

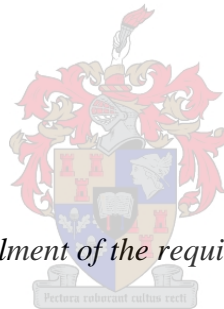
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Guarding Whiteness: Navigating Constructions of White Car-Guards in Postapartheid

South Africa

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

In postapartheid South Africa, the topic of whiteness and white privilege has been at the forefront of social contestation. The persistence of white privilege, and the way in which whites attempt to renegotiate their social identities amidst a loss of political power, has been recognised as a central point of inquiry for South African whiteness studies. The postapartheid social order is uncharted territory for white South Africans, and its novelty has stimulated the conditions for the emergence of potentially new, multifarious white social identity structures distinguished largely through their intersections with class. In terms of conceiving whiteness through class, the issue of heterogeneous and homogenous white social identities is a central tension in the whiteness studies literature as scholars attempt to establish how to conceive whiteness under these new, particularised conditions. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), this study aimed to develop an intersectional and nuanced understanding of whiteness in postapartheid South Africa, by identifying, describing and contextualising potentially heterogeneous white social identities as expressed through patterns of hybridisation within their everyday discourse. Accordingly, this multi-method ethnographic study explored the narrative experiences of a group of white car-guards and the mainly white motorists who engage with them in postapartheid social locales, as articulated through their respective constructions of themselves and each other through discourse. The analysis suggested that postapartheid South African whiteness remains largely homogenous in terms of its discursive patterns and preoccupations, and several parallels were identified between the participants' discourse, and the type of colonial and apartheid era discourse depicted more broadly in the whiteness studies literature. Furthermore, it was found that the participants' discourse was characterised by a sense of "guardedness" around those attempts which sought to highlight the persistence of these homogenous discursive patterns and preoccupations. Although this study aimed to explore potentially heterogeneous white social identities, and even after accounting for divergent occupations of class, these findings suggest that it is certainly too soon to disregard the dominance and doggedness of homogenous, mainly privileged, white social identity structures in postapartheid

South Africa. This suggests that the call for the particularisation of white social identity structures should continue to inform the study of whiteness, but not at the expense of negating the homogenous performance of whiteness and white privilege that persists and prevails even within those social conditions that render it obsolete.

Key Words: Whiteness, White Privilege, Poor Whites, White Talk, Critical Discourse Analysis

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South Africa

Chapter 1: Introduction and Outline

1.1 Introduction

Whiteness is a concept that entails the critical examination of issues of power and privilege and the circumstances that render them normal (Matsebula, Sonn & Green, 2007). As a social identity, whiteness is considered a universal racial category guaranteeing those who are granted access to it the seemingly inherent right to a social occupation of unearned privilege (B. K. Alexander, 2004; N. Alexander, 2007; McKaiser, 2011). In turn those individuals embodying this social identity are committed to enforcing the centrality and normalisation of white people and their perspectives through their performance of discourse (Bonilla-Silva, 2012; Green & Sonn, 2005; McKaiser, 2011; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995; Nakayama & Martin 1999; Steyn, 2004; 2007; Ratele, 2009; Verwey & Quayle, 2012; Wale & Foster, 2007; Willoughby-Herard, 2007). This performance is essentially a self-reifying practice that entails the systematic reproduction of dominance, normativity and advantage and simultaneously, the subversion of inferiority, marginality and disadvantage respectively (B. K. Alexander, 2004; Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007).

In postapartheid South Africa, the emergence of more divergent white social identities and the associated changes in terms of how these identities may perform whiteness through discourse in new ways, has resulted in multiple interrogations of, and even ambiguities about how whiteness and white privilege may be conceived (Schönfeldt-Aultman, 2014). At the centre of these interrogations and ambiguities, the issue of heterogeneous and homogeneous white social identities is a fundamental tension plaguing those scholars who face the difficult task of establishing how to treat the subject of whiteness under these new and very specific conditions (Hughey & Byrd, 2013). Those arguments in favour of homogeneous white social identities stress that whiteness is a defining aspect of personhood and identity (Steyn, 2001), that there is no disidentification from

whiteness (Biko, 1978), and that whiteness transcends other intersections of identity, such as class (B. K. Alexander, 2004; N. Alexander, 2007; Blaser, 2008; Hook, 2004). Contrastingly, arguments in favour of heterogeneous social identities are concerned that conceptions of homogeneity may obscure the more intricate and nuanced differences between various cultural, ethnic and linguistic “whitenesses,” and that they simultaneously reduce the opportunity to fragment and disempower a construct which is all too often depicted in a decontextualized and monolithic manner (De Kock, 2006; 2010; Green et al., 2007; Hughey, 2012; Ratele, 2007; Scott, 2012; Willoughby-Herard, 2007). According to this argument, our inquiries into whiteness must be particularised, and one should focus on those instances where its perceived normalisation is challenged – this is assumed to be the most effective approach in terms of destabilising whiteness from its assumed position of authority and hegemonic power (De Kock, 2006; 2010; Steyn, 2001; Hughey, 2012; Hughey & Byrd, 2013).

Contemporary South African whiteness studies acknowledge how whites’ loss of political power has resulted in significant challenges for white social identity structures, but also that the previously entrenched patterns of whiteness and white privilege remain stable in the workings of postapartheid society (Collier, 2005; Green et al., 2007; Posel; 2010; Ratele & Laubscher, 2010; Shefer & Ratele, 2011; Steyn, 2007). These studies aim to uncover the discursive mechanisms informing the ideological reconstruction of whiteness and white privilege, suggesting that its persistence is attributed to the way in which white people perform whiteness through discourse (Ratele, 2009; Steyn, 2007; Wale & Foster, 2007). Problematically, these sorts of discursive inquiries are generally conducted amongst mostly middle-to-upper class, white South Africans, and although the majority in this category are rightfully located in this way, this approach is one-dimensional and so neglects to conceive whiteness through its intersections with class (Green et al., 2007). In terms of problematizing this in terms of those popular arguments supporting heterogeneous white social identities, this aspect of South African whiteness studies reduces the opportunity to explore potentially multifarious white South African social identity structures, and

simultaneously, may negate the emergence of the potentially hybridised discursive characteristics which define them (Steyn, 2007). Considering the strong call for the contextualisation and particularisation of varied types of “whitenesses” and white privilege, one has to consider the implications for current South African whiteness studies if their efforts are addressing an essentially homogenous discursive performance of whiteness. Here I suggest that the exploration of potentially varied white social identity structures and their discursive performances may at least provide some clarity in terms of resolving this tension.

In this thesis, I recognise the value of those arguments in favour of both homogeneous and heterogeneous white social identities, and will propose that it may be possible to integrate these seemingly opposing subject positions by exploring whiteness through its intersections with class. This proposition is based on the inference that by exploring the ways in which whites from different class positions talk; one may be better equipped to explore potential patterns of heterogeneity within white discourse without negating the overarching commonalities within whiteness, and by extension, white social identity structures themselves. Therefore, through a discursive socioconstructionist lens, this thesis will attempt to provide multi-contextual, ethnographically based insights into the ways in which potentially heterogeneous white South African social identity structures perform whiteness in various ways through discourse. By employing an analytic framework of critical discourse analysis, this thesis will explore the ways in which white car-guards and white motorists talk about their respective experiences of life and each other in postapartheid South Africa, and will focus particularly on highlighting the discursive similarities and contradictions between these two potentially heterogeneous performances of whiteness. However, although I aim to explore potentially varied ways of performing whiteness, I will navigate this territory critically and reflexively, and will remain cognizant of Ratele and Laubscher’s (2010) sentiments that to be white in South Africa is “power of one sort or another” (p. 97). I only suggest, as West and Schmidt (2010) do, that it may be beneficial to explore the possibility of more nuanced and intersectional ways of approaching social identities in South Africa in order to encourage

discourses of hybridization which challenge our very real, yet persistent reliance on polarising narratives. Consequently, through my findings I aim to contribute to and expand upon contemporary South African whiteness studies literature, and in turn, to possibly provide refreshing and potentially destabilising insights into the interrogation of whiteness and white privilege today.

1.2 Outline

Chapter 1 contains a brief introduction to and rationale for this thesis as well as an outline of its chapters. In this chapter, I will also highlight the central tension of heterogeneous and homogenous white social identities, and will suggest how one may integrate these positions through studying whiteness through its class-based intersections. Chapter 2 will provide a background into understanding car-guards and the context of their development in South Africa. Herein, I will sketch how white social identity structures have been conceived through class-based intersections in South Africa, and will define key concepts related to the informal sector, and the car-guard industry specifically. Chapter 3 consists of the literature review, which will critically review both the international and South African whiteness literature, and the central arguments in favour of both homogenous and heterogeneous white social identities within both orientations. At the end of Chapter 3, I will discuss the discursive socioconstructionist theoretical framework of this thesis. This will be based on my review of the literature, and similarly will inform the selection of my methodological framework. Chapter 4 restates my research question and lists the research objectives, and is thereafter dedicated to a discussion around my methodological approach, and ethical considerations herein. I will describe and motivate my chosen ethnographic approach, as well as the use of critical discourse analysis for the interpretation of data. In Chapter 5, I will present my results and an integrated discussion around them. Following this, Chapter 6 is dedicated to critical self-reflection and a necessary process of reflexivity, which is designed to deepen the results and discussion chapter preceding this. The thesis will conclude with Chapter 7, wherein I will discuss the limitations of my work, as well as my final conclusions.

Chapter 2: Contextualising Car-Guards and their Development in South Africa

2.1 Whiteness and Poverty

It is unanimously accepted that poverty and unemployment is one of the major macroeconomic problems plaguing postapartheid South Africa (Blaauw & Bothma, 2001). According to data from the most recent 2009 multi-topic poverty survey, the Living Conditions Survey (LCS), during the period September 2008 to August 2009, approximately 26.3% of the population was living below the monthly food poverty line (R305), while roughly 38.9% and 52.3% were living below the monthly lower-bound poverty line (R416) and the monthly upper-bound poverty line (R577) respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2009). Additionally, employment in the formal sector has shown a steady decline since 1994, and unemployment rates are projected to continue increasing as the number of new entrants into the labour market grossly outweighs employment opportunities (Blaauw & Bothma, 2001).

The gravity of poverty and economic decline aside and despite the many other political and social changes that have ensued since the inception of South Africa's democracy; the current consensus is that the majority of the country's white population continue to occupy positions of economic and structural privilege (B. K. Alexander, 2004; N. Alexander, 2007; Green et al., 2007; Ratele, 2009). Whites' seemingly inherent right to this privilege has been historically afforded to them by the policies of apartheid, which almost guaranteed them security in the economic sector and enabled them to live a superior life "suitable" for white people (Wale & Foster, 2007). Although whites no longer experience the same state-sanctioned guarantee, and even after accounting for postapartheid equality based policies such as Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment, the structural and economic legacies of apartheid remain ubiquitous: The majority of white South Africans have better employment prospects, hold higher status positions in the workplace and generally earn more money than other racial groups (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). It would appear then that white South Africans, have for the most part, retained their implicit and seemingly inherent occupation of economic privilege in particular.

The continued salience of racially stratified occupations of privilege is substantiated by additional statistics from the LCS which indicate that the black African population remains the most affected by poverty with 61.9% of black Africans living below the upper-bound poverty line between September 2008 and August 2009. Coloureds have the second highest proportion with 32.9% of the population living below the upper-bound poverty line, followed by the Indian and Asian population with population numbers at 7.3%. The white population however have the lowest poverty headcount, with only 1.2% of white South Africans living below the upper-bound poverty line during this period (Statistics South Africa, 2009). Whilst Statistics South Africa is expected to release the results from the most recent 2014/2015 LCS based on field work conducted from September 2014 to October 2015, in terms of the current 2009 statistics, one can deduce that an overwhelming majority of 98.8% of white South Africans continue to occupy positions of economic and structural privilege in postapartheid South Africa. Thus, although it is imperative that this group remains our primary concern in terms of conceiving whiteness and white privilege in contemporary South African whiteness studies, in the next section, I want to shift the gaze to the 1.2% of the white minority population who live below the upper-bound poverty line, the statistics which contradict the norm – the outliers. Here, the somewhat contested category often referred to as poor whites, confronts us with an “other” type of whiteness which assumes neither economic privilege nor the traditionally middle-to-upper class social status coupled with this occupation (Scott, 2012). Accordingly, the next section will discuss whiteness and class positionality in South Africa.

2.2 Whiteness and Class Positionality

Class positionality in South Africa is subject to numerous interpretations, but for the purpose of this thesis, middle-to-upper class, wealthy white South Africans are operationalised as those individuals who have achieved a standard of living associated with economic prosperity and stability, are likely to earn a minimum of R10,000 per month, and own cars and perhaps property (Visagie & Posel, 2001). They are likely to be computer literate, and to have access to a multitude of technological and social media applications.

However, in terms of defining occupations of class in this thesis, it is if not more important to note how occupations of class are also related to ideological constructions around race, privilege and wealth – thus one's class position is not bound singularly to factors around material possessions and quantifiable wealth (N. Alexander, 2007). This makes it possible for a wealthy white person to be constructed as occupying low-to-middle class status, or conversely, for a person who is poor in a quantifiable sense to occupy middle-to-upper class status (Ratele, 2009). Nonetheless, in South Africa, class status is generally still coupled with race status, and so the embodiment of white skin is generally equated with the occupation of at least middle-to-upper class status (Green et al., 2007). In the next section, I will touch on how South Africa's political context has been implicated in the emergence of poor whites working in the country's informal sector, and will also provide an operational definition of the aforementioned sector.

2.3 Whiteness and the Informal Sector

In terms of locating poor whites within the context of South African history, when white job protection and security fell away after the elections in 1994, whites from the lower socioeconomic strata turned to alternative low-paying employment prospects as they lacked the social orientation, education and skills that have now become a prerequisite for white employment in the changing landscape of the new South Africa (Blaauw & Bothma, 2001). Unsurprisingly then, the country has seen an increasing number of poorer whites filtering down into its informal job sector, an area which has traditionally been viewed as unfit for white livelihood (Barker, 2003). For the sake of this thesis, the informal sector may be operationally defined as “unorganised, unregulated and mostly legal but unregistered economic activities that are individually or family owned and use simple, labour intensive technology” (Barker, 2003, p. 215). This coincides with Statistics South Africa's definition of the informal sector namely “...unregistered businesses, run from homes, street pavements or other informal arrangements” (as cited in Blaauw & Bothma, 2001, p. 2). Examples of economic activities within this sector include petrol attendants, domestic work, street vendors and car-guards. In the next section, I will contextualise the development of car-guards in

postapartheid South Africa and will attempt to provide an operational definition of the key terms within this emerging informal industry.

2.4 Car-Guards: Background and Key Terminology

Whilst there has been significant research conducted around whiteness and domestic work in particular (see e.g., Ally, 2011; Shefer, 2004), excluding the occasional print or online news article, very little research has been done on South Africa's booming car-guard industry (Blaauw & Bothma, 2001). According to McEwan and Leiman (2008) car-guards have become an increasingly common site around South African metropolitan centres within the past decade; however this has not been matched by necessary scholarly attention. For example, according to Blaauw and Bothma's (2001) study, Kitching (1999) was reported to have conducted the only known car-guard study in Bloemfontein, however since then, other studies have slowly started to emerge (see eg., Bernstein, 2003; Dekker, McEwan & Leiman, 2008).

The activity of car-guarding may be defined principally as a security service and involves patrolling parked cars in public parking areas such as shopping malls or hospitals to prevent vehicle break-ins and car theft. According to Kitching (1999) the car-guard industry started as a very informal activity, when unemployed people started offering their services to motorists at municipal parking spaces in the central business districts (CBDs) of cities on an ad hoc basis in exchange for a donation. More recent developments have however seen a greater degree of formalisation in the car-guard industry. For example, according to Act 92 section six of the (1987) Security Officers Act individuals rendering a security service are required to register as security officials with the Security Officers Board of South Africa. Notwithstanding this development, the line between informality and formalisation remains drastically unclear in this industry – something that is recurrent within other industries in the informal sector, such as domestic work (Ally, 2011).

For the sake of this thesis, I refer to formal car-guards, who may be viewed as those car-guards active mainly at private parking areas of shopping centres in the city. Formal car-guards

generally pay a leasing fee to a management body in exchange for a parking “bib”, a name tag, and the right to park cars on privately owned property (Blaauw & Bothma, 2001).

Demographically, black African refugees and asylum seekers, from French Central Africa particularly, make up the majority of the car-guard population in South Africa (Bernstein, 2003). For example, in their study of car-guards in and around the Cape Town CBD, McEwan and Leiman (2008) found that there were no white car-guards within the accessible population. This however contrasts Blaauw and Bothma’s (2001) study of car guards in Bloemfontein, where it was found that the majority (82%) of car-guards were white. In the next section, I will provide a rationale for studying white car-guards in particular, and will motivate how this inquiry may be of value for those contemporary whiteness studies which attempt to explore whiteness through its class-based intersections.

2.5 White Car-Guards: Rationale for Whiteness Studies

This thesis will address white car-guards specifically, based on the inference that the existence of white car-guards in postapartheid South Africa may present a meaningful and interesting point of inquiry for whiteness studies. One may conclude that this is based on three main interrelated factors that I have outlined in this chapter: Firstly, the majority of car-guards in South Africa are black, French Africans whilst white car-guards constitute the minority of the overarching car-guard population – this mirrors the stratification of poverty along racial lines, and positions white car-guards as a marginalised group.

Secondly, the majority of white South Africans retain the right to economic and structural privilege, and thus do not typically work in the informal sector – this exacerbates the marginalised status of white car-guards. Lastly, white car-guards working in the informal sector may be viewed as poor whites because the informal sector is generally reserved for non-whites – again, this speaks to the continued racial stratification of poverty in South Africa, and so poor whites may be conceived as lower class whites due to the implicit relationship between poverty and the informal sector and class positionality.

The combination of these factors equates white car-guards with a sense of difference, an “other” type of white existence, which in fact contradicts dominant constructions of whiteness as an economically privileged, middle-to-upper class social identity structure. One may ask how white car-guards construct and articulate this somewhat confounded aspect of their social identity, and similarly, how other more economically privileged white South Africans relate to and construct their largely uncharacteristic existence. This thesis will concern itself with exploring these two questions. In the final section of this chapter, I will reflect critically on my retrieval of white poverty and white car-guards within the context of contemporary whiteness studies.

2.6 Critical Reflections: White Poverty and White Car-Guards

Before this contextual section is drawn to a close, it is imperative to reflect critically on my inferences around whiteness and white poverty, and my location of white car-guards herein. Fundamentally, I am inclined to cement what I am *not* trying to achieve through my work here. Whilst this negation may seem strange in terms of establishing objectives, through this prospect, I hope to demonstrate conscious and critical awareness of the current sociopolitical location of whiteness studies in South Africa as well as my responsibility to produce and interpret works within it. This sort of critical reflection and reflexivity will remain a fundamental principle of this thesis.

Firstly, I am *not* claiming that white poverty is a by-product of the onset of the democratic era in 1994. This is in light of what Bottomley (2012) describes as a form of “collective amnesia” when retrieving South Africa’s poor white population (p. 13), and how it seems to be overlooked, mainly by the white population, that poor whites have existed as a marginalised social identity throughout South African history. When combined with current narratives of white victimhood and reverse racism, I am very cautious of retrieving this group of whites as a “fault” of that which came after apartheid. In fact, it is essential for all whiteness scholars to remain critical of any accounts which attempt to present whiteness as a victimised social category as it may represent an attempt to distract us from destabilising the 98.8% of white South Africans who have retained economic

privilege even after the cessation of apartheid. One must not fall into the trap of losing sight of the 61.9% of the black African population who still remain the most severely affected by poverty.

The implications here are made more salient by raw data from South Africa's 2011 census, which in conjunction with the General Household Survey, reports that just 7,754 white households lived in informal settlements (Statistics South Africa, 2011). If each household consisted of four people, which is slightly higher than the national average of 3.6 used in the 2011 census, it would mean that there were only around 31,000 whites living in informal dwellings of any kind – including shacks not in a backyard (informal settlements); shacks in the backyards of existing houses; and caravans or tents.

Secondly, I am *not* claiming that all white car-guards are poor, or even that those whites regarded as poor whites are poor. I only assume that it may be possible for them to be constructed and understood in this way, which suggests that this is not strictly determined by quantifiable poverty indicators. In quantifiable, largely objective terms, “poor” is operationalised as those individuals who regard their monthly earnings as “low”, and in addition, experience a denial of opportunities and a restriction of choice to enjoy a decent standard of life, as well as a limited sense of freedom, dignity and respect from others (Studies in Poverty & Inequality Institute, 2007). This thesis does not adhere strictly to this definition, as it concerns itself more with the qualitative constructions around poor whites, thus viewing the experience of being poor in more relative terms – for example, can one view poor black Africans and poor whites as equally poor? Or does the cultural capital attached to the ownership of white skin provide whites with a more privileged kind of poor existence?

In summary, poor whites, and by extension, white car-guards, may present a meaningful point of inquiry for whiteness studies for the following reasons: (a) firstly, they provide a rare opportunity to explore more potentially divergent forms of whiteness and white privilege undefined by occupations of economic prosperity or class; and (b) secondly, their middle-to-lower class positionality may reveal neglected and meaningful intersections between whiteness and class; (c)

thirdly, their existence contradicts economically privileged, homogenous white social identity structures by presenting us with an “other” type of whiteness, and thus, may provide practical insights into how the rebuttal of white privilege should be treated; and (d) lastly, exploring what makes this group an “other” kind of whiteness may hold the key to destabilising continuing forms of hegemonic white privilege. In the next chapter I will review the literature informing the academic field of whiteness studies, and how the construct of whiteness has been depicted at the centre of these studies.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Reading the Literature Review

This chapter section will review the academic literature constituting the body of research labelled variously as “whiteness studies,” “white studies”, or “critical whiteness studies”, and how the construct of whiteness at the centre of these studies has been depicted and understood within the context of their development.

The construct of whiteness is primarily a power-laden discursive formation that privileges, secures, and normalises the cultural space of white people’s lived experiences, whilst the focus of whiteness studies is to make visible and challenge the relevant discursive lacunae informing this formation (West & Schmidt, 2010). Perhaps one may suggest that these distinctions themselves are useful to the review of the literature.

Accordingly, this literature review will be guided by a critical framework that identifies those normalised, predominantly Western formations of whiteness within its academic works, and subsequently challenges their respective formations as they are spelt out through their various discursive lacunae.

The subsequent discussion will begin with an introduction to both the academic field of whiteness studies, and to the construct of whiteness at the centre of these studies. Thereafter, I will provide a brief overview of the most popular theoretical orientations adopted by these studies, and an explanation of how and why these orientations lend themselves to the inquiry of whiteness as a construct. Following this, I will critically address how the historical development of whiteness studies has been constructed from a predominantly white, Western perspective. Subsequently, the main theoretical points of departure constituting what is commonly understood about whiteness as a construct will be discussed and located within their various contexts of development. This in turn will provide the platform for the central issue of heterogeneous and homogeneous white social identities to be unpacked and contextualised both broadly, and more specifically within the context of South African whiteness studies. Finally, I will attempt to integrate the positions of heterogeneity

and homogeneity by exploring the implications and intricacies on both levels, and the potential implications for further South African whiteness studies.

3.2 Introducing Whiteness and Whiteness Studies

3.2.1 Concept and literature orientations.

Although related to studies of race and racism, whiteness studies makes its departure by turning our academic gaze from the traditional (black) object of racism onto the generally overlooked (white) subject of racism (Wale & Foster, 2007). In recent years the study of whiteness has emerged as an effective tool for: (a) tracing the historical and structural processes that have created whites position of privilege relative to non-whites; (b) examining social identity construction amongst those racialised into whiteness; and (c) identifying the discursive and often latent social practices that establish and maintain white privilege as a universal truth from which its power is deployed (Steyn, 2007).

In its totality, whiteness studies is comprised of a range of interdisciplinary literature undertaken by postcolonial scholars, anthropologists, educationalists, feminist scholars, and psychologists (Green et al., 2007). As Winddance-Twine and Gallagher (2008) substantiate, whiteness studies can now be found in “virtually every branch of the social sciences” (p. 5). This variation in whiteness studies’ scholarly inquiry has at times resulted in the opinion that it is an unsystematic or tenuous academic field; however, one may be reassured that from their various standpoints, the aforementioned social science disciplines all recognize the role of human experience in research, as well as the complex relations of power that this position engenders (Nayak, 2006). Consequently, this variation amongst whiteness studies inquiries is actually united by a shared purpose which seeks to examine how power is articulated and redefined through an assortment of sociopolitical discourses and cultural practices that manifest in systems of power and marginalisation. One may suggest then that the principal goal of whiteness studies is not only to delineate and dissect white social identities, but ultimately to reduce whiteness’ hegemonic social and political power across varied social contexts (Scott, 2012).

In their review of the literature Winddance-Twine and Gallagher (2008) note that studies of whiteness generally adopt a qualitative framework to guide their research processes and inquiries, although recently they have seen the slow emergence of some empirical work. This orientation may be attributed to how whiteness' assumed position of privilege and power has been established and cultivated, by what Steyn (2004) describes as its "discursive terrain" – or its penchant for discourse which permits it to maintain its dominance throughout various spatial and temporal contexts. Unsurprisingly then, there is no shortage of literature on rhetoric and whiteness, particularly within the body of Western literature (Moon & Flores, 2000; Ratcliffe, 2005; Shome, 1996; Tierney & Jackson, 2002) and there is an abundance of work on whiteness and white discourse, particularly within the context of more recent South African studies (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995; Nakayama & Martin, 1999; Steyn, 2001; 2004; 2005; Steyn & Foster, 2008; Wambugu, 2005).

In fledgling democratic societies such as South Africa, qualitative and discursive approaches are useful in the sense that they lend themselves to the exploration of the micro-processes lodged in encounters of transformation (Hunter & Hachimi, 2012). Such micro-processes often exhibit an almost magical quality to evade traditional empirical inquiries, and therefore lend themselves to those research methods which are designed to access the often latent yet typically rich underlying narratives of lived white experience situated beneath the meagre superficial presentation of discourse (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010).

