteristics and beliefs. It appears that the exosystems have an indirect impact on the coloured students' development unlike the microsystems that seemed to figure prominently in the identity development of most of the students.

#### **4.3.4 Macrosystem of Public Discourses on Coloured Identities and Communities in Post-Apartheid South Africa**

The macrosystem, defined by Bronfenbrenner (1993) as: "The overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristic of a given culture, subculture, or other extended social structure, with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in such overarching systems" (p. 25). In her study, Renn (2004) recognizes the macrosystem in the United States as including "the sociocultural environment made manifest in the proximal processes of student development", and further mentions such patterns as "social stratification and mobility, the economic system and capitalist ideology, a belief in the ideal of

meritocracy and achievement of individual potential, as well as cultural understandings of gender, race, and ethnicity” (p. 40). As such, the macrosystem can construct and provide the developmental opportunities that will be available within micro-, meso-, and exosystems. Renn’s study on the multiracial students’ development in college explores the factors that influenced the development of students’ understanding of race and culture – the concepts majorly instigated the students’ development.

Since the focus of this study is on coloured students’ identity development, I determined the macrosystem of the public discourses on coloured identities and communities in post-apartheid South African society as the most influential overarching pattern existent in micro-, meso-, and exosystems that served as the predominant instigator and inhibitor of the coloured students’ development. Interestingly, the macrosystem of the post-apartheid public discourses on coloured identities and communities certainly provided the identity development and interpretation opportunities, however they served as the motivators of the opposite identity constructions and opposite discourse productions. In this sense, the coloured students became aware of the public discourse on coloured identities, communities and cultures as racialized, illegitimate, marginalized, extremely fragile and inconsistent. This specific discourse catalyzed the constitution of an agency that initiated the deconstruction of that very discourse and construction of a new one, based on their personal experiences and influenced by the multiple factors within micro-, meso-, and exosystems. Thus, the newly constructed discourse by the coloured students argues that the coloured identities, communities and cultures are in fact ethnicized, diverse, highly heterogeneous, ambiguous and fluid, yet recognizable, specific and profoundly creative.

There were several dominant themes that emerged from the data that are relevant to the macrosystem of the public discourses on coloured identities and communities, which in its turn emerged in the students’ discussions on their identity development. One of the major themes, raised by the coloured students in terms of their identities, was the fact that in some instances, the students were reluctant to define themselves within provided categories – particularly in the cases of filling out state or administrative forms or generally when they were required to do so. For example, Laura from the US said:

You know, sometimes I just laugh at things because, you know, for example in the university registration forms it says ‘coloured group’ or ‘brown’, so I just laugh at that.

But for me it is just another way of categorizing people and it is supposed to make things easier like when you are doing the assessment thing. Sometimes if I have to fill out the form, I pick 'other' because I don't want to put myself in such category.

Laura, who self-identified as coloured, also frequently switching from coloured to South African national identity, clearly refused to be categorized within the racialized terms, such as 'brown'. Here the fact that the state was still utilizing the racialized based on colour categories was unacceptable for Laura, therefore she opted to omit definitions altogether. Like Laura, Lana from the UWC was also opposed to filling out similar forms and she mentioned:

When you are looking for jobs or even applying for bursary or for anything, you need to say in the box and you have to categorize yourself as 'white', 'black', or 'Indian', or 'coloured', I always say 'other', I don't say 'coloured', I would never say 'coloured', and in my CV I never put my race as well.

Lana, who informally self-identifies as Muslim and coloured, expressed her strong opposition to the state and public identifications of her as coloured in terms of race. According to Lana, her identity is interpreted by the larger South African society and the state as rigidly racialized unlike her personal understanding of the coloured identities as based on the cultural specificities and ethnicized. Like Lana, Nicole from the US also refused to fill out the forms on different occasions, however, she added:

The ministry decided to fill in it on our behalf, and I came back as 'white' and one of my friends came back as 'black' and she was white, so they decided to fill in based on our names, most of the times it works, 95% of the time it works, but the 5% it is still there and it is open to interpretation because some people they've got an African name but they are not necessarily African, so they've got names suited to certain culture but they don't fit in with that category at all whereas my name is very English white but yet it is not that you see and I've had many experiences like that in the past.

