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**Confronting Coloniality: The Potential for
a South African Decolonial Theology of
Whiteness**

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Declaration

This dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Theology** in the Graduate Programme in **African Theology**, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, **David Elliott**, declare that:

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a. Their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
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Date: 25 October 2022

Supervisor: _____



Gerald O. West

Date: 3 November 2022

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to offer a potential theoretical framework within the discipline of African theology for engaging, subverting and transforming the phenomenon of Whiteness in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. This framework is developed through bringing three theoretical frameworks into dialogue with one another. These theoretical frameworks are South African Black Theology, Decolonial theory, and South African Whiteness Studies. Through the use of dialectical analysis I produce a South African Decolonial frame for theological reflection on Whiteness. Throughout this dissertation a self-reflexive method of study is also used. As a white scholar I regularly situate myself and my own Whiteness in the context of the discourse, allowing myself both as a scholar and as a person to be informed by black-led theory and black scholarship.

Key Words: Race, Racism, Whiteness, Blackness, Decoloniality, Coloniality, South African Black Theology, Decolonial Theory, South African Whiteness Studies

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Dedication

“I don’t know if I believe in God. But I know I am a builder of altars. I build my altars with poetry and music. The altars must be beautiful. I build them before a deep, dark, and silent abyss. The fires I light in them illuminate my face and warm me. Yet the abyss remains the same: dark, cold, silent.” – Rubem Alves

This dissertation is dedicated to those who have built altars before the abyss. To scholars, poets, musicians, activists, mothers, fathers, children: ordinary people, all those who have felt it necessary to build fires to resist the encroaching cold of darkness.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the rationale for undertaking this study. I offer a short background to the research. I follow this background with the central research question and sub-questions of this dissertation and introductory discussion of the three theoretical frameworks that inform this dissertation. These frameworks are South African Black Theology (SABT), Decolonial theory, and South African Whiteness Studies. Following the brief introduction of these frameworks, I describe the dialectical method that is used in this dissertation to establish a potential South African Decolonial Theological frame for reflecting on Whiteness. I conclude this introductory chapter by outlining the structure of the dissertation following this chapter.

1.2. Background to the Research problem

The historical reality of colonialism is not unique to South Africa.¹ However, South Africa has a unique experience of this phenomenon as well as the enduring legacies thereof. South Africa's first landing upon by Europe and the West was carried out by the Portuguese through Bartholomew Diaz and Vasco Da Gama in the 15th century (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, p. 2). Efforts to establish colonies by Europe and the West began in South Africa with the settling of Jan van Riebeeck, and the collection of Dutch settlers he came with, in 1652 (South African History Online, 2020). Though initially stopping only to make a halfway house for the trade exploits of the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC), the establishment of a Dutch colony soon followed (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, p. 4). Notably, what came with the establishing of this colony was not only white bodies but white Western ideologies. The "Western intellectual baggage" ingrained in capitalism, political systems, social systems, and Christianity were present from this earliest stage (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, pp. 4 – 5) and continued to be present long beyond their inception in South Africa.²

¹ The Berlin Conference of 1884 – 1885 in which European Powers determined who got control and ownership of which parts of Africa (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, p. 1) highlights how this experience has been common for the majority of Africa. There are also examples of colonialism in other places in the world outside the African continent but these will not be focussed on in this dissertation.

² A notable element of this intellectual baggage present at the inception of colonialism is racial superiority (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, pp. 4 – 5).

This intellectual baggage has begged further questions of other enduring legacies from white Western colonialism in thought, identity, systems, power structures and the like that may have persisted into the current South African context. 21st century South Africa is notably a context that is post-colonial, meaning that it is not under imperial colonial rule anymore. As such, questions are asked specifically regarding what legacies have outlived colonialism in present day post-colonial South Africa. Coloniality is a term that refers to the enduring legacies of historical imperial colonialism (Ramantswana, 2017a, p. 73) even when formal colonialism has ended. More specifically, coloniality is the “long standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production” (Ramantswana, 2017a, p. 73). When discussing coloniality in the South African context it is essential to also note the history of Apartheid which in many ways emulated and reinforced colonial structures and norms (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, p. 5) as well as its legacy of Whiteness.³

Apartheid introduced racism into legislation in a way that was unprecedented in the South African context (Mhlauli, Salani & Mokotedi, 2015, p. 205). After coming into power in 1948 the National Party set in motion race-based legislation intentionally designed to benefit white people and disadvantage black people (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, p. 1). Race-based legislation affected things such as land ownership, education, geographical boundaries, use of public facilities and freedom of movement (Mhlauli, Salani & Mokotedi, 2015, pp. 206 – 208). The racial segregation of Apartheid came to an end with the first democratic elections held in South Africa on the 24th of April 1994 (Mhlauli, Salani & Mokotedi, 2015, p. 204). Though this is the case, questions similar to those asked of colonialism are asked by present South African scholarship. These questions explore what legacies of Apartheid white superiority and its corresponding legislation, identities, thought systems, politics, cultures, class divides, economic systems, structures and the like are extant in the current South African context. Notably, since the formal institutions and political system of Apartheid have collapsed, this dissertation explores these legacies in a post-Apartheid, post-colonial South African context.

Coloniality and Whiteness have been challenged and engaged through various frameworks in theology and academia more generally since the 20th century. Several of these frameworks have

³ Whiteness refers to norms, values and privilege within a system that benefit those considered white within the system. This definition will be further explored and unpacked in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, most comprehensively in chapter 4.

actively sought the subversion of these phenomena and the transition to a ‘new South Africa’ no longer entrapped by them. This dissertation is located within the discipline of African theology and, as such, I ground my discussions of these phenomena within a theological meta-framework that has engaged comprehensively, subversively, and critically with Whiteness and coloniality, namely South African Black Theology (SABT). Using SABT as a meta-framework also allows me to locate my interrogation of Whiteness within Blackness. This locating is important because it assists me in ensuring I adopt a critical stance towards Whiteness shaped by the experiences of those who have been othered by Whiteness, those deemed black within white systems, and assists me to be led by the theorising of those who have both theoretical and embodied resistance against Whiteness in the South African context.

I bring this meta-framework into dialogue with two other frameworks that are interdisciplinary and have similarly comprehensively, subversively, and critically engaged with Whiteness and coloniality, namely Decolonial Theory and South African Whiteness Studies. In seeking to participate in exploring, understanding and subverting the legacies of colonialism and Apartheid, I thus wrestled with the following research question: what would a potential Decolonial theory of Whiteness situated in South African Black Theology look like? In wrestling with this question and these frameworks, I begin by acknowledging my own social location as someone who has grown up benefitting from Whiteness and coloniality. I also acknowledge my own Whiteness is in transition as I explore reconstituting my Whiteness into something new, something shaped by the voices and experiences of those Whiteness and coloniality have harmed.

In attempting to answer this question I identified the following critical sub-questions. Each sub-question is addressed within its own chapter in this dissertation. These sub questions are:

1. What are the relevant discussions on Blackness/Whiteness in literature on Black theology in South Africa?⁴ This sub question is explored in chapter 2 of this dissertation.
2. What are the relevant discussions in literature on Decoloniality in academia with particular emphasis on discourse in theology? This sub question is explored in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁴ In its early phases this will notably, due to the origins of Black theologies, involve some discourse on North American Black Theology (NABT) as well.

3. What are the relevant discussions on Whiteness in Black Consciousness, Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness and South African Whiteness Studies? This sub question is explored in chapter 4 of this dissertation.
4. What theologically useful theoretical concepts and frameworks on Whiteness can be derived from bringing South African Whiteness Studies and Decolonial theory into dialogue within the context of South African Black Theology? This sub question is explored in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

To effectively answer these questions, some key terms are worth briefly defining at this stage. These key terms will be discussed in greater detail throughout this dissertation in tandem with their theoretical underpinnings in the context of this dissertation. I define race as a modern social construct within human social imaginary designed to create zones of being (racially considered white) and non-being (racially considered black) for the express purpose of economically, politically, ontologically, epistemologically, and socially benefitting those who are considered white at the expense of those considered black. Whiteness refers to the systemic creation and preservation of privilege, values, and norms to benefit those considered white within a given racialized context. Racism is a systemic injustice embedded in human social, political, and economic systems for the enactment of discrimination, prejudice, and bias based on race for the preservation of Whiteness. Coloniality, which Whiteness, race, and racism assist in constituting and are constituted by, is the enduring legacies and logics of colonialism still extant within a given post-colonial context. All of these definitions will be more directly operationalised and applied to the South African context throughout this dissertation as their theoretical underpinning in the context of this dissertation is explored in greater detail.

1.3. Literature Overview and Theoretical Frameworks

I will now offer a general and brief overview of some of the findings which will be explored in greater detail in the following chapters of this dissertation. This section will also serve as an outline of my theoretical frameworks for this dissertation. This dissertation will be a theory crafting project seeking to develop new theoretical knowledge in the discipline of African theology based on potential overlaps and dialogue between SABB, Decolonial Theory and South African Whiteness Studies as theoretical frameworks. I will first overview SABB, followed by Decolonial Theory and finally South African Whiteness Studies.

1.3.1. South African Black Theology

Per Frostin (2021) outlines the complexity of Black theological narratives due to the complexity around what is meant by ‘Blackness’. This multifaceted and complex term, he argues, has been given meaning by Black scholarship in the developing world that extends well beyond skin pigmentation into addressing the core issue experienced by black people that is “My [Black] beingness oppresses me” (Frostin, 2021, p. 87). Blackness has been co-opted to be a liberating term in Black theologies and includes elements of resistance to white people determining Black identity, socioeconomic oppression, lack of access to resources and the denial of black people’s ontological density. Steve Biko (1987) concurs with this assessment of Blackness noting the essential need to develop ‘Black Consciousness’ for black people through which oppressive structures are acknowledged and undermined. He specifically calls for the development of theologies that challenge the systemic white racism in Christianity which, he contends, continues to oppress black people (Biko, 1987, p. 30). Tinyiko Maluleke (1998) frames the journey of SABB in doing this work, noting its development through three distinct phases. Within these phases of development he highlights critical shifts in conceptualising various core elements of SABB. Gerald West (2016; 2021) continues in tandem with this framing by Maluleke suggesting there is an emerging decolonial fourth phase presenting new and nuanced understanding of race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context.

These phases of SABB provide a helpful framework for analysing the development and shifts in conceptualising race, racism, Blackness and Whiteness in South Africa according to both Maluleke (1998) and West (2021). Phase 1 of SABB grounds strongly within North American Black Theology (NABT), Black Consciousness, the Black Power Movement and the Civil Rights Movement, as agreed upon by Maluleke (1998), Patrick Wachege (2019), James Cone (1985) and Adam Clark (2013).⁵ Cone (2011) describes the central underpinnings and characteristics of this phase, emphasizing the purpose of Black Theologies as reconciling the reality of Black suffering with the ‘Good News’ of the Christian Gospel. Clark (2013) supporting, and regularly referencing, Cone highlights that this comes with an ontological notion of Blackness that centrally defines all black people. This sentiment is echoed as necessary to Black theologies whilst also being challenged as problematic by scholars like John

⁵ It is important to note that Phase 1 is SABB’s inception phase within academia.