As a result of this qualitative discursive orientation, the popular methodological stance employed by whiteness studies appears to be that of Discourse Analysis (DA). DA stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice (Brockmann, 2011). DA extends that all social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and are the means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served (Van Dijk, 2012). In terms of one's inquiries into whiteness, DA lends itself to questions such as: How is the text positioned or positioning, and whose interests are served or negated by this positioning? (Janks, 2008).

3.3 Critical Reflections on the Development of Western Whiteness Studies

3.3.1 Historical development of Western literature.

According to Western literature, the study of whiteness originates in the intellectual milieu of North America (Blaser, 2008; Green et al., 2007; Hughey, 2010; Steyn, 2004) and may be considered a relatively new academic field where attention by both scholars and laypeople has recently burgeoned (Hughey, 2012). Dolby (2001) echoes this, stating that whiteness studies has only reached its current “popular status” within the last 20 years, and the field now includes hundreds of books, ethnographies, scholarly articles and reviews (Winddance-Twine & Gallagher, 2008). It is thus generally accepted that there was an “explosion” of scholarly interest around the topic of whiteness in the early 1990s, something which is often attributed to Richard Dyer’s (1988) analysis of the representation of whiteness in Western visual culture.

Ganley (2003) draws parallels between the topics flourishing popularity during this period, and the release of Toni Morrison’s (1992) *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, and David Roediger’s (1991) *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. In her book, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Nobel laureate Morrison’s (1992) influential argument is that whiteness is a discrete concept that remains largely unexamined in Western culture, whilst Roediger’s (1991) work addresses the construction of whiteness by detailing how 19th century Irish immigrants were able to reclassify their race from black to white by accepting a socially inferior working class position. Other influential works emanating from this period include: Theodore Allen’s (1994) *The Invention of the White Race*; Ruth Frankenberg’s (1993) *White Women, Race Matters*; and Noel Ignatiev’s (1996) *How the Irish Became White*.

Problematically however, whiteness studies sits within, and has been influenced by a much older tradition, and so this commonly accepted dating of the emergence of mainly whites writing on whiteness is not really accurate (Ganley, 2003). Blaser (2008) argues that, despite the recent proliferation of whiteness studies by white academics in particular, whiteness studies have been

central to the projects of African American scholars for over a century. Roediger (2001) similarly observes that the popular inquiries which are considered to mark the inception of whiteness studies, such as his own, are actually the most recent contribution to an African American tradition extending as far back as American slavery.

Referring to the Australian colonial context, black inquiries into whiteness began as far back as the 1600s when William Dampier's ships loomed off Australia's west coast (Ganley, 2003). Within the African colonial context, Algerian born Frantz Fanon and Tunisian born Albert Memmi's works are also significant, yet often undervalued in terms of retrieving whiteness in postcolonial contexts today (Hook, 2011). Here one also needs to acknowledge black authors such as William J. Wilson in his (1860) essay, *What Shall We Do With the White People?*; Langston Hughes' (1934) work, *The Ways of White Folks*; and particularly W. E. B. Du Bois and his (1920) essay, *The Souls of White Folk*; for their invaluable contributions to the whiteness studies literature (Bradshaw, 2014).

Retributively, these "forgotten" black scholars must be credited for being amongst the first to pose the question of how to address the problem of white people, or how to make sense of white social identities and how they affect those positioned outside of whiteness, and their conspicuous erasure from the literature must be critiqued (Leonardo, 2004). According to Roediger (2001) the novelty of whiteness studies as a project by white scholars is representative of white's privilege to position themselves at the centre of everything, and a continuing refusal to acknowledge the insights of people of colour. He argues that "the novelty of critical studies of whiteness is...only alleged...the growth of the profile of studies of whiteness has itself reflected the privileges enjoyed by white scholars" (Roediger, 2001, p. 74). In the same critical vein, others argue that the assumed emergence of whiteness studies in the early 1990s provides an avenue for white academics to legitimise whiteness and white privilege as constructs which only they can control, thus fuelling an identity politics that is unpalatable because it risks re-centring whiteness (West & Schmidt, 2010; Winddance-Twine & Gallagher, 2008).

Similarly, the recent surge in popularity around the study of whiteness in South Africa has led some scholars to question the “political agenda” of South African whiteness studies. For example, South Africa’s first whiteness studies colloquium, entitled “Interrogating Whiteness: Literary Representations of ‘race’ in Africa”, was hosted by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University on the 10th of May 2008. Whilst the colloquium proved to be a productive site for interdisciplinary and transnational discussions about whiteness, it was introduced and consolidated by the keynote addresses of two of the most prominent South African academics in the field, Melissa Steyn of the University of Cape Town and Leon de Kock of the University of the Witwatersrand – both of whom are white (West & Schmidt, 2010). Ironically, it will also become apparent that I reference both Steyn and De Kock on numerous occasions in this thesis.

Irony aside, the degree of scepticism in this particular case is duly amplified by statistics which confirm that it is white academics that control what is known about whiteness. Referring specifically to the South African context, Ngobeni (2006) notes that “although whites constitute eight per cent of the population, white academics produce 98% of all scientific research output (as cited in Green et al., 2007, p. 400). Naturally this is problematic as it implies that white academics are positioned as experts of whiteness, and also, that those “alternative” and historical forms of epistemology initiated by black scholars are typically invalidated (Green et al., 2007).

In summary, the review of the academic literature constituting whiteness studies requires one to be critically reflexive of the way in which the historical development of this discipline has been depicted. Although the debt owed to black scholars and this tradition is typically unacknowledged, white scholars in particular must be encouraged to review whiteness studies from more decentralised and critical perspectives (Blaser, 2008). Notwithstanding this suggestion, this does not imply that the commonly depicted theoretical points of departure informing popular and contemporary, “white” whiteness studies should evade scholarly review entirely. Rather their depiction should be used to inform further, more critical research efforts. Hence, the next section will discuss the key theoretical concepts depicted within popular Western whiteness studies, and

this will be discussed and critiqued in terms of their application to subsequent, more decentralised research efforts.

3.3.2 Key concepts of Western whiteness studies.

3.3.2.1 Whiteness and invisibility.

Aside from the necessary critique of their development, it can be argued that the emergence of various whiteness studies post the 1990s boom generally concern themselves with how whiteness is “invisible” – a notion which has come to constitute what is commonly understood about whiteness as a theoretical construct. Perhaps this development has been offset by those particular inquiries made by Dyer (1988) and Morrison (1992), which as I discuss earlier, both address the supposed unmarked or, in this case, invisible nature of whiteness. Following this, there appears to be substantial emphasis in the literature which characterises whiteness as a vacant cultural identity – a cultural identity that is often unnamed and unmarked in terms of its attributes (Van Der Watt, 2001). It is argued that white identities are formed in predominantly negative terms, implying that whiteness is an empty category, constituted by the absence and appropriation of what it is not (B. K. Alexander, 2004; De Kock, 2006; Green et al., 2007; Newitz & Wray, 1997; Scott, 2012; Van der Watt, 2001). Furthermore, it is assumed that white people do not experience the world through racial or cultural distinctiveness, but rather as universal and normalised (Green et al., 2007; Hughey, 2012; Scott, 2012; Van der Watt, 2001). Those in favour of this supposition may argue that whilst it is easy to identify the defining characteristics of most cultures, white culture evades such identification. This particular formulation of whiteness has come to define what Steyn (2007) describes as the “first wave” of whiteness studies: Those whiteness studies which depict whiteness through hegemonic and monolithic constructions, through which it is framed as both pervasive, and “invisible” (De Kock, 2006). In the next section, I will discuss how this construction has been challenged and argued against in subsequent literary developments.

3.3.2.2 Rendering whiteness visible.

Although arguments about whiteness as a formation of unmarked privileges and universal norms are certainly well established (Hughey, 2010), in terms of the temporal evolution of the literature, eventually the project of showing up the ostensible invisibility of whiteness became inadequate (De Kock, 2006). Driven by considerable animus around the irony of a whiteness that is everywhere and nowhere at the same time, subsequent studies began to argue that in order for whiteness to exist as an object of study, it must be acknowledged as a construct defined by something other than its perceived emptiness and invisibility (B. K. Alexander, 2004; Kuchtar, 1997; Newitz & Wray, 1997). Consequently, the ensuing literature began to move away from the “first wave” orientation, and in turn occupied itself with what may be described as a process of rendering whiteness visible. This approach has since come to occupy the centre of contemporary whiteness scholarship (De Kock, 2006).

An important stream of more recent studies has since exposed the extent to which whiteness imperceptibly functions around the multifarious manifestations of white privilege, contesting that even though white people experience their social space as culturally neutral and normalised, whiteness has definite cultural content characterized by assumptions, belief systems, value structures and institutional and discursive options that frame white people’s self-understanding (Steyn, 2004). Here, the literature argues that whiteness’ source of privilege and power is normalised, unmarked, and even untraceable, because it is founded in a set of intangible ideological attributes which permit it to reinvent and reconstruct itself as the superior race whilst simultaneously evading detection. In this case, whiteness is a type of subjectivity, a sort of lived experience that is played out and embodied by whites, through their discursive performance of whiteness (Ratele, 2009). This performance assumes a seemingly natural position of morality, truth, and respectability (Demirtürk, 1999). It is fundamentally a normalised position from which judgements of beauty and morality can be made – whiteness is viewed to be the gold standard of behavioural excellence (McKaiser, 2011). It has become complacent in our conception of

knowledge, trustworthiness, and wealth (Green et al., 2007), and is entangled with constructions of self-assurance, political sophistication and moral maturity (Winddance-Twine & Gallagher, 2008). In terms of these types of discursive constructions, one may even go as far as to liken whiteness to a moral category, as a metaphysics of all that is positive (Hook, 2004).

Conclusively, although the effort to assign definite cultural content to whiteness marks an improvement from simply viewing it as “invisible”, the above-mentioned constructions of whiteness continue to portray it as a largely fixed and unmalleable construct, which is arguably problematic on three levels. Thus, firstly, by reifying what is essentially a product of socioconstructionism – that is by giving the construct of whiteness concrete attributes – one reduces the ability to crack open and manipulate its theorisation (Nayak, 2006). Secondly, in terms of contextualising our inquiries of whiteness, this notion of a “blanket commonality” amongst its attributes and performances, simplifies the degree of conferred white authority (Wilson, 2002). Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly in terms of developing my own argument herein, this particular formulation of whiteness implies that it is a homogenous social identity – a notion which does not leave much space for the potential expressions of its hybridisation. In the next section, I will motivate and discuss why whiteness needs to be particularised through our writings on it, particularly in the instance of drawing on Western literature within the context of South African whiteness studies.

3.3.2.3 Particularizing whiteness.

According to socioconstructionist literature orientations, whiteness may be performed in *various* ways across *various* contexts (Allen, 1994; Ignatiev, 1996; Roediger, 1991), and thus must be regarded as primarily a social and political construction which is contingent on temporal and spatial adaptations (Scott, 2012). Within the literature, such socioconstructionist positions aim to systematically expose the invention and manufacturing of the white race, arguing that whiteness is “multifaceted, situationally specific and reinscribed around changing meanings in society” (Green et al., p. 393). These studies maintain that whiteness is a continuously morphing social identity with

shifting boundaries which are refracted in relation to its particular local contexts, and that we therefore have to conceive the construct from a non-essentialist perspective (Dolby, 2001; Blaser, 2008; Green et al., 2007; Hughey, 2010).

In terms of problematizing this perspective critically, the literature also argues that the boundaries of whiteness shift according to the perceived group interests within political contexts, suggesting that the study of whiteness must simultaneously consider the interlocking axes of relative power and subordination which inflect and modify it across various spatial and temporal contexts (Blaser, 2008; Green et al., 2007; Steyn, 2004; Winddance-Twine & Gallagher, 2008). For example, socioconstructionist scholars such as Ignatiev (1996) and Roediger (2001) refer to how the Irish, Jews, Italians, Hungarians, Czechs, Poles and Slavs, who for a certain period in 19th century America were regarded as non-white, fought ferociously and successfully to gain social acceptance as white. In this instance, both Ignatiev (1996) and Roediger (2001) exemplify that whiteness is not an omnipresent and invisible phenomenon, but a contextual site of identity that is constantly renegotiated within a continually changing set of circumstances which are generally deployed from institutionalised structures and government practices (Dolby, 2001)

This makes a significant departure from the fundamentally homogenous construction of whiteness discussed prior to this which depicts whiteness as a largely unmalleable theoretical construct defined by a stable set of ideological attributes. One may understand this as a tension within the literature, and this sentiment is echoed strongly within various, more critical socioconstructionist whiteness studies. Accordingly, studies within this orientation reject the assertion that whiteness is an unconditional, universal and equally experienced location of privilege and power, and thereby refute the essentially homogenous and monolithic construction of the subject as depicted in “first wave” orientations (Scott, 2012). Rather these studies suggest that the situational and historical contingencies that reposition white identities lend themselves to what is referred to as the particularisation of whiteness by identifying, describing and contextualising more culturally divergent or heterogeneous types of white social identities (Hughey, 2012). Roediger

(2001) substantiates that the first and most critical contribution of whiteness studies “lies in ‘marking’ whiteness as a particular, even peculiar, identity, rather than as the presumed norm” (p. 79). Those studies that propagate the popular notion of particularising whiteness constitute what Steyn (2007) refers to as “second wave” whiteness studies, which aim to bring whiteness out of its pretensions of universality by carefully “pencilling in its lines of particularity” (De Kock, 2006, p. 181).

The urge for particularisation has resulted in more decentralised developments within the literature which maintain that whiteness can only be properly understood when full account is taken of its global dimensions rather than those universalised observations and theorisations which originate from a typically Western subject position, usually North America (Green et al., 2007). In this instance, Steyn (2004) speaks of the “third wave” of whiteness studies, which tackles the institutional structures, ideological beliefs and government practices that maintain white privilege within the global, Western racial order through its critical postcolonial perspective. The “third wave” of whiteness studies has welcomed the development of literature from notably settler-colonial or postcolonial contexts with more delimited publications on whiteness emerging in Australia, Britain, Canada, Japan, Latin America, Kenya and New Zealand.

In terms of South African studies, there has been a surge of literature coinciding with the cessation of apartheid, when mainly white scholars began to interrogate the ways in which whiteness may redefine itself in the context of changing power relations (Steyn, 2007). South African studies tend to agree that the specificities in time and the particularities in place render constructions of South African whiteness both engrossing and distinguishable from dominant constructions of Western whiteness (Ratele, 2009), and that South Africa’s unique historical and political configuration implies that whites have never experienced their whiteness as invisible – one of the key theoretical constructs in Western whiteness literature (Steyn, 2007). In terms of conceiving whiteness within South African whiteness studies specifically, this reinforces the call for the writing on of whiteness through its particularisation, and hence raises some crucial questions for

contemporary South African literature (Blaser, 2008). The following section will review the literature on South African whiteness studies, and how the construct of whiteness has been understood at the centre of their development. Thereafter, I will locate the central issue of heterogeneous and homogeneous white social identities within South Africa's past and present sociopolitical context.

3.4 South African Whiteness Studies

3.4.1 A loss of power and privilege.

South African whiteness studies generally begin with a fundamental point of departure: In the postapartheid era, white South Africans are engaged with a colossal task of reconstructing their social identities, social relations, and even society itself (Booyesen, 2007; Bornman, 2010; Collier, 2005; Matthews, 2011; Rudwick, 2008; Scott, 2012; Steyn, 2004; 2007; Steyn & Foster, 2008; Walker, 2005). After long periods of colonial and apartheid rule, and the relinquishing of political power by the white oligarchy in the early 1990s, it is presumed that the shape and face of whiteness in South Africa has forever been changed (Blaser, 2008; Steyn, 2001; 2007). In terms of conceptualising whiteness and white privilege amidst the loss of white political power, the disbandment of apartheid in 1994 marked the cessation of legally inscribed privilege for all white South Africans, and the beginning of a new epoch in which their seemingly inherent right to this privilege was no longer as discernible as in the past (Steyn, 2007). Consequently, in postapartheid South Africa, the previously entrenched links between power, privilege and the embodiment of white skin have been redefined, and this raises some crucial questions for South African whiteness studies (Blaser, 2008).

It follows quite logically then, that the primary goal of South African whiteness studies is to challenge the ways in which white's attempt to restabilise their identities in postapartheid South Africa, but also, to determine how whites continue to almost magically reinforce whiteness and white privilege in a context which renders these constructs obsolete (Scott, 2012; Steyn, 2007). In fact, the tenacity of whiteness and the continued perpetuation of white privilege is a widely held and

common assertion, which suggests that the racial stratification system inherited from colonial and apartheid regimes is rather stable (Posel, 2001; Ratele & Laubscher, 2010; Steyn & Foster, 2008; Verwey & Quayle, 2012; Wale & Foster, 2007). Green et al. (2007) seem to agree; noting that “power remains with white people, and power relations have remained unchanged” (p. 396).

In conclusion, in South Africa, as in other parts of the world where race was positioned as the fulcrum on which power balances, whiteness seems to have maintained its defining weight (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). In the next section, I will discuss the dominant approach adopted within South Africa literature, as well as the relevant findings.

3.4.2 White talk.

3.4.2.1 Function and characteristics.

Agreement as to the tenacity of whiteness and white privilege in postapartheid South Africa notwithstanding, the question as to this patterns persistence remains open. For Franchi and Swart (2003) a large part of the answer lies in a continuing, testamentary benefit as historically produced structural privileges have been bequeathed through generations of white’s living in South Africa. Green et al. (2007) similarly argue that whiteness has been maintained through “a range of non-discursive and structural elements” and that white privilege still has to be “depowered” (p. 428).

The more dominant argument in the literature attributes the persistence of whiteness and white privilege to a range of mostly discursive factors, and so South African whiteness studies tend to focus on the less mapped terrains of whiteness, as opposed to an emphasis on purely structural factors (Demirtürk, 1999). Consequently, the majority of the literature assumes that the persistence of whiteness, white privilege and the stratification of race in postapartheid South Africa is likely related to the way in which white people perform whiteness through discourse, and the discursive analysis of what is referred to as “white talk” has emerged as the primary point of inquiry for South African whiteness studies (Steyn, 2001; 2004; 2007; Steyn & Foster, 2008; Wale & Foster, 2007).

The literature proposes that white talk is primarily a discursive phenomenon mobilised by white South Africans as they reconstruct new narratives to explain who they are in response to the

challenge of renegotiating their social identities within postapartheid society (Nayak, 2006; Scott, 2012). However white talk is also described as a “strategic rhetoric” (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995, p. 20) as it functions to favourably frame whiteness in such a way that it can maintain its centrality, power and superiority without having to critically interrogate its privilege, racism and history (Steyn, 2004; 2007). This is achieved through a sophisticated performance of discourse wherein white South Africans recycle covert discursive themes founded in notions of white supremacy and racism in order to reposition and preserve whiteness and white privilege underhandedly (Wale & Foster, 2007).

This type of performance is generally positioned through dramatizations, denials, subversions and ululations which can often make it notoriously difficult to pin down the ideological position of the white speakers (Steyn, 2005). For example, specific findings suggest that white South Africans continue to recycle the central constructions of apartheid ideology in everyday conversation; however these constructions are repackaged through discourse in a seemingly democratic and liberal manner (Green et al., 2007; Steyn, 2007; Verwey & Quayle, 2012; Wale & Foster, 2007). Additional studies have shown that articulations of postapartheid whiteness generally deny white privilege, argue for non-racial colour-blindness, and construct whites as a victimised racial category (Blaser, 2008; Steyn & Foster, 2008; Winddance-Twine & Gallagher, 2008).

However, through deeper critical discursive analyses of white talk, South African whiteness studies have begun to unmask whiteness through its depictions of the country’s apartheid past as a “golden age” where the government and economy were firmly on track, juxtaposed against the current political climate which is embellished with descriptions of backwardness and ruin (Blaser, 2008; Verwey & Quayle, 2012). Furthermore, narratives of reverse racism, crime, decay, and corruption all serve to position the new South Africa as a fiasco, whilst tales of being forced out of the country, white genocide and discrimination in the job market also become apparent through deeper critical discursive analyses (Dolby, 2001; Steyn & Foster, 2008).

These types of findings demonstrate that there is a pattern of discursive contradiction and inconsistency between the latent, ideological constructions informing white talk, and the way in which that same talk is repackaged and presented on the surface of everyday conversational texts (Ratele, 2009). Consequently, South African whiteness studies generally, and rightfully, are concerned with reducing the discursive gap between what white talk says, and what it implies. In the next section, I will discuss the implications of white talk research for further South African whiteness studies.

3.4.2.2 Implications for South African whiteness studies.

In terms of conducting a fair and critical review of the whiteness studies literature, the fact that the discursive analysis of white talk saturates the South African literature must be problematized, and the implications around this discussed herein. Thus, whilst findings around white talk appear to present themselves consistently in the literature, and although white talk has in many ways come to characterise our understanding of postapartheid whiteness, by focussing singularly on this type of discourse and this type of whiteness, contemporary South African whiteness studies may be portraying a one-dimensional depiction of whiteness, and simultaneously neglecting the potential discourses of difference within it. Therefore, without discrediting the value and significance of whiteness studies that are based on findings around white talk, the majority of white talk research has been conducted amongst the same type of participants – those typically middle-aged, economically privileged, middle-to-upper class white South Africans. Problematically, this dominant methodological aspect of the whiteness studies literature inhibits the development of inquiries which seek to explore potentially variable narratives amongst other types of white South African social identities (Newitz & Wray, 1997; Ratele & Laubscher, 2010; Steyn, 2007; Wale & Foster, 2007).

In summary, this aspect of South African whiteness studies carries implications in light of those well-established arguments which suggest that whiteness is challenged only by particularising and cracking open its monolithic conception, and by highlighting and dissecting the discourses of

hybridization within (De Kock, 2006; 2010; Green et al., 2007; Steyn, 2007). Consequently, the next section will problematize the implications of writing on an essentially homogenous performance of whiteness for South African whiteness studies.

3.5 Problematizing Homogeneity and Heterogeneity

3.5.1 Class-based interrogations and intersections.

Although scholarship often represents South African whiteness as a homogenous identity for all white people – an identity that Steyn (2001) argues is a defining characteristic of personhood – over the past thirty years whiteness has become so deligitimised by virtue of its complicity with apartheid that it has been rendered “a place less looked-into, a site of unredeemed racism and assumed uniformity” (De Kock, 2006, p. 176). As I have touched on now numerous before, this notion tends to obscure the ethnic differences amongst whites, and induces a blinding sense of sameness, which reduces the potential for change and possibilities for richer cross-cultural engagements (Green et al., 2007; Scott, 2012). However, in the context of South African power and political relations where the simple embodiment of white skin has always resulted in whites’ categorisation as “privileged”, some may argue that it is unrealistic to explore the possibility of other kinds of whitenesses – or other ways of embodying whiteness (N. Alexander, 2007).

The above contentions are demonstrative of the level of complexity and intricacy required when writing on and reviewing South African whiteness literature in contemporary postapartheid South Africa. They also may lead one to ruminate over how one should *write* about whiteness, and how one should conceive its performance in *reality*. Although this may seem like quite an abstract supposition, it echoes the literature’s concerns around the “reification of whiteness”, which refers to giving that which is a theoretical construct (whiteness) a tangible essence (in terms of assigning characteristics and qualities to whiteness). In this case scholars argue that it is risky to write about whiteness in a way which depicts it as powerful and privileged, when in actuality, it is a theoretical construct. However, naturally it is necessary to write about whiteness in a way that corresponds with its performance in reality: This notion is attached to the frustrating task of delineating and

destabilising whiteness from its *constructed* position of authority and hegemonic power, or as it is written about in the literature, without falling into the trap of negating its position of power in *reality* – or as it is played out through those that embody white skin (Hook, 2011).

In summary, I suppose, like Frankenberg (1997), that the central issue here is that one should be cautioned that the very process of engaging with the construct of whiteness critically, may serve to do the opposite of what is hoped for, thus re-centering whiteness rather than destabilising it. This was touched on earlier, in the section on Western literature, where I highlighted how South African whiteness studies have been criticised for fuelling an identity politics that is unpalatable because it risks re-centring whiteness (West & Schmidt, 2010), or how they can be perceived as “further privileging and indulging a discourse that carries very negative historical baggage” (Scott, 2012, p. 753). Perhaps what one may conclude from abstract, almost philosophical tensions such as these, is that one has to be both cautious and critical when reviewing and reproducing whiteness studies literature.

Notwithstanding the multitude of intricacies and tensions within South African whiteness literature, in terms of the particular argument that I attempt to explore in this thesis, the central tension is based on the need to hold whiteness together as a meaningful theoretical construct, whilst simultaneously permitting an exploration of internal heterogeneity within real, lived white experience (Hughey & Byrd, 2013). In this instance, Green et al. (2007) suggest that in order to maintain a consistent understanding of whiteness across divergent contexts, the construct of whiteness must be held constant as one that unfairly privileges and places white people in positions of power, whilst concurrently recognising and permitting the expression of a range of divergent white social identities. In this regard, Hughey (2012) is of the opinion that “navigating between the long-term staying power of white privilege and the multifarious manifestations of the experience of whiteness remains the task of the next era of research on white racial and ethnic identity” (p. 174).

Potential resolutions around this particular tension are not written about extensively in the literature, but perhaps one could draw inspiration from Blaser (2008), who suggests that we view

whiteness as a construct that simultaneously encompasses contradictory discourses, or as I extend, that we view whiteness as that which simultaneously occupies both homogenous and heterogeneous expressions of subjectivity and identity. If anything, an exploration of what De Kock (2006) describes as the “difference within” (p. 176) would prove interesting, and may provide refreshing insights into our conception of whiteness in novel and problematic times. In another article, De Kock (2010) goes on to advise that:

In a context of heterogeneity as marked as that in Southern Africa, the signifier “whiteness”, despite equally persistent tropes of sameness and rock-solid marks of identity, must be regarded as a shuttling moniker, a hot potato variously juggled and differently handled, grasped, welcomed or rendered problematic across time and space. (De Kock, 2010, p. 15)

This notion, as advocated by both Blaser (2008) and De Kock (2010) is useful in the sense that it subscribes to the call for particularisation by allowing those who write about whiteness to explore how whites with heterogeneous identities – across varied contexts – make meaning, and perform whiteness in strikingly similar, or homogenous ways (Hughey, 2012). However, in terms of actually creating the practical conditions for this sort of intersectional research where would one begin?