Nicole's white English first and last names resulted in the state's assumption that she was white and English, whilst in reality Nicole strongly self-described as coloured and generally emphasized her identity as culturally based. If Laura, Lana and Nicole challenged the racialized categorizations within the official discourse, other students mentioned the numerous incidents when they were racially categorized and discriminated against in public spaces. Moreover they were automatically assigned the racist stereotypical characteristics that, as I discussed earlier, are

still commonly used to describe coloured communities and coloured people. For example, Walter, an undergraduate student from the UWC, said that he would prefer staying away from the majority white and black neighborhoods, and he explained:

If I had a chance to go to the mostly white areas, I would feel uncomfortable in the environment because people would look at me differently with impression 'what are you doing here and what are you up to now', and I am very conscious about that, that's why I will feel uncomfortable because I am not the person that they perceive me to be and I don't like that. And in order to change their perception I sometimes greet and smile to that person to assure him that I am not here doing some trouble but some people would actually ask me 'what are you doing here', but mostly older folks - I think they are just different. But also if I go to African area, their impression would be 'what are you doing here and you are not supposed to be here', they perceive that this is only their area and 'you are coloured and what are you doing here, you are not used to be here, so what are you doing here'.

Walter's feeling uncomfortable and unwelcome while visiting predominantly white or black neighborhoods firstly points to lingering racial residential segregation that still exists in most of the parts of Cape Town, and secondly it demonstrates that the stereotypical understanding of *other* groups is practiced up to the present time. The interviewed coloured students have been confronted and racially discriminated against by the specific stereotype about coloured people being 'criminals' and 'gangsters' numerous times. If Warren reported a personal experience, Lennard, an undergraduate student of the UWC, mentioned an incident that happened to his friend, however he also noted that he had been racially discriminated against as well:

My friend plays baseball, he is a professional player, he plays for the Western Cape province, and he is in the group which is very diverse: there are coloureds, blacks, and whites, but there are more whites in baseball. So someone stole something from a white guy and immediately the coach blamed the coloureds, and, the guy, he got very upset, but apparently it was a white guy who stole from another white guy. So this is a kind of perception about the coloureds, they say 'ah, the coloured stole something', so that perception of stealing is big stereotype in community, but also the violence. Me personally I also experienced this sort of situations, and I don't like being wrongly accused - it just gets under my skin, and mostly they are white people who stereotype, but

there are also a lot of people who don't.

The institutionalized and societal racism experienced by Lennard's friend and Lennard himself is unfortunately not a singular and rare incident. Each student had a story to tell about his/her experiences of having been racially stereotyped and discriminated against merely because of their skin color or ethnicity. Nikolas, an undergraduate student of the US, a historically Afrikaner university, recalled several incidents of being discriminated against in the public spaces of Stellenbosch, a town with a predominantly white Afrikaner population:

There is one particular scenario that I want to share: it was myself and my friend, he is dark skinned, his parents are black, but he grew up in Afrikaans community, so for the first three years he classified himself as coloured and now he classifies himself as black. We decided to go clubbing, so we went to one club, and we got to the bouncer and I pay him the money to pay for our entrance fee and we showed our student cards and I gave him 50ZAR because of cover charge as he told us to cover charges 20ZAR, and then he gave me 10ZAR back, it was actually the bouncer and manager standing next to him. So I gave the money to the bouncer 50ZAR, and I was expecting 30ZAR back because I thought it would cover 10ZAR fees each with the student card, so the manager gives the bouncer 10ZAR and he gives me a 10ZAR, and then the bouncer turns to the manager and the bouncer like 'but he gave 50' and then the manager told the bouncer 'no, it is 20ZAR for them' and I asked the manager 'what does it mean for *them*?' and he was like 'oh, you guys are not VIP members of the club', so my friend was getting very angry and asked the manager 'but we don't know about what is the VIP list and how you get to the VIP list?', so the manager just dismissed us and said 'if I see you here quite often then you will get into the VIP list'. So I really wasn't in the mood because we were expecting more friends to come so I took 10ZAR and we went inside. One of our coloured friends came about 15 minutes later and he is lighter skinned than I am and he doesn't go to this bar regularly and he is not in that VIP list that no one knows anything about, and we asked him 'hey, how much did you get charged?' and he said 'I paid only 10ZAR and showed my student card' and we were shocked because there was no any other excuse because there was no VIP and it was purely based on the color of the skin.