McClendon III (2019) and Anthony Pinn (2012) who detail the pitfalls of ontological notions of Blackness.

Phase 2 of SABB is outlined by Maluleke (1998) as engaging the broader nature of Blackness, shifting away from an ontological notion of Blackness as described in phase 1 of SABB. He notes that phase 2 brings to the fore that not every black person experiences Blackness nor does every black person necessarily experience Blackness in the same way. This is grounded in the seminal work of Itumeleng Mosala (1987) who fleshes out race and/as class, revealing that race and class are inextricable in the South African context. Lebamang Sebidi (1986) concurs with this sentiment and delineates the class divides created by race in South Africa through its system of racial capitalism. Mofokeng (1993) and Mosala (1987) both concur with the analysis of racial capitalism and suggest the need for an intentional shift towards a more nuanced understanding of what perceptions of God, life, faith and reality SABB led both black and white people to maintain.

Phase 3 as noted by Maluleke (1998) and West (2016) unpacks the notion of Blackness further to recognise the layers of culture and gender within race discourse. This recognition further pushed SABB and other Black theologies to expand their view of God, life, faith and reality through listening to critical voices who were most oppressed in the complex multi-layered matrix of oppression, as described by Frostin (2021), in the South African context. Francisca Chimhanda (2010) and Wachege (2019) describe this phase as the merging of two historically distinct fields of thinking, SABB and African theologies. They contend that these two fields that once existed only as dialogue partners shifted to become a single field of thought. Mercy Amba Oduyoye (2001) highlights the particular space needed, and created, in this phase for black African women voices to be heard. The notion and shift of womanist and feminist perspectives occurring in this phase is echoed by Wachege (2019), Timothy van Aarde (2016), Jakob Urbaniak (2018) and Zorodzai Dube (2016).

Phase 4 of SABB is an emerging phase described by West (2016; 2021). In this phase, SABB scholarship embraces and explores the 'Decolonial Turn'. This turn is the shift to using Decolonial theory as a critical dialogue partner for understanding reality, race, and oppression in the South African context. Hulisani Ramantswana (2017a) unpacks 'decoloniality' as a framework and tool for challenging and subverting structures of domination, specifically undermining coloniality which references enduring legacies of colonialism and Apartheid in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. Makhosazana Nzimande (2008) pioneers this

analysis and explores developing hermeneutics for exploring the effects of coloniality on women. Phase 4 takes a notably intersectional shift as argued by West (2021), Ramantswana (2016b) and Nzimande (2008). Vuyani Vellem (2012) describes this as the current process of “unthinking the West”, a notion further explored by Jerry Pillay (2020) who, in dialogue with Vellem, calls for strategically chosen interlocutors for SABB scholarship and praxis who can reveal enduring coloniality in systems and structures in present day South Africa. Mary-Anne Plaatjies Van-Huffel (2020) similarly notes the need for a way forward with clearly designated interlocutors, and suggests an image of Blackness that is coherent with the multi-layered nature of oppression and post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa.

These sources are valuable to my research because they offer an outline of the meta-theoretical framework within which this project is located. SABB functions as the pivotal context in which I carry out my research. These sources provide a necessary theological and race-critical framing for the research of this dissertation, that recognises and seeks to subvert historic and current racial injustice in Christianity and South African society. These sources underpin a framework through which I have interrogated Whiteness, both my own and that in society, whilst submitting to black-led theory. Through submitting to these sources, I am assisted to participate in discourse on Whiteness as a white scholar with less likelihood that I will inadvertently, or intentionally, re-inscribe Whiteness. The sources highlighting the emergent 4th phase of SABB particularly provide an essential point of departure for discourse between SABB and Decolonial theory. These sources also provide necessary mapping of SABB as the meta-framework of this dissertation, the critical discursive context for bringing Decolonial theory and South African Whiteness Studies into dialogue with one another in this dissertation. These sources provide the foundation for a coherent and applicable theological and theoretical discursive context for my case studies that I will bring my developed framework into dialogue with.

1.3.2. Decolonial Theory

Hulisani Ramantswana (2017a) locates his discussion of decoloniality within the reality of structures of domination. These structures of domination, he notes, specifically include those addressed in Black theologies such as socioeconomic oppression of black people and systemic Euro-Western white supremacist ideologies. His contention, one echoed by Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, 2015), Walter Dignolo (2011) and Anibal Quijano (2000), is that structures of domination must be subverted in the Christian church and society. Ramantswana (2017b)

further describes decoloniality as a means by which these and other systems and structures of domination are challenged. Ramantswana (2016) frames what shapes these structures and systems with the umbrella term 'coloniality' which describes logics, legacies and realities of colonialism living on in different or hidden forms though formal colonialism is abolished in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. This is due to what Ramantswana (2015, p. 807) describes as the "collapse of colonial administrations" not resulting in the collapse of all "long standing patterns" resulting from colonialism. Fetson Kalua (2019) agrees with Ramantswana's assessments of colonialism and coloniality and locates them in the context of the 'post'. He explores the 'post' as meaning historically after the end of formal colonialism whilst also meaning realities that are results of colonial enterprise. Kalua (2019, p. 49) diverges with Ramantswana's discussion of coloniality in that he does not support decolonial theory which he describes as a "ghost" of postcolonial theory.

Sara Marzagora (2016) contests Kalua's (2019) interpretation of postcoloniality versus decoloniality suggesting that postcolonial discourse critiques coloniality from within whereas decoloniality critiques it from without. Pablo Quintero et. al. (2019) agree with Marzagora's assessment noting the historic development of postcolonial theory from historically colonial powers. They contend that though postcolonial, decolonial and sub-altern studies all seek to address coloniality, they approach with differing epistemological assumptions that cannot be overlooked. Johannes Seroto (2018) grounds his discourse of Decoloniality within the origins of coloniality as a term. He notes that scholars such as Anibal Quijano and Walter Dignolo describe this phenomenon as the 'dark side of modernity'. Dignolo (2011, p. 46) affirms Seroto's (2018) assessment and describes coloniality as that which "emanates" from the "rhetoric of modernity" without necessarily being explicit. Dignolo (2011, p. 46) further frames decoloniality as, in its essence, a demythologizing of modernity and of white European epistemologies, ways of being and systems and structures of power and society.

Quintero et. al. (2019) discuss the various forms of coloniality, a concept similarly explored by Seroto (2018), as coloniality of being, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of power. Coloniality generally presenting in these forms is commonly agreed to by scholars like Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), Dignolo (2021), María Lugones (2010) and Akhona Nkenkana (2015). Nkenkana (2015) highlights the necessity of coloniality being studied as a multi-faceted phenomenon. She emphasizes that coloniality, as described initially by Quijano (2000), is an encompassing reality that transcends and underpins various issues and injustices like race, economic disparity, gender injustice, and various forms of asymmetric power relations.

Marzagora (2016), in agreement with this assessment, further observes in coloniality the characteristic of essentialist notions of truth, history and narrative. Essentialism, she argues, thus becomes a marker of when coloniality is present in a given context (Marzagora, 2016, p. 166). This observation is made by Marzagora (2016) in tandem with observations of the shifts that occurred in postcolonial and postmodern discourse.

Graham Ward (2017) focusses on decoloniality within Christian theology drawing on the concepts of Mignolo (2011). Generally, Ward (2017) contends that central to the Decolonial theological task is provincializing Europe, translating theological terms into contextually relevant terms, contesting Eurocentric theologies and affirming contextually developed theologies. Sandra Harding (2017) adds that Liberation theologies, in their varying forms, are often a reflection of the Decolonial thinking and praxis suggested by Ward (2017). Ramantswana (2017a, p. 76) argues that decolonial theologies seek to provide “resurrection” to those marginalised in society by coloniality. Decoloniality in theology thus, he contends, calls for differing approaches of meaningful theological engagement depending on whether one is a perpetrator or victim of coloniality. Critically Ramantswana (2017a, p. 77) suggests Decolonial theologising needs to address landlessness as historic, enduring injustice and as a direct result of coloniality. Mavis Mhlauli, End Salani & Rosinah Mokotedi (2015) affirm this assessment, noting that coloniality is tangibly lived through exploitation of land, people and resources.

These sources are valuable to this dissertation because they give a brief outline of prominent and relevant characteristics of Decolonial theory. These sources, whilst grounded in sociology and anthropology, draw the discussions of Decolonial theory into the theological context, which is important for the dialogue between frameworks in this dissertation. These sources compliment the theoretical underpinnings of the two other frameworks, SABB and South African Whiteness Studies, that are explored in this project. Notably these sources prioritise contextual understandings of reality, understand race, Whiteness, and racism as systemic injustices and adopt a praxis-oriented position interested in transformation of lived realities. They highlight the gap in research this project seeks to explore which is whether decoloniality brought into dialogue with South African Whiteness in the context of SABB will produce coherent theory within the discipline of theology. These sources similarly encourage drawing on knowledge from sources other than academic literature which assists in justifying my choice of case studies, these case studies being speeches from chairpersons of the Black Methodist Consultation. Recognising the value of sources other than academic literature assists me to

embody a decolonial epistemological and methodological shift in my research, celebrating the value of knowledge that is produced outside of academic contexts.

1.3.3. South African Whiteness Studies

Biko (1987, p. 13) begins his discourse on Whiteness by establishing it as the standards and norms on which South African society is based post-colonisation and during Apartheid. He further describes Whiteness as the establishment of privileges from birth for white people (Biko, 1987, p. 19). George Yancey (2012) concurs with this assessment describing in similar fashion the ways in which society has been structured and continues to be structured to benefit white people. Aretha Phiri (2013), in agreement with Yancey (2012), emphasizes that Whiteness exists and maintains itself in relationship with Blackness. She argues that this relationship is one of negation in which Blackness is constantly made an aberration to be ‘othered’ (Phiri, 2013, p. 163).

Scholars offer different theoretical points of departure for engaging Whiteness. Where Biko (1987) roots his discussion of Whiteness in South Africa in the development of Black Consciousness, other South African Whiteness scholars such as Melissa Steyn (2005) and Zimitri Erasmus (2010) ground themselves in Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Adrien Wing (2016) grounds Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies in the North American context where Critical Race Theory developed. CRT’s development, Wing argues, is grounded in Critical Legal Studies which sought to reveal Whiteness, white supremacy, racism, race, and white privilege ingrained in the United States’ legal system in order to subvert these phenomena and create a more just legal system in the United States (Wing, 2016, p. 47). Critical Legal Studies then branched into Critical Race Theory to focus more broadly on the ingrainings of race and racism into various social, economic, and political systems.