Certain studies suggest that one needs to identify those almost incongruous – even antithetical – embodiments of whiteness, and as I identify in Chapter 2, propose that we research whiteness through its lesser seen intersections with class (Wale & Foster, 2007; Willoughby-Herard, 2007). This could stimulate the development of more particularised and nuanced inquiries into white social identity structures, and will provides a refreshing alternative to simply writing about whiteness from one middle-to-upper class, economically privileged subject position. Ultimately, if this kind of inquiry is effective, it could reopen and de-essentialise the constructions of South African whiteness and white talk that currently saturate the literature.

Again, although I touched on this in Chapter 2, conceiving whiteness through class is not without its own set of intricacies, particularly within the South African context where the

boundaries between these constructs often appear to be indistinguishable (Wale & Foster, 2007). To reiterate, positions of class are naturally linked with positions of privilege, and because whiteness is typically privileged, it is generally coupled with a superior position of class (B. K. Alexander, 2004). This inextricability is exacerbated when conceiving positions of class through economic privilege specifically as it is argued, for the most part, that whiteness and economic privilege are inseparable constructs (Green et al., 2007). Nonetheless, irrespective of the perceived entanglements between whiteness and class, and similarly whiteness and economic privilege, scholars tend to agree that whiteness should always be conceived through its intersections with class – even if this requires the separation of economic privilege from whiteness as an assumed innate quality (B. K. Alexander, 2004; Blaser, 2008; Green et al., 2007; Ratele & Laubscher, 2010; Wale & Foster, 2007).

To conclude this section, I propose that by exploring whiteness through its class-based intersections specifically; South African whiteness studies may be better equipped to explore multifarious performances of whiteness which may contribute to the destabilisation of its homogenous depiction in the literature. In the following section, I will explore how one might account for those whites who are seemingly isolated from the middle-to-upper class position typically afforded to those whom embody whiteness, and how this sense of difference could potentially inform the development of more particularised constructions of whiteness within South African literature. This will be contextualised in terms of the historical developments and constructions surrounding this heterogeneous white social identity, and how this has been made sense of in the literature.

3.5.2 Writing on poor whites in South Africa.

In order to consider the different manifestations of whiteness and white privilege, the inquiry into those whites who conflate the seemingly indistinguishable boundaries between race and class is of paramount importance (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). However, when compared to the magnitude of research conducted amongst middle-to-upper class, economically privileged whites

there are certainly lesser seen insights into marginalised white social identity structures – specifically amongst those less economically privileged, lower class, poor whites (Newitz & Wray, 1997; Willoughby-Herard, 2007).

Distinguished primarily by their lower class status and general association with poverty, the group often referred to as “white trash” in Western conversational contexts is marginalised not only in terms of these socioeconomic variables, but more importantly because of their perceived ideological difference to the majority of “normal” whites (B. K. Alexander, 2004). In terms of conceiving poor whites through their depiction in the literature, this form of social categorising is made possible by the sheer visibility of their existence which contradicts the typically invisible production of whiteness performed by homogenous white social identities (Hughey & Byrd, 2013).

However, according to De Kock (2010) one could go even further than this, and say that poor whites are complicit in whiteness’ relationship with its “perceived non-self, or anti-self, to which it is so ineluctably tied by the violence of hierarchical binary constitution” (De Kock, 2010, p. 18). Thus in terms of positioning whiteness through both its self and its non-self, poor whites are depicted as a contested social identity because their particular (non-self) performance of whiteness refutes and threatens the (self) performance played out by a homogenous and idealised form of whiteness (Hook & Truscott, 2013). For example, where whiteness is paired with fixed ideological attributes such as orderliness, rationality, and self-control, it simultaneously distances itself from its non-self which is laden with its respective binary opposites: Chaos, irrationality, violence and a lack of self-control (Green et al., 2007). Similarly, where whiteness entangles itself with constructions of self-assurance, political sophistication and moral maturity, its non-self is synonymous with a degeneracy of intellect and morality, and is sometimes even viewed as evil (Winddance-Twine & Gallagher, 2008). Through their perceived difference, the existence of poor whites provides evidence that white civilization is “indeed vulnerable to internal disintegration and degeneration” (Willoughby-Herard, 2007, p. 485), and they thus generate a tension in both the literature, and indeed in society itself, that threatens to expose the myth underlying the norm (Wilson, 2002).

These assessments of whiteness, suggest that in any given locale, the shared ideal of what whiteness should be is distinguished and policed through implicit and explicit social markers of white authenticity (Hughey & Byrd, 2013). In this regard, contemporary South African whiteness studies, particularly those adopting rich narrative based focuses, often refer to how historically, the apartheid government was not only interested in whether a person was obviously white but also whether that person performed an obvious type of whiteness (Hook, 2004; Ratele, 2009)

These studies generally use apartheid archival sources as a platform for discursive and thematic analysis, and stress how poor whites perceived difference was protected, policed and fixed into place by the powers of the apartheid state (Hughey & Byrd, 2013; Ratele, 2009; Ratele & Laubscher, 2010; Wale & Foster, 2007; Willoughby-Herard, 2007; Wilson, 2002). They explain how during apartheid, the process of policing and essentialising whiteness, which in itself is an untenable artifice, was justified through the claims of various “pseudosciences” which sought to construct whiteness and race as quantifiable biological truths (Wale & Foster, 2007). For example, the international eugenics movement was a by-product of the colonial era, and sought to scientifically rationalise differences between different races, in order to ultimately position whites superiorly (Willoughby-Herard, 2007). This “scientific” movement trickled down from the centre of the Western colonial imagination, to apartheid South Africa – where the existence of an unprivileged and deviant white social identity was one generally unseen and unheard of at the time (Bottomley, 2012).

Inspired by the principals of eugenics, the Western-funded Carnegie Commission, a five volume multidiscipline research effort conducted in South Africa in the early 1930s, which subjected poor white communities to mental testing and genetic monitoring in order to rationalise poor whites perceived difference through a series of biologically informed discursive strategies, is often written about (Willoughby-Herard, 2007). Ratele (2009) describes how poor white communities were also at the forefront of governmental contestation in the 1950s, where due to their perceived difference, the 1950 Population Registration Act saw poor white South Africans of

Portuguese, Greek and Jewish descent drift into questionable racial categories – something which ironically contradicted the grounds of racialised essentialism that this kind of legislation was founded in. Consequently, the way in which contemporary South African whiteness studies continue to retrieve whiteness through its historicisation, suggests that the way white social identities have been *manufactured* in the past, remains relevant for our current inquiries of whiteness. The emphasis on the constructed, or in this case, manufactured nature of white social identities also supports those arguments in favour of viewing whiteness as a social category which is subject to reinterpretation, or heterogeneous expressions.

In addition to describing poor whites as a contested, heterogeneous white social identity which was deemed problematic by the apartheid state, contemporary South African whiteness studies also demonstrate how poor whites were simultaneously protected and privileged by those in power. Hence certain, popular South African whiteness studies also acknowledge how the apartheid government implemented projects of discriminatory job protection, welfare and education to rehabilitate poor whites, and thereby prevent the degeneration of the white race (Green et al., 2007; Ratele & Laubscher, 2010; Wale & Foster, 2007). One of the ways in which this was enforced was through apartheid labour policy, specifically the Inspectorate of White Labour, which aimed to replace non-white labourers with so-called poor whites in an attempt to institutionalize a system of racial hierarchy in the workplace (Willoughby-Herard, 2007). Thus despite the contention around this group's "other" performance of whiteness, several scholars concur that through the very materiality of their white presence, poor whites were always included in the circle of white privilege, despite their shared class interests with non-white South Africans (B. K. Alexander, 2004; Green et al., 2007; Hook, 2004; McKaiser, 2011; Wale & Foster, 2007). South African scholars extend that this legacy is still evident today – the difference is that it no longer has the same, state-sanctioned guarantee (Truscott & Marx, 2011). For example, in postapartheid South Africa, poor whites continue to engage in a performance of white privilege that they assume to be either a birth-right or a historically perceived sanction (Wale & Foster, 2007), something which is

quite simply an unearned racial privilege that comes with being white (McKaiser, 2011; Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). In summary, it would appear then, that even after disregarding issues of class and location, the embodiment of white skin transcends class and continues to provide privileges, albeit non-economic privilege based on one's classification as white (Hook, 2004).

In the next section, I will discuss how one needs to be critical of the way in which one retrieves poor whites from within the literature, as well as the relevant implications for South African whiteness studies.

3.5.3 Poor Whites and literature tensions.

In terms of problematizing these findings for the purpose of this literature review and the various arguments I highlight within it, one should be wary of viewing white social identities as entirely heterogeneous as one may simultaneously overlook the overarching commonalities amongst outwardly different white social identities. Therefore, although one may recognise the corrosive potential for undermining whiteness by examining it through its various transgressions, one should be simultaneously aware that "other" whites may be subject to the same forces of power and supremacy as normalised whiteness (Roediger, 2001). Hughey (2010) echoes these sentiments, cautioning that although the current trend in whiteness studies is to highlight the heterogeneity of fractured white identities, demonstrations of hegemonic whiteness amongst differently positioned whites can still be seen. This contemporary sentiment echoes Steve Biko's (1978) argument, which essentially offers whites no distance from their whiteness (Hook, 2005). For Biko, the defensive recourse to the heterogeneous nature of white society is in fact one of the biggest challenges to destabilising whiteness and white privilege, and he writes that:

Basically the South African white community is a homogeneous community. It is a community of people who sit to enjoy a privileged position that they do not deserve, are aware of this, and therefore spend their time trying to justify why they are doing so. (Biko 1978, p. 19)

Although Biko's sentiments here are apparently unable to adequately accommodate the possibility of potentially heterogeneous white social identities that I similarly have argued for, the point I want to emphasise is that perhaps one should be more concerned with the strategic use to which claims about the heterogeneity of whiteness can be put. Consequently, in terms of exploring arguments in favour of the particularisation of heterogeneous white social identities, the past and present context of South African whiteness, and the continued impact and persistence of apartheid legislature and class divisions along racial lines suggests that it may be more appropriate to view white social identities as predominantly homogenous (Truscott & Marx, 2011).

3.6 Literature Review-Based Theoretical Approach

3.6.1 Discursive socioconstructionist approach.

Considering that white social identity formation is constructed through regular, patterned, and largely discursive negotiations of reality, with both external objects and internal processes of self-identity, the study of whiteness lends itself to a discursive socioconstructionist theoretical approach which emphasizes the emergent properties of identity within specific social, discursive interactions (Green et al., 2007; Hughey, 2012).

As informed by my review of the literature, I aim to explore patterns of homogeneity and heterogeneity within the constructions surrounding potentially heterogeneous white social identity structures as articulated through white discourse. Exploring patterns of homogeneity and heterogeneity within discourse requires one to focus on those textured and intricate narratives which simultaneously encompass elements of both similarity and difference, or in other words, those instances where white discourse appears to be evasive, inconsistent, overlapping, and contradictory (Ratele, 2009).

By proposing adoptable and illuminating notions of repertoire and mobilization, I will fashion my construction of the data in what Wetherell and Potter (1992) refer to as a "peopled" kind of way (p. 202). In summary, this means that my theoretical framework depends on subjective descriptions from within the participants' discursive performances, as well as my own subjective

interpretation thereof. This “peopled” approach also supports the supposition that knowledge and meaning are created through processes of socioconstructionism, or in other words, through processes of social engagement. For example, where a singular discursive approach may reduce the account of knowledge to its strictly observable manifestations in discourse, socioconstructivists make more room for the provision of socially shared and constructed knowledge (Janks, 2008). In terms of this thesis, this means that I will draw on my own underlying mental models that represent the full meaning of discourse as subjectively assigned by myself, based on the implicit sociocultural shared knowledge within that same discourse. The majority of this knowledge will be drawn from my review of the whiteness studies literature.

Importantly, a discursive socioconstructionist approach is also favourable here because it is designed to reflect those particularised constructions of whiteness within the historical, economic and sociopolitical context enveloping its social engagements (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). However, this approach is also not limited only to the broader social context surrounding postapartheid assumptions, issues, arguments, and interpretations of whiteness, as it also permits insights into the more every day, micro-expressions of the construct. This is useful because the examination of the micro-expressions of whiteness, particularly within a relatively new democratic society, better equips one to expose the obstacles and open the space for transformation at the levels of both social and personal interaction (Hughey, 2012; Hunter & Hachimi, 2012; Matsebula et al., 2007). Consequently, within the context of these engagements, I aim to critically examine how the micro-level discursive strategies currently mobilised by white South Africans connect to broader historical patterns of unequal relations and white privilege.

3.7 Conclusion

This conclusion will summarise and integrate the key concepts and arguments discussed within my review of the whiteness studies literature. Firstly, this chapter addressed how whiteness studies has been depicted as an academic field that emerged in the early 1990s, and attributed to the works of those popularised inquiries made by mainly white scholars such as Dyer (1988), Roediger

(2001) et cetera. I problematised how this depiction is representative of the erasure of black scholarly works within whiteness studies, and attempted to stimulate a sense of retribution in this regard. It became apparent that the way whiteness has been written about it has in itself been influenced by the powers of whiteness, and I concluded that one needs to retrieve the whiteness studies literature both reflexively, and critically.

Secondly, the key concepts in Western whiteness literature were discussed. I discussed how whiteness has been depicted as a normalised, invisible social identity structure with no real cultural content. Thereafter, I argued that in order for whiteness to exist as an object of study, it must be conceived as a construct with definite cultural content – as something that is defined apart from its apparent emptiness. It was stressed that whiteness must be particularised according to the unique spatial and temporal contexts that it is embedded in. This was located within the socioconstructionist position that there is no true essence to whiteness, "only the historically contingent constructions of that social location" (as cited in De Kock, 2006, p. 91).

Based on the call for particularisation, I moved on to a review of South African whiteness literature. I highlighted how a loss of political power and state-sanctioned privilege has resulted in a unique set of postapartheid conditions which present significant implications for contemporary South African whiteness studies. Thereafter, the central discursive concept of white talk and its main findings were discussed. The fact that white talk is related to findings based on middle-to-upper class white South Africans was also problematised, especially in light of the call for the particularisation of whiteness. I suggested that this was a central tension within the South African literature especially, and something that could perhaps benefit from those more intersectional inquiries which seek to explore potentially incongruous white social identity structures. My inference here was based on the assertion that whiteness is only challenged when its monolithic conception is cracked open, and the differences within dissected, or as Steyn (2001) says, when white individuals adopt a discourse of hybridisation.

Subsequently, I discussed how the group referred to as poor whites may provide an opportunity to explore whiteness through its intersections with class, and also through its contentions with its non-self – or antithetical self. It was assumed that this kind of intersectional inquiry may provide more nuanced and particularised insights into whiteness, and also potentially stimulate the unfolding of more heterogeneous, or hybridised narratives within whiteness.

Finally, I cautioned that although poor whites may provide a meaningful point of inquiry for research into more heterogeneous forms of whiteness, one should similarly exercise caution when retrieving this group in both past and present literature. I demonstrated how various South African scholars have warned that it may not be appropriate to conceive whiteness as anything other than a homogenous social identity at this early stage of South Africa's democracy. I concluded that whilst it may be possible to encourage more nuanced and intersectional ways of approaching South African white social identity structures, in terms of writing about whiteness, it is if not more important to remain critical of such approaches which might acknowledge a multiplicity of whitenesses.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the methods employed in this study. Firstly, I will restate the research questions and provide an outline of the research objectives. Secondly I will provide a description of the research design, which is a multi-method ethnographic approach. This will be followed by a description of the data collection and procedures. This description will be discussed in terms of three different procedures: (a) internet and radio ethnography; (b) qualitative interviews; and (c) participant observation sessions. Thereafter, I will discuss the chosen method of analysis, and how it has been tailored in terms of my specific topic and research objectives. Finally, the relevant ethical considerations will be highlighted.

4.2 Research Questions and Objectives

4.2.1 Research Questions

Considering the strong call for the contextualisation and particularisation of varied types of whitenesses and white privilege, this thesis concerns itself with the following problem: What are the implications for current South African whiteness studies if their efforts are addressing an essentially homogenous discursive performance of whiteness – the particular performance of course being the one performed by middle-to-upper class whites? There is however another angle to this problem: In a society such as South Africa, where race has been carved as one of the defining aspects of social identity – is it even possible to imagine other types of whitenesses such as those distinguished by their intersections with class? This thesis proposes that an analysis of the discursive performances of potentially varied white social identity structures, as distinguished through their intersections with class, may at least provide some clarity in terms of resolving this tension.

4.2.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this thesis are thus as follows:

1. To particularise the study of whiteness by looking at the construct through its intersections with class, and thereafter identify, describe and contextualise potentially heterogeneous white social identities through an analysis of their everyday discursive performances.
2. To stimulate a necessary and more intricate discussion of a construct which is typically conceived as monolithic; and to identify the emergence of more nuanced, intersectional ways of approaching identity in postapartheid South Africa.
3. To uncover the discursive processes and mechanisms informing the way white people talk; and to identify the patterns and preoccupations which contribute to the reproduction of whiteness in postapartheid South Africa.
4. To locate these findings within the historical context of the colonial and apartheid era; and to critically examine how these discursive strategies connect to historical patterns of unequal relations and white privilege.
5. To remain critically aware of the multifarious manifestations of white privilege and power whilst exploring the potentially heterogeneous white social identities and discourses of hybridization.

4.3 Design

4.3.1 Multi-method ethnography.

This thesis is a qualitative, multi-method ethnographic study. Ethnography emphasises the importance of studying first-hand what people say and do in particular contexts (Hammersley, 2006). Traditional ethnographic approaches are qualitative in nature and aim to generate rich understandings of lived experience (Brockmann, 2011). Qualitative research methods explore the rolling-up of particular experiences into narrative form, and explore “not what happens to a person, but how this is accounted for, how it is put into a frame that makes sense” (Frosh, 2007, p. 635).

The use of multiple data collection methods is a key feature of ethnography, and the term “multi-method” suggests that this particular type of ethnography generates data through a variety of

contexts and methods (Brockmann, 2011). However, even though ethnography may be used in different ways on different occasions, it is duly necessary to give some indication of the methodological boundaries of this type of design (Hammersley, 2006).

Inquiries generally involve fairly lengthy contact through participant observation in relevant settings, as well as relatively open-ended interviews designed to understand people's perspectives (De Kock, 2006). This may be complemented by the study of various sorts of documents or archival sources (Hammersley, 2006). The most critical aspect of ethnographic research is the active involvement of the researcher in the participant's social world, to the extent that they become a knowing member of that world through their immersion within it (Brockmann, 2011).

In terms of generating data, ethnographic approaches discourage the making of assumptions based only or mainly on existing (and possibly reified) textual effect and markers which refers to how the text presents itself superficially, or on the surface, in terms of its structure and content (De Kock, 2006). A large part of the meaning making in this sense is thus sourced not simply from textual effects, but from the exploration of the researchers' own thoughts and feelings – this is advocated as a way of gaining an understanding of the social world which goes beyond popular discourse (Brockmann, 2011). This approach affords the researcher a degree of authority as they become co-constructors of meaning with the participants, a subjective process determined primarily through what they deem as irrelevant and relevant (Hammersley, 2006). Accordingly, one of the criticisms of ethnography is that the researcher may not be fully aware of the power relations between themselves and the participants, as well as their own situationality and perspective in terms of also being an active participant (Brockmann, 2011). This may be resolved through a constant process of self-reflection and reflexivity on the part of the researcher (De Kock, 2006).

4.4 Data Collection and Procedures

As ethnography permits a sense of methodological eclecticism, I made use of a variety of data collection methods. These methods included the following types of ethnographic inquiry: (a) internet and radio ethnography; (b) qualitative interviews; and (c) participant observation sessions.

Data collection took place in two phases. The first phase involved the collection of ethnographic media (internet and radio) sources which were selected based on their subject matter – car-guards in South Africa. The second phase involved the conduction of qualitative interviews and participant observation sessions which both aimed to explore the experiences of white car-guards in South Africa.

4.4.1 Internet and radio ethnography.

In this section I discuss the internet and radio data collection methods employed in this study. In each case rationale, procedures as well as advantages and disadvantages are discussed.

4.4.1.1 Disadvantages of anonymity.

The radio and internet ethnographic sources were selected to represent the narratives of those mainly white middle-to-upper class motorists who engage with car-guards in South Africa. However, in internet and radio ethnography, where the data is collected online or on-air without meeting the participant's face-to-face, one cannot confirm who the participants are, and what their circumstances are, beyond what they tell us (Hammersley, 2006). Thus, whilst it was simple to control the topic of the discussion, it was virtually impossible to control the demographic factors, or subject position, of the online participants due to the degree of anonymity afforded to them by the online context. This was one of the disadvantages of this method specifically.

Due to this disadvantage, I had to rely on my implicit cultural knowledge to infer aspects of the subject positions of the online participants based on South African cultural identity markers such as: Name and surname, place of residence, and themes of whiteness in the discourse. I based my inference on the assumption that those individuals who engaged with car-guards at the shopping mall were largely middle-to-upper class white South Africans, based on the location and demographics of the shopping mall, which is situated in a predominantly “white area”, and visited mainly by first language English and Afrikaans speaking white clientele. In certain cases, it was easier to ascertain the subject position of the online participants for example, in the event that there

was a profile picture which revealed their identity, or where they self-identified their race and class positionality in the context of their online participation.

4.4.1.2 Advantages of anonymity.

Notwithstanding the inability to control for the subject position of the participants, the degree of anonymity afforded to them by their participation in the online context is very significant for both the nature and results of this thesis. For example, it is widely asserted that white South Africans are generally wary of entering discussions of race and whiteness, or they generally distort the content of the discussion to position South Africa's racial past favourably as well as their position within it (Green et al., 2007; Steyn, 2001; 2004; 2007). As race is a primary indicator of whiteness in South Africa, white participants may be less likely to engage in discussions of this nature where their race is known – for instance, in a face-to-face interview where one's race is obvious. In this particular face-to-face interview context, it could be argued that there is a certain sense of complicity and consequence to their participation in this context based purely on the participants' racial identity. To clarify, if a participant is white, and is partaking in a face-to-face interview on the topic of whiteness, they may be more guarded in terms of their participation because they are already somewhat exposed – the visibility of their racial identity means that their participation may be framed through the fact that they are white, and thus there is a degree of censorship attached to this context. However, the degree of anonymity afforded to participants in online contexts may offer them some sense of disidentification, or at least enables them to control and manipulate certain aspects of their social identities – such as race. An example of this would be the use of pseudonyms, the selection of profile pictures, or even the creation of entirely artificial online identities. Moreover, the online context affords the participants an “advantage” in the sense that they can inhabit whiteness without any real threat to personal identity, or any threat to “face” in public. They can voice their sense of whiteness without fear of censure, and there may even be a greater sense of freedom in terms of the extent to which they can express whiteness without being detected. Based on these factors, one can expect that the data generated from the internet data in

particular, might be more revealing, more brazen and less restricted than that which was generated simply from the face-to-face interviews.

4.4.1.3 Collection of internet data.

The internet data has been selected from archival internet sources extracted from online news forums and their comment sections, as well as online chat rooms and their comment sections. A Facebook post was also selected for analysis. The selection of these archival internet sources was based on an internet search, where the following search keys were entered into the internet search engine: (a) “car guards in South Africa”; (b) “white car-guards”; (c) “poor white car guards” and; (d) “parking attendants in South Africa”. Based on the results of this preliminary search, sources which were potentially suitable for analysis were identified. Thereafter, the sources were read extensively and a preliminary analysis was conducted based on the subject matter and its themes. This was a subjective process that was informed by my earlier review of the whiteness literature. Eventually a total of 14 internet sources were selected for analysis.

4.4.1.4 Collection of radio data.

The radio data has been extracted from an on-air interview that took place on Cape Talk radio. The topic of the radio interview was “poor whites in South Africa”. The interview took place over the telephone at approximately 21h30 in July 2014. I contacted Cape Talk via email to initiate a discussion of the topic. In my initial email to Cape Talk, I specified that the interview would be used as data for this thesis, and the producer approved this arrangement. The producer also invited Benita Moolman from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to participate in the on-air discussion. The discussion was hosted by Cape Talk radio presenter, Audrey Masango. When the interview commenced, Masango introduced the listeners to my research topic, informed them that the research was ongoing, and located the topic in the context of the conversation that was about to ensue. Thereafter, he proceeded to ask me and Benita a set of relevant questions in a semi-structured way. The questions were related to constructions of whiteness, white privilege, poor whites in South Africa, and apartheid policy which privileged poor whites. In due course, listeners

were encouraged to call in to the show to voice their comments and opinions on the topic. This resulted in an organic, free-flowing and textured narrative. The radio interview was initially scheduled to be an hour long, however due to high levels of listener activity; the producers asked me and Benita stay on-air for a further 30 minutes. Once the interview was finalised, Audrey Masango recited some of the messages that the listeners had texted to Cape Talk via their cellphones. The entire duration of the interview, and the recitation of the text messages was audio recorded via a recording device that I connected to my phone. Thereafter, this data was transcribed. The listener's telephonic participation, reflecting their thoughts and opinions on the topic as it emerged, was my primary source of interest. Where listeners have been quoted in the discussion, their identities have been protected through the use of pseudonyms.

4.4.2 Qualitative interviews.

In this section I discuss the indicators determining participant selection for the qualitative interviews, as well as the procedures around conducting the actual interviews.