Nikolas and other students' narratives reflect that the apartheid legacy of racialization is very much alive and well in the new South African public environment despite the post-apartheid

objectives of de-racialization and political correctness. According to most of the students' interviews, being racially stereotyped or witnessing racial discrimination seemed to be something that happens in the public spaces where discriminatory actions are committed by random strangers, however there were several incidents that the students had mentioned when the people, whom they closely knew, reinforced the same racialized discrimination. Jacob, an undergraduate student of the US, shared his personal experience:

I had one friend and we were sitting next to each other at the graduation and I always hug her, but I couldn't hug her that day because her father was in the audience and she was like 'if I hug you now I will get disinherited', and I know that it is true. For me it was weird but I was ok with that and I could laugh about that.

This excerpt from Jacob's interview manifests how social relations, even personal friendships, are affected by the public racist discourse that ultimately shapes individual self-understanding and identity formation. Jacob was able to transcend this particular experience of being racially discriminated against by his friend, however the fact that he deliberately and strongly self-identifies and embraces an inclusive South African identity may serve as his individual act of opposition that challenges the public racist discourse. He further expressed his passionate disapproval of the racial classification utilized in South Africa:

I was once on the bus and one person asked me 'You are Xhosa, aren't you? And what are you?' And I said 'I am South African', and he was like 'Yeah, but what are you?', and I was like 'I grew up in Stellenbosch, and I go to Stellenbosch University, and I am not an upper class', and he was like 'OK, but are you black or coloured? I need to know'. And I was 'Why do you need to know?' And he was like 'You know what I mean, you know what I mean' and I said 'I don't really know. Can you explain that to me how my racial profile can help me relate to people? I don't get that' and then he smiled 'You are a clever one, aren't you?'

The persistence of racial classification in the public as well as official discourses and spaces was continuously brought up in the interviews with the students, and they attempted to either ignore or subvert and oppose it as frequently as possible in a manner similar to that of Jacob, but in several cases the students opted to shrug it off rather than object. For instance, Robert from the University of Stellenbosch told me that people tended to confuse his identity because of his ambiguous appearance:

I had some situations that people thought I was Indian or something else, and I sometimes if anyone asks me ‘what race you are?’ I would say ‘I am Portuguese’, and then they would be like OK and walk away, and for weeks and for weeks they would still believe that I was Portuguese and they would never guess that I was coloured. I had lots of situations like that when people were asking me what race I am, so I will be just joking around about that, but at the end I would be ‘no, but seriously I am coloured’.

Robert, when he felt uncomfortable over being identified by others according to widely accepted racialized characteristics and features, preferred adopting an uncommonly different identity (e.g. Portuguese) in order to indirectly resist being categorized in terms of race. These examples of the direct and indirect opposition of the coloured students to the state and public racial categorizations imposed onto them manifest their refusal to accept the identities assigned to them by the official and public discourses. Additionally, this constructed opposition to the assigned racial classifications allows the coloured students to form and give meaning to their own identities, remarkably different from the official ones, and produce a multitude of identity discourses that challenge the overarching state and public discourses on the coloured identities and communities. Yet, those emerged discourses still remain fragile and heterogeneous, as they are the outcomes of the highly diverse group of students who relationally situate the identities within their own personal experiences and contexts.