Erasmus (2010) and Wing (2016), as CRT scholars, focus generally on the concept of race in South Africa whereas Melissa Steyn and Daniel Conway (2010), as CWS scholars, focus on the “power centre” of race in South Africa which they argue is Whiteness. Steyn (2005), Anoop Nayak (2007), Linda Pedersen and Barbara Samaluk (2012), Yancey (2012) and Mary West and Jennifer Schmidt (2010) all recognise interrogating Whiteness as a “power centre” as central to the work of Critical Whiteness Studies. Yancey (2012) furthers his discourse in this regard by highlighting a critical challenge of maintaining focus on Whiteness. Whiteness, he argues, tends towards invisibility by perennially establishing itself as the norm (Yancey, 2012,

p. 6). Nayak (2007), concurring with Yancey (2012), extrapolates this idea by discussing the fluidity of Whiteness as a phenomenon (Nayak, 2007, p. 738). This is noted as particularly pertinent in South African Whiteness studies by Kopano Ratele and Leswin Laubscher (2010). They argue that Apartheid constructions of white identity were intentionally fluid for the sake of preserving structural privileging of the minority and that this has endured into the present in South Africa (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010, p. 89). Erasmus (2010, p. 245) and Biko (1987, p. 24) both concur with and emphasize this point suggesting that Whiteness and race are both tools to achieve underlying goals such as power imbalance and socioeconomic domination. Kevin Durrheim, Xoliswa Mtose and Lindsay Brown (2011, pp. 31 – 32) conclude that this complex reality, one they term “race trouble”, invites a new approach to dissecting and subverting racism and Whiteness to disrupt their historic clear-cut hierarchical pattern.

Biko (1987, p. 50) contends that Whiteness seeks to uphold a white supremacist system because even the most downtrodden white worker has a lot to lose if the system is changed. South Africa’s white supremacist system, he contends, seeks to produce systemic privileging and subjugation that cannot be escaped by those not considered white in the system (Biko, 1987, p. 28). Antwi Akom (2008, p. 250) further expands on subjugation as a concept in tandem with Du Bois’ assessment of Whiteness as a “psychological tax”. Whiteness’ “psychological tax” is utilised to create an elevated white status on the backs of other races, those considered black within a white system. Yancey (2012, pp. 2 – 4) strongly agrees with this sentiment, championing the notion that the inscribing of no value, violence and other-ness in black people and black bodies is carried out by the ‘white gaze’. Phiri (2013, pp. 167 – 168) concurs with Yancey (2012) noting how the white gaze silences and renders black people invisible and non-human.

To combat the white gaze, Yancey (2012, p. 6) and Phiri (2013, p. 162) contend that this objectifying gaze needs to be destabilised through rendering Whiteness as visible. Steyn (2005, p. 127) argues that this can be done through acknowledgement and subversion of linguistic tools used to maintain Whiteness as the norm. DiAngelo (2018, p. 2) agrees somewhat with a focus on linguistics but suggests that harmful use of language is further underpinned by white fragility. She describes this fragility as a means of white people defaulting to innocence, similar to Yancey’s (2012) description, in scenarios where race is made apparent or difficult conversations about race are attempted (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 2). Marzia Milazzo (2017, p. 558) contributes to this discourse on disrupting Whiteness and the white gaze, critiquing the

problems of white self-indulgence that often manifest because of white fragility and prevent transformative discourse and praxis.

While acknowledging claims such as Biko's (1987) that Whiteness is a white issue to be dealt with by white people, Milazzo (2017, p. 558) and Phiri (2013, p. 162) suggest that this often results in narcissism through which white people call for care. This emanates, they contend, from the problem of white fragility. Whiteness studies carried out by white people thus needs to be able to, they continue, acknowledge wrongdoing without collapsing into paralytic guilt (Milazzo, 2017, p. 563; Phiri, 2013, p. 163). This resembles Steyn's (2005, p. 127) argument that white talk, linguistic tropes utilised to preserve and create Whiteness, can be utilized to actively capitalize on privilege and stall transformative discourse and praxis. This can be done, she contends, even by white people who are aware of their Whiteness (Steyn, 2005, p. 127).

Milazzo (2017, p. 564) quotes Yancey noting that, even considering pitfalls similar to those noted by Steyn (2005), through epistemological humility white people can meaningfully engage their Whiteness. Phiri (2013, p. 163) cautions that while this is done Whiteness should not be re-centred and afforded continued hegemony. Johannes 'Klippiers' Kritzinger (2008, pp. 16 – 17) offers a similar caution and, through the dialectics of Biko (1987), suggests an approach of contestation that disrupts white hegemony through the creation of various smaller, competing white identities that embrace the diversity and complexity of the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. George 'Cobus' Van Wyngaard (2016, p. 486) similarly argues that Whiteness must be addressed by white people in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. He frames how Whiteness should be addressed by white people by drawing on notions similar to the Black consciousness tradition of Biko (1987), highlighting that through a process of deep listening to the "racialized other" white people can be meaningfully present and part of discourse on Whiteness.

These sources are valuable to this dissertation because they establish the various discourses that make up South African Whiteness Studies as a framework. These sources allow me as a white researcher to ground my exploration of Whiteness in black-led and race-critical theory, which in turn assists me to not reinscribe Whiteness in South Africa as I seek to engage and critique it as a white researcher. These sources allow for contextually relevant explorations of Whiteness that also take into cognition general characteristics of Whiteness as a phenomenon across post-colonial contemporary contexts, noting Whiteness as both a local and global phenomenon. These resources discuss the history of the development of discourses on

Whiteness and white supremacy which is essential to a project focussed on theory crafting on the phenomenon of Whiteness. These resources highlight the research gap this project seeks to address which is what potential theoretical knowledge can be developed from the overlap of, and dialogue between, South African Black Theology, Decolonial theory, and South African Whiteness Studies.

1.4. Identified Gaps in the Literature

The gaps in the literature that I have noted are as follows. Within SABT there is the notable development of a present fourth phase that focusses on the 'Decolonial Turn'. This phase presents a visible opportunity to further explore the relationship between SABT and current Decolonial theoretical discourse, both within theology as a discipline and outside of it. This dissertation could thus fill a critical gap of providing an outline of the characteristics of this fourth phase through dialogue between SABT and Decolonial theory. As such, participation in the growing discourse of this phase by clearly outlining theoretical characteristics of this phase is a useful contribution. Notably within South African Whiteness scholarship there is also a gap of under-theorisation of Blackness (see Gartushka, 2019 and Phiri, 2013). Thus, by bringing SABT into dialogue with Whiteness scholarship there is potential for useful, deeper insight into the nature of Whiteness in the South African context for South African Whiteness Studies.

It is also notable that South African Whiteness scholarship has roots within discourse surrounding colonial legacy (see Steyn, 2003 and Biko, 1987). As such, by bringing South African Whiteness Studies into dialogue with Decolonial theory, there is potential for new useful tools and insight within South African Whiteness scholarship from Decolonial theory. Decolonial scholarship similarly has engaged the concept of Whiteness as part of its own discourse (see Ramantswana, 2017a and Urbaniak, 2019). These two frameworks will thus, through dialogue carried out in this dissertation, mutually bolster each other in how they conceptualise critical concepts. In summary, each framework brought into dialogue in this dissertation will receive potentially useful concepts and tools for engagement by being brought into dialogue with one another. There is notably no present literature that explores the interface between these three frameworks. As such, the most critical gap in the literature that this research can fill is seeking to produce a new framework for South African Decolonial theological engagement of Whiteness through bringing these frameworks into dialogue.

1.5. Methodology

This dissertation utilizes dialectical analysis as its methodology.⁶ This is a qualitative research method and involves the interrogation, description and analysis of abstract concepts. I conduct a desktop study which, within the meta-framework of SABB and the discipline of theology, brings the frameworks of Decolonial theory and South African Whiteness into conversation. I first explore the theoretical underpinnings of SABB. The data for SABB has been gathered through literature relevant to SABB, mainly from the contexts of North America and South Africa dated 1950 to 2022. Key sources that have been utilized include *Black Theology as Public Discourse* (1998) by Tinyiko Maluleke and *Liberation Theology in Tanzania and South Africa: a First World Interpretation* (2021) by Per Frostin. These sources will be focussed on and engaged in chapter 2 of the dissertation.

Second, the data for Decolonial theory has been gathered through literature relevant to Postcolonial, Neocolonial and Decolonial theory in North America, Africa and the South Americas dated 1950 to 2022. The process of data collection was the same for all three frameworks and as described for SABB. Key sources that will be utilized include the work of Hulisani Ramantswana such as *Decolonial Reflection on the Landlessness of the Levites* (2017a) and Walter Dignolo's *Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: a Manifesto* (2011). These sources are focussed on and engaged in chapter 3 of the dissertation.

Thirdly, the data for Whiteness will be gathered through literature relevant to Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness and South African Whiteness Studies in North America, Europe and South Africa from 1950 to 2022. The process of data collection was the same for all three frameworks and as described for SABB. Key Sources that will be utilized include Steve Biko's *I Write What I Like* (1987) and Kopano Ratele and Leswin Laubscher's *Making White Lives: Neglected Meanings of Whiteness from Apartheid South Africa* (2010). These sources are focussed on and engaged in chapter 4 of the dissertation.

Fourthly, I have, through dialectical analysis, distilled the information gathered in chapters 2, 3 and 4 into the defining characteristics of South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness. These defining characteristics have been synthesized so as to formulate a new

⁶ At the outset of the dissertation, and throughout it, I also utilise autobiography and social location as part of my methodology drawing on Ingrid Kitzberger's *Autobiographical Biblical Criticism: Between Text and Self* (2019). This allows who I am as a white South African to be visible in this project as I address issues of Whiteness and coloniality without excluding or ignoring my own participation therein as a white researcher.

frame for South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness. This analysis is done in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Fifthly, to test the validity and veracity of my new framework I have brought it into dialogue with two case studies. These case studies come from the Black Methodist Consultation in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. These case studies reflect how the Black Methodist Consultation has negotiated and conceptualised the critical phenomena my new framework seeks to conceptualise such as race, racism, Whiteness, Blackness and coloniality. These case studies are three chairpersons' addresses that capture the conceptualising of these phenomena by the BMC in the South African Apartheid context pre-liberation in the 1990s and the recent 21st century post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. These case studies assist me in remaining grounded within the discipline of theology and assist in my continued submission to black-led, race-critical engagement with Whiteness. These case studies also assist me to enact decolonial epistemological and methodological shift, acknowledging the value and validity of non-academic sources for theological reflection. Further explanation of these case studies, dialogue between these case studies and my new theoretical framework, and conclusions regarding the usefulness of my framework is conducted in chapter 5 of the dissertation.

Sixthly I have concluded this dissertation by summarising the research conducted and its conclusions, reflecting on the experience of carrying out the research, noting the limitations of the research and offering my recommendations for further research. The conclusion is conducted in chapter 6 of this dissertation.