4.4.2.1 Participant selection.

Participants were selected through a purposeful sampling method, which refers to the premeditated decision to sample a specific locale according to a fixed but reasonable set of social dimensions or indicators (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). Here the dimensions determining participant selection included occupation, race, age, gender, and history. These criteria were selected to be representative of a group that was privileged by the system of apartheid, and who have now lost that privilege in the political and economic sphere, but are likely to still maintain some privilege in the white cultural realm (Steyn, 2005). The dimensions are as follows:

1. Occupation: Car-Guard
2. Race: White
3. Age: Between 35 – 65
4. Gender: Male

5. History: Must have grown up in South Africa during the apartheid era

All of the participants were based and employed at Somerset Mall in Somerset West. Somerset West is a town in the Western Cape, positioned 50 kilometres East of Cape Town. Somerset Mall is the largest shopping centre in Somerset West and markets their provision of a formalised car-guard service to the public (<http://www.somersetmall.co.za/about.html>).

Prior to actual participant selection, and based on informal, preliminary conversations with some of the car-guards, it became apparent that they are not contractually employed by Somerset Mall. It emerged that a lesser known organisation, Glowing Fortune Security Services, functions as the employment body that manages the car-guards.

The car-guards are required to pay Glowing Fortune a daily rental fee, or what the car-guards refer to as “school fees”, for the right to work in their area. In turn, every car-guard is assigned a designated space on the “deck”, which refers to the parking lot in its totality. The deck has various zones and demarcations which are organised according to the NATO phonetic alphabet, for instance, Alpha, Bravo, and Zulu One. Due to the degrees of formalisation and informalisation being so unclear in this unregulated and essentially informal industry, in this specific case, one may view the car-guards as independent contractors. This implied that obtaining permission to conduct interviews and participant observation sessions with them was more of a courtesy than a prerequisite. Prior to selecting the participants through purposeful sampling, I made contact with Somerset Mall, who in turn advised that they are not directly affiliated with the car-guards. Thereafter, I made contact with Ab, the Operations Manager for Glowing Fortune, to inform him of the nature of my research, and my motives and intentions around it. Ab appeared to be enthusiastic about the research, and confirmed that I was welcome to begin selecting participants on the premises, in the event that they wanted to participate.

Thereafter, I made initial contact with the car-guards by introducing myself to them in the parking lot, and informally explained the nature of my research to those who appeared interested. I immediately noticed that some of the car-guards were unsure of me, wary almost. They appeared to

be quite guarded, and were not very enthusiastic about having an informal discussion in the parking lot. In hindsight, approaching the participants at their place of work during work hours may not have been the most suitable manner to go about initiating the selection process. Nonetheless, the majority of the car-guards agreed to give me their contact numbers in order to continue with further informal discussions around the interview process, and potentially to set up an actual interview.

4.4.2.2 Conducting the interviews.

The second pool of data, representing the experiences of the car-guards, has been generated by means of semi-structured qualitative interviews. Semi-structured qualitative interviews are guided yet open-ended communication events that are co-created by the interviewer and the interviewee (Brockmann, 2011). The questions probes and prompts are written in the form of a flexible interview guide (Appendix A) (Zungu & Pillay, 2010). Aside from the interview guide, the interview questions were largely biographical so as to explore the car-guard's constructions of who they are and why they do what they do, and also, to encourage a historical element to their narratives. This served to give the car-guards a voice and to provide a sense of depth and authenticity within the narratives – something which cannot be generated from the outside in.

The interviews were conducted from May – June 2014. A total of eight interviews with ten participants took place – two of the interviews were “doubled up”, so two participants were interviewed simultaneously. The other six interviews were single participant interviews. The participants comprised of eight white car-guards, one black car-guard and the Operations Manager, Ab. As I mention earlier, the participants were selected based on a purposeful sampling methods, however snowballing was also present, as the later interviews were secured after the first few interviews were conducted. Participants were sampled until redundancy, or to the point where no new themes emerged (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The interviews ranged in duration with 35 minutes being the shortest, and 80 minutes the longest. The duration of the interview was largely influenced by my discretion, based on the unfolding of the narratives and their state of saturation. The majority of interviews were between 50

– 70 minutes long. The interviews occurred at varying times, between 09h00 – 17h00, according to what suited the participant's schedules. All of the interviews took place at public locations in and around Somerset Mall in Somerset West. Beverages were offered to the participants at my personal expense. The interviews were conducted in English, however, in a few instances both the participants and me switched to Afrikaans if we felt we were able to communicate something more effectively.

All of the participants were bilingual (English and Afrikaans) although first language preferences were different amongst them. The interview consent forms were distributed and explained to the participants in English, but I made a point of assessing the participant's English language fluency prior to commencing with the interviews, and ensured that they were comfortable with the terms of the language use. In one case (the 35 minute interview) there seemed to have been a language barrier, which made the narrative very stagnant.

Throughout the interview, I aimed to create a comfortable, organic, non-judgemental and personal space. I wanted the flow of the interviews to be more representative of a natural conversation, rather than a formal interaction. However I still wanted a framework to conduct the interviews from within, and before and during the interview process, I engaged critically with academic literature surrounding the construction of whiteness in both apartheid and postapartheid contexts. All of the interviews were recorded with my personal recording device. Once all of the interviews were complete, they were subsequently transcribed by a transcription agency. The agency was required to sign confidentiality forms for each transcription.

4.4.3 Participant observation.

In addition to the qualitative interviews, I conducted ethnographically based participant observation sessions at the participant's work site – the parking lot. I aimed to use the data generated from these sessions as a platform to explore the similarities and contradictions in terms of what people say and what people do. One of the criticisms of ethnography is that researchers may view the individuals being studied as a product of their particular environment, rather than of who

they are and what they do elsewhere – simply because there is no observational data available about the rest of their lives (Hammersley, 2006). In this case, I attempted to contextualise the observation sessions through the existing, largely biographical data obtained from the qualitative interviews with the respective participants. It is important to note that the observation sessions were conducted after the interviews, so as to expand upon, or essentially deepen and enhance an already rich pool of experiential knowledge.

There are several facets to the largely complementary addition of the participant observation data to the qualitative data – these facets are based on my initial inferences and suppositions about the manner in which the data would potentially unfold throughout the research process. Firstly, I assumed that there may be inconsistencies in terms of how participants describe and strategically account for their experiences, through discourse, and the actuality of that experience. Considering that one of the primary characteristics of whiteness is its sophisticated ability to manipulate subjective experience through discursive lacunae (Steyn, 2004), I was aware that removing the “privilege” to articulate experience through discourse, may have provided a more raw, and less controlled, guarded side of whiteness. Secondly, I felt that the participant observation sessions would provide a meaningful opportunity to reflect on my own subject position within the research process – something which I could reflect upon through anecdotal field notes detailing my personal experience of the observation sessions. Considering my central role in this research process, and the necessary dose of reflexivity required to both counteract and enhance any effect of my role here, the field notes served to provide a rich data source in this sense.

4.4.3.1 Conducting the observations.

One of the potential pitfalls of participant observation sessions in ethnographic research is when the sessions are shortened – this can encourage an ahistorical perspective, one which neglects the local and wider histories as well as the biographies of the participants (Brockman, 2011). In terms of this thesis, where context forms the backbone of the analysis, I attempted to account for this through my use of the other complementary data collection methods such as the qualitative

interviews and the internet and radio ethnographic sources. Nonetheless, the observation sessions were very short, and the analysis may have benefited from further time spent.

A total of five participant observation sessions were conducted. The observation sessions ranged from 60 – 100 minutes long. I conducted the sessions at different temporal cycles of the day: Namely the morning period between 08h30 – 10h30; the afternoon period from 12h30 – 14h30; and the late afternoon period from 15h00 – 17h00. I felt that this may have prevented any kind of temporally based skew or bias in terms of my observations.

In order to account for or soften any kind of researcher reactivity effects (Hammersley, 2006), or the effect of the researcher's presence, I adopted a strategy of what may be described as conscious, selective observation. Firstly, I ensured that the participants were comfortable with me observing them at work in the parking lot prior to the observation sessions. Upon arriving at the site for the observation session, I informed the participant of my presence and then based on my discretion, would either sit in my car and observe from a distance, or engage with them naturally in the parking lot from where they stood. I generally alternated between both observational standpoints.

There was no structure or guide to the observation sessions; rather they were based on the “happenings” of the parking lot, and the car-guard's behavioural engagements with their customers and the other car guards. I used my personal recording device to audio record my field notes. This was done privately in my car in the parking lot, or on my way home. I recorded any information that came up for me personally, or anything that I felt would have added value to the data. After the participant observation sessions were finalised, I transcribed the audio files myself.

4.5 Data Analysis

4.5.1 Critical Discourse Analysis.

All the ethnographic data sources were analysed by means of CDA. CDA is a powerful proposition for studying the constructions and processes surrounding whiteness as they exist in everyday renditions of human interaction (Potter, 2003). Conducting CDA marks a move from

considering language as an abstract system of terms, to considering talk as a constitutive activity reflecting the means through which subjective worlds are constructed and negotiated into existence (Bodwell, 2001).

In its most basic form, the analysis concerned itself with the following discursive analytic procedures as outlined by Phillips and Jørgensen (2002). These procedures entailed: (a) careful engagement with the text over time involving reading and re-reading; (b) a preliminary analysis to identify themes of sense-making; and (c) a second level analysis of how the broader social contestations work through the text. The second level analysis draws on the principles of CDA in particular. The critical component of CDA seeks to understand how discourse is implicated in relations of power (Janks, 2008). The underlying assumption guiding this process is based on the central tenet of whiteness – how does whiteness continue to negotiate and entrench its privilege and power in a context where it is both marginalised and no longer in control?

In terms of analysing the narratives, I drew inspiration from Ratele (2010) by looking specifically at how the speakers positioned themselves and others in whiteness; how being white was written of; evasions about complicity accomplished; and group domination and structural violence denied. I also concerned myself particularly with how the realities and identities of white South Africans come to hold their meaning in terms of the white subject's descriptions, glosses, categories and orientations (Potter, 2003).

Other specific questions that were used to guide the analysis included: (a) how do white car-guards articulate their experience in postapartheid South Africa? (b) how do other mainly white and generally middle-to-upper class motorists articulate their experience of white car-guards? and; (c) how do both sets of articulations relate to South Africa's political context and to the constructions of whiteness within this context specifically?

In consensus with this thesis' theoretical framework, I employed a "peopled" kind of CDA. As I discuss in the brief theoretical section of this thesis, this is another way of saying that texts are instantiations of socially regulated discourses and that the processes of production and reception are

socially constrained. An important part of my analysis accrued from the manner in which the text responded to my interrogation thereof, and so its meaning was co-created through my own social regulation. In terms of my own interrogation of the text, throughout the analysis I was reminded of Van Dijk's (2012) analogy which compares discourses to icebergs. This reminded me that we only see or show superficial information or knowledge but the larger part of the information remains hidden beneath the surface. This presupposed knowledge is theoretically accounted for by assuming its presence in the ideological structure of the discourse, but not in its semantic representation as explicitly expressed by its sentences (Van Dijk, 2012). Consequently, whilst my analysis has a definite textual aspect, defined not only by the presentation of signifiers on the surface of the text but also by the utterance of specific linguistic selections and their juxtapositioning, it also relies heavily on my inferences around the presupposed ideological content. I always aimed to go *beyond* the meagre superficial presentation of the text (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Additionally, my analysis recognised the "historical determination" of the discourse so as to understand that they are tied to the conditions of their particular context (Janks, 2008). Hence the text was always read in context and the narratives are understood as part of a historical, economic, social and political context which produces them even as they speak of that context (Ratele, 2009).

The discursive selections were thus contextualised in terms of my literature review and the way white people talk, and located in their past and present ties to white social practice. I was specifically guided by those selections which employed implicit whiteness strategies which sought to defend, deny and entrench whiteness and white privilege (Wambugu, 2005). Finally, I also aimed to leave some space open within my analytic procedures, so as to not obscure the potential emergence of previously unexplored discursive terrains of whiteness. This consideration is particularly relevant in terms of this thesis' objectives which aim to explore patterns of hybridisation within white discourse.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical permission for conducting the study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of Stellenbosch University. Potential research participants, once identified, were invited to participate voluntarily in the research. Prior to their participation in the research, the participants were asked to sign informed consent forms (see Appendix B). The consent forms informed them of the nature and purpose of the study. They were printed in English, and explained verbally in English. Participants were encouraged to communicate if they were unsure of anything in this regard. All the participants confirmed that they understood the consent forms fully. All participants were given a copy of the consent forms which contained my details and my supervisor's details in the event that they wanted to contact us after the interviews.

Although it was stated in the consent forms, it was verbally reiterated that the interviews would be audio recorded for the purpose of data analysis. Participants were informed that the interview data, whether audio recorded or transcribed, would be stored in a secure location at the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University. Only my supervisor and I had direct access to the data. The transcription agency had access to the audio recordings and the transcribers were required to sign confidentiality agreements. The participants were informed that the data would be kept in a secure location for a period of five years after data collect, after which it would be discarded. They were assured that they could withdraw from the research at any point, and that there would be no consequences in this event. It was stressed that they are not bound to the research in any whatsoever. The participants were informed that their identities would be kept, and will remain confidential throughout the research and thereafter. Thus, in the event that a participant is quoted herein, a pseudonym or participant code was used as opposed to their names. Participants were informed that they would not be remunerated for their participation in the research, but that they could order refreshments during the interviews at my expense.

The only foreseeable risk was that the participants would be sensitive to discussions around race, racism and on being white. Considering the term, "poor white" has discriminatory

connotations; the participants were never referred to as such. Since this study was exploring the experiences of car-guards, I did not anticipate that any of the participants would experience emotional discomfort to the point where they would require a referral for counselling. However, I informed the participants that I would make the necessary arrangements should they feel the need to consult a counselling service during or after the interview. I informed them that I would incur all of the costs in this regard. None of the participants reported any kind of emotional distress at any stage of the research. In terms of the internet and radio participants, pseudonyms were used in the instance that their words were quoted. The radio participants were informed of the nature of the research prior to their engagement in the radio interview. If they had any complaints about the content of the interview, they could contact the Broadcasting Complaints Centre for South Africa – and contact details for this institution were provided after the show. The internet participants are bound to the terms of engagement as set out by the various internet sites. They are required to agree to these terms and conditions before posting on the sites. As this engagement took place on a social platform, it is accessible to the public unless it is moderated by the internet site or participant thereafter.

Chapter 5: Results and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this analysis, the multiple themes are all inextricably linked. Hence, the idea is not to read and understand the themes independently, but rather to integrate them, make connections, draw parallels, and ultimately trace the network of fine lines of what may be likened to the discursive “web of whiteness”. This principal of holism, of an amassed narrative fused by its respective entanglements with its sub-narratives, has functioned as the foundation for my own analytic inquiry.

Secondly, while it is customary to separate the results chapter from the discussion of research findings, when using CDA as a methodology, this separation becomes less defined, as describing, explaining and situating data are crucially interlinked. I have therefore structured this analysis into two segments, inclusive of both the results on the discursive signifiers and codes, as well as a corresponding discussion of the implications of this data in relation to the literature review, and the aims and objectives of this thesis.

Thirdly, discursive signifiers and codes are identified with the intention to unlock the underlying constructions, or themes, around whiteness. In terms of what I have discussed about the process of conducting CDA, the discursive signifiers may be analogised as the tip of the iceberg, as that which is visible on the surface of the text. Throughout this chapter the discursive signifiers, which are essential to the identification and interpretation of their underlying respective ideological constructions and themes, are *italicised* so as to highlight their centrality within the analysis. In those cases where I make additional comments on how particular signifiers may be read in the context of my analysis, the comment will appear in brackets, and will also be italicised – like [*this*].

In conclusion, the results and the subsequent discussion thereof are organised according to the following two segments: (a) “Discursive Signifiers” and; (b) “The Nature of the Narrative”. Each segment begins with an orientation on how to read the particular segment, and culminates with an integrative conclusion.

5.2 Discursive Signifiers

5.2.1 Reading this segment.

This segment is based on my interpretation of several underlying discursive themes traceable throughout the various ethnographic narratives. The discursive themes are identifiable by their corresponding discursive signifiers. Discursive signifiers may be likened to indicators of underlying discursive themes. They function as signs, or directions as to where one should look. In terms of the iceberg analogy described by Van Dijk (2012), and as I mention just above, the signifiers are essentially the tip of the iceberg – or that which is exposed. They function as the key to unlocking the content beneath the surface of the text, and therefore allow one to access the latent content of the discourse.

Most importantly, signifiers allow the content of the text to be signified covertly, or in a way which repackages the underlying discursive content in a more socially acceptable way. Thus, I am not only concerned with how these signifiers present themselves on the surface of the text, but rather, I will focus on how the use of signifiers relates to a process of the underlying content being signified covertly by whites.

The use of signifiers within discourse exists only because of those who construct them, and those who in turn are able to interpret their underlying meaning. For example, in the analysis the signifiers only became apparent because I inferred their presence and their underlying content. This is based on my socioconstructionist theoretical approach which permits me to draw on my own underlying mental models that represent the full meaning of discourse as subjectively assigned by myself. According to Balirano and Corduas (2008) this process depends on a shared understanding of norms or expectations which they describe as “diasporic elements which are accessible only to those who possess the necessary semantic, pragmatic, and cultural information” to decode them (p. 228), hence why I say the use of signifiers exist only because of those who construct them, and those who in turn are able to interpret their underlying meaning.

In order to illustrate the basic function of discursive signifiers, I give the following general examples. The signifiers must be read through the consideration that they allow the speaker to imply something without having to state the implication directly. This in turn affords the speaker a degree of power, as they are able to perform whiteness through discourse in a way that evades identification, for example: (a) “*well obviously!*”; (b) “*dare I say it?*”; and; (c) “*just saying...*”. Due to the nature of this analysis, the use of these signifiers must be located within the context of their development. This context has come to inform the performance of whiteness, through the use of signifiers in the postapartheid context. Since the cessation of apartheid in 1994, whites assumed sense of inherent superiority and privilege has faced interrogation and relinquishment. The sociopolitical space where whites were once able to freely and outwardly express their privilege has come into the light and since has diminished (Collier, 2005; Green et al., 2007; Hook, 2004; Schönfeldt-Aultman, 2014; Steyn, 2004; 2007). To reiterate, whiteness’ power, as performed through discourse, can no longer exist where it may be overtly detected. Due to a loss of political power, the sociopolitical consequences of whiteness’ potential detection, has led it to resignify its power through discourse, in a way which permits it to retain its privilege within the same context of changing power relations. Through their performance of discourse, white’s use of signifiers becomes central to our analysis, because it implies that it is not the underlying content of the message which has changed – but rather, just the code by which that same content is transmitted and understood amongst whites. Ultimately then, the political shift and loss of power has not only affected the way in which whites renegotiate their social identities, but also, how they articulate this process through their discursive performance in social contexts (Nakayama & Krizek 1995; Ratele, 2009; Steyn, 2004; 2007).

Schönfeldt-Aultman (2014) draws similar conclusions in his study of the discursive performances of white South African expatriates living in the United States. The results of this study demonstrated that the group employed similar discursive strategies representative of what Stuart Hall (1981) refers to as inferential racism or, those “apparently naturalized representations of

events and situations relating to race”, whether factual or fictional which have racist premises and propositions inscribed in them as a set of unquestioned assumptions. Similarly to the use of discursive signifiers, inferential racism enables racist statements to be formulated “without ever bringing into awareness the racist predicates on which the statements are grounded” (p. 20). Consequently, discursive signifiers are a necessary constituent of inferential or coded racism as they permit whiteness to permeate discursive contexts in a way that appears naturalized, which simultaneously enables it to evade detection and interrogation. In summary, the use of discursive signifiers in white discourse may be regarded as a rhetorical strategy, which I will argue, is mobilised by whiteness to guard and uphold white privilege in uniquely postapartheid conditions. In my discussion of the following theme, “Discursive Signifiers,” I will demonstrate that this discursive performance is translated even within the confines of this car-guard conversation. In the following sections, I will discuss the following three sub-themes based on their representation through discursive signifiers: (a) white discourse and denial; (b) powerlessness and white victimhood and; (c) colonial discourse.

5.2.2 White discourse and denial.

My critical discursive analysis reveals several instances where, ironically, the relevance of whiteness and race to the discussion around car-guards is deemed entirely irrelevant, or in some cases, completely denied. This is revealed by the discursive signifier, “*throwing out the race card*”, and the related signifiers “*it’s been over 20 years*”, and “*it’s time to move on*”. The aforementioned signifiers are loaded terms that perform a very important function in the battle to guard and uphold white privilege. It may be argued that this is a powerful, intimidating and dismissive performance of discourse which is produced by whites to undermine the relevance and necessity of discussions around race, whiteness and white privilege in postapartheid South African society. For example, in the rare instances where whiteness and even racism were rightfully detected in the ethnographic narratives, and subsequently called out by the “identifier”, whiteness tended to respond in a generally consistent manner through its discursive performance. In these instances, whiteness

becomes extremely defensive, and mobilises various discursive signifiers which essentially function to attack and undermine the identifiers claims. In this regard, the use of signifiers like, “*throwing out the race card*” are discursive strategies in the sense that they prevent the narrative from progressing beyond the point of its use in the conversation. Thus by denying the validity of the identifiers competing claim, and deeming it simply as something which is both irrelevant and unfounded, whiteness restricts the potential for an open narrative around race and white privilege to unfold, by deeming it as unnecessary, and even counter-productive to the new democratic order. Steyn and Foster (2008) describe this process of discrediting those discourses which function to highlight the enduring effects of apartheid as “the final turn of the screw” in white’s well-rehearsed discursive repertoires (p. 29).

The irony of this particular discursive performance of course, is that race continues to occupy a central position within the discourse of those same speakers who make such a concerted discursive effort to deny its relevance. This ironical characteristic of the discourse creates a sort of ambivalence when reading the text. Here one may ask why discussions around race and whiteness continue to dominate discursive contexts, if these constructs are irrelevant and insignificant. Findings from South African whiteness studies suggest that this discursive ambivalence is by no means coincidental. Contrarily, it is argued that the discursive characteristic of ambivalence is mobilised because it permits the ideological function of the discourse to operate efficiently whilst simultaneously rendering the ideological position of the speaker more difficult to pin down – this affords the speaker a degree of disidentification from their performance of discourse. This ambivalence requires the analyst to go further than that which manifests on the surface of the discourse, or to not take discourse at face value as Steyn and Foster (2008) encourage.

Within this sub-theme, “white discourse and denial” I refer to another discursive signifier which is commonly used in the performance of white discourse – colour blind racism. Similarly to the *throwing out the race card* signifier, claims of being “*blind to colour*” have been found to saturate the performance of whiteness in postapartheid conversational contexts. In fact, in her

analysis of middle-to-upper class white South African's discursive performance, Steyn (2007) found that claims of being "*blind to colour*" were highly prevalent, and that the mobilisation of this particular discursive strategy functions not only to deny the relevance of race but also to position white the speaker as innocent. The use of the colour blind racism strategy is ironic when compared to multiple findings which suggest that the racialised categories instilled by apartheid remain firmly entrenched within the workings of the postapartheid social order (N. Alexander, 2007; Green et al., 2007; Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). The effort that is invested in the discursive performance of this claim, as informed by its centrality within the various ethnographic narratives of this thesis, should therefore urge one to interrogate its associated denial. The denial itself becomes the defining feature of this particular discursive performance, as it provides the grounds upon which this signifier can operate.

At this point, I would like to consider the following narrative extracted from my Cape Talk 702 radio interview with Aubrey Masango and Benita Moolman on the topic of poor whites:

Hendrik: Poverty is colourless, it's um sexless, it's just poverty. Um I've experienced and I've seen, over the weekend I spent time in Magaliesburg, up to Rustenburg, and I've seen every kind of person suffering. So um my view of poverty is, poverty is poverty, and we need to help, and we need to assist as far as possible. I did um come across a person, um, uh, I don't know how to...so proud that she would not accept a half-eaten eisbein from a very well uh, well, well-educated person, and this person gave her this half-eaten eisbein, and she refused it. I thought that was stuuupid!

Masango: You seem to not be saying something there Hendrik. It sounds to me like you want to say that this is a poor white woman, who...

Hendrik: No!

Masango: No?

- Hendrik: No (laughs) I was waiting for you to say that. It was not. It was a *colourless person*, I saw it as a *colourless person*, um, I don't want to, um, identify um, the race or the nationality or the colour of this person...
- Masango: Why?
- Hendrik: No, no, I'm not going to say, no Aubrey...
- Masango: I hear you, I just want to get clarity for my sake Hendrik. I want to understand, you see I'm not shy to talk about people's colours. Is this...
- Hendrik: I'm not shy to talk about it but I *don't want to make it a race issue*.
- Masango: Why not? Remember that this discussion we are having here is a race discussion.

In this example, it is clear that the white speaker, Hendrik is making a concerted discursive effort to prove that he does not “*see colour*”, hence his repeated discursive claims that he viewed the person in question as “*colourless*”. This discursive claim is primarily a denial which represents a refusal to acknowledge the significance of racial categories in postapartheid discursive contexts. In the context of this narrative specifically, the denial itself may also be considered a signifier – a signifier of resistance and guardedness around the topic of race and whiteness. This denial, like the “*throwing out the race card*” discursive strategy, essentially functions to prevent and undermine the necessary open narratives around this topic to emerge.

This serves to insulate and protect whiteness from scrutiny and interrogation, thus guarding the continuing manifestations of its privilege in a society which renders it obsolete. The use of denial in Hendrik's narrative here appears to be performed consciously through his discourse, as he reveals in his retort to Masango, “I was waiting for you to say that”. Here the denial of seeing colour is revealed to be a sham because Hendrik's discursive performance slips up by acknowledging race by pre-empting its centrality in the conversation with Masango. The irony is that that the very claim that Hendrik focusses so hard on disproving, that race is irrelevant and that people are colourless, becomes reinscribed through his discursive performance due to his discursive

effort and investment to achieve the opposite. Herein lies the contradiction – and this is primarily what one should concern one’s self within this analysis. The product of this contradiction is ambivalence and slippage, in the sense that the speaker aims to deny the relevance of race through discourse, but simultaneously reinscribes its centrality within that same discursive performance. Again, this can make it difficult to pin down the ideological position of the speaker. Masango however, is able to identify the contradiction and slippage within the Hendrik’s discursive performance with ease, as demonstrated in his retort to Hendrik after her he “does not want to make this a race issue”. In response Masango asks in confusion, “Why not? Remember that this discussion we are having here is a race discussion”.