Nevertheless, the produced discourses of the coloured students, influenced by the factors within the overarching macrosystem of the public discourses on coloured identities, coloured communities and cultures, do suggest that the coloured youth recognize and support the existence of unique coloured cultures as well as identities, emphasizing their heterogeneity, fluidity and creativity. I believe the following responses of Noah and Robert from the University of Stellenbosch may be illustrative of the overall stance of the interviewed coloured students towards their identities and how they described their cultures:

I would say that it is still very different from other cultures, I think it is very vague but there is something there even if it is vague, and people can’t put finger on it but there is like an abstract culture that people can identify with. It is pretty vague and it sort of adopts other rituals from other cultures, form other races, from other ethnic groups, but it still exists (Noah, the US).



All of our cultures in some way or another - they are all linked somehow, even though they seem to be different some way or another, they are linked. I think that coloured culture is very distinct and unique in its own way and it is different. I think all the cultures started in some way adopting small pieces from other cultures, that's how our culture actually came about and developed, and it developed in its own unique different way, but that's why I think it is linked to other cultures somehow because they adopt certain things from other cultures. And I have heard a lot that because coloured culture has adopted so much from other cultures it doesn't exist as a culture, but as a coloured person I know that we do have our own culture (Robert, the US)

## **SUMMARY**

Drawing on the ecology model of identity development, constructed and utilized by Renn (1998, 2004) in her research project on how multiracial students construct and develop their identities in the context of higher education, I explored what factors influenced the coloured students' identity determination and development within and outside the university environment. Through data interpretation I distinguished several important factors that were salient and significant within the coloured students development model: 1) the microsystems of friendship groups, involvement in campus activities/student activism, family and academic work; 2) the mesosystem of student activism; 3) the exosystems of home communities, language and religion; and 4) the macrosystem of the public discourse on coloured identities, communities and cultures in post-apartheid South Africa.

The data interpretation manifested that the microsystems of friendship groups were identified as particularly significant for the coloured students, since friendship groups formed the core of their social life and were vital in not only constructing, but, more importantly, asserting their identities. The influence of friendship groups on the identity development was obvious and represented as one of the strongest and most profound elements of the microsystems in the model of coloured student development. Moreover, the microsystems of involvement in campus activities and student activism for the coloured students were closely connected with the microsystem of friendship groups, and they also offered additional important resources for

identity development and negotiation. Furthermore, I determined that the microsystem of family for the coloured students identity construction and development were of particular importance because families overall provide sources of individual's heritage and establish cultural consciousness.

As most of the students underscored the importance of involvement in student activities and student activism in the microsystems discussion, I distinguished the mesosystem of student activism as the most significant in students' identity development. This particular mesosystem is comprised of the interactions and mutual operations of the microsystems of friendships, involvement in student activities/student activism, family and academic work. For most of the students, their involvement in student activities/student activism, holding membership in student groups with various goals and objectives from political to cultural, were interconnected with their family backgrounds, community experiences and, of course, friendships. I also determined that the exosystem factors of home communities, language and religion were frequently characterized as important by the interviewed students.

Ultimately, through the analysis of microsystems, the mesosystem of student activism and exosystems, I identified the macrosystem of the public discourses on coloured identities and communities in post-apartheid South African society as the most influential overarching pattern that served as the predominant instigator and inhibitor of the coloured students' identity development. Interestingly, although the macrosystem of the post-apartheid public discourses on coloured identities and communities provided identity developmental and interpretations opportunities, they also served as the motivators of opposite identity constructions and opposite discourse productions.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS**

In this study, I attempted to examine how post-apartheid coloured youth re-construct and negotiate their identities, maneuvering through various social and cultural contexts of their everyday experiences within diverse university settings. Drawing on the current conceptualizations of coloured identities as heterogeneous, non-static and highly contextual, I hypothesized that there would be multiple discourses constructed by coloured youth that would reflect the social, cultural and political conditions in post-apartheid South Africa.