1.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I introduced the background to the research problem, research question and research sub-questions of this dissertation. I briefly overviewed the three theoretical frameworks discussed and brought into dialogue in this dissertation within the discipline of theology, namely SABB, Decolonial theory and South African Whiteness Studies. Having overviewed these frameworks, I identified the gaps in the literature that this dissertation seeks to fill. I detailed the methodology that has been utilised for this dissertation as well as the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Historical and Contemporary Discourse in South African Black Theology

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I explore and discuss the meta-theoretical framework of this dissertation South African Black Theology (SABT). I begin this discussion by first describing my social location as a white researcher, my position as an outsider in SABT discourse, and the value of SABT for submitting my personal embodiment, and discussions, of Whiteness to black-led theory. I then move to explore the historical development of SABT in four distinct phases. I discuss phases one, two and three respectively as established historic phases of SABT. I present the pivotal characteristics of each phase using Per Frostin's five key characteristics of Liberation theologies. I conclude this chapter with introductory discussion on SABT's emergent fourth phase characterised by the 'Decolonial Turn'.

2.2. The Insider/Outsider Problem and Social Location

I am a white male scholar. I am inherently removed in some ways from the experiences of black people. I fundamentally cannot understand what it is like to be a black person beyond what I read, hear and observe. My experience growing up as well as my social location presently as a middle class, employed student minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa means that I am also fundamentally removed from the experience of Blackness as it will be conceptualised in this chapter and dissertation. While this observation is, for some, obvious and apparent, it is essential to note at the start of this chapter. Black theologies fundamentally ground themselves in black people's experience and Blackness (Cone, 2011, p. 14). Considering that I am inherently removed from black experience my interpretation and understanding of black people, Blackness and Black theologies is that of an outsider. Additionally, I recognise that my personal white identity, the way I embody Whiteness, and systemic Whiteness have at times in my life been synonymous. As such I have perpetuated systemic injustice towards black people and those characterised by Blackness at various points in my life both wittingly and unwittingly.⁷

⁷ The difference between systemic Whiteness and personal Whiteness will be explored briefly later in this chapter and particularly in chapter 4 of this dissertation. It is worth noting at this point that there is a difference between

I am a product of a South African context that has a long and complex history with white supremacy and systemic white racism. Due to this I have at times, knowingly or unknowingly, perpetuated systemic white racism as found in the post-Apartheid and post-colonial South African context. While this is the case, I actively pursue a new form of personal Whiteness and I am participating in work to subvert Whiteness and systemic white racism in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. Systemic white racism has also taken on new shape, new form, new identity in the era of “posts” in South Africa (Steyn, 2005, p. 122). This encourages new discourse to understand how systemic white racism, and the phenomenon of Whiteness, can be engaged and subverted. While I discuss the implications of this more comprehensively in chapter 4, I do note that I locate myself in discourse on Whiteness, this discourse being race-critical and seeking to subvert Whiteness, that has developed since South Africa’s political liberation in 1994. I do not seek to speak on behalf of black experience. I rather will explore in their own terms Black theologies, South African Black Theology in particular, recognising my positionality as an outsider who seeks to reconstitute his Whiteness considering black experience and Blackness.⁸ It is fair still to question to what extent I *can*, as an outsider, understand and convey the experience of an insider from whom I am, in some ways, fundamentally removed (Partridge, 2000, p. 44) in this chapter and dissertation.

My response to this form of questioning is twofold. Firstly, my goal is to submit to black-led theory as much as possible. I have taken this approach in this chapter and dissertation. This moves beyond just reading black scholarship to internalising arguments and positions to allow them to shape my participation in this discourse. I also recognise that black experience is not an essentialist reality (Maluleke, 2000, p. 34). Submitting to black-led theory thus involves submitting intellectually to theorists who specifically engage with black voices in the margins. This allows me to critically engage with work that benefits the margins without being entrapped by discourse on Blackness from which I am alienated. I attempt to allow black scholarship to direct me to various sources of thought in this regard to avoid arbitrary value judgements as an outsider regarding whose voice on Blackness does or does not matter. By submitting to these theorists, I open myself to black experiences, the voices of insiders, and allow them to inform my thinking, being and action. Considering the location of this dissertation is within the

the two phenomena. It is also notable that Blackness throughout this chapter changes in how it is conceptualised. I acknowledge at this stage, as will be discussed later, that Blackness is not synonymous with black people.

⁸ Academic theology has a long history of this kind of engagement from white scholars with Black theology. This is further discussed later in this section. An early example of this kind of engagement is David Bosch (1974).

discipline of theology, Black theologies are an obvious choice both for disrupting and decentring my own Whiteness and as a meta-theoretical framework that allows me to submit to race-critical, black-led theory.

Secondly, Black theologies often maintain the goal of, along with affirming Black dignity and subverting white racism, being engaged by white people (Cone, 2011, p. 152). This is not so that white people may be pandered to, but that white people would be challenged and transformed to live, act, and think differently to the status quo of Whiteness and systemic white racism (Cone, 2011, pp. 152 – 153). I thus emphasize that I undertake the task of engaging Black theology in this project seeking to be ‘white in transition’. I will form part of the historic and enduring tradition of white scholarship who have allowed their own Whiteness to be interrogated and transformed by black experience to ultimately address the enduring oppression caused by systemic white racism and systemic Whiteness. This is a clear trajectory within Black theologies that scholars such as Basil Moore, Gerald West, Per Frostin and James Perkinson have sought to embrace. I do this whilst acknowledging the pitfalls that may arise with this task and the potential I have to reinscribe Whiteness and systemic white racism through this work. Though there are pitfalls, Black theologies create space for discourse with outsiders for the sake of transformation of the status quo.⁹ With the backdrop of my social location established, I now move to discuss the historic development of South African Black Theology.

2.3. The Historic Development of South African Black Theology

Tinyiko Maluleke in his work has highlighted how the course and shape of South African Black Theology (SABT) has changed with the passage of time. Since its inception it has existed in various phases (Maluleke, 1998, p. 61). He also, in a recent foreword to the re-released edition of Per Frostin’s *Liberation Theology in Tanzania: A First World Interpretation*, lamented how often new theological works “are either ignorant of the work already done or unwilling to factor

⁹ It is also worth noting at this point that Black theologies are a coherent and valuable frame for engaging my case studies in this dissertation. Black theologies, as will be discussed in this chapter, recognise the value of particular black interlocutors for shaping theological discourse. I use three speeches from the Black Methodist Consultation in this dissertation to test the validity and veracity of my developed South African Decolonial frame for theological reflection on Whiteness. These case studies also act as interlocutors for my theological frame, shaping what I have developed, because of my grounding within SABT as a meta-framework. This will be explored comprehensively in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

in the ground already covered” (Maluleke in Frostin, 2021, p. xx). This framing of the “work already done” will be a guiding factor for the exploration of SABT in this chapter and dissertation. Maluleke in his own work highlights three distinct phases of SABT. These three phases will be explored followed by a brief discussion of an emerging fourth phase which this dissertation seeks to be a part of. From this, a framework of the changing landscape of South African Black theology and its conceptions of key notions such as race, racism, class, culture, gender, Blackness, Whiteness, coloniality and the like will be mapped.

Through these phases it is noteworthy that key concepts do have shifts in meaning. Generally speaking, conceptions of race, racism, Blackness, Whiteness and the social phenomena they interact with, such as gender and culture, are not static (Jodamus, 2017, p. 210 – 211). As such, for each phase I will highlight key concepts that construct the hermeneutic through which race and its various intersectional realities are viewed. I will utilise Per Frostin’s incisive outline of the five key characteristics of “Third World theologies” to guide the breakdown of the first three phases of South African Black theological discourse.¹⁰ These are: the choice of interlocutors (social relations underpin theological reflection, who are the voices listened to and engaged with), the perception of God, analysis of conflicts, social and theological analysis (the role of the social sciences in theological reflection, social scientific and theological tools utilised), and the relationship between theory and praxis (Frostin, 2021, pp. 6 – 9). Between phases some commonality between like characteristics is maintained. However, there are notable shifts in thinking regarding each of these critical elements of the SABT paradigm in each epoch.¹¹ I will then briefly introduce the discourse of the fourth phase before concluding this chapter.

¹⁰ It is valuable to note that Frostin has been meaningfully engaged and utilised by black scholarship and his framework is useful because it is both incisive and grounded in the long and storied tradition of ‘third world’ liberation theologies including African and Black theologies. Scholars such as the late Vuyani Vellem (see Vellem, 2017) and Tinyiko Maluleke (see Frostin, 2021) have referenced his work and highlighted its usefulness in this discursive context.

¹¹ The goal of this chapter is not to re-hash already established points. By highlighting the trajectory of SABT, noting the key characteristics of its discourse throughout history, a substantial baseline for the modern discourse which this dissertation seeks to be part of can be established.

2.3.1. Phase One: The Birthing of Black Theology in North America and South Africa

As discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation, Black theology as it is presently understood came into being at the same time as liberation movements in North America and South Africa. This locates the birth of Black theology in the 1960s in North America (Frostin, 2021, p. xviii) and late 1960s/early 1970s in South Africa (Moore, 1994, p. 14). Concepts within Black theology were discussed well before these points in history in both contexts. These dates are notable because in the 1960s and 70s formal academic Black theology came into being. North American Black Theology (NABT) was a notable source for SABT in this first phase (Wachege, 2019, p. 842). It is important to acknowledge this as both NABT and SABT will be engaged throughout this section on phase one. The various conversation partners that informed them will also be noted below, some of which are the social movements noted in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

The first characteristic Frostin (2021, p. 6) notes as defining of Liberation theologies is choice of interlocutor. In Black theology in both North America and South Africa at this time it was those deemed black in a white racist system. The choice of interlocutor in phase one is thus black people as a collective and as individuals. This is made clear through the following central black theological question: can the suffering of black people be reconciled with a loving God (Cone, 2014, p. 11)? The reality of black suffering caused by systemic white racism brought about theological reflection that took the personal experiences of black people as its point of departure. Notably problematic within this reflection on black suffering is that it occurred, according to NABT and SABT, in the framework and context of Western Christianity. Both NABT and SABT thus sought to make sense of this, and the paradox of the oppressed taking up the oppressor's religion, by treating the oppressed as their key interlocutor. In NABT the nuanced form of this was the paradox of the black slave worshipping the same God and utilising the same religious practices as the white slave owner (Cone, 1985, p. 756). In SABT the slave and slave owner were substituted for the reality of the black oppressed under the white colonial and Apartheid oppressor (Wachege, 2019, p. 845).