A second example of the “*colour blind racism*” discursive strategy will be discussed in light of one of the qualitative interviews conducted with a white car-guard participant. The following excerpt is relevant here:

Interviewer: How is your relationship with the Congolese guys?

Participant: I have quite a good relationship with *some of them*. I have actually got, *one of the Congolese guys*, I’m basically *their* friend, of the white guys, and uh, *him and I talk a lot*, we’ll have a *long chat every now and then*, and then he’ll come and visit me or whatever...

Interviewer: So it’s not like um, you know, the white guys and the Congolese guys...

Participant: No I don’t see it that way, there are guys that are full on Afrikaans, and they’ve got the racial differences and that, but I don’t see it that way. I mean, we’re a group, we’re not just separate items on a chessboard, that all get put in different positions on the board...I feel that we, we’re basically a unit, we’re not just one, like in the word “team” there is no “I” in “team”. A unit is where we all stand together and we try and help everyone.

Interviewer: So does everyone kind of know everyone?

Participant: Ya basically, you don't know everyone's names and all that off by heart, you don't know all the people's names, but you know them face by face, when we come in the mornings, we will crack a joke here and there, we will smile and laugh.

Here the participant is discursively softening the extent of racial tension and division prevalent between the white and black car-guards. He almost achieves this discursive performance largely through utilising what Steyn (2007) refers to as liberal white discourse, which emphasises social values such as unity, cohesion, and sameness. Although this has been found to be a well-rehearsed discursive strategy in white discourse, there are several lapses within that same performance which are revealed through the discursive characteristic of contradiction. A particular example is how the participant initially begins by stating: "I have quite a good relationship with *some* of them", and then contradicts this by saying "I have actually got, *one* of the Congolese guys, I'm basically *their* friend, of the white guys". The contradiction is operant due to the inconsistency within the participants discourse – firstly he has a good relationship with "*some*", and this is then reduced to "*one of the Congolese guys*", and thereafter, he reverts back to the collective in "I'm *basically* their friend". The participant exhibits further discursive contradiction by initially stating "*and uh, him and I talk a lot*", but then shortly thereafter, this is reduced to "*we'll have a long chat every now and then*".

With regards to the performance of liberal white discourse in the narrative, the participant claims that the car-guards are "*basically a unit*", when in actual fact, this unit is stratified according to race. The participant's denial of the system of racial hierarchy within the car-guard contingency is discredited by his use of the analogy of a chessboard, where the chess pieces are organised on opposing sides of the board according to their respective colours: Black and white. Ironically, in the game of chess, the player representing the white pieces is traditionally afforded the privilege of making the first move, or starting the game. Aside from my inferences around the game of chess, I am duly concerned with the discursive signifiers and characteristics at play within this narrative,

and more so, with how they function to guard and uphold whiteness and white privilege. Thus whilst the participant asserts that there is no sense of racial division amongst the car-guards as a collection, one must be encouraged to read his claim through its denial. This supposition is substantiated by the slippages within the participant's discourse, or the inconsistencies between what he simultaneously tries to prove and deny through his discursive performance. A large degree of inference is necessary here, however as stated earlier, the nature of the analysis fortunately lends itself to this. Hence, why is it that all the white car-guards are on first name terms with each other, and are able to recall highly detailed and personalised recollections of each other's identities but the black car-guards are referred to simply as "the Congolese"?

This inference is substantiated by evidence from the other qualitative interviews and the participant observation sessions, where in no instance, are any of the black car-guards referred to by their first names. This is representative of a state of depersonalisation and objectification on behalf of whiteness towards an "other" – or something else which exists outside of *its* subjective world. The participant's discursive performance slips up when he states "you don't know everyone's names and all that off by heart, you don't know all the people's names, but you know *them* face by face". What the participant is really eluding to here is that the white car-guards are not on first name's basis with the black car-guards because the aforementioned form part of an external, largely "unknowable" sub-team.

This was substantiated again by data from the participant observation sessions, where it became apparent that the black car-guards are not ever really spoken of in a personal sense. For example, whilst the white car-guards could all recite highly personal and particular details about each other's private lives and identities, the black car-guards remained absent from such conversations. Perhaps the most alarming and noticeable schism within the performance of white discourse then, lies between what is being performed, and what is being enacted in reality – the gap between these two positions is the crux of this analysis.

Consider another instance of the analysis – in this case, it has been extracted from the participant observation data. This content is more anecdotal in nature, and also much more volatile and overt when compared to the liberal performance of white discourse exhibited by the participant above. This particular participant observation session took place informally in the parking lot. The participant was not probed to talk about this particular story; rather he seemed to open up quite jokingly about it, as if he was “catching up” with an old friend. He paints a scene of how his brother bestowed his young son with an air rifle with the purpose of shooting *anything* that is black, *anything* that moves. What struck me immediately about the participants discourse here was the presence of the same sense of depersonalisation and objectification that was identified in the liberal performance of white discourse discussed just above. In this instance however, this is communicated more directly through the use of the impersonal term “*anything*” as opposed to the more personal and animate term “*anyone*”. The participant goes on to describe how the young boy reclines on the balcony of his parent’s flat in Gordon’s Bay, and fires off “warning shots” to prevent black people from approaching the building.

Whilst the discursive content of this anecdote is outwardly racist, there are submerged layers of white discourse which remain unseen beneath the written gestalt. For example, it is imperative to note that this anecdote was recalled with a great sense of humour and pride. Naturally, it is difficult to translate these tonal effects into what is seen on the surface of the text – however their presence within the narrative is significant and can certainly deepen one’s interpretation. According to Schönfeldt-Aultman (2014) the strategic use of humour is commonly mobilised within white’s discursive performance, and allows for the protection, defence and disavowal of whiteness’ racism, as the element of laughter normalises the content of what is being said.

However, in terms of my particular discussion within this section, with its focus on the discursive characteristics of denial and contradiction – when I asked this same participant whether he was racist, he answered immediately with: “I’m *not a racist*; I was taught to respect black, yellows, pinks, coloureds and whites. I was taught to respect them all equally”. This discursive

performance in particular, is representative of the colour blind racism discursive strategy as the participant discredits the very real significance of the racial categories he refers to in his narrative by referring to other non-racial category “colours” such as yellow and pink (Steyn, 2004; 2007). Again, this is constitutive of both denial and contradiction on several levels, and again, one should be reminded not to isolate written gestalts from their context and their presupposed content.

In summary, upon reflection of the narratives discussed in this section, one may conclude that there seems to be a contradictory fixation on not only denying the lingering effects of a racially stratified society, but on concurrently highlighting that which the speakers are simultaneously trying to disavow. Thus, grave discursive efforts are made to conceal racism and whiteness on the surface of the text, however, the discourse always seems to “slip up” – as if whiteness loses control at the weak points of a futile defence. One may go even further and suggest that this “slippage” is representative of the natural order of events here. So psychoanalytically speaking, when one fights or resists unconscious fixations and anxieties from finding conscious expression, they will inevitably slip through the cracks of a superficial psychological defence (Hook, 2012). It then becomes almost mandatory, that seemingly unrelated and continuously discredited discussions in the context of postapartheid social relations will always gravitate towards issues around race – despite whites’ discursive attempts to counteract this. Hence why for so many of us, and particularly for those speakers responsible for the denial embedded in the ethnographic narratives, we are often left with a perplexed sense of “how did this conversation end up here?”

Notwithstanding the functionality of denial and contradiction in the discourse, one can certainly deepen the discussion of the signifier “*throwing out the race card*”, and others related to it. The use of the aforementioned signifier, and others such as “*it’s been over 20 years*”, are prerequisite’s for a more explicit discussion around the power and privilege of whiteness, and what this power and privilege represents. Addressing this concern from another angle then, the use of these signifiers is testament to the assumed sense of power and privilege occupied by whiteness within discursive contexts, and its alignment with positive values such as morality, objectivity, and

superiority. For example, Hendrik alludes to this notion in the excerpt from the radio interview, when he states:

I don't know how to...so proud that she would not accept a half-eaten eisbein from a very well uh, well, *well-educated person*, and this person gave her this half-eaten eisbein, and she refused it. I thought that was *stuuupid!*

Here Hendrik signifies his whiteness with the positive signifier "*well-educated person*", and in turn signifies the lady's blackness with the negative signifiers of *poverty and stupidity* (ultimately Hendrik does admit that the lady in question was black). There are also other layers to wherein the speakers' discursive performance draws on colonial associations with exoticism and carnality in order to signify blackness. For example, where Hendrik is surprised that the lady would not eat from a half-eaten bone that he, a "very well uh, well, *well-educated person*" bestowed upon her. Whilst this aspect of the discourse is relevant to the section on discursive signifiers, it certainly requires deeper analysis, and will be discussed in the subsequent sub-theme on colonial constructions of whiteness and blackness specifically.

To bring the discussion back to understanding how whiteness entrenches its power and privilege through discourse, it is largely through whiteness' discursive alignment with positive values that whites are able to almost unquestionably dictate their own social standing and constructions of self through discourse. Secondly then, the clearly identifiable use of positive discursive signifiers is also representative of the way in which whiteness continues to be the overarching or governing voice within the context of postapartheid society. For example, it is the prevailing voice of whiteness that echoes in unison throughout the narratives that "*it's time to move on*". At no point in the same narratives is there any trace of a consideration that for others, "*moving on*" is an ideal that we remain far removed from. It seems to be unconsciously assumed that what happens in the confines of the subjective "white mind" is an absolute representation of an objective reality experienced in global terms – even by those minds which may not operate within such confines. This is consistent with findings around white South African discourse which suggest that

whites present an evaluation of postapartheid South Africa as if it emanates from the “objective” character of the political and national life of the country (Steyn & Foster, 2008). Ultimately this facet of whiteness is linked to its inherent power and privilege because the ability to determine, or at least to be associated with objectivity, affords the person or group in such a position, several unearned and even immoral social advantages. Where Hughey (2012) speaks of “multifarious manifestations” of white privilege, and the need to understand them with a little more sophistication – this privilege, the privilege to determine what is right, and what is true, and to be *believed* in this regard, is particularly pertinent within white discourse, and more specifically, within the confines of this conversation.

5.2.3 Powerlessness and white victimhood.

According to various South African scholars, postapartheid South African whiteness is characterised by a sense of vulnerability and victimisation, as well as an energy of resistance, and even sulking (Steyn, 2007). This is certainly echoed through my analysis of this thesis’ ethnographic narratives, although I find that whiteness’ discursive performance in this regard centres round tales of being bullied, and backed into a corner – with many even going as far as stating that they are “*being held ransom*”. In terms of locating this performance within the political context that white’s discursive performance of whiteness is currently embedded within, these discursive signifiers are demonstrative of the loss of power that whites have been grappling with since the cessation of their legally inscribed privilege in 1994. In addition to the general sense of powerlessness, these signifiers are further representative of a perceived loss of control and entitlement – values which are of course inextricably linked with the overarching value of power. Take note of the following example extracted from one of the online ethnographic narratives based on a discussion around car-guards:

I pay for insurance, tracker ect [sic]. I will ask if I want a guard to look after my vehicle. But like all other things you are forced to accept their service. I want a business like that, pay

rental for a bib and then *bully others* into giving me money and *I can make as much as I like* and *not pay tax ect* [sic]. Wow that's just great! (Sunelle Kritzer)

The above excerpt is demonstrative of what one may personify as a sulking whiteness. This sulking whiteness is characterised by a sense of selfishness and relatedly, an imbalanced or skewed sense of subjectivity and sense of relating to its external world. There are several signifiers within the text that support this formulation. For example, note the centrality or the focus on the singular individual experience in the gestalt in: (a) *"I pay"*; (b) *"I will ask if I want"*; (c) *"I want a business like that"*; and (d) *"I can make as much as I like"*. Additionally note how the speaker fails to accurately understand and depict the experience of the *others'* reality – rather she misconstrues what she perceives to be the *others'* experience of reality in order to substantiate her current depiction of a victimised whiteness through discourse. Thus the speaker constructs the car-guarding industry as one in which you *"bully others"*, or more realistically, where black car-guards bully white motorists. She also falsely represents the car-guarding industry as one in which *"I can make as much as I like"*. This is contradicted by factual evidence that the car-guarding industry is completely unregulated and the tipping component is dependent almost entirely on the customer's discretion (Blaauw & Bothma, 2001). How does this afford the car-guard the opportunity to make as much as they like? Lastly, based on the assumption that the signifier *"car-guard"* and the signifier *"others"* allude to blackness and whiteness respectively, it is evident that the white victimisation rhetoric is operant here. The assumedly white speaker has almost successfully managed to portray herself as the victim in this scenario by literally constructing car-guards as bullies.

The key to unlocking these more latent structures of whiteness within the gestalt lies largely within the speaker's statement: *"But like all other things you are forced to accept their service"*. Here, the lapse between what the speaker is saying, and what she is implying is revealed through the prefix, *"but like all other things"*, wherein she uses the uniquely South African socioeconomic phenomenon of car-guards as a platform for a much broader conversation around postapartheid

conditions to emerge. Essentially, through discourse, the speaker applies her subjective perception based on her subjective experience of one micro-site of South African socioeconomic life (the dynamic between motorists and car-guards) and thereafter utilises this, in order to generalise this experience to the macro-context of South African socioeconomic conditions (relationships between whiteness and its other). Hence the use of the generalising prefix “*but like all other things*”, and the collective pronouns, “*their*” and “*others*”.

Based on my inferences round the presuppositions within this narrative, one may conclude that what the speaker is actually performing through discourse is the claim that in “*all other things*” [in postapartheid South Africa], “*others*” [the whites who she represents] are “*forced to accept*” things that are beyond their desire, will and control at the hand of “*their*” [blacks] bullying [greater degree of power].

What follows is another example of the white victimhood rhetoric characterised largely by a sense of powerlessness and a lack of control:

Basically *we are being held ransom in our homes* behind burglar bars, *and now in the streets* and the police aren't much better either nice place south Africa [sic] but *all worth it for sunny skies, braais and good surf yes suuure*. (Mariella Cortosa)

Here whiteness' loss of power is signified by the words “*we are being held ransom in our homes*”. Note how the speaker makes the same “jump” from one micro-context, the home, to the broader macro-context of the streets. There is an implied sense of sameness or relevance translated from the psychological experience of whiteness within the micro-context, and the experience of whiteness within the macro-context. As I have identified, this psychological experience is characterised in this case, by a perceived lack of power coupled with a heightened sense of fear. This is translated through amplified emotionally based claims, or ululations, which distort objectivity in order to align themselves with what the white speaker is producing through their discursive performance. Hence, the white speaker is not literally “*being held ransom*” in her home. Furthermore, for the sake of this argument, note how the speaker extends this not just to the

confines of *her* home, but to the more collective sense of “*our homes*”. Which broader community has she elected herself as the spokesperson of here?

The speaker also alludes to her whiteness through what may be considered largely white lived experience. Thus, for white South Africans, despite their negative assertions of experience in the postapartheid context, life is privileged in the sense that it’s “*worth it for sunny skies, braais and good surf yes suuure*”. This lived experience, and frame of reference, is far removed from the lived experience, and frame of reference, of those less privileged South Africans whose reality is far less comfortable.

Conclusively, the particular results of the analysis here must be located within the context of other signifiers within the discourse. Notably, these insights contradict those seemingly liberal white claims of wanting to live freely and fairly in a new, shared democratic order, or that the socioeconomic by-products of the apartheid system are irrelevant to this specific period. Hence, whilst whites may claim to align themselves with a “*rainbow nation ideal*”, reminding us that “*it’s 2014, so are we really having this conversation?*”, a deeper discursive analysis depicts that democracy is not something that whiteness is entirely comfortable with, or at least, not something that has been agreed to on its terms. With particular reference to the narratives, there is a clear sense of whites being “*forced to accept*” the current sociopolitical climate.

In this next case, I will expand upon the construction of the white victimhood rhetoric. I will contextualise this with reference to a case-study extracted from two online ethnographic narratives. The two sources, both of which are titled “Car-Guard Damages Man’s Car over Non-Payment” are located at:

1. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10152736412925023> and
2. <http://www.gunsite.co.za/forums/showthread.php?33799-Car-guard-damages-man-s-car-over-non-payment>.

A synopsis of the incident follows:

Brent Ryan, a “Wynberg man”, and his girlfriend were allegedly attacked by a car-guard (unnamed) when they refused to tip him after parking their car in the parking lot at Llandudno beach one Sunday in April, 2013. Ryan said he had not anticipated that the guard would cause damage to his Volkswagen Golf when he told the man he had no change in exchange for the customary tip. He says, “I saw him walking towards us and I said that I don’t have anything to give. Then he was insisting I say ‘thank you,’ but I explained to him I don’t need a car-guard because I have insurance.” Ryan said he began arguing with the guard and he shouted a derogatory statement that may have fuelled the guard’s anger. “I got annoyed and I said ‘go back to your country.’ I could tell he was not from here because he had a French accent.” The car-guard then stood in front of the car to block them from exiting. Ryan elaborates that “he then hit my bonnet and smashed my windscreen on the driver’s side and bashed the rear passenger door, on the right. He managed to pull the driver’s door open but I managed to close it again. (News 24, 2013)

There are several signifiers of whiteness within this excerpt. Firstly, notice how Ryan’s whiteness is coded through everything other than his race. His English name and surname, a man from *Wynberg* a traditionally white “southern suburb” in Cape Town, and the fact that he was visiting *Llandudno*, a historically white’s only beach in Cape Town. This is aside from the obvious fact that he is privileged enough to own a car and have car insurance. With these signifiers in place, it is safe to assume that other white South Africans would have the necessary signifiers to decode that Ryan is in fact white. Secondly, notice how the car-guard’s blackness is also coded through signifiers other than any overt sign of his race. Ryan states, “I could tell he was not from here because he had a *French* accent”. When combined with the obvious signifier “*car-guard*”, it would be similarly safe to assume that other white South Africans would decode the racial identity of the car-guard as “black foreign national” – most likely Congolese. These signifiers are necessary constituents of an initially superficial textual analysis into the function of discursive signifiers. However, as we are becoming increasingly aware of, CDA implies that one should always be

encouraged to go beyond the text into the deeper ideological layers that are embedded within it. With reference to whiteness theory, which is the framework through which these deeper layers are traced, this excerpt is clearly demonstrative of the white victimhood rhetoric.

In this case, the newsworthiness of this story exists on the basis of this rhetoric whereby Ryan is painted as both the victim and the hero, and the nameless car-guard, as the assailant. I will intentionally omit the car-guard's name/pseudonym at this point, as it is largely, and very significantly, absent within the online discussions that ensued around this event. The effect of this omission, or negation, is a sense of depersonalisation – a by-product of colonial discourse, whereby those positioned outside of whiteness are objectified, and even dehumanised (Hook, 2011).

In terms of a deeper analysis of whiteness, the discourse around Ryan's experience centres the reader's concern round his very personal and subjective account of the event. Again, the car-guard's omission is translated from beyond the negation of his name, but further to the complete absence of his experience as not communicated through his personal narrative. The effect of this almost hierarchical positioning of the subjects within the narrative is that its readers and commentators are afforded a greater opportunity, and thus are more likely, to identify and empathise with the subject who is positioned superiorly – the more privileged, white Brent Ryan. The personalisation of the car-guard however, is lost within the depths of this narrative, or perhaps even forgotten about in a broader sense. Nonetheless, his presence is spoken of and referred to, even mobilised, through the function of the signifiers that have come to represent his identity. Hence, whilst Ryan is lauded by other whites who praise his non-violent totally natural and justifiable actions, the car-guard is constructed, through discourse, as a savage whose actions are completely the opposite: Violent, unnatural or inhumane, and totally unjustifiable. I will come back to this largely binaristic construction of Ryan and the car-guard in the next section on colonial discourse, but at this point in the discussion, I want to focus on Ryan's subtle admission to his xenophobic comment "*go back to your country*". Importantly, through his personal account of the events that ensued, Ryan's subtle and almost indirect admission to his involvement in the outcome of the

situation is mobilised as evidence of white heroism – this is a white man who is apparently able to admit his shortcomings despite being victimised. Hence a sort of “heroic white” rhetoric is also operant within this discursive context as exemplified in the following instances:

1. “I admire the way you’ve handled the issue Brent. Well done!” (Dewald Katto)
2. “Well done of the way you handled the situation, how times have changed since the old days at Llands [*Llandudno*] in the early 90s...[*temporal signifier for apartheid era*]” (Jo Brownson)
3. “Brett, well done behind you 100%” (Melinda Garrison)

Conversely, there are only three instances where identifiers call out Ryan for the implications of his actions in the event where he yelled the xenophobic comment “*go back to your country*” to the car-guard. The example that follows refers to one of those instances:

Brent I hope you realise that your post says I denied him money he is violent and he smashed my windscreen. That is a lie. He smashed your windscreen because you made a racially charged comment. Not because you denied him money. Yes they can be annoying and they not always helpful but come on man *don't play innocent*. You got all tough with him and he retaliated. Would he have smashed your window if you had not made a very stupid comment. No. I am not condoning what he did but *you presented this like you were a victim* when in reality you provoked the whole thing. (Charlie Singer)

Here the identifier rightfully points out that Ryan’s depiction of himself as the victim of an irrational attack is not entirely accurate. What is significant to note in this case, is the manner in which Ryan mobilises defensive discursive repertoires in response to the identifier’s claims. Interestingly his defence is based on the previously identified discursive signifier “*throwing out the race card*”:

That is your opinion Charlie. I accept it, but DO NOT agree with it in the slightest. Letting people harass you, even after you've explained the situation to them is WRONG. *Yes words were said - in the heat of the moment - anything could be said and done.* Please explain the racially charged statement clearly. The word "racist" is used far too loosely these days, and seems to cover a broad range of things when someone has an issue with someone else (who happens to be different to them in some way or another). (Brent Ryan)

And again in:

I'm rude to people that harass me. *"Go back to your country"* was a more specific variation of "go back to where you came from". I didn't exactly open the conversation with that outburst. *What's up with people and racism? Jeez.* Every time there's some sort of crime news in SA, people pull out the *"race card"*. I am not racist and do not stand for it at all. I stand for justice, which I hope Wabusu eventually faces, no matter how dire his life may currently be. (Brent Ryan)

Notice how Ryan attempts to excuse or justify his defamatory and xenophobic statement.

Through his discourse here, Ryan very eloquently reasons why he was entitled to speak to the car-guard in the way he did. Problematically though, his reasoning makes vast allowances for his behaviour, but simultaneously restricts any form of justification for the car-guard's behavioural response. Why is whiteness able to justify its offensive verbal behaviour, whilst the same privilege is not afforded to those outside it? The irony of this inference is revealed through Ryan's comments in *"Yes words were said - in the heat of the moment - anything could be said and done"* and *"I'm rude to people that harass me"*. These statements specifically demonstrate how discourse is mobilised to justify whiteness' behavioural performance in this situation, but secondarily, are also ironic in that they are singularly applicable to whiteness, but not to that which lies outside of it.

Other defensive whites step in at this point to protect Brent's sense of white victimhood by also retorting to the identifier with the *"throwing out the race card"* discursive strategy:

Are you for real bru??? stop [*sic*] commenting on socio issues in a post that is simply been sent out to warn people about the dangers this individual who is wearing the parking bib poses. NO one wants to debate, looking out for fellow beach goers not starting a racist war. mate [*sic*] get your priorities in order. TWAT. (Ian Van Heerden)

And:

Uh how can the act of a carguard [*sic*] smashing one's windscreen because he didn't get what he felt was "owed" to him possibly be interpreted as racism on the car owner's part? Not everything is racially motivated. (Geraldine West)

And lastly:

Oh Lauren...Bottom line is that Brent was *NOT being racist* by deciding not to give the carguard money and the *carguard had NO RIGHT to retaliate with such violence over R2* or whatever. What if the broken windscreen was Brent's face? Would you still brand him as being "rude to strangers" if the guard had broken Brent's nose instead of smashing his windscreen? Don't try to justify violence by placing the *over-used race card* on it. An individual that is capable of such *senseless anger over (literal) small change* should not be excused of their behaviour in any form. Brent, *anyone would have lost their cool in a situation like this*, imagine if this man had attacked a car with women and children inside. It's bad enough that he still attempted to put you in the wrong to the cops. Violent and a liar. Real nice combo... (Geraldine West)

With regards to the above excerpt in particular, notice how the speaker constructs the incident. Ryan's actions are construed to be based on the fact that he did not give the car-guard money in "Brent was *NOT being racist* by deciding not to give the car-guard money" whilst the car-guard's violent retaliation is construed to be singularly related to this aspect of the engagement in

“the car-guard had *NO RIGHT* to retaliate with such violence over R2 or whatever”. At no point does the speaker consider that Ryan’s defamatory comment was a central contributing factor to the unfolding of events here – rather the car guard’s response is constructed as “*senseless anger over (literal) small change*”. Contrarily Ryan’s behaviour is justified in the statement “*anyone would have lost their cool in a situation like this*” however; the car-guard is not afforded the same privilege, for an “individual like him *should not be excused of their behaviour in any form*”.

Notwithstanding the thematic overlap between these excerpts and the discussion around the “*throwing out the race card*” and other related signifiers, I propose that the signifiers within these excerpts are similarly constituents of the prevalent white victimisation rhetoric in postapartheid South Africa, which Wambugu (2005) states, “functions as an insulating device against claims of racism” (p. 57). This sense of insulation implies a largely internal, defensive, and exclusionary process which seeks to protect the core of the subject/object from outside threats. Thus, this victimisation rhetoric functions to maintain the privilege and power at the epicentre of whiteness from being extracted and disposed of by that which it perceives as threatening. The victimisation rhetoric is typical of whiteness’ discursive resourcefulness as it functions according to what may be analogised as “the magic of sleight of hand” (Ratele, 2010, p. 162). The “magic” ensues in the following way: By presenting themselves as the victims in the current political climate, whites are able to divert the attention from their own complicity in that same climate by ironically transferring the complicity onto those who were truly victimised. Hence, this victimisation rhetoric further functions to disempower or marginalise those social groups oppressed by whites, by depicting them as the oppressors (Moon & Flores 2000). Psychoanalytically speaking, one may think of this as a sort of projection (Hook, 2011).