Through the interviews I learned that similar to other minority and marginalized youth, coloured students produced various discourses and practices as a medium of counter-hegemonic formation and negotiation of their marginalized identities and communities. Ultimately I identified two dominant discourses produced by the coloured students: coloured as an ethnic/hybrid cultural identity, and an adoption of an inclusive South African national identity, simultaneously rejecting coloured identity as a product of colonial and apartheid social engineering. In the chapter on the students' identity discourses, I discussed in detail the prerequisites and rationales provided by the coloured students in constructing both of the discourses. I believe that an interpretation of coloured identities as constructed within cultural boundaries, particularly popular and frequently mentioned by the interviewed coloured students, might manifest how the larger coloured population of South Africa could define coloured identities as an ethnic cultural identity vis-à-vis its widely accepted definition within racial lines. Therefore the availability and variety of identity construction strategies and discourses might reflect the shifting attitudes and perspectives of the concepts of race and ethnicity in South Africa. Consequently, I argue that the development of a multitude of discourses and

interpretations of coloured identities among post-apartheid coloured youth may indicate the transforming landscape of coloured identities and cultural debates in post-apartheid South Africa.

To comprehensively understand the contextual nature of identities, particularly of coloured identities, I adopted and integrated an ecology model of identity development, constructed and utilized by Renn (1998, 2004) in her research project on multiracial students' identities in a higher education context. I believe that examining coloured identity construction within the ecology model of identity development can lead to a wider acknowledgment of the current perspective on coloured identities as heterogeneous, highly contextual and instigated by the coloured population's agency rather than being a mere product of social and cultural engineering. In addition, the implementation of this model is helpful in terms of examining and understanding the similar complicated and confusing processes for determining one's identity and experiences of marginalization and stigmatization as a result of being of mixed-race or multiracial.

I examined the data to determine the specific contextual factors and opportunities provided by the microsystems of friendship groups, involvement in campus activities/student activism, family and academic work, the mesosystem of student activism, the exosystems of home communities, language and religion, and the macrosystem of public discourses on coloured identities, communities and cultures in post-apartheid South Africa. The research data allowed me to depart from Renn's identified mesosystem of peer culture (1998, 2004) and focus on the mesosystem of student activism as involvement in student activities underscored as the most significant in their identity development by the interviewed coloured students. This particular mesosystem originated through the interactions and mutual operations of the microsystems of friendships, involvement in student activities/student activism, family and academic work. For most of the students, their involvement in student activism and holding membership in student groups from political to cultural were interconnected with their family backgrounds, community experiences, friendships and even academic experiences. Each student's identity development was affected by various factors within the mesosystem of student activism through the interactions among various microsystems. However, it turned out that the students' positioning themselves as activists was the main theme that dominated the discussions on how they would interpret and understand their identities. As such the coloured students' involvement in student activism was presented as the primary instigator of their identity development. Thus, I

determined that the mesosystem of student activism played a highly significant role in the coloured student development within as well as outside university settings.

Additionally, though I expected to discover that the macrosystem of public discourses on coloured identities and communities in post-apartheid South African society was the most influential overarching pattern existent in micro-, meso, and exosystems and served as the predominant instigator and inhibitor of the coloured students' identity development, I also learned that the macrosystem of public discourses interestingly played a reverse role in coloured students' identity development. The macrosystem of post-apartheid public discourses on coloured identities and communities certainly provided various identity developmental and interpretation opportunities, however they also served as the motivators of oppositional identity construction and oppositional discourse production. In this sense, the coloured students, becoming aware of the negative public discourse on coloured identities, communities and cultures as racialized, illegitimate, marginalized, extremely fragile and inconsistent, constructed an agency that initiated the *deconstruction* of the negative public discourse and created a new one, based on their personal experiences and influenced by the multiple factors within micro-, meso-, and exosystems. Thus, the findings supported the suggested argument that coloured identities, communities and cultures can be conceptualized as ethnicized, diverse, highly heterogeneous, ambiguous and fluid, yet recognizable, specific and profoundly creative (Erasmus and Pieterse, 2000; Erasmus, 2001).

Ultimately, I believe that this research project might contribute to further understanding of coloured identities in particular and minority identities in general and not only in the South African context. The examination of minority and marginalized identities utilizing the ecology model of identity development, emphasizing contextual and modifiable factors of identity productions, may not be a novel idea, however it offers a more comprehensive approach to exploring an identity development and most importantly what social, cultural, political and economic elements impact that process.