Due to black experience being the point of departure for black theologising, one of the key theoretical conversations within Black theology, in this phase and beyond, is what constitutes black experience. Blackness, that which is characteristic of black experience and black

identity,¹² is argued as determined by systemic white racism in both NABT and SABT (Wachege, 2019, p. 843). Both contexts also grounded themselves in the notion of ontological Blackness. Quoting James Cone, Adam Clark (2013, p. 380) describes ontological Blackness in NABT as the notion that Blackness is an ontological marker and the ultimate reality of people with what is commonly understood as black skin pigmentation. This results in a central contention that it is impossible to “surrender to a higher reality” than one’s Blackness as a black person (Clark, 2013, p. 380). This view is very clearly supported by SABT in its first phase. Through noting Blackness as an ontological marker of all black people, a clear front of resistance was created by and for black people against systemic and legislated white racism in the Apartheid South African context (Maluleke, 1998, p. 61).

Blackness, as described by both NABT and SABT, is not birthed in a vacuum. Blackness is a creation vis-à-vis Whiteness (see McClendon III, 2019, p. 33 for NABT and Maluleke, 1998, p. 61 for SABT). Whiteness, that which is characteristic of white experience and white identity, is also created and supported by systemic white racism. This systemic injustice produces a black racial ‘other’ who can be exploited for the benefit of the race commonly named white people (Biko, 1987, p. 28). Though it is not explicitly named as such, Whiteness is regularly discussed as an ontological marker of white people in North America and South Africa at this time (see Cone, 1985, p. 756; Biko, 1987, p. 23). The challenge for Black theologians thus, in both contexts, is to assist black people in being liberated from systemic white racism. It is also to challenge white people to meaningfully notice, engage and subvert systemic white racism (Cone, 1985, p. 756; Biko, 1987, p. 23). Blackness and Whiteness are described as realities that exist in tandem. Whiteness relies on the negation of Blackness. Both are ontological realities, inscribed into black and white people and should necessarily be subverted as part of the Black theological task.¹³

The perceptions of God, Frostin’s second characteristic, within NABT and SABT at this stage are notably similar. The notion of ontological objective Blackness played a primary role in terms of understanding who God is. The controversial phrase “God is black” was first used in

¹²Blackness in this phase had minor differences in North America and South Africa. These differences were determined by the philosophies and social movements that NABT and SABT interfaced with. These minor nuances are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

¹³ It is important to nuance that, according to SABT, oppressive Blackness is subverted through the creation of a new Blackness that resists and subverts oppressive Blackness as it is conceived by systemic Whiteness and systemic white racism. This is discussed further at various points throughout this dissertation.

the late 19th century in Christian discourse (Allen, 2019, p. 5). The goal of this phrase was to highlight radical solidarity. God, through God's very nature, "claim[s] black suffering as God's own" (Cone, 2011, p. 152). It was argued in this phase that God must meet black people in their Blackness and so it is determined as a fundamental characteristic of God's being (Cone as referenced by Clark, 2013, p. 380). It is fundamental to God's character to choose sides, specifically to choose the marginalised (Molobi, 2010, p. 36). God is thus ontologically black in this phase in the same way that black people are. This notion of a 'Black God' stands in resistance to Western Christian notions of a white God.¹⁴ God being created in the image of whiteness allowed for the prevalence of white racist systems (Blum et. al., 2014, p. 380). Thus, the image of God as black was developed to undermine the systemic white racism inherent in many Western theologies.¹⁵ Examination of social analysis later in this section will highlight that this also extended into critique of society.

A key figure in conversation on the nature of God within Christian discourse is Jesus Christ. The centrality of the figure of Jesus Christ to theological reflection in Christian history cannot be understated (McGrath, 2011, p. 266). Jesus Christ is considered a key figure in terms of revealing God's character and nature (McGrath, 2011, p. 266) in many Christian theologies. The person and work of Christ are similarly considered pivotal in this phase of NABT and SABT. Jesus was seen through the hermeneutic of black suffering and determined to be the "Oppressed One", a Messiah for the liberation of the oppressed (Cone, 1985, p. 769 – 770). He is argued to have revealed God's radical solidarity with black people. Christ thus stood as one who "enfleshes" black experience and black experience "enfleshes" Christ (Urbaniak, 2018, p. 198). The perception of Christ is thus notably linked to the perception of God in this phase of Black theologies. It is through Christ's suffering that Black theology in North America and in

¹⁴ The racialisation of God in Western Christian theology is not necessarily explicit. This phase argues that this is implicit and made evident with the focus in many Western theologies on modern and post-modern intellectual crises rather than the lived experience of suffering of black people (Cone, 1985, p. 756).

¹⁵ With this phrasing comes contestation around what it means for God to be black. Varying discourses exist and it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore each one. James Cone (1985, p. 769) notably argues that the focus of the phrase is not "European metaphysical speculation" but rather is intentional anthropomorphism, utilising "foolishness to shame the wise". As Blackness evolves as a concept so does this characteristic within Black theology.

South Africa finds meaning and connection to the God of Christianity. This resulted in the controversial claim that ‘Jesus is black’ as well.¹⁶

This discourse on Blackness, Whiteness, and their defining factors clearly highlights the analysis of conflicts, Frostin’s third characteristic, offered in this phase. In NABT and SABT conflict is between white people and black people in a white racist system. This system was clearly set in motion by white people and white people have a responsibility to engage and subvert it. The tension between oppressed and oppressor exists on racial lines determined socio-politically. These lines are obviously demarcated via legislation present at the time of this phase. This legislation in both contexts supports social imagination which in turn supports the legislation. As Steve Biko (1987, p. 28) succinctly suggests, an underlying logic is developed to create a group (those deemed black) that is subservient to another (those deemed white). The core conflict is thus, as Frostin (2021, p. 8) frames it, rooted in ethnic difference.¹⁷ It is worth noting in this phase that the questions Frostin (2021, p. 8) raises over the multi-layered intersectional relationship between forms of oppression are not thoroughly explored. The conflict focus remains that of the divide between black and white people (Moore, 1994, pp. 11 – 12). Notably, conflict analysis also explored the tension between church and state. As an overtly political and public theology (Maluleke, 1998, p. 60), SABT in this phase sought to explore the prophetic role of the church in speaking truth to power and addressing issues of justice.

Social and theological analysis, Frostin’s fourth characteristic, in this phase of Black theology in both NABT and SABT revolved around interrogation of racism in society and in the church. The notable historic movements already discussed largely formed the hermeneutics for social analysis. These were the Black Power Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Consciousness movement. These movements shared the positionality of anti-racism (Wachege, 2019, p. 843). Anti-racism is informed by a process of understanding how race, racism, and racial constructs look and function to ultimately undermine and subvert them (Erasmus, 2010, p. 245). These varying movements employed various strategies for interrogating racism. They

¹⁶ As was the case with God is black, Jesus is black has varying interpretations and questions regarding whether the blackness he embodies is literal or symbolic. These will not be the focus of this dissertation. I note that there is complex discourse surrounding it and it has evolved with the evolution of Black theology, and conceptions of Blackness, in South Africa particularly.

¹⁷ Frostin utilises the term ethnic in this context to reference “white-black” difference (Frostin, 2021, p. 8) as opposed to differing tribal or cultural groups within a particular racial category.

all also inherently shared the view that racism is a systemic and structural problem (Wachege, 2019, p. 844). As such, racist individuals and groups were addressed but they were ultimately symptomatic of a greater systemic injustice that needed to be challenged and deconstructed. It was also inherent that it was not sufficient to see racism as a problem. One had to be actively positioned to resist and confront racism.

Notably, helpful tools for anti-racist social and theological analysis were ‘Blackness’ and ‘Whiteness’ as sociological concepts. Blackness was used in this context as a tool to subvert systemic white racism. This was done through a reframing of Blackness into a tool of liberation for black people. Blackness was utilised as a rejection of the infiltration of white “culture and religion” into Christianity (Cone, 1985, p. 766). White culture and religion were replaced with black culture and religion in order to liberate black people (Cone, 1985, p. 766). This extended beyond liberation in the theological sphere with the ultimate goal of holistic liberation economically, socially, politically and ontologically for black people and white people (Cone, 1985, p. 762).¹⁸ SABB was notably effective at this through its close relationship with Black Consciousness. Black consciousness sought to demonstrate the lie of Blackness being an aberration from Whiteness through affirming black dignity and the rallying of black people in defiance to the mental and physical oppression they regularly faced under systemic white racism (Biko, 1987, pp. 48 – 49). Notably, black liberation within Black Consciousness and this phase of SABB called for “whites” to focus on white liberation and “blacks” to focus on black liberation (Biko, 1987, p. 21). Whiteness was thus confronted by granting humanity to those dehumanized and making Blackness into a weapon for resisting racist oppression.

Key to the theological tools of Black theology in both NABB and SABB in this phase is the Bible. The Bible is treated with a hermeneutic of trust in NABB and SABB at this time (West, 2000, p. 143). This results in the argument that the Bible, as a whole, is useful for theological reflection and offers a unified voice calling for the liberation of the oppressed (West, 2000, p. 143). Key texts, like those detailing the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt, acted as driving forces for the liberation of black people from racist oppression (Cone, 1985, p. 759). This use of the Bible as a tool also continued the core project of liberating Christianity from racism. The

¹⁸ The full extent of what must be engaged for holistic liberation across the various levels of exploitation in society is not explored in this phase as I have already mentioned. For example, though reference is made to economic exploitation in this phase this is not explored with great depth in Black theologies until SABB’s second phase. This will be discussed further in the sections that follow.

Bible had been used in North America and South Africa as a tool to oppress black people. In response to this the Bible was claimed by black people and black scholars as a tool to resist and subvert the very oppression it was fundamental in creating (Farisani, 2010, p. 507). It is worth noting that SABT did not follow the same path as NABT seeking to locate contextual understanding of race within the Biblical text (West, 2016, p. 327). SABT rather took the approach of highlighting similarities between the plight of the black oppressed in their context and the plight of the oppressed in various Biblical narratives (West, 2016, p. 327). The Bible thus acted as a theological weapon in the hands of black people to resist and subvert systemic white racism in both the church and society.

The relationship between theory and praxis, Frostin's fifth characteristic, in NABT and SABT at this time is highlighted by their theological claims. This phase clearly highlights that there is an overlap between "religious orientation and social transformation" (Pinn, 2000, p. 197). There is a notable challenge for change in thought, ideology, and abstract theology in NABT and SABT at this time. However, these things are clearly informed and preceded by the need for tangible social change (Cone, 1985, p. 756). Praxis in this phase is conceived as more important than theory and, whilst theory should change to depart from black experience, this is expressly for and from the purpose of black liberation. Black Consciousness, as I have noted earlier, particularly highlights the intermingling of praxis and theory. Biko (1987, p. 29) clearly delineates the importance of both external and internal liberation, noting that the two somewhat co-exist and that without internal liberation (change in consciousness and mindset) there is no meaningful external liberation. This liberation, however, is not achieved through theorising. It is achieved through tangible work with people at the grassroots. Thus, the emphasis of Black theology in NABT and SABT in this phase is on liberating praxis which informs theoretical understanding.