In order to bring this discussion back to the topic of car-guarding specifically, we need to explore what car-guards and the car-guarding industry as a whole are symbolic of. By identifying this, we are able to access the ideological and implied function of the discourse, as opposed to being restricted by the façade that it presents. This requires us to unpack these signifiers contextually.

Firstly, the signifier “*car-guard*” is coded as, and representative of the broader signifier “*the new South Africa*”. According to Steyn and Foster (2008) the signifier, “*the new South Africa*” itself has become a site over which “battles of representation are fought and through which interests are contested” (p. 33). Thus the manner in which car-guards are constructed through discourse corresponds with the manner in which the new South Africa is constructed through discourse. This theoretical inference permits us to identify parallels within the discourse which support this claim. One might be cautious of circular reasoning here, but the nature of this analysis is based on the textuality of the text, and an important part of our analysis accrues from the manner in which the text responds to our interrogation thereof (Ratele, 2010).

In order to identify these parallels within the discourse, and link them back to the overarching signifier of white victimhood, it is important to stress that power and the potential loss of that power, provides the hinge upon which these parallels are constructed. To provide an example, an analysis of the narratives around the existence and legitimacy of car-guards reveals a central concern for white speakers: Car-guards are not something that *they* asked for, or something that *they* need, and so why should *they have to* support this “industry?” This implies that for the speakers, our current sociopolitical climate should be a reflection of what *they* want (ask for) and what *they* need. The “*they*” is representative of a distinction made by the speakers to separate themselves from others, and further, to indirectly position the former’s want’s and need’s above the latter’s. Naturally, this signifies an inherent or assumed sense of both entitlement and power to determine the general state of affairs, irrespective of the rights of others within this context. It is the same sense of privilege – the privilege to determine issues around morality and objectivity, to have the right to act as the prevailing voice of society, which unearths the performance of whiteness seeping through these narratives. It is the same sulking and selfish whiteness that I referred to earlier where I noted the centrality or the focus on the singular individual experience in the gestalt through signifiers such as: (a) “*I pay*”; (b) “*I will ask if I want*”; (c) “*I want a business like that*”; and; (d) “*I can make as much as I like*”.

Within the context of this car-guard conversation, and aside from the obvious privilege, power and entitlement that is still assumed in white discourse, the irony of those claims which depict whites as victims without rights or freedom of choice is that, in the context of these car-guard conversations, the tipping component is entirely regulated by the motorist. To provide an example: in its simplest form the tipping component involves the exchange of money between the motorist and the car-guard, whereby the former gives the latter money in exchange for the latter's service. Because this exchange takes place within the socioeconomic context of a non-regulated industry, motorists are able to exercise their full discretion in terms of what to pay the car-guard in exchange for the service which they provide. Thus, although whites claim that they feel *forced* to engage in this dynamic, the principle upon which this dynamic exists in the first place, singularly affords whites the power and privilege to determine the terms of this engagement. Contrastingly, the car-guards are forced to accept, without question, the nature of this seemingly natural yet undeniably skewed dynamic, because their livelihood is dependent on it. Consequently, when compounded with the comparatively disadvantaged class bracket that they occupy, we may extend that it is the car-guards who are truly victimised within this dynamic.

If this is the case, where does the contention around this sense of victimisation and powerlessness that is translated so strongly within the motorist's online ethnographic narrative arise from then? To draw inspiration from psychoanalysis once again, we may extend that this particular performance of discourse functions as a projection (Hook, 2011). Perhaps one may propose that whites feel forced into tipping not by the physical presence of the car-guards, but by the pressures of their own guilt and complicity in the fact that car-guarding, as an uniquely South African socioeconomic phenomenon, is an industry born out of the inequities of an apartheid system which they as a social group have come to be rightfully associated with. The irony now is that whites are being made, through their own sub-conscious guilt, to literally pay for something that they contributed to creating. This inference would prove far too threatening for defensive whites to acknowledge as it would imply an admission of complicity in the inequities of an apartheid system

which they have already deemed as irrelevant. Thus white's privileged position within the imbalanced motorist-car guard dynamic remains unacknowledged, and so, they are able to locate themselves as the victims of a socioeconomic phenomenon impinged on them against their very innocent will.

If we extend this assumption, based on the use of the interchangeable signifiers "*car-guards*" and the "*new South Africa*", it is representative of the general sense of unaccountability that white South Africans communicate within postapartheid discursive contexts. Whiteness is unaccountable for the state of affairs in the new democratic order, whilst that which is outside it, is blamed and constructed as incapable, and even criminal (Green et al., 2007). If whiteness was genuine about its discursive desires to uphold the "*rainbow nation ideal*" that is so commonly alluded to in postapartheid white talk (Steyn, 2005), then why is there still such a strong sense of stratification, of blame, and of *us* and *them* continuing to be recycled throughout that same discourse?

This sense of unaccountability, of whiteness almost "washing its hands clean" in a new black and dismal postapartheid social order (Steyn, 2004), reminds me of a phenomenon which Archer (2011) also identified amongst the white madams in her study, where she found specifically, that the madams (the employer) did not take responsibility for the role of rule-setting and estrangement in the home/workplace, but expected their maids (the employee) to behave in a way consistent with what they expected. When the maids failed to meet this expectation, which naturally is entirely subjective and determined singularly by whiteness, the madams felt they should be held accountable for this. Looking at the home/workplace, and the parking lot as two corresponding micro-sites for the analysis of white privilege – we can conclude that in both cases, whites attempt to position themselves as "*unaccountable*" largely through discourse.

Whilst this tone of unaccountability functions as a stand-alone rhetoric, it is simultaneously fuelled by the associated rhetoric of white victimhood. Similarly to the race card rhetoric of dismissing the validity and relevance of discussions around race and whiteness before they can

unfold, the victimhood and unaccountability rhetoric's function to uphold white privilege by irrefutably excusing whites from moving into the uncomfortable position of acknowledging their complicity in their own past and present forms of white privilege before an interrogation thereof can even arise. Conclusively, the performance of the white victimhood rhetoric and its associated signifiers through discourse is also inextricably to what I identify as another facet of white privilege – unaccountability.

5.2.4 Colonial discourse.

I would like to begin this next sub-theme by referring to the car-guard attack report that was unpacked in the preceding section. My particular consideration herein is: In his attack on the car-guard “Wambusu”, why did Brent Ryan mobilise xenophobic discourse specifically? If one assumes that Ryan has a range of discursive repertoires at his disposal, why did he mobilise this specific discourse in response to feeling threatened?

It is duly noted that I am merely entertaining this notion here, as Ryan's motives and intentions as to why he personally chose to mobilise this discourse are beyond the scope of this thesis. Perhaps one may find more assurance in the supposition that the discourse itself is certainly powerful and occupies a central position within the discursive performance in its entirety. Moreover, in terms of conducting a critical analysis of discourse, the use of this particular statement may be contextualised by retrieving it through the history of colonialism in Africa. When the discourse is retrieved through this contextual framework, a new set of presuppositions becomes imaginable – for example, the fact that the colonial order is understood to have been racially stratified according to the hierarchical positioning of the oppressor (the white colonist) and the oppressed (the black colonised), enables the discourse to reinforce these respective positions of power and subordination through its performance (Hook, 2012). In this particular example and in terms of colonial discourse more broadly, the discursive performance is channelled largely through binaristic orientations. Hence, whilst this thesis is primarily a discussion about whiteness, it is simultaneously and relatedly a discussion about blackness.

The use of binaristic orientations in white discourse exists because the ideological construction of whiteness, by whiteness, is inextricably linked with its ideological construction of blackness (Steyn & Foster, 2008). In summary, the construction of whiteness is largely dependent on its construction of blackness, and these constructions are largely formulated through the juxtaposition of binaries (Hook, 2011). For example, if one were to consider the construction of whiteness as an independent binary, it would be noted that it associates itself with largely positive ideological values such as civility, humanity, rationality and capability. Conversely, if one were to consider the construction of blackness on the juxtaposing binary, it would be noted that whiteness constructs it through largely opposing, negative ideological values such as lawlessness, wildness, irrationality and incapability.

This juxtapositioning of these ideological constructions through whiteness' binaristic discursive performance can be seen within my own analysis, where for example, whiteness constructs itself through the following descriptions:

1. "*Whites with a clear upbringing of civic duty*"
2. "Car guard klapped by myself and two other *good samaritans*"
3. "So called *law-abiding people*"
4. "They tried to be *good citizens*"
5. "It is time that *reasonable/rational South Africans* took back the country from the goons who are running it"

Conversely, results from my analysis exemplify how whiteness constructs blackness through the following opposing negative ideological values such as:

1. "Like a *parasite* sponging off this country"
2. "*Illegals* clog our cities"
3. "Sho the *baboons* in Cape Town are aggressive hey"
4. "*Bad people*"

5. “Mongoloid”

Conclusively, these binaristic constructions are representative of a broader ideological construction of a white self/subject and its black other/object, whereby the self is located and constructed on the positive pole, and the other is located and constructed on the opposing pole (Hook, 2012). Aside from the ideological constructions of a white self/subject and its black other/object exemplified just above, in its simplest form, the pronouns “*us*” and “*them*” are discursively recycled throughout the ethnographic narratives with the effect of enforcing this type of othering through discourse. Thus, one may infer that the pronouns, “*us*” and “*them*” are signifiers of whiteness and blackness respectively, inasmuch as they represent latent content which does not require explicit racialization. Moreover, this content is generally only accessible to those whites who possess the necessary semantic information to retrieve this discourse through its latency (Balirano & Corduas, 2008).

Take for example the statement “*us working class folk*”. Here, the “*us*” precedes the ideological signifier, “*working class folk*” which suggests a distinction between one group [*white*], self-constructed as “*working class folk*” and another group [*black*] located outside of the boundaries of this categorisation. It implies that the type of experience located outside of “*us*” is not “*working class*” or to a lesser extent “*working class*” than the type of experience occupied by “*us*”. This lends itself to the hierarchical ideological positioning of a superior and inferior “*working class*” category occupied by whiteness and blackness respectively.

To provide another example, the below excerpt from one of the online data sources demonstrates both the use of the “*us*” and “*them*” signifiers, as well as the ideological constructions attached to these respective categories:

At least the rest of *us* can have a laugh at *your Malema-like* absence of logic, principle, or consistency, things which take a dose of *intellect* and not just the happy accident of good breeding something which you no doubt associate with *car-guards* but not *forum members*.

A critical discursive analysis of the excerpt lends itself to reading the signifiers through the following presupposed content inserted in brackets:

At least the rest of *us* [*whites*] can have a laugh at your *Malema-like* [*referring to Julius Malema, former president of the African National Congress Youth League, code for black*] *absence of logic, principle, or consistency* [*the absence of positive characteristics associated with whiteness*], things which take a dose of *intellect* [*positive characteristic associated with whiteness*] and not just the *happy accident of good breeding* [*alludes to the animalistic sex drive associated with blackness*] something which you no doubt associate with car-guards [*blacks*] but not forum members [*whites*].

By reading the above excerpt through its presupposed content, suddenly whiteness' discursive performance takes on new meaning, and the use of essentially racist signifiers reveal the underlying racist constructions upon which they are grounded in (Schönfeldt-Aultman, 2014). This new meaning is only brought into awareness by theoretically accounting for its assumed presence in the theorisation of the discourse, but not in its semantic representations as explicitly expressed by its sentences (Van Dijk, 2012). In terms of my own critical discursive analysis then, identifying the semantic signifier's of "us" and "them", and their broader ideological constructions of whiteness and blackness respectively, within whiteness' discursive performance may hold the key to unlocking the implied or presupposed knowledge that this thesis concerns itself with.

Moreover this thesis concerns itself equally with locating the implicit content of the discourse through the context and location of its development. Thus whilst whiteness' tendency of discursive othering is typical of postapartheid versions of white talk, it is presupposed that it originates from what I have referred to as colonial discourse (Steyn & Foster, 2008). Whilst I have touched on the binaristic and hierarchical characteristics of colonial discourse, in terms of providing an operational definition of the construct, Bhabha (1994) describes it as a "form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that informs the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization" (as cited in Hook, 2012, p. 67). It is widely asserted

that racial and cultural hierarchization, and the location of whiteness as superior within this dynamic, remains central to the occupation of white discourse in contemporary discursive contexts. In terms of this theorisation, and as I have identified, blackness constitutes the “*other*” in whiteness’ vocabulary – the bottom rung of the self-constructed whiteness hierarchy. At this stage of my discussion however, I would like to initiate a departure from the singularly discursive and ideological characteristics of colonial discourse, in order to explore the more psychological nature of this process. According to Bhabha’s (1994) formulation of colonial discourse, one may locate constructions of blackness as those which are not only distinguished by whiteness’ sense of othering but also at the point where whiteness’ “intense discursive and affective energies converge” (as cited in Hook, 2012, p. 160). Steyn and Foster (2008) identify this precise phenomenon within the latent structures of South African white talk; they however refer to it as white ululation: A discursive strategy initiated by whites to rally white consciousness through heightening affective states, thereby legitimating the promotion of sectarian self-interest and the extension of white privilege in postapartheid South Africa. Although this discursive strategy may be window-dressed and embellished by claims of white liberalism, white ululation is essentially hostile to the new social order and encourages alienation from, rather than rapprochement with, the others in the nation (Steyn, 2005).

Of particular relevance at this point in the discussion then, are the parallels that I assume to exist between white ululation and colonial discourse. My inferences are as follows. Firstly, note that both discourses function to heighten affective states within and between the speakers, and secondly, note that they are both fundamentally hierarchical. Furthermore both discourses are a response to perceived threats to a white supremacist order which occupies itself, across temporal contexts, with the maintenance of racial stratification and the disproportionate distribution of power that accompanies it (Steyn, 2001). Thus as the coupling of these discourses is invariably related, one may trace their links to each other through historical context – white ululation emerges from a historically racist white colonial imagination.

Let me now shift the attention to tracing whiteness' colonial imagination within my ethnographic data. Remember the formulations that proceed are based on the discursive process of identifying semantic and ideological signifiers of whiteness and blackness, as well as the affective states that surround them with the goal of locating our inferences within the context of their development. This requires an attempt to highlight the way in which whiteness mobilises discourse to code itself positively whilst simultaneously coding others negatively. This brings us back to the construction of binaries through discourse.

Perhaps one of the most deeply etched binaries of whiteness and blackness are the constructions of normality and abnormality that surround them respectively. This was translated within my informal discussions with the car-guard participants in the participant observation sessions, where reference was often made to their "*normal team*". I refer to the following excerpt from my self-reflection notes after conducting one of the participant observation sessions:

Already he's told me [the participant] that the black guy opposite me, the car-guard, is very loud or whatever, and he wants to shoot him with a shotgun, but thankfully it's only one day a week that he's here. Ya, so he told me he wants to shoot this car-guard, and he prefers his "*normal team*". So I'm assuming "*normal*" is the key word for white.

The above excerpt substantiates whiteness' constructions of itself as normal, and its other (the black car-guards in this case) as assumedly abnormal. This is based on the inference that if one team is inherently normal, then what possibilities of normality are open for occupation by the other team? Are there degrees of normality, or is the concept mutually exclusive as measured against its opposing value of abnormality? Irrespective of one's opinions around this, what I am more concerned with, is that these are questions which whiteness assumes the right, and equally the privilege, to determine on its own and others behalf.

In terms of the ideological constructions around normality and abnormality that are performed through white discourse, signifiers around humanity and carnality are attached to whiteness and blackness respectively. Once again, more importantly, it is whiteness which affords

itself the privilege to construct its self and its other along these lines. Hence, it is through a discursive performance which alludes to and exists upon primordial associations with signifiers related to exoticism and carnality that whiteness is able to construct blackness through terms such as “*parasite*”; “*mongoloid*”; and; “*baboon*”. These terms are mobilised to convey a sense of wildness and incivility which simultaneously renders blackness as a subordinate and wild derivative of a seemingly superior and unquestionably normalised type of white humanity (Hook, 2011).

Extracted from the online data sources, see below for more specific examples of how whiteness constructs blackness in this regard:

1. “Any human being that acts like *an animal* should be told off, regardless of skin colour”
2. “No probs at all running this *prawn* over”
3. “*Thieving vermin*”
4. “Bring back the death penalty!!! These *animals* must be taught a lesson in life. They must be hanged!”
5. “It’s the *overweight fat arses* that wobble and ooze in *herds* at slooooooow speed, getting in everyone’s way”
6. “For that R40 he spends on *finger lickin’ meal*, he can feed his *whole family* (taken that he does not have *18 children*) for that evening”
7. “But when you start your engine, he appears out of nowhere, like magic...*devious little creatures*”

The above excerpts are saturated with references associated with animalism, carnality, and wildness. They signify a large contingency [“*herds*”] of scavenging [“*prawn*”/“*thieving vermin*”], sexually rapturous “*creatures*” [“*taken that he does not have 18 children*”] that need to be controlled [“*must be taught a lesson in life*”], and even extinguished [“*bring back the death penalty*”].

With these ideological constructions in mind, below I refer to a 2012 online article titled “The Golden Pre-Car Guard Age” in which the writer paints a picture of their experience in a shopping mall:

Since you have a lot of time standing in the queue, you also wonder what happened to the hair of the till operator as it looks as if *something is alive in there*...you put your items down on the counter and note to *the one* with the *living organism* in her hair that it “will be on account”...she mumbles something to *the one* next to her, mumbles something to me and then she *stumbles off* into the store...you see the one with the thing in her hair making her way back *slowly, very slowly*...

Before I expand upon my formulation of this content, it is important to establish how the writer has signified themselves as white without stating this directly in the discourse. The writer refers to a “*golden pre-car guard age*” and opens up her article with “I *remember the days* when I went to shopping centres with my mom; nothing in life was more exciting and fun”. She continues saying that “The total experience was pleasant, and left me feeling happy and warm”. She goes onto say that:

Shopping centres have deteriorated to something unfriendly, hostile and upsetting. When driving into a parking area, you will either drive up and down searching for a parking bay, having to deal with the hundreds of people who have the confidence to call themselves “legal South African drivers”

In terms of the speakers subjective position, his/her whiteness is communicated largely through temporal signifiers as he/she “*remembers the days*”, a golden era, before *car-guards* [*remember that car guards have come to signify the postapartheid era*] where the total experience was just “*pleasant*” leaving the speaker feeling “*happy and warm*”. The description of this subjective temporal experience of whiteness is juxtaposed against her current experience of the same context.

In order to trace the colonial discourse within this excerpt, we need to shift our attention to the writer's almost bizarre fixation with the till operator's hair: "...you also wonder what happened to the hair of the till operator as it looks as if *something is alive in there*". Why in this instance, does it look as if "*something is alive*" in the till operator's hair, and what exactly is the speaker implying by stating this observation? These questions go unanswered by the speaker, but through my own presuppositions, it may be possible to locate the presence of this discourse within the framework of colonial discourse and its imagination. The construction of blackness through colonial discourse implies a state, as I have identified, of wildness, incivility and carnality. The supposition that the till operator has something "*alive*" in her hair, implies that her hair itself is wild. It implies that the condition of her hair lends itself to being occupied by living organisms – to parasites, or those creatures which feed off bacteria and dirt.

In terms of locating this discourse within the context of its development, historically, whiteness has occupied itself with the nature of "black hair" since the apartheid era, whereby black South Africans were categorised as such according to the (1927) Population Registration Act which entailed the "scientific" evaluation of the hair follicle. The "pencil test" for example, was a method of assessing racial identity, by pushing a pencil through the person's hair – how easily the pencil came out of the hair, determined whether the person had passed the test, and thus could be deemed as non-black. Alternatively, if the pencil seemed to get "caught up" or stuck in the person's hair, they would likely have failed the test, and been deemed as black. Consequently, by retrieving the speaker's discourse through this historical framework, new meanings, with grave implications for studies of racism and whiteness, become apparent through the analysis of the text.

One can certainly expand upon the analysis of this speaker's discursive performance, and in fact, through presupposition, there are several more elusions to colonial discourse specifically, which may be accessed within the text. For example, in the last section of the excerpt the speaker describes how the till operator "*mumbles* something to the one next to her, *mumbles* something to me and then she *stumbles* off into the store...you see the one with the thing in her hair making her

way back *slowly, very slowly...*” Herein, note how a sense of laziness, inefficiency and incapability permeates this discursive performance. This is conveyed through the associated signifiers “*mumbles*”; “*stumbles*”; and “making her way back *slowly, very slowly*”. The cumulative interpretation of these signifiers here reinforces constructions of blackness through that which whiteness is not – blackness is by definition, lazy, inefficient and incapable (Steyn, 2005).

Notwithstanding the obvious privilege to determine constructions of the self and the other, based on evidence from the narratives, it would seem that the major privilege afforded to whiteness in this regard, is the way in which it tarnishes the constructions of the other in order to enhance its own self-presentation and moral credibility. In terms of conceiving notions of white privilege around this, this may be viewed as a type of colour capital, whereby discourse is mobilised to reposition whiteness positively, and thereby uphold the power of whiteness (Hughey, 2012). Again, this can be located contextually. For example, one of the qualitative interviews focussed significantly on the topic of farm murders in postapartheid South Africa – a phenomenon which is linked to an impending white genocide, orchestrated by black people of course. During the course of these discussions, I was shown graphic online content and footage of the alleged torture and murder of white South African farmers by black people. I was shown images of white men wrapped up in barbed wire and decapitated, and white women tied to their beds, punctured with stab wounds. In terms of my analysis, whether these crimes occurred or not is largely irrelevant here, but what is of importance though, is the way in which whiteness constructs both itself and blackness within the context of the discourse surrounding these events.

According to the participant in question, the reason why the farm murders are so brutal, and so the reason why they have been depicted as such through discourse, is because black people are savages. They are born as savages, and they will always be savages. It is “*inbred*” in them, and the only way in which white South Africans (the protagonist’s) will be able to cure postapartheid South Africa of the “*swart gevaar*” [*black peril*] is by *eliminating* the blacks. For example, when I asked the participant what needs to be done to solve crime in South Africa, he responds frankly that we

need to “get rid of all the blacks” whilst another online commentator urges that “it’s definitely *not a normal society*, let’s work towards a society where these guys have no place, or aren’t necessary”.

This is translated into further cries of despondency which suggest that “South Africa has gone to the dogs”, as well as depictions of haunting imagery where we live in a postapartheid state plagued by violence, disintegration and corruption (Steyn & Foster, 2008). Again, whether these claims are quantifiably accurate or even mildly objective is not the issue I concern myself with. Rather, I am principally concerned with how these issues are mobilised and constructed strategically in order to serve the ends of whiteness and white privilege through its discursive performance.

Thus, what these kinds of narratives imply is that whiteness has constructed itself as the innocent victim of a “*swart gevaar*” so as to justify their continued white privilege through the mobilisation of discourse to substantiate its claims. It also highlights the psychological component operant within the discourse here – the prevalent heightening of affective states – which is mobilised to justify whiteness’ racism. This is characteristic of colonial discourse, whereby associated signifiers function to stress the threat posed to white power by the prospect of reverse colonialism. Psychoanalytically speaking, this is also indicative of a sort of projection, whereby whiteness projects that which it has done onto the intentions of the “other” (Hook, 2004). Hence, one may propose there is a certain sense of ironical anxiety that whites will suffer by the same hand at which they have made the other suffer. This is revealed through white fears of domination, conquest and defeat by blacks as communicated affectively through their discursive performance. In order to add emphasis to the heightening of affective states, discourse is dramatized through the use of exaggerated, unsubstantiated claims. For example, the ethnographic narratives are embellished with statements designed to elicit fears of reverse colonialism amongst whites such as:

1. “To hell with them *stealing* our South Africans freedom of choice with violence, this is where we have to live”
2. “In Cape Town, 98% of them are illegal immigrants from the DRC”

3. “Then again with the unrestrained entry of thousands of immigrants from beyond our borders the oversupply of people for the limited number of jobs becomes worse”

Perhaps what is most alarming, and thereby necessary to explore within the context of this discussion, are the eminent contradictions that coexist alongside discourses of racism and colonialism and reverse/colonialism within the narrative. For example, a participant who claims he is not racist exclaimed in hate speech that “it’s the fucking blacks, it’s all their fault” whilst another participant retold a story of how he was run over and left for dead. As a result of his injuries, he lost his job and “had no other choice” but to become a car-guard. When I asked him whether he thought the culprit of the accident had any intent, he answers “*well*, it was a *black guy*” – as if the fact that the culprit was black is enough to singularly substantiate why he was left for dead after being hit by the vehicle. In this context, the signifier “*well*” is enough to qualify that he need not say anything more other than the culprit’s race in order to justify the brutality of this incident.

Other participants joyfully retold me detailed stories from the apartheid era whereby, in their capacity as government security officials, they would brutally abuse black people. These stories were garnished with tones of humour and joy. However, within the same vein, the same participants will quite confidently proclaim but “*I am not a racist*”. Naturally then, the degree of contradiction is so intense, and clearly illogical, that it warrants further analysis.

These examples must be expanded upon within the context of postapartheid social relations, mainly because they contradict those seemingly liberal assertions of social cohesion, and transformation made by whites within the same narratives. The contradiction is so stark that it becomes somewhat bizarre to integrate them within a reading of the text. However, this is simultaneously a central aspect of our analysis – the contradictions and sense of discursive irreconcilability are largely what have come to define the discursive performance of whiteness in South Africa today (Green et al., 2007; Steyn, 2004; 2007).