Additionally, the interviews with the coloured students illuminated several problematic issues currently faced by coloured communities in post-apartheid South Africa, including institutional racism and racial discrimination within and outside higher education institutions, residential and institutional segregation, persisting imposed racial classification, and educational underdevelopment that need to be underscored in future potential studies on coloured identities

and communities. Furthermore, the study's findings reflected the aspirations and inclinations of the post-apartheid coloured youth towards an inclusive South African national identity, which is reckoned to unite the racially fragmented society that still faces the apartheid legacy challenges.

## **5.2 FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS**

This study builds on the literature focused on race, ethnicity, hybridity, coloured identities and communities, as well as identity development theories and adds to the literature on coloured identities construction and development and post-apartheid youth identities development and negotiations. Since I only attempted to explore the coloured students identity construction and development in post-apartheid South Africa and conducted interviews with a small number of the coloured students in only two locations - the University of the Western Cape and the University of Stellenbosch - I believe that there is plenty of room for more detailed and in depth research on post-apartheid youth identities in general and coloured youth identities in particular within other contexts and differing settings. The potential research on post-apartheid coloured youth and communities' identities on a broader level might shed light on the specifics of coloured politics within post-apartheid South Africa as a multi-racial and multi-ethnic democratic state.

For instance, I would propose the following potential research topics: South African nation and national identity constructions and interpretations among the post-apartheid South African society, particularly among those groups who are considered minority in the South African social terrain; more in depth historical perspective on the processual transformations of the coloured category and its utilization in post-apartheid South African society; a comparative analysis of the generational interpretations of coloured identities among apartheid and post-apartheid generations; in depth and grounded on data analysis of conceptualizations of coloured identities as hybrid or creole identities; differing class aspirations and their connections to the coloured identities constructions and interpretations; and so on.

Additionally, the topic on coloured identities in itself is hotly discussed and contested, and there is a necessity in more studies that focus on coloured identities from the perspective that post-apartheid coloured communities hold an agency to deconstruct previously racialized

categorical identities, simultaneously constructing new identities, reflective of their specific socio-economic, political, cultural and historical experiences as well as address personal and group anxieties and fears still present in post-apartheid coloured communities.

## **APPENDIX**

### **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

#### Background/Identity:

1. Where did you go to high school?
2. In what ways was it similar to or different from the university where you are currently enrolled? (Ex: size, public/private, racial/ethnic diversity)
3. How did you decide to attend the University of the Western Cape/the University of Stellenbosch?
4. How do you identify yourself? (In terms of racial/ethnic/cultural identity)
5. How do others (professors, other students, friends, etc.) identify you? (In terms of racial/ethnic/cultural identity)

#### University/Space:

6. Has the description of your racial/ethnic/cultural identity changed since you have come to the university? If so, in what way(s)? If not, why not?
7. What do you think contributed to that change/reinforced that description?
8. Tell me about how the different racial/ethnic/cultural groups interact on campus.
9. Do you interact with students from different racial/ethnic/cultural background on and off campus? If so, where and how?
10. Tell me about your friends and other peers at the university. Would you say that your sense of identity influences your making friends or relationships with them?
11. Have you been involved in any activities in on or off the campus? If so, what kind? Do you think that those activities reflected or contributed to your identity?
12. Do you think that there are specific places/spaces on campus that you would consider as only for coloured students? If so, why? Explain the significance of this place/space?
13. Would you say that this place/space is representative of your identity? Why?
14. Would you say that you employ some strategies to present this place/space as for coloured students? If so, what kind of strategies?



Nation and national identity/coloured communities:

15. Would you say that there is a single overarching South African national identity in the post-apartheid South Africa? How can you describe it?
16. Do you see yourself as belonging to a common South African nation or rather to a specific cultural community? If so, which community would you say you belong to? Why? If not, why not?
17. Would you say that there are certain specific characteristics that differentiate your racial/ethnic/cultural community from other communities? If so, how would you describe them?

Concluding:

18. Is there anything else you would like to talk about that you find to be important me to understand in relation to coloured communities and identities?
19. Can you suggest anyone who would agree to participate in this study?

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