The first phase of Black theology shows, using Frostin's analytical categories, the close relationship between NABT and SABT in their initial phases. Both utilise similar theological and sociological tools to address the issue of systemic white racism within the church and society. There is, in this phase, noticeable room for development in terms of how certain concepts are understood. Blackness is characterised as a monolithic, homogenous and ontological reality that applies to all black people and is an ontological characteristic of God and Jesus Christ. The problem of ontological Whiteness, and its underpinning from systemic white racism, is established as central to the Black theological task. It is from the baseline of this first phase that the second phase of SABT develops.

2.3.2. Phase Two: Race and/as Class in SABB

The second phase of SABB begins in the 1980s (Maluleke, 1998, p. 61). With the passage of time came changing historical scenarios in church and society and the deepening of theological reflection in this field. The choice of interlocutor, Frostin's first key characteristic of Liberation theologies, in SABB takes a notable shift in this phase as compared to the first phase. This is due to dramatic shifts in conceptualising race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness at the time. A critical voice to note with regards to these shifts is Itumeleng Mosala. Within the field of Biblical Studies Mosala argued for a stronger recognition of the role of class in racial distinctions (as noted by West, 2016, p. 331). This recognition raises questions of whose voice amongst black people should be listened to. Black theologians in this phase argue that not all black voices speak the same thing. Black theology is not the product of every black person who does theology, academically or in casual conversation (Maluleke, 1998, p. 61). Mosala (as referenced by van Aarde, 2016, p. 5) calls for the ridding of the "presuppositions and assumptions of the ruling class" within Black theology. This entails that the key interlocutor for SABB becomes economically marginalised black people.

SABB thus concerned itself with listening to the oppressed amongst the oppressed, providing those on the furthest fringes with resources to survive (Mofokeng, 1993, p. 141). South African Black theologians began to unpack race and/as class. Race and/as class suggests that socio-economic disparity underpins the notion of race (West, 2020, p. 41). Systemic white racism was strategically designed within colonial systems and structures by white people to create class gaps. As such, meaningful engagement with race requires acknowledging it cannot be separated from class as a phenomenon. Lebamang Sebidi (1986, p. 31) further describes this through the notion of "racial capitalism". Sebidi (1986, pp. 19 – 20) argues, through bringing race-analyst and class-analyst positions into dialogue, that racism in South Africa was constructed in tandem with economics with the express purpose of creating class divides. Blackness and Whiteness, because of this, are conceived differently in this phase as compared to phase one. Whiteness refers to that which characterises the ruling class. Blackness refers to that which characterises the economically oppressed.¹⁹ Whiteness and Blackness were no

¹⁹ This does not deny the role of race in Whiteness and Blackness since the majority of the ruling class in South Africa at the time were white people and the majority of the economically oppressed were black people. Race and/as class makes room, however, for more nuanced analysis of the multi-layered nature of oppression taking into consideration that black and white peoples' experiences and identities are not homogenous even though they are within the categories of black and white.

longer matters only of race, though it certainly did still matter, but matters of where you fell on the spectrum of class. Black suffering was recontextualised in terms of economic lack. Blackness and Whiteness could also no longer be considered ontological markers of those with particular skin colours because they could no longer homogenously describe white people or black people.²⁰

The perception of God, Frostin's second characteristic, shifts in this phase with the shifts in conceiving Whiteness and Blackness. Important questions are raised around ontological Blackness and the ways in which God is portrayed in Christianity and the Bible. This phase notices within Christian discourse, and the Bible, ideological conflict between the rich and the poor (Mosala, 1987, p. 4). Within this discourse God is seen by some as on the side of the poor and by others on the side of the rich (Mosala, 1987, p. 4). God's positionality with the poor or rich complicates the argument of phase one that underpinned the assertion that God is black considering that not all black people are necessarily poor or rich. This phase made clear that further unpacking of theoretical assumptions and the "class and ideological commitments" of Black theology was necessary (Mosala, 1987, p. ix). It could no longer be taken for granted that authentic Christianity and interpretation of the Bible immediately lent itself to SABT. Simultaneously God being ontologically black could no longer be the basic assumption because Blackness was no longer a homogenous reality experienced and embodied by black people.

There was need, in this phase, for a more complex understanding of the varying ideologies that underpin conceptions of God and conceptions of Blackness. Phase two still contended that God was invested in the plight of the oppressed (Maluleke, 1998, pp. 61 – 62). Similarly, phase two maintained that God resisted domination as set in motion by systemic white racism (Mofokeng, 1989, p. 40). The experience of black people also remained a driving factor in understanding God. Phase two adopted interpretations that Blackness includes being relegated socio-economically and politically, and thus God was perceived as one who is on the side of poor black people in the monstrous socio-economic suffering they face (Mofokeng, 1989, p. 46).

²⁰ It is worth noting that race and/as class does not negate the systemic injustice experienced by affluent black people. The choice of interlocutor remains key, however, in ensuring liberation (as noted from Per Frostin, 2021, p. 6). Black theology shifted to noting that the voice of the black elite class was not necessarily representative of the black poor. It is also notable that the number of black elite class people during the time of this phase was substantially lower than post 1994. This also does not delegitimize the claim that at the time, and in present day South Africa, the majority of people in poverty are racially black and the majority of racially white people are wealthy (see Sguazzin, 2021).

An emphasis was retained in terms of solidarity and, rather than stepping into the pitfalls of ontological Blackness, God was conceptualised as one crucified with God's crucified people (Mofokeng, 1989, p. 46). This perception maintained a complex tension in which racial oppression is recognised but Blackness is not made an ontological marker of God. Rather, the complex realities of racialised suffering and socio-economic exclusion that underpin systemic white racism became the realities with which God identifies, takes up and meets people in. Notably conceptions of Christ shifted in similar directions. Christ's suffering with the black socio-economically and politically oppressed became the point of focus as opposed to Christ being black (Mofokeng, 1989, p. 46).

The developments in conceiving race and/as class results in a major shift in the analysis of conflict, Frostin's third characteristic, in this phase. Frostin's (2021, p. 8) questions on the interrelation of varying forms of oppression starts to move to centre stage.²¹ The underlying logic of race and racism gets greater attention and the conflict that is focused on becomes class conflict (conflict between the rich and the poor). This does not mean that race in terms of ethnic, cultural and ideological difference is totally side-lined. However, there was a clear need for exploring the gap on issues of class that existed in Black theology in South Africa at the time. Notably the problem of Black theology not effecting meaningful change at the grassroots (Mosala, 1987, p. i) and the elitist nature of Black theology (Mosala, 1987, pp. i – ii) demanded introspection within the field and willingness to explore class conflict within SABT as a field. It is also notable that continued conflict between church and state remained at the core of SABT. Especially in the wake of events in the late 1970s like the Soweto uprising, SABT was honed as a prophetic theology challenging the actions and ideology of the Apartheid government (Mofokeng, 1989, p. 43). Conflict analysis thus focussed on understanding the relationship between the rich and the poor as well as the church and state.

Social and theological analysis, Frostin's fourth characteristic, that underpins this phase is drawn from Marxist historical analysis.²² This makes sense in tandem with the developing phenomenon of race and/as class in this phase. Exposing the classist nature of South African society, Christianity and biblical interpretation would be pivotal for opening meaningful

²¹ This is not to suggest that Frostin's work was necessarily centre stage in this discourse. Rather, the questions he raises and the observations he offers are exemplary of the critical shift in discourse that occurred.

²² I acknowledge that there is paradox in using Marxism in a theological context. This has been engaged by many scholars and has been proven a meaningful tool in theological contexts. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to engage this discourse and so it is assumed as effectively argued in favour of.

engagement with the interlocutor, the black poor, of this phase of SABT. Through this analysis SABT highlighted that Christianity has throughout its history existed for the bourgeoisie (Sergio Rostagno as quoted by Mosala, 1987, p. 7). By recognising that Christianity existed for the elites the conflict between classes, in the Marxist sense, within Christian tradition and the Bible began to be highlighted (West, 2016, p. 331). Simultaneously with this critique was the increasingly persistent criticism of capitalism in SABT (Parratt, 1990, p. 529). This resulted in the use and development of “communal praxis”, drawing from the Marxist notion of the proletariat as the agent of change, to resist and subvert white racist oppression (Parratt, 1990, p. 530). Sociological tools in this phase thus sought to assist in understanding class conflict, interrogating what systemic injustices rooted in racial capitalism were fuelling this conflict and how they could be subverted in both the church and society.

It is important to note that the sociological tools of this phase’s social analysis were utilised in tandem with social and political movements in the 1980s. Critically, the banning of many political parties made churches key vehicles for discourse on what was happening socially, politically and economically (Moore, 1994, p. 15). This reality informed the church’s growing role as a prophetic agent. In quoting Maimela, Moore (1994, p. 15) highlights that it is in the context of this societal shift that the race and/as class discourse shift begins. The shifts in civic spaces to focus on new definitions of race were pivotal to SABT reconstituting its conceptions of race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness. The focus on Black Consciousness began to fade as the core policies of non-racialism and chartered politics began to take centre stage (Moore, 1994, pp. 15 – 16). Discourse on land expropriation and redistribution gained greater traction in this period.²³ This highlights that discourse in the church shifted in tandem with discourse in the public sphere, both influencing each other, as was the case in phase one. These movements helped to create and sustain the sociological tools which became central to the SABT task.

The key theological tools developed for analysis in this phase were new SABT hermeneutics. The second phase developed hermeneutics that undermine the concept of a single monolithic “biblical truth” (Mosala, 1987, p. 4). A new frame was developed recognising that ideological conflict is present in the text and that there are varying “biblical truths” that present themselves

²³ Biko (1987) makes reference to land and economic issues as well. It is not a new concept to this phase, however the noticeable shift to economic and class disparity unsurprisingly raised further awareness on the importance of land ownership, redistribution and economic disparity.

(Mosala, 1987, p. 4). Critically, this contestation did not result in the casting away of the Bible as a source for SABB. It rather resulted in a particular historical-critical approach of reading the Bible that does not seek to “[spar] with the final ideological form of the text” (West, 2016, p. 335). By beginning from a posture of suspicion rather than trust these ideological conflicts can be recognized and meaningfully engaged (West, 2016, pp. 328 – 329). West (2016, pp. 335 – 336) through his own insight and dialogue with Mosala notes that this allows for identifying systemic and structural injustices with greater nuance and allows for listening to the “undermost” voices in texts that are often suppressed or marginalised. By doing this the Bible was turned into a more meaningful ‘weapon’ that could be used by the marginalised in resistance of white racist capitalist systems.