That which adds to the contradictory nature of the discourse are those instances whereby whiteness attempts to repackage its defamatory constructions of blackness into more socially

acceptable terms. Again, the function of “repackaging discourse” is to enhance the self-presentation of whiteness in postapartheid discursive contexts by positioning itself as liberal and democratic. For example, the ethnographic narratives elicit more seemingly liberal constructions of blackness such as: (a) “*three gents of a dark complexion*”; (b) “*occupants of African descent*”; and; (c) “*representatives of the poor*”. We may say these constructions of blackness, formulated largely on the linguistic phenomenon of the euphemism, function to position whiteness as more politically correct, or PC as the term is now colloquially referred to as. This is representative of a strategic attempt to “window-dress” white talk (Ratele, 2010). Others describe this particular strategy as “giving right-wing discourse a respectable spin,” in which white backlash rhetoric is recoded for everyday discourse, adopted and legitimized in the fabric of mainstream culture (Van Dijk, 1997). The process has been a manifestation of discursive resourcefulness in contexts where white people do not want to lose the advantage of whiteness, but where at the same time it has become increasingly difficult to be overtly supremacist and racist (Steyn & Foster, 2008).

In summary, as a critical analyst in this field, I constantly need to remind myself to see past the “window-dressing” of white discourse. Within the context of this section specifically, I need to be encouraged to see past whiteness’ attempts to be PC, and to trace those lingering effects of its own colonial imagination. Despite whites discursive efforts that seek to disprove and deny racist predicates, my analysis of the cumulative ethnographic data suggests that postapartheid South African whiteness is still very much embedded within its colonial imagination. Whilst there may have been splits, mutations and adaptations – the narratives are still haunted by traces of a racist colonial cognitive framework. My inference here might contribute or at least reinforce our understanding of whiteness on two counts: (a) Firstly, we must always locate whiteness within the context of its historical development for those engagements which isolate it from its context may hinder the uncovering of the necessary rich and textured multi-dimensional facets of the construct and; (b) secondly, yet relatedly, one should not be blinded by the singular depiction of whiteness through its current depiction of itself through elements of white talk: Such as white victimhood and

white ululation. Rather, one's investigations of whiteness today should be read across temporal and spatial contexts – as something which is both simultaneously theoretically stable and fluid (Green et al., 2007). In the next theme, “The Nature of the Narrative,” I will discuss my results based on the more superficial presentation and structure of the narratives.

5.3. The Nature of the Narrative

5.3.1. Reading this segment.

The nature of my analysis lends itself to a layering of related themes – a process which permits us to locate our inferences within the entangled facets of whiteness theory. This should encourage one to read the analysis in a manner which supports interdependence between sections, so as to facilitate a process of weaving between parallels and overlaps within the data. Remember that the overarching goal of this thesis is to harness an encompassing and multidimensional understanding of whiteness, and so, the sum of my analytics is not only intended to be singularly comprehensible through the divisions within it. Ultimately one should attempt to gain an integrated and holistic understanding of cumulative themes and sub-themes.

In support of this introductory consideration, the following theme will for the most part intersect, and at times overlap with the preceding theme, “Discursive Signifiers”. Whilst the former has obviously been identified as a theme with the ability to hold its own weight, the nature of the analysis as a whole, implies that there will undoubtedly be instances where the thematic boundaries of this discussion are blurred. This is both intentional and necessary in terms of this thesis' overarching analytic goals and relatedly, in terms of approaching whiteness as a theoretical construct. Nonetheless, notwithstanding their similarities and the fluid thematic boundaries between these two primary themes, there remain some important analytic distinctions between their respective concentrations which need to be made. Hence, where “Discursive Signifiers” aimed to identify signifiers within the data in order to unlock underlying discursive themes and constructions, the “Nature of the Narrative” focusses more on the superficial presentation and structure of the data.

In support of my intended direction with this theme, in his reading of various narratives extracted from the Apartheid Archives Project, Ratele (2009) notes how it is “the changing positioning of the narrator, the grain of the story, the prevarication and denials, the assertions and retractions, defences and vulnerabilities” which illustrate how profoundly troubled white identities construct their view of themselves and others in postapartheid South Africa (p. 174). Similarly, the “Nature of the Narrative” will locate various; mainly white narrators at the centre of a “master narrative” in order to critique how these narrators construct their narratives through discourse, and how these constructions relate to our conception of whiteness theory. Thus, one may liken the narrators of the various ethnographic narratives as performers in a “whiteness show,” where the “stage,” will showcase the modern crisis of white identity. I use this analogy here in order to make a comparison between the stage in a theatrical sense, and the discursive presentation of the narrative within the context of my analysis: In what fashion is the presentation of the narrative performed through discourse? Consequently, whereas the theme discursive signifiers focussed on what was occurring behind the scenes – on the largely subversive discourse that whiteness is not prepared to show – this theme will focus on the raw presentation of the narrative – on what we are permitted to see. Conclusively, the nature of the narrative will be discussed in terms of two related sub-themes titled: (a) on and off the record; and (b) coding whiteness, who’s there?

5.3.2 On and off the record.

Within the realm of postapartheid discursive contexts, white South Africans tend to express an almost tangible sense of awareness in terms of what can and cannot be said (Steyn, 2001). This may be conceived of as a “paranoid position” whereby whites have developed a sort of self-monitoring, and probably cognitive condition, in response to changing power relations and what they perceive as social surveillance (Hook, 2012). As Farred (1997) contends, whites’ lived experiences in postapartheid South Africa are unable to “provide physical and mental sanctuary for a community accustomed to such protections by virtue of its race,” which in turn requires white South Africans to “develop a new vigilance ... because their sense of place in their society is

endangered in real, ideological, and metaphorical terms” (as cited in Schönfeldt-Aultman, 2014, p. 28).

In terms of understanding psychology and discourse, this “new vigilance” manifests itself in a process of discursive revisions attributed largely to the unfamiliar social context that postapartheid South African whiteness is entangled with: If discourse is representative of one’s way of relating to one’s social world, changes in one’s social world are likely to amount in relative changes in discourse (Bodwell, 2001). This notion is something which is translated even within the confines of this car-guard conversation. The excerpt that follows has been extracted from a qualitative interview conducted with one of the car guard participants, Si. Note how it echoes traces of the white victimhood rhetorical strategy that has come to dominate postapartheid discursive contexts:

Interviewer: Do you think car guard is like an appropriate name?

Interviewee: Not really no. Although that’s what everybody thinks it is or looks at it to be, but I feel like there’s more than just that. I mean some people look at us and think we’re just there to stand and look at the cars, and there’s nothing anything else that we have to do.

Interviewer: I think a lot of people that think that.

Interviewee: They probably would ask me why are you doing this kind of job, why don’t you get a better job, so I say, explain to me, how is it that a [*lowers voice and looks around*] white person...

Interviewer: A white person?

Interviewee: ...in a country *nowadays* supposed to get a job? *Loads of people* who have graduated from college, they’ve got degrees *beyond anyone else*, they’ve got boxes of diplomas and qualifications and they can’t find work. They are struggling, I know people that have been without work for 3 years after their college, and they’ve got degrees but they can’t find work.

The rhetoric at play above is constituent of the narratives constructed by whites to position themselves as innocent people living in a perilous nation whereby they are victimised due to their embodiment of white skin (Green et al., 2007). The statement “*in a country nowadays*” is a temporal signifier that reflects the participant’s view that the privilege afforded to whites [“*loads of people*”] by the historical apartheid context does not transcend into the current political context [“*nowadays*”]. This is a discursive process governed by deictic expression which permits the speaker to refer to a known parameter of the communicative situation, or a shared context model of the participants (Van Dijk, 2012). Thus, the signifier “*nowadays*” is a known parameter, or deictic expression, mobilised by whiteness to depict the current political and social order in terms of its own goal – which in this case, is to construct itself as victimised. Conclusively, the use of the signifier, “*nowadays*” permits the participant to refer to an implicitly understood diaspora, as represented through temporal context, without having to state this directly.

In terms of expanding upon the application of discourse to whiteness theory, it may be argued that this signifier functions as a sort of smokescreen as it diverts the listener’s attention from continuing forms of white privilege and re-centres it on the plight of the white victim. This is the “sleight of hand” magic trick that Ratele (2009) refers to in his own analysis of postapartheid white talk. Whilst this is an important consideration, as I have identified, this section concerns itself primarily with the presentation and structure of the narrative. Thus with regards to Si’s reflections on that state of affairs “*nowadays*”, the discursive performance I am most concerned with is the precise moment where the participant lowers his voice and looks around before outwardly stating, “they probably would ask me why are you doing this kind of job, why don’t you get a better job, so I say, explain to me, how is it that a [*lowers voice and looks around*] *white person*...”.

The fact that the participant felt the need to lower his voice and look around is most likely related to the fact that the interview took place in a public setting – there were other people around us, who perhaps may have been in earshot of our conversation. This discursive performance is preemptive of that which follows it – the term “*white person*” – and how the use of this term is

affected by a state of social surveillance in postapartheid discursive contexts. In terms of my own inferences, I suggest then that perhaps it is not only the contextual nature of whiteness as a largely defensive theoretical construct that has resulted in the state of surveillance and vigilance it experiences today. Based on my results, and my interpretation thereof, I propose that the primary cause of this specific discursive phenomenon is related to the awareness of *who else* is watching, monitoring, recording and judging the “whiteness show”.

I would now like to explore another case wherein this type of self-monitoring cognitive function, and heightened sense of awareness is echoed throughout the conversation. In this case, I refer to my interview with one of the car guard participants called Es, who was particularly closed off and guarded during our interview. He was clearly reluctant to “go to certain places”. When I asked him whether there was any racism amongst the car guard contingent, he responded quite simply with “no, no racism at all”, or in terms of our analysis, with prevarication and denial. However, within this same discussion, Es went on to explain that there is a sense of surveillance experienced by those who consider speaking out about what really goes on in the car-guard’s worlds. This was substantiated when I approached Ab, the manager of the car-guard contingent, to request his consent to commence with the interviews. Ab in turn informed me that some of the guards had already approached him to report that I had made initial contact with them – perhaps the car-guards felt compelled to check whether they may engage with me on the nature of their work and experiences.

Regarding this thesis’ methodological framework, there are certain implications that warrant further discussion due to the potential effects on the subsequent unfolding of the various narratives. Thus there are some important points to consider about the methodological factors surrounding the conduction of the qualitative interviews specifically. Firstly, the qualitative interviews were recorded, and participants were made aware of at exactly which points the recording device was turned on, and at which point it was turned off. Secondly, the participants were required to sign formal consent forms, a process which lends itself to a sort of contractual agreement between

researcher and the researched. Lastly, the interviews took place in close proximity to the participants place of work, so in and around locations at Somerset Mall. This posed the risk of them being overheard or exposed by colleagues and customers who they are familiar with on a day to day basis. Considering the combination of these methodological factors, I propose that the conduction of the qualitative interviews may have amplified the pre-existing sense of guardedness experienced by whites around discussions of race and whiteness. Thus the fact the interviews were recorded, formalised through the consent forms, and occurred publically may have exacerbated an already amplified state of social surveillance due to a greater possibility of being exposed for discussing constructs which are typically determined as “off bounds”. This may have been disadvantageous for my analysis as it implies that my methodology may have been both insensitive and ineffective. However, in itself, this potential shortcoming simultaneously provides me with another platform for analytic departure. Relatedly, I was able to link this sense of guardedness to the use of the recording device, and this stimulated a further inferential process as I began to make sense of the data.

I noticed that when the recorder was turned on, and the participants were made aware of this, the ensuing discussion was extremely rigid, stunted and forced. There was a tangible sense of discursive guardedness around the conversation, and the narratives certainly did not flow freely. Initially, my probes and questions were met with one-word retorts or simply blatant denials – these kinds of responses do not lend themselves to the unfolding of an open conversation. It seemed almost as if I had been met at the gates by a “white guard” who without having to say much, made it very clear that my access to any whiteness that lay beyond those gates, was severely restricted. As a result, I found myself feeling extremely discouraged and almost frustrated during the qualitative interviews because the data did not seem like it would result in much.

However on the contrary, I noticed that as soon as the recorder was turned off, and the formal interview was brought to a close, the conversation would suddenly open up and extend to an almost 30 minute informal discussion thereafter. I refer to an instance below where the participant a 55+ year old white Afrikaans male, transported me to a world of apartheid war crimes and police

brutality as experienced during his time working as a prison warden. As this content was not recordable, I had to record my own voice notes as quickly as possible post-interview. This was then transcribed and included in the body of my participant observation data. I refer to an excerpt from this data below:

Um ya, when the recorder was turned off, I basically listened to war crimes that these guys had committed. Stories of how they would lock up guys during apartheid, lock up black guys during apartheid, and then basically drive around with them in bumpy streets, well as bumpy a street as possible. And then laugh at how they would hear guys getting “flung” around in the back. And then other stories how they would arrest random guys and then drop them off in the middle of the veld, and that was it... Even today, they say there is a secret room at the back of the mall, and if anyone commits a crime, that person is taken to the back room and first beaten up by the security guards in that room, and then only the police get called.

Interestingly, this interview took place with the same participant who demonstrated his awareness earlier that someone else would have access to the recordings. This sense of the narrative opening up after the recording device was turned off occurred in all of the qualitative interviews, except for one where there was quite an uncomfortable Afrikaans/English language barrier between the participant and myself. This interview did not open up – however the interview did conclude with the participant stating he did not want to answer any questions related to the future of South Africa. This was juxtaposed against his willingness to answer seemingly more personal questions about his family and upbringing in Welkom.

The point to be emphasised here, is that when I turned the recorder off, I was almost magically granted entry into the internal world of whiteness. It was during these more informal interview discussions, that the data suddenly became rich, colourful, and crammed with detailed anecdotal narratives of lived white experience. The metaphorical white guard monitoring the gates of whiteness, no longer felt as threatened, because suddenly, it may have appeared that there were less people “watching the show”. For instance, there was an incident, where one of the participants

demonstrated his awareness that my supervisor, Professor Desmond Painter, would have access to the recordings, after I accidentally took a sip from his coffee cup instead of my own. In response to my error here, the participant exclaimed; “now your supervisor is going to know what you did!” One may conclude that the participants were for the most part actively aware that others could have access to that content which they deem as protected territory.

Methodologically, this sort of awareness or guardedness around the recording device specifically is problematic for our investigations into whiteness. Perhaps one may infer that the interviews would have been less guarded if they were not recorded. However, this phenomenon also affords us with the necessary insight to seek whiteness out of those discursive spaces in which it may hide. It is through identifying contrasts and contradictions, such as those differences in discussions occurring both “on and off the record”, that one may be able to access the deeper structures and processes around whiteness’ discursive performance.

5.3.3 Coding whiteness, who’s there?

Although this theme is titled “on and off the record”, primarily due to my observations around the use of the recording device, the notion of guardedness and discourse extended beyond turning the recorder on and off. As I assume earlier in this section, the guardedness seems to be related to *who* is listening, and how one needs to perform discursively in response to the presence of this audience as whiteness perceives it. In a qualitative interview with Ab the manager of Golden Fortune, the social surveillance affecting whiteness’ necessary discursive performance is showcased through his explanation around one of the internal security protocols. The protocol in question involves the use of the internal security radios, and how the car-guards use them to report “suspicious activity” through discourse. Ab explains that the “*correct*” protocol entails that the *race* of the suspect is coded through discourse into the following categories: (a) “*class one*”; (b) “*class two*”; and (c) “*class three*”. In terms of this categorisation and according to Ab, reporting suspicious activity over the internal radio may therefore sound as follows: “Three suspicious *class one* males, driving a red Toyota Yaris, located at Zulu Bravo [refers to mall entrance]. It was only

after I probed Ab to confirm what the relevant class categories referred to, that he explained “well class one is white...*obviously*...”

In terms of the discursive notion that an expression is meaningful if language users are able to construe a model for it, or in other words, incomplete clauses and propositions may be interpretatively completed by their interpretation as mental models representing the specific event knowledge of what is going on (Van Dijk, 2012), Ab’s use of the discursive signifier, “*obviously*” functions to qualify this this assumedly natural hierarchical categorisation. Thus the categorisation of whites, coloureds/Indians, and blacks into class brackets one, two, and three respectively is a hierarchical system based on the stratification of race. Why are the codes, or in this case, racial categories organised in this hierarchical order? Whilst there is no certainty as to whether this stratification is merely coincidental, the likelihood that it may be a reflection of an inherently racist cognitive framework which positions whites as superior over other races seems reasonable. Naturally, this inference is located in the context of apartheid era legislation, where in which case, the stratification of race was organised along these same lines.

In terms of the focus of this theme, “coding whiteness, who’s there?” the central concern is based on the following question: Why is it considered both necessary and correct, protocol in fact, for racial categories to be coded over internal radio reports? The race of the “suspicious characters” is not a secret to those car guards who are reporting the suspicious activity; in fact the code itself clearly defines this – so why does whiteness feel compelled to use these codes to resignify race in this context? Perhaps Ab’s response to this question is the easiest to digest: He states that “quite simply, you *can’t* say ‘this is a black person’ or ‘this is a white person,’ well...you simply can’t”.

According to Ab’s explanation, it seems that it is socially and discursively acceptable to state racial categories overtly in general, unmonitored conversational contexts – or in those discursive instances wherein whiteness does not experience social surveillance. However, when the context of this conversation changes – when it is perceivably more formalised and measured – whiteness makes a discursive effort, presumably as a result of the social surveillance it experiences, to recode

race in order to comply with its expectations around necessary and suitable discursive performance in postapartheid South Africa. In the case of the Somerset West car guards, those guards listening to and reporting suspicious activity over the internal security radios belong to various racial categories – predominantly split between black and white car-guards, and Ab who classifies himself as coloured. Thus one may conclude that it is the “*who*” in this situation which requires race to be coded, as whiteness is guarded around any discussions that state these categories directly, particularly when there are *others* privy to their performance in this regard.

In drawing this section to a close, what can one conclude from this “on and off the record” phenomenon? Here there are several suggestions to be made. Firstly, might it be possible to infer that the microsites of these guarded discussions around whiteness, as they occur whilst being recorded, or over internal security radio’s, are applicable to the broader South African political context? Generally, whiteness seems to be fixated with the possibility of being exposed through its discourse, and so we may speak of *performing* whiteness, and performing whiteness in South Africa today, requires whites to put on their best show yet. This discursive fixation on being exposed, or on being perceived as discursively inappropriate or incorrect in postapartheid discursive contexts, may be a central contributing factor in terms of the way whiteness talks today.

Secondly, one may conclude that one should not accept the denials, restrictions and barriers imposed by whiteness in its discourse. Considering the relationship between discourse and power, and how discourse is mobilised to recycle relations of power and privilege specifically, one must push beyond the discursive obstructions such as the denials and the prevarications, in order to confront whiteness and its continued occupation of the constructions of both privilege and power. This implies that one needs to shift their attention to those discursive spaces in which whiteness may hide from outright detection, and to those smokescreens which function to divert and distract inquiries such as these from finding what they seek. Potentially, we may even go as far as to infer that silence or stonewalling around talks of whiteness and race is also a particular rhetorical strategy

– this is a strategic silence which serves to protect whiteness from being unmasked by “identifiers” or its “audience” in postapartheid discursive contexts.

Lastly, one may conclude that whiteness has harnessed the sophisticated ability to decipher when it is required to be discursively guarded, and when it can drop this guard. We can conclude that this is substantiated by the nature of the narrative as it presents itself in those discussions occurring on and off the record respectively. Ultimately we need to put this information into practice. As a guideline, I can only encourage that inquiries into whiteness should be steered by methodologies that will lend themselves to less defensive and controlled narratives. Hence scholarly efforts must go beyond the traditional formalised qualitative interview structure which may contribute to the exacerbation of the “surveillance experience”, and the resultant need to *perform* discursively. One may conclude that traditional structured methodological inquiries, such as the qualitative interview, may result in an equally structured narrative – an outcome which is far from ideal when dealing with a theoretical construct which has mastered the art of resisting direct discursive penetration. This lends itself to at least an exploration of more eclectic, and less perceivably formal methodological inquiries based on the supposition that they may be able to stimulate more open narratives around whiteness and race in postapartheid discursive contexts.

With regards to my own methodological framework, the eclectic range of data sources available to me definitely served to open up and deepen those more guarded and closed narratives. With that being said, it was only through my analysis of the online ethnographic data, that I came to discover that the inherent narratives were not as affected by the same on and off the record phenomenon when compared to the qualitative interview data. My supposition around this inconsistency in the results may be related to the varying levels of personal engagement required at the level of both primary data sources. Thus the qualitative interviews require a greater degree of personal engagement from the participants than the online data sources which require a lesser degree of personal engagement. The imminent online narratives may be linked to less personal engagement for several reasons. Firstly, the online narratives are derived from online news forums

and blog sites, where participants or commentators, are naturally granted a degree of anonymity. For instance, they are able to construct a profile based on however they choose to construct their identity – the use of pseudonyms and the option to select a profile picture affords them one such privilege. Considering that white identity structures are currently considered to be undergoing a modern day crisis, the degree of anonymity and freedom offered to online users in terms of how they can construct their identities in the context of the “new South Africa”, may be highly appealing to its users. In the online narratives, whiteness was far less guarded when voicing its opinions on issues surrounding car guards and relatedly, postapartheid South Africa. In these instances, the commentators were not probed for this information as the participants were in the qualitative interviews; rather they volunteered their opinions and sentiments freely. In terms of my argument here, it may be possible that whiteness felt less threatened in the online discursive contexts, when compared to the qualitative interview contexts, because their identities could not be traced beyond their control, and they could decipher *who* constituted their audience. Thus in the event that whiteness was more comfortable with hiding and protecting certain elements of their identity structures which may signify race to others – such as English/Afrikaans names and surnames and profile pictures depicting users with white skin – the nature of the online discursive context certainly makes this possible. Secondly, in terms of deciphering *who* constitutes an audience, if one posts a comment on an online forum, one is simultaneously afforded the opportunity to read other users comments, thus permitting one to ascertain the nature or slant of the opinions and arguments surrounding the topic prior to their own social engagement. For the online user, this may be used as a social yardstick in terms of measuring what is discursively safe or unsafe to express within the confines of this specific, and most likely politicised conversational context.

Notwithstanding my inferences around inconsistencies in discursive platforms and personal levels of engagement, the greater degree of freedom and control afforded to whiteness in online contexts did not eliminate guardedness within the narratives completely. Rather, the process of sifting through piles of online commentary revealed that those in control of the online content, for

example the online editor or content writers for News24, select online moderators who moderate user commentary in the comments section on their web pages. The moderators or the “mods” as they are colloquially referred to as by online users, function as what may be described as discursive guards. Thus they moderate online user comments for profanity, and any explicit or offensive content. The mods have the right to erase such content from the online pages, and may subsequently ban the online user responsible from commenting on any of their articles or posts in the future.

Generally I noted that the “mods” would step in to erase “offensive” content when one of the online users made a directly discriminatory statement. Presumably, their intervention is precipitated by the comments made by other users in response to the discriminatory statement, and so the “mods” may function to diffuse tension amongst users, and also to probably protect their own web page through its association with such negative commentary. The “mods” seem to patrol the more corporate news forums, such as News24, whilst smaller and presumably less influential blogs do not appear to have “mods”. Perhaps the inference to be made here is that a professional news forum is required to be more socially responsible in terms of the opinions it affiliates itself with, whereas more personal online platforms, are essentially free agents.

In terms of my “on and off the record” discussion, I concerned myself primarily with the following question: At what point in the conversation do the “mods” step in to delete content, and what function does this process of policing and deletion serve? Resultantly, I found it interesting that whilst explicitly racist and discriminatory content was generally removed from the online web pages, subversive content of the same nature remained unmoderated due to the way it was packaged and presented. At this stage, I would like to refer back to the case of the white “victim” Brent Ryan who suffered a “car-guard attack”. To recap, the ensuing discussion is highly politicised, and focuses on positioning the car guard in question as an illegal immigrant, whilst Ryan is portrayed as an innocent victim. In the excerpt that follows, I would like to draw particular attention to the sense of haphazardness and confusion translated in the various comments as a result of the “mods”

stepping in to perform their role. It is important to note that this excerpt is actually the first post in response to the contentious News24 article:

Barry Hannandale (April, 23, 2013)

DeAndre, if he was an illegal immigrant he should go back. Please do not support *those who break the law*

[Reply to Barry Hannandale - 7 comments (hide)]

Malbie Steytler (April, 23, 2013)

Methinks DeAndre is an illegal immigrant as well. LOL [*Laugh Out Loud*]

Mickey Summers (April, 23, 2013)

I was actually wondering what happened to DeAndre's *ridiculous comment* as well as *all the comments showing him what an idiot he is*. Maybe DeAndre works for News24?

CJ Weibach (April, 23, 2013)

I am convinced they are the one's breaking into cars so they can create their own market. It is time *that reasonable, rational thinking South Africans take back the country* from the *goons* who are *running it into the ground today*. I was born in the middle of the 1970s – I do not remember car guards when I was young, *the scourge* only started around the middle of the 1990s

Handre Jacobi (April 25, 2013)

What happened to the earlier comments here??? News24?

Boetie Boerbul (April 25, 2013)

I've told you guys before, there are *clowns* parading as news24 moderators!!

It is evident that the first post is made in response to a user called "DeAndre" who obviously made a comment related to the car guard being an illegal immigrant. Based on the user, Barry

Hannandale's comment, it may be inferred that DeAndre's deleted comment was in support of the car guard's plight as substantiated by his request: "Please do not support *those who break the law*". Another user, Mickey Summers, subsequently refers to DeAndre's comments as "ridiculous", and reveals that further comments, which presumably ridiculed DeAndre, were also moderated or deleted. Unfortunately one cannot access DeAndre's comment, but one can confirm that it existed, and was deemed necessary for moderation. However, whilst DeAndre's comment was deleted, user CJ Weibach's comment, although saturated with whiteness and colonial discourse, is apparently not in need of moderation:

I am convinced *they* are the one's breaking into cars so *they* can create their own market [*construction of us/they and association with they/crime*]. It is time *that reasonable, rational thinking* [*signifiers for whiteness*] South Africans *take back the country* [*themes of reverse colonialism*] from the *goons* [*signifiers for blackness*] who are *running it into the ground today* [*constructions around inefficiency and incapability*]. I was born in the middle of the 1970s [*temporal signifier for apartheid*] – I do not remember car guards [*signifier for the new South Africa*] when I was young, *the scourge* [*signifier for blackness rooted in the colonial imagination*] only started around the middle of the 1990s [*temporal signifier for the new South Africa*].

This comment is saturated with whiteness and colonial discourse – based on the identification of its signifiers inserted in brackets and as deconstructed in the earlier section. Considering this example and in drawing this section to a close, I would like to touch on my conclusions regarding whiteness and the characteristic of discursive moderation within the online discursive context. These conclusions are as follows: (a) Irrespective of certain comments being moderated, whiteness continues to permeate the online narratives; (b) If comments are repackaged through the use of discursive signifiers such as "*goons*" [*blacks*], then the moderating forces tend to let these comments remain; and (c) The fact that the nature of the comments being moderated is largely political, and often racial, implies that there is an apparent need to police discussions around

these subjects. One may extend that the invisible yet ubiquitous presence of the moderators on the online news forums is representative of the state of social and/or contextual surveillance surrounding whiteness in postapartheid South Africa. Thus although the users do not know who the “mods” are, or when they may step in to moderate the discursive expression of their thoughts and opinions, the prospect of their intervention exists possibly at the back of their imaginations.

Finally, in a much broader sense, the theme “The Nature of the Narrative” has revealed that whiteness is fixated with the politicisation of its self and other within postapartheid discursive contexts. I base this seemingly dramatic inference on the fact that the ethnographic sources informing my analysis were never based on discussions around race, or the political state of the nation. However, the discourse always seem to return to that central point within its narratives – think of how a pendulum swings from side to side, or pole to pole, but always settles in the centre. Whilst the primary topic informing all of the ethnographic sources was “car-guards in South Africa”, the narratives all ultimately centre round discussions of race in a manner which is characteristic of the way postapartheid South African whiteness talks. With this in mind, it may not be unreasonable to assume that race and the politicisation thereof continues occupies a central position within postapartheid South African social life over twenty years after the cessation of apartheid in 1994. What function does this fixation serve? Whether it is a conversation around a braai, a comment on a news forum, or on a blog – why is it that mainly white South Africans continue to frame their central discussions of race and political life at the centre of their discourse? Most importantly though, one needs to be extremely critical of the manner in which these discussions are framed, and the lens that we are made to view these thoughts and opinions through. Typically, this lens is put into place and repositioned and aligned by whiteness, and whilst talks about race and the political state of our nation may be necessary and constructive as we continue to shape our democratic society, whiteness’ hegemonic power to influence and control this process must be readdressed in this regard.

5.4 Summary

In Chapter 5, I presented the results and an integrated discussion of my research findings. This was structured into two segments titled “Discursive Signifiers”, and “The Nature of the Narrative.” The first segment, “Discursive Signifiers” focussed more on the use of signifiers in white discourse, and located the ideological constructions informing them within prominent findings around various themes that white people recycle through their discursive performances in postapartheid South African. Within this segment, various sub-themes were discussed, including, “white discourse and denial,” “powerlessness and white victimhood”, and “colonial discourse”. Each sub-theme was discussed in terms of the signifiers informing them, and moreover, were located in their various contexts of development. The second segment, “The Nature of the Narrative” focussed more on the structure of the narrative and the characteristics of its textual presentation. Two related sub-themes were identified in this segment, including, “on and off the record,” and “coding whiteness, who’s there?” Each sub-theme was discussed in terms of how whiteness may be characterised as guarded in discursive contexts, and that this is a result of the contextual or social surveillance that it experiences around discussions of race and whiteness.

Chapter 6: Critical Reflections

6.1 Reading this Segment

One of the major criticisms of whiteness studies is related to how the researchers position themselves outside of their work, as if it is something that they gaze upon from the outside (Ware, 2013). In light of this criticism, the purpose of this next section of the discussion is to locate myself within the research process, and to reflect on how elements of my own subjectivity, particularly my whiteness, has influenced the generation and shaping of the data. Herein, I will acknowledge my complicity in the results based primarily on how my methodological approach has positioned me centrally within the construction of the discussion's narratives.

Whilst studies of whiteness generally necessitate this kind of section within one's work, all too often these "critical reflections" can seem inauthentic and overly rehearsed (N. Alexander, 2007). This is problematic for whiteness studies as it defeats the objective of this process – which is to reflect on one's presentations of power within the development of one's findings (Bradshaw, 2014). However, more dangerously perhaps, prescribed and superficial critical reflections neglect to expose those truly meaningful nuggets of experience – the kind of shameful reflections that we guard very closely.

Ware (2013) goes on to caution that admissions of whiteness are generally passive – there is always a degree of distance achieved between the speaker and what the speaker is saying. In this section, I aim to reflect on this distance and in that way possibly narrow it somewhat, by locating myself as an active participant in the construction of whiteness within the narratives. Thus the question of my selfhood in these narratives may, according to Nuttal (2009) "offer a way of undoing the foreclosures of race, of keeping race open as a practice in the making" (p. 254). This requires that I not only locate my whiteness within this research, but that I recognise my complicity in the complex systems of domination and power within it to the best of my ability (Bailey, 2011).

8.2 Critical Reflections

In her review of Ruth First's work on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Nuttall (2009) explains that one of First's fears was that:

She would be "found out"...would reveal the secret of who she was to other whites...

The secret, that is, that she was not "white like them" or in the sense that they were, that she was, as she writes, "passing for white"; an imposter. (as cited in Ware, 2013, p. 256)

In my capacity as a white female working on whiteness during the course of this thesis, First's sentiments resonate deeply with me. During the data collection phase, I similarly found myself feeling like a fraud or an imposter: Sitting there, nodding in agreement and smiling occasionally as participants opened up to me about the golden age of apartheid and the degrading wasteland the once glorious South Africa has regressed to today. For the most part, the interviews did not feel balanced, or fair. It felt as if I was privileged to the extent, through my education, to have access to information that the car-guards did not. This was due to my theoretical understanding of whiteness, and how it constructs itself through discourse, which made it feel like I had "one up on them," like I myself was guarding a secret that they were not privileged enough to understand or grasp just yet.

In my position as the interviewer, essentially I had the power to shape the outcome of each interview. In many instances, I assumed a position of difference between myself and the white car-guard participants. I felt as if my whiteness was different to their own – a weaker shade of whiteness. I assumed that I knew things about whiteness that they were not privy to, and in this way, I at times considered myself "less white" than the participants – maybe even a "better white" in the sense that I could identify this. I simultaneously felt sick about my racial complicity in these results. I may at times, have considered myself to be a "better white" or "less white" than the participants but would I be generating the same data if I was a black female? Would the car-guards even have agreed to partake in these interviews if it were not for my embodiment of white skin? These questions served to make me very aware of my own white privilege in this regard. Here, I

was guilty for “using my whiteness” for my own personal gains – to write this thesis, and ultimately to benefit from the outcome thereof in some way or another.

As soon as the qualitative interviews were complete, I found myself rushing to a safe space to record my own experience: As if my own thoughts and feelings around this were so important, narcissistically so even. I felt compelled to check out with someone about this process even if that someone was myself. I soon came to realise that I myself was an actor in all of this, and that I too was wearing several masks during this process. I also found myself battling, schizophrenically almost, between the subjective positions of compassion and pity towards the car-guards. I refer to one of the excerpts from my participant observation data below:

But I mean he does care. And it's just so sad for me that these people have absolutely no hope, no sense of future for life. It's just so sad. And that that has been engrained into their minds because of an ideological, political system – and I think it just goes to show that it's not about having compassion for whites. Actually I'm lying, in a way it is, it is about having compassion for whites because in a way it's not about holding the individual accountable, yes it is about holding them accountable. I mean you just see now from my explanation how fucking full of inconsistencies and irregularities this whole research area is. It's because these people are both personally accountable and oppressed by an ideological system, and my duty is to remain completely reflexive the whole time, and completely aware of what's going on.

The above excerpt, aside from its irrationalities and contradictions, demonstrates how I grapple between pitying the car-guards, and holding them accountable for their whiteness. The car-guard narratives were for the most part, quite negative in terms of their tone and content. Due to the type of white talk saturating the narratives, particularly the expressions of fear, hopelessness, despondency, and anger, I found myself having to be cautious of pitying the participants. As this kind of work requires that one remains as self-reflexive and self-aware as possible, I found myself contemplating whether these feelings of pity may have been rooted in my own whiteness. My

embodiment of whiteness may have contributed to my emotional identification with the car-guards in this instance, and their embodiment of whiteness may have led them to manipulate elements of their lived white experience to present themselves as victims. This inference carries significant implications. It implies that as a researcher, particularly as a white researcher, I do not simply stand on the outside, gazing into the participants' whiteness from some detached "less white" perspective. In fact, as the participant observation data suggests, there were instances during the data collection phase where I felt myself being sucked into the cries of the white victimhood rhetoric. Similarly, I have to remind myself not to portray myself as a victim of whiteness in instances such as these.

It is important that we identify these reflections here, as not only are they significant in terms of whiteness theory, but they constitute an inseparable part of the research process. I refer to another excerpt from the participant observation data below:

Today when I was doing the second interview, there were black people sitting close to us in the Spur, within close proximity – maybe even hearing proximity to us. And they're [*the participants*] openly talking about blacks and openly describing these apartheid war crimes, saying that blacks are savages, in front of these people. And part of me can't say what I really want to say, like I don't agree with you, or I feel sick right now, or I feel so implicated in your racism just by asking you these questions. And by having to almost kind of agree with you, by probing you, to get the answers that I am looking for... It's almost like, through this research process, I have to become implicated in their racism. Because if I don't, I can't access it. They are so in tune with being judged because of them being racist, and it's such a sensitive topic that they have such well-articulated defences against, that if I don't put on an act, I will never get the data or the answers that I'm looking for.

The above excerpt demonstrates my own awareness of the "on and off the record" phenomenon. In this instance, I find myself feeling extremely self-aware of the fact that there are black people "within close proximity – maybe even hearing proximity to us". Is my concern here motivated by *who* is listening? In this case, yes. Firstly, I was worried about how the black people

in question would feel if they were to hear what we were discussing. Secondly, I was worried about how *we* would seem, about what kind of whites *we* would be perceived as for having this kind of discussion. This second concern is based on positive self-presentation – and more specifically, the fear that one will be perceived negatively by others. As I have identified, this is a central concern of whiteness – how do others perceive *us*, and most importantly are these perceptions positive? Why is it acceptable for us to perceive others negatively, but certainly not acceptable for us to be perceived negatively? In this regard, my subjectivity is representative of an internal “language of watching” (Nuttall, 2009, p. 61), expressed through the heightened degree of self-consciousness emphasised through the frequent questions around my own self-presentation. This is representative of the state of social surveillance affecting whiteness that I explain in my discussion. This leads me to infer that there are parallels between my own sense of self during the research process, and the white participants, who were also concerned with surveillance, and accordingly self-awareness and self-presentation.

During the interviews, I would also often identify feelings of anxiety about heading into certain discursive territories – mainly those involving questions around race. I felt uneasy about what questions were appropriate or relevant, and which were “out of bounds”. I felt obliged to respond to and treat the participant’s sense of guardedness around whiteness with an equal measure of sensitivity. I was constantly fixated on not offending them, on not scaring them away from the discussion. This is similar to what Leonardo (2004) identifies in Peggy McIntosh’s work on white privilege, whereby he critiques how McIntosh is led to construct her narrative in such a way as to obscure some of the real processes of racial domination. Leonardo (2004) supposes that this “softening” of the narrative is deemed necessary by McIntosh insofar as it protects her white audience from feeling threatened by her findings to the point that they discredit her message. This sense of caution or “softening” in response to entering into discussions around race may be representative of empathy and sensitivity, but it is more problematic in terms of one’s investigations into whiteness. This is exactly the effect that whiteness aims to produce within those who confront

it – through the mobilisation of its discursive repertoires, whiteness aims to stonewall those who identify it, those who attempt to seek it out of its hiding places.

This is also something which translates into the broader conversations around my research area. For example, when white people ask me about my research area, I am often met with a sense of anxiety about having to explain it to them. Instead of answering simply with “I work in whiteness studies, a field of study related to uncovering the continued positions of privilege afforded to white people”, I find myself trying to repackage and soften this content in a more socially acceptable way. Again, this is problematic because my perception of what is socially acceptable in the context of these discussions is based on a status quo established by...whiteness. Whiteness’ power attempts to instil these fears within me to the extent that I am often left worrying about how whites will construe what I do, or what kind of extreme white will they think I am?

In concluding this section, I refer to Samantha Vice’s (2010) paper, “How Do I Live in This Strange Place?”, which focusses on how whites should feel shame and guilt for their whiteness, and suggests that the solution to these affects is to socially withdraw – for whites to be silent in discussions around race and whiteness. Her argument was met with serious opposition by those who feel strongly that Vice’s prescription “thwarts the restoration of ethically appropriate relationships between blacks and whites”, and neglects the “conflicting reasons and duties that whites might have – as moral agents, citizens, and persons with prudential interests” (McKaiser, 2011, p. 453). In terms of my own reflections, whilst Vice (2010) may have been more correct in prescribing shame as an appropriate emotional response to one’s whiteness, in order to truly confront and destabilise our own whiteness, these type of reflections are required to go beyond the affective state of shame. Thus perhaps the most important element in our admissions and critical reflections of our whiteness should be a commitment to the continuing and certainly frustrating process of engaging in open narratives by standing both within and outside oneself. This necessitates a commitment to the likelihood of being wrong, a commitment to the potential destabilisation of our identities in

whiteness, and the commitment to opening one's self up to criticism in response to one's own critique.

Furthermore, these efforts and commitments should not be based on those responses which may laude us as "good whites" or "heroic whites" or other such moral value judgements attached to our whiteness. As B. K. Alexander (2004) cautions, whites need to be cautious of the motives informing their efforts to destabilise whiteness and white privilege. We need to ask ourselves, is it to make up for, to apologize for, to deflect arguments against our privilege? Or is it a dangerous and ubiquitous state of self-righteousness, self-censorship, guilt and romanticization? Accepting responsibility for one's complicity in one's whiteness should be done without the narcissistic expectations of praise. The injunction is thus to continue with the frustrating and frustrated task of whiteness scholarship and for whites to continue to act, but without the social and psychic gains coming to motivate their actions (Truscott & Marx, 2011). Ultimately, whites must be committed to truly understanding and destabilising all the different manifestations of their privilege – even those which we may not be aware of yet. Thus, whilst the acknowledgement of one's presentation of power within one's work is crucial to working with whiteness, again, we need to *push* beyond this to explore the depth of our own limits and precisely what makes us so uncomfortable.

Chapter 7: Limitations and Conclusions

7.1 Limitations and Conclusions

Aside from the limitations related to subjectivity that were outlined in the preceding section, I am ultimately required to identify further limitations in terms of evaluating the objectives of this thesis in the context of this final conclusion. Thus in this regard, I begin my conclusion by referring directly to the central dynamic between motorists and car-guards which the objectives of this thesis hinged upon. The exploration of this dynamic proved to be for the most part, initially difficult to navigate and certainly complex. Perhaps my experience here may be attributed to the central objective of this thesis, which aimed to collaborate with two *seemingly* heterogeneous types of whiteness, distinguished by their perceived class-based intersections. The methodology around this inquiry was designed to stimulate the emergence of those potentially hybridized discursive performances of whiteness as articulated within each group in response to their constructions of themselves and each other. Through this I hoped to explore the issue of homogeneous and heterogeneous white identity social structures as expressed through their particularised performances of discourse in the postapartheid social context.

Whilst this thesis certainly made use of a divergent range of ethnographic sources, and examined several narratives of whiteness within them, I must conclude that the narratives were for the most part, homogeneously white. In terms of the evaluating the objectives of this thesis, this would imply that the discourses were not hybridized, and that the two potentially heterogeneous performances of whiteness are more homogenous in nature. This is based on the following findings (a) the use of signifiers to represent themes of whiteness was generally consistent within the narratives; (b) the signifiers could be interpreted through the presupposition of similar discursive themes which correspond to findings established by other South African whiteness studies, particularly those based upon the examination of white talk; (c) The performance of whiteness through discourse generally exhibited the same characteristics within the presentation of its narratives – herein, the characteristic of guardedness emerged as the defining characteristic of white

talk across the ethnographic narratives and; (d) The emergence of potentially heterogeneous, or hybridised discursive performances was generally inhibited and defended against by the overarching performance of white discourse.

Moreover, whilst at times the voices of what I referred to as “identifiers” or of those who stand *outside* of whiteness could be seen within presentation of discourse, these narratives were the rarities in a pool of talk which was controlled by a clearly dominant discursive performance of whiteness. When I speak of whiteness in this sense, I refer to those largely homogenous characteristics of postapartheid white talk which have come to define whiteness in the same context – so all the denials, lapses, contradictions, fixations and ambiguities that it has been proven to demonstrate as inscribed primarily by versions of colonial and apartheid era thinking. In conclusion, the results of this thesis suggest that whiteness and white talk remain, for the most part, entrenched in and preoccupied with the discursive patterns of power and privilege that it has been found to consistently recycle throughout discursive contexts.

Notwithstanding the above findings, I do not assert that white social identity structures are *entirely* homogenous as this would reduce the necessity to examine them through their expressions of heterogeneity and simultaneously would overlook the class-based intersections informing them. Furthermore, these findings must be contextualised in terms of the limitations of this thesis. Thus, there are two major limitations which may have hampered the emergence of the potentially hybridized discourses the objectives of this thesis concerned itself with. Firstly, the indicators which were assumed to represent differences in class between motorists and car-guards, and thus the potential heterogeneities between white social identities, were not held constant. Hence, it was only assumed that there were class differences, or any differences for that matter between the two mainly white groups – these differences were never measured or quantified. For example, interestingly I initially construed this thesis based on the assumption that white car-guards were “poor whites”, however during the research process it became apparent that this was not the case – in most instances the car-guards were earning enough to be viewed as “not poor” (in terms of quantifiable

poverty line indicators). The point I am trying to make here, is that my assumptions about class-based intersections and heterogeneity between motorists and car-guards were just that:

Assumptions.

Secondly, although this thesis aimed to explore whiteness within itself, and so naturally, lends itself to a degree of exclusion, this also may have inhibited the development of hybridised discourses. Quite simply, this thesis did not welcome a diversity of opinions from other groups located outside of whiteness. Here I must critique my work. In my methodological section, I state that I conducted an interview with one black car-guard. This was conducted after data saturation within my car-guard qualitative interviews. Although I do not speak of them in the results and discussion, the data generated from my interview with the black car-guard proved to provide highly opposing and contradictory accounts to those discursive performances conducted by the white car-guards. This implies that this thesis could have benefited from more divergent inquiries which explored whiteness outside of itself.

Nonetheless, although they were a rarity, there were certainly still instances of more heterogeneous expressions of white talk, such as those contradictory discourses echoed by the identifiers and other minorities positioned outside of the homogenous discursive performance of whiteness. Their subtle presence within the narratives should certainly not be negated or overlooked in favour of assuming an argument in favour of homogeneity. Rather, it could be argued that the glimpses into these “other” oppositional narratives constitute rich and meaningful discursive encounters as they reveal how a generally guarded whiteness responds when confronted directly. Perhaps this thesis’ most valuable contribution then, lies in the assertion that the heterogeneous characteristics of white talk permit one to identify precisely how whiteness mobilises itself through its discourse when it is threatened. This suggests that the process of exploring whiteness through its class-based intersections, could provide us with valuable insights into the nature of postapartheid South African whiteness and how it may be treated in the discursive contexts that it defends itself in.

In terms of resolving the issue of homogenous and heterogeneous white social identities, based on my findings, I can only encourage that it may be possible to view white social identities as theoretically fluid, malleable and endlessly reconstituted – but only if this is retrieved through a secure and apparently knowable white object that performs whiteness through discourse (Nayak, 2006). With this being said, I suggest that we continue to focus on what Nakayama and Krizek (1999) describe as "marking the territory of whiteness" (p. 95) as it is more in keeping with an understanding of whiteness in discursive performative terms. Consequently, I am of the opinion that it is far too early, and even risky, to consider viewing white social identities as anything other than primarily homogenous structures – based on their generally homogenous discursive performances of whiteness even after accounting for class-based intersections.

More broadly, the results of this thesis suggest that the relationship or point of engagement between motorists and car-guards is a particularly relevant site for exploring both whiteness and the transforming social climate of South Africa today. The results prove that the discussion around car-guards may be linked directly to the broader conversation around South African social and political life. However, the results also depict that the dynamic between motorists and car-guards extends beyond the political sphere, and into the realm of the more personalised, or micro-level, power imbalances that continue to be woven into the seams of postapartheid social life.

This particular finding suggests that those kind of socially hierarchical dynamics that lend themselves to an examination of privilege and power are not only rooted in the domain of the political, but also in the more private corners of the white imagination. This central facet of the analysis concurs with the general sentiment that whilst the nature of power is typically structurally disseminated and maintained, power is also, perhaps more dangerously, entrenched within more commonly overlooked and somewhat covert discursive locales – such as online news forums, or conversations and aversions with the car-guard at your local parking lot.

As South African studies of whiteness have confirmed, these locales may range from the confines of our classrooms (Dolby, 2001; Rudwick, 2008); to conversations around the braai

(Schönfeldt-Aultman, 2014); and even book club discussions about our domestic workers (Ally, 2011; Archer, 2011). In this regard, I suggest that whiteness transcends the broader structural workings of our society, to the most intimate and nuanced domain of our engagements as South Africans trying to navigate the postapartheid space. Here one may speak of the psychic nature of power, and the psychic power of whiteness specifically (Hook, 2012). It is the unexplored nature of these more covert social locales, characterised largely by the continuing patterns of white privilege therein, that permits whiteness to maintain its powerful and privileged position in postapartheid South Africa. This is largely due to the opportunity that it is afforded to guard itself within these contexts. Here it becomes imperative to highlight the central role occupied by the performance of white discourse in these contexts, in order to facilitate those efforts which seek to redefine whiteness and white privilege in the postapartheid social order.

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Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The semi-structured interview schedule is designed to stimulate discussions with participants based on their experiences as a white car-guard working in post-apartheid South Africa. Please note the questions will not necessarily be asked in the above order. Similarly, it may unfold that not all of the questions are asked or in turn, that alternative questions are asked.

1. Upbringing and personal history
 - Please describe your upbringing in South Africa
 - Please describe your professional history in South Africa
 - Please explain the steps you believe led you to become a car-guard today
2. The parking lot
 - Please describe an average work day in the parking lot (Probes may encourage questions related to working hours and average daily income)
 - Please describe your relationship with the other car-guards
 - Please describe what you like and dislike about your job
 - Please suggest how you think the parking lot should be managed
 - Please describe what you think makes someone a good and bad car-guard
3. Engagement with motorists
 - Please describe your experience of engaging with motorists in the parking lot
 - What do you think consumers like and dislike about a car-guard service?
 - Do you think car-guards provide a valuable service for consumers in South Africa – if so, why?
4. Future prospects
 - Please describe your vision and goals for the future (Probes will address plans to stay in South Africa and further career prospects)
 - Please describe what you think the future looks like for car-guards in South Africa
 - Please describe your concerns for the future

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Guarding Whiteness: Navigating Constructions of White Car-Guards in Post-Apartheid South Africa

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Gemma Spickernell, from the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The results will be contributed towards a research study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a white car-guard working in South Africa.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Firstly the research aims to explore the experiences of white car-guards working in South Africa. Secondly the research aims to explore the perceptions amongst white South African motorists in response to white car-guards. Lastly, the research aims to reveal how South Africa's political context is implicated in the aforementioned examinations of discourse, and how and why those discourses came to exist in the current South African political climate.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Participate in one individual interview between 1- 1.30 hours long with the option of a follow up interview at your convenience.
- Agree to audio recordings of the interview for data capturing purposes.
- Sign this consent form based on your agreement to participate in the research.
- Offer insights into your personal experience as either a white car guard or a white consumer in South Africa.
- Consider the possibility of participant observation sessions.

Details of the interviews

- Individual interviews will be conducted in the Somerset West area or another area that is convenient for you.
- The interviews will be conducted between May – June 2014, between 06h00 – 18h00. These times are flexible and you may select any time convenient for you.
- Should you require transport to the interview – I will cover these costs.
- I will be the only interviewee present.

- The interview will be conducted in English. Please advise if you are comfortable with this arrangement. You may answer question in Afrikaans if you prefer.
- You will be provided with refreshments during the course of the interview.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

- The interview will seek insight into your personal, unique experience as a white car guard or a white consumer in a post-Apartheid South African context.
- The nature of the discussion may raise political sensitivities.
- Should you feel uncomfortable with the discussion at any point, you may choose not to answer the question, or withdraw from the interview entirely without any consequences of any kind.
- In the event, that you feel the need to consult with a counsellor during or after the interview – I will direct you to a reputable counselling service in an area convenient for you. I will incur these costs.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

- You will not benefit directly from this research.
- The study aims to explore the experiences of white car guards in a post-Apartheid South African context. The results of the study may contribute to increased knowledge of this social phenomenon and further research inquiries.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

- You will not be paid for your participation in the research.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of:

- All interview data will be coded –you will remain anonymous during the research and in the results of the research study.
- Audio recordings will be stored in the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University in a secure location. Only the researcher and the relevant research supervisor will have access to the recordings.
- The recordings will be deleted once the proposal has been submitted to the Department of Psychology for academic review at the end of the 2014 year.
- Only the transcriber of the data will *listen* to the audio recordings.
- Transcription excerpts, in which you will remain anonymous, may be published – in this event; a pseudonym will be used to protect your identity.
- Transcription excerpts will be archived and stored in a secure location which only I will have access to.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

- Your participation is entirely voluntary.
- If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.
- You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.
- The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research at any stage, please feel free to contact:

- Miss Gemma Spickernell – Principal Investigator
 - Mobile: 082 572 3607
 - Email: gspickernell@hotmail.com
 - Address: Plot Ten, Sir Lowrys Pass Village Road, Somerset West, 7129
- Professor Desmond Painter – Research Supervisor
 - Telephone: 021 808 3458
 - Email: dpainter@sun.ac.za
 - Address: Department of Psychology, Wilcocks Building, Ryneveld Street, Stellenbosch, 7600

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE
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The information above was described to _____ by _____ in English and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in and no translator was used.

Signature of Investigator

Date