The relationship between theory and praxis, Frostin’s fifth characteristic, remains largely the same in this phase in comparison with phase one. However, it is notable that the relationship of theory and praxis in phase one, that of being praxis oriented, was brought into question by this phase. Not in the sense of questioning its value, but in questioning the veracity of the claim that phase one of SABB was truly rooted in practical transformation (Mosala, 1987, p. i). The above noted Marxist influence of proletariat led reform brought new energy to this discourse. Praxis needed to precede theory and be accessible to the working class that Black theology claimed to speak on behalf of. The language this took on was decidedly Marxist, noting that white Western theologies spoke of preferential “option for the poor” where SABB spoke of revolution that made resources accessible and communal (Tilhagale as quoted by Parratt, 1990, p. 530). SABB in phase two thus strongly sought after liberation work done at the grassroots which ultimately would then inform theoretical conversations.

Phase two of SABB introduces greater nuance into the frame’s theoretical conception of race. Whiteness and Blackness are no longer defined purely on ethnic or racial terms. The reality of class divides in relationship with racial divides becomes central to analysis and, through the use of Marxist historical criticism, new hermeneutics are developed for engaging and subverting white racist systems, structures and the Apartheid regime. The inclusion of the systemic injustices caused by capitalism are notable and defining for the trajectory of the field. The recognition of another ‘layer’ of the oppressive structure of systemic white racism also opened space for further discourse on other forms of oppression that function in tandem with racism and classism. Similarly, phase two created space for new socio-theological tools and frameworks to be developed to specifically assist the marginalised in the process of liberation. From this launching pad the discourse of the third phase of SABB begins to develop.

2.3.3. Phase Three: A Return to Culture

The third phase of SABB begins in the 1990s in the wake of South Africa's political liberation from Apartheid in 1994 (Maluleke, 1998, p. 61). An equally important shift in the late 80s/early 90s was the collapse of the Berlin wall and the end of the Cold War. These two realities in conjunction stirred theologians in South Africa, and in Africa generally, to begin pursuing new avenues of thought (Maluleke, 1996a, p. 4). This not only extended into discourse on race but discourse on identity. Distinguishing and delineating what is African, who is African, what is African Christianity and the like (Maluleke, 1996a, p. 4), all formed part of this era of discourse.²⁴ SABB in this phase had to answer critical questions. When divides were ending globally and locally why should a clearly racially distinctive theology continue? Especially when, as noted above, Black theology recognised its role as contextual? When liberation is achieved, what role does South African Black theology fulfil?

SABB thus had the task of proving it was more than just a protest theology to be naturally removed from its place in discourse by other prophetic or contextual theologies.²⁵ To do so it would need to show why a racialised theology should still exist when race is "no longer supposed to matter" (Maluleke, 1998, p. 61).²⁶ It was clear at the time that the notion of race and identity would need to be further expanded to include various interlocutors and layers. This is notably similar to phase two where it was recognised that multiple layers of oppression intersect and to look at only one fails to do justice to the whole. Whilst retaining the importance of class and ethnicity, a necessary turn to what cultural, gendered and religious realities define black experience and Blackness was made in this phase (Maluleke, 2000, p. 24). This resulted in a notable merging of discourses as African theology and SABB, historically distinct fields, began to converge (Wachege, 2019, p. 849). Rather than being oppositional or mutually

²⁴ It is worth noting the tension of my social location in this discourse as a white person. The inclusion of white people in the term "African" is contested. I will note at this point that I do believe it is possible to be white and African but that it requires internal and external shifts for white people to be 'white in transition'.

²⁵ This critique endures to the present day in theological discourse. It is also worth noting that in this time period there are many developments in reconstructionist and contextual theologies critiquing SABB and seeking to fill this gap. I note that these discourses occurred, but it is beyond the scope of this project to engage these developments. I also note that much of SABB's writings and arguments in this phase respond to these critiques and challenges.

²⁶ It is worth noting that, as is evidenced by this reference, many scholars critiquing SABB did not engage or acknowledge how conceptions of race had expanded in SABB. This does not do away with the critiques offered but highlights the enduring problem of race as a phenomenon being undertheorised in many theological contexts.

exclusive, the logics of the fields were brought together in a fluid give-and-take dynamic where both informed each other in pursuit of meaningful African existence for black Africans (Chimhanda, 2010, p. 435). It is the product of this converging of discourses that will be explored in this section.

Blackness and Whiteness thus took on new form in the context of a more complex framework of racism. Whiteness was still conceived as underpinned by systemic white racism and capitalism.²⁷ However, it was argued that these systems had the objective of creating class as well as erasing other cultures and religions and placing women in perpetual positions of servitude (Oduyoye, 2001, pp. 24 – 25). Considering this, Blackness became characteristic of economic, gender-based, cultural, ethnic and religious oppression. This all is maintained whilst still predominantly being characteristic of those commonly considered black people. Whiteness characterised those who oppress based on economics, gender, culture, ethnicity and religion. This is still largely enacted in and by those commonly considered white people. Blackness and Whiteness in this phase are firmly removed as ontological markers and discourse on racism takes on the complex nuances necessitated by the post-colonial and post-apartheid context in which it existed (West, 2000, p. 142). In terms of Per Frostin's (2021, p. 6) multidimensional framing of oppression, it is clear that SABB in this phase entered into more meaningful discourse in this regard.

The choice of interlocutor in this phase, Frostin's first characteristic, is nuanced by these new conceptions race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness. It did not remove economically oppressed black people as the choice of interlocutor. However, SABB discourse began to take seriously that black people, in terms of culture and traditional religion, are not homogenous in the South African context (Van Aarde, 2016, p. 2). Simultaneously a new focus on gender appeared with incredibly important contributions coming from African Womanist theologians (Maluleke, 1998, p. 62). The role of social location thus became even more pivotal. The voices that were to be listened to were the voice of those othered economically, culturally, religiously and on the basis of gender. To understand these phenomena African Traditional Religions (ATRs) and

²⁷ Maluleke (1996, p. 315) even expanded some notions in this regard in this phase in his discourse on affirmative action in post-Apartheid South Africa, engaging Sebidi on racial capitalism and delving into the reality of a "buffer class". This notion suggests that the realities of Whiteness and Blackness in South Africa at the time were very grey in some pockets. The "buffer class" referenced black people who had risen up the class ladder and created the illusion that if all black people wanted to succeed they need only work hard and they can achieve the same thing.

African Initiated Churches (AICs) became very important (Maluleke, 1998, p. 62). Black people, in particular black women, who belonged to these institutions and were othered along these lines became central interlocutors to the ‘cutting edge’ of SABT discourse at the time. These people and phenomena, which had been historically marginalised, became central for the continued forward movement of SABT.

The perception of God, Frostin’s second characteristic, in this phase was intimately influenced by the increased importance of culture, ATRs, AICs and gender. God, as characterised by Western Christianity, was deconstructed further than along the lines of race and class to the lines of race, class, gender, and culture. Similarly important, the intentional movement towards more localized theologies (Maluleke, 2000, p. 30) shifted this phase of SABT’s God-talk. Depictions of God that were characterised by universal identity claims and carried patriarchal undertones were strongly critiqued (Oduyoye, 2001, pp. 15 – 16). God was thus spoken of in more generally localized, African language familiar to the cultural group theologising about God whilst also being mindful of gender dynamics and God being defined in masculine terms.²⁸ Jesus Christ continued to play a role in this phase as a revelation of God. However, there was a distinct shift to place Christ amongst the “cloud of witnesses”, not as a key voice but rather as one of many (Maluleke, 1996a, p. 17). Jesus Christ was thus shifted from being “the” revelation of God to “a” revelation of God. Whilst symbolism of a “Black Messiah”, tortured and weak, remained prevalent, the role of culture in Africanizing Christ (Urbaniak, 2018, pp. 187 – 188) was given greater primacy. God was thus characterised as one who met black people in their suffering and experience and could be defined, experienced, named and conceptualised in local, familiar terms.

Analysis of conflict, Frostin’s third characteristic, within this phase critically required an understanding of conflict between genders, cultures and traditional religions. Whilst continuing to interrogate where the tensions were between races and classes, tensions between genders, cultures, and traditional religious viewpoints (Chimhanda, 2010, p. 434) were added to the discourse. Whilst this was happening the conflict born from being prophetic, that of conflict between church and state, required a new approach. With the shift to a new political

²⁸ This discourse did not erode the universal nature of God as a supreme being. It rather sought to ensure that there was not a monopoly on whose God-talk was considered right, true, correct, or orthodox. This extends into the critique of Christ as an ancestor who is part of the cloud of witnesses pointing to the single “supreme being” (Maluleke, 1996a, p. 16).

dispensation came the need for a new kind of prophetic voice. There was a noticeable reduction in “speaking truth to power” in this phase as SABT floundered to find its new voice, some even arguing that it had met its demise (Chimhanda, 2010, p. 434). This highlights a noticeable tension in this phase of SABT. It was fighting a ‘war on many fronts’ and, in the court of academic opinion, losing at each one. There were thus conflicts analysed within SABT around issues of gender, culture and traditional religion whilst also analysing conflicts between SABT and other emergent theological discourses challenging SABT’s validity and veracity at the time.

Social and theological analysis, Frostin’s fourth characteristic, unsurprisingly took on new shape in this phase. Each new characteristic of oppression required specific tools of analysis. In terms of analysing gender, African women theologians provided several key sociological and theological tools of analysis. The two core fields included in this regard were gender studies and feminist theory (Dube, 2016, p. 1). These tools allowed for critical interpretation of gender roles in SABT, Christianity and South African society, as well as emphasizing the necessary liberation of black African women within SABT discourse (Dube, 2016, p. 1). The systemic injustice of patriarchy is more thoroughly conceptualised in this phase. For culture and traditional religion there was a twofold turn to AICs and ATRs as interlocutors (Maluleke, 1998, p. 62). These two groups had retained elements of South African black experience that were eroded by systemic white racism, capitalism, and patriarchy. AICs and ATRs highlighted that black African experience requires a turn to holism, an understanding of life in its entirety as opposed to viewing it as its constituent parts (Richardson, 2012, p. 44). This entailed that the interface of various ATRs within AICs as well as within culture, religions, gender roles, ethnic identity was critical to understanding the broad tapestry of Blackness and black African experience. This created far more nuanced perceptions of Blackness and highlighted the need for subversion of Whiteness and white racist, capitalist, and patriarchal oppression with far sharper nuance.

AICs and ATRs were critical theological resources for analysis in this phase of SABT. Culture and religion are not mutually exclusive in South African black experience. Cultural and religious sources thus come in holistic packages where these phenomena intertwine. SABT in this phase formed theological tools through dialogue with AICs which meaningfully held together Christian and African culture, religion, ethics and the like (Maluleke, 1997, p. 22). This and other shifts in SABT to utilise what is African, though the term African can be convoluted and difficult to navigate (Maluleke, 1997, p. 6), form the foundations of the

theological analysis in this phase. These theological tools formed part of the hermeneutic of recovery applied to black African culture (West, 2016, p. 342). It is notable that this task is recovery of culture that is pre-colonial and post-colonial. The assimilation process of AICs to maintain what existed before colonization is mined as an important theological resource (West, 2016, p. 345). The role of colonization on black African culture is not ignored. Whilst this is the case, critical lenses were also applied to pre-colonial black African culture to prevent romanticizing of toxic elements of and to allow for positive development in the post-colonial era (Maluleke, 2000, p. 34).

The centrality of the Bible in social and theological analysis in SABT is interrogated and often subverted in this phase. Certain scholars, such as Simon Maimela (as referred to by Maluleke, 1996a, p. 14) advocated for the entire removal of the Bible as an SABT tool. This approach is contested by SABT scholars. The role of the Bible in the experience of grassroots black African Christians cannot be denied (Maluleke, 1997, p. 18) according to many scholars in this phase. The Bible is noted as a beloved and important text and that it would be difficult to imagine it will be simply removed even with theological backing from SABT. As such scholarship felt it was better not to remove the Bible but to confront issues in understanding and interpreting it (Maluleke, 1996a, p. 14). This continues the notion of turning the Bible into a “formidable weapon” for the oppressed to use to gain liberation (Mofokeng, 1988, p. 40). Ultimately the Bible, and Christianity as a package therewith, are relativised as tools for African theological reflection in this phase (Maluleke as referenced by West, 2016, p. 342). SABT in this phase grounded itself in a different epistemic location than that of Western Christian reflection by granting primacy to indigenous theological resources that had been underutilised or silenced. It also explored new hermeneutics for engaging the biblical text that took seriously the experiences of gender and culture in the South African context.

The relationship between theory and praxis, Frostin’s fifth characteristic, retained its historic shape in this phase. The focus continued to be developing theory based on praxis that engaged and ultimately liberated those on the margins. The poor who are part of AICs and ATRs, especially poor black women, became the primary site of praxis (West, 2016, p. 342). SABT sought to provide meaningful tools to those most affected by systemic white racism, capitalism and patriarchy to liberate them both mentally and physically. Through the praxis of recovery of black African culture, knowledge and experience, new theorising could be developed. There remained the notable struggle of abstract theologising that was not tangibly changing the lived experience of people at the grassroots in this phase (West, 2000, p. 150). However, through

development of theological tools that listen to the marginalised, praxis did take on shifts that continued the process of moving SABT out of the hands of the elite back into the hands of the oppressed (West, 2000, p. 150).

Phase three of SABT scholarship continued to expand what was understood about race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness in the South African context. Blackness is recognised in the experiences of women and African culture which were regularly side-lined by the norms and values of society at the time determined by Whiteness. The interconnectedness of gender, culture and traditional religion were emphasized in this phase. Through the recognition of culture as a “site of struggle” (West, 2016, pp. 341 – 342), the relativising of Christianity within African theological discourse, and the turn to listen in particular to the most oppressed within AICs and ATRs SABT further unpacked what Whiteness, white systemic racism, capitalism and patriarchy looks like in the South African context as well as what is necessary for the liberation of those oppressed by it in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid era. It is on the foundation of the above three phases that phase four of SABT emerges.

2.3.4. Phase Four: The “Decolonial Turn”

The fourth phase of SABT participates in emergent discourse that utilises and relies on Decolonial theory (West, 2016, pp. 345 – 346). Decolonial theory will be the framework discussed in chapter 3 of this dissertation and will act as one of two key theoretical frameworks explored within the meta-theoretical framework of SABT to produce new theoretical understanding for theological reflection on Whiteness in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. Considering the discussion to follow in chapter 3, I do not explore thoroughly the fourth phase of SABT in this chapter. I introduce this phase in this chapter briefly, seeking to highlight the clear relationship between decolonial thought and SABT throughout its historic development into the present day.²⁹ I also briefly note two scholars particularly relevant to highlighting the coherency of SABT’s fourth phase drawing on Decolonial theory as a critical dialogue partner.

Hulisani Ramantswana (2017a, p. 72) describes decoloniality as a framework through which “structures of domination are questioned and challenged”. It is clear from the discourse of this chapter that throughout the history of SABT it has sought to do the same. Discourse challenging what Decolonial theory terms coloniality, the long-standing “patterns of power that emerged

²⁹ This is a view maintained by several SABT scholars (see West, 2016; Kobe, 2018; Vellem, 2012; Pillay, 2020).

as a result of colonialism” (Ramantswana, 2017a, p. 73), is evident in each phase of SABT in a variety of forms. This includes SABT pursuing the subversion of racism, patriarchy, classism, denial of human dignity, knowledge and epistemological destruction and cultural erosion. This is essential to note and emphasize. Decolonial theory in the South African context is, in many ways, a continuation of and expansion on work already done in SABT. Especially noting the comprehensive development of phase three in exploring the multi-layered nature of oppression, there is meaningful discourse on colonial and Apartheid legacies in the South African context and how they can be subverted in SABT to this point.

It is valuable to highlight more specific instances of decolonial thought in SABT through relating historic SABT concepts to current Decolonial thought. In phase one of SABT racialised structures of domination and systemic racism are conceptualised as realities enduring from colonialism into Apartheid. Systemic racism in Decolonial theory is similarly conceptualised as a clear longstanding pattern of colonial and Apartheid domination in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context (Ramantswana, 2017a, p. 76). Phase two of SABT offers deepened insight into the relationship between race and class, noting that the two cannot be engaged separate from one another. Similar notions of racial capitalism and race and class’ inextricable link is detailed in Decolonial theory (Ramantswana, 2017a, p. 76). Phase three of SABT introduces the epistemic shift to listen especially to women, African culture and African Traditional Religions. This shift is embodied in Decolonial theory through epistemic delinking and relinking, and through intentionally shifting to indigenous sources of knowledge as well as those most harmed by the enduring legacies of colonialism and Apartheid (Ramantswana, 2016a, p. 186). These are brief examples of an overarching theme of decolonial thought running throughout SABT and the ‘Decolonial Turn’ being a logical continuation of SABT in its emergent fourth phase.

The apparent relationship between decolonial thinking and SABT is unsurprising because, as has been noted throughout this chapter, Liberation theologies develop in tandem with, and at times create or develop, academic frameworks and concepts. Decoloniality as a concept in academia notably arose simultaneously with liberation theologies in the 1960s (Kunnummal, 2020). The fourth phase of SABT continues the important work of understanding and subverting the multi-layered reality of oppression and exclusion in present day South Africa utilising the historically availed SABT tools as well as newly developed Decolonial theoretical tools. Hulisani Ramantswana, who I engaged in the previous paragraph, is a notable example

of a scholar who continues the decolonial trend of SABT in its fourth phase through bringing SABT into dialogue with Decolonial theory.

The pioneering scholar of the emergent fourth phase of SABT is Makhosazana Nzimande. Nzimande (2008, p. 224) uses a complex array of frameworks engaging various levels of oppression of women particularly in the South African context including feminist theory, African theology, SABT, postcolonial theory and gender theory. In the field of Biblical Studies she develops *imbokodo* hermeneutics for engaging the biblical text from this interlacing web of experiences, seeking to subvert the normalised damaging notions of race, gender and class found in the text and society generally (Nzimande, 2008, pp. 224 – 225). It is clear from her and Ramantswana that the fourth phase of SABT is in an emergent, highly intersectional phase and is actively participating in current post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African Decolonial thought. Ramantswana (2017a, pp. 76 – 77) particularly highlights the value of decolonial black theological reflection on Whiteness, recognising the need to engage and subvert Whiteness as a legacy of colonialism and Apartheid in the South African context as a black theological task.

2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I mapped the meta-theoretical framework of this dissertation South African Black Theology. I began this by first noting my social location as a white researcher. I then discussed the first three phases of SABT and their distinctive characteristics. I ordered these characteristics using Per Frostin's five key characteristics of Liberation theologies. I concluded by introducing discussion on SABT's fourth phase characterised by the 'Decolonial Turn'. The conclusion of this chapter introduces discourse on Decolonial theory which I now move to discuss in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Decolonial Theory, Decolonial Theology and South African Black Theology's Fourth Phase

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I continue the discourse on decolonial thought begun briefly at the end of chapter 2. I chiefly discuss the second theoretical framework of this dissertation Decolonial theory in this chapter. I begin by first engaging Decolonial theory, addressing the critical concepts of colonialism, colonality, decolonisation, decoloniality, and their links to subversive discourse and praxis against Whiteness. I follow this by shifting to explore discourse on Decolonial theologies, particularly South African Decolonial theologies. I conclude by exploring SABT's fourth phase and outlining the characteristics of this phase using Per Frostin's five key characteristics of Liberation theologies.

3.2. Decolonial Theory and Theology

This chapter will focus on Decolonial theory generally before shifting focus onto decolonial theology. This is due to the nature of Decolonial theory as a field. It is inherently multidisciplinary, challenging historic boundaries in academia and pushing for thinking that births from "border epistemologies" (Mignolo as referenced by Tonelli, 2020, p. 195). This is not done to argue that Decolonial theory in other fields precedes decolonial thought in theology.³⁰ These two phenomena happen in tandem with each other and with intellectual, socio-political movements, and academic fields at varying points in history. In the South African context this was highlighted in the last chapter. Black Consciousness, as an example, contains logic and reasoning that current Decolonial scholarship recognises as decolonial thought.³¹ Black Consciousness is an example of a border epistemology that has birthed, as Decolonial theory will frame it in this chapter, epistemic disobedience and decolonial action. It is also a framework that intersects with other disciplines. Black Consciousness is not an

³⁰ Sandra Harding (2017, p. 624) highlights that Latin American Decolonial Studies, and some branches of Feminist Studies, name Liberation theology as a key influence for the 'Decolonial turn'. Scholarship is not completely unified on which came first and it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to seek to clarify this further.

³¹ See Biko, 1987, pp. 56, 64. These references highlight clear links to decolonial thought in both theology and the social sciences. This is not to say Biko necessarily aligned with everything in Decolonial theory. It is commonly accepted, however, that he was a decolonial thinker and that Black Consciousness reflects embodies decoloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 222).

explicitly theological frame, but it is regularly referenced and utilised within SABT. With this clarity in mind, I will now address key concepts to Decolonial theoretical discourse.

3.2.1. Colonialism and Coloniality

The birthing phenomenon for Decolonial theory is colonialism.³² Colonialism is the historic event of imperialism in which Western European and North American powers established themselves as rulers over other regions through the violent installation of colonies (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, p. 1). These colonies were established as extensions of particular nations which sent them, claiming particular lands as their own with no regard towards the original inhabitants. With this imposition of new rulers came the imposition of new political systems, economic systemics, religious systems, education systems, cultures, epistemologies and ways of being onto indigenous inhabitants (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, pp. 4 – 5). Decolonial theorists argue within the “epic” school of thought regarding colonialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 485). This suggests that contexts in which colonialism occurred are fundamentally altered by the event. Rather than it being a transitory period in history, colonialism’s unparalleled destructive impact and its enduring legacies are treated as fact (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 485). It is chiefly these enduring legacies that Decolonial theory engages, describes, critiques and seeks to subvert.

These enduring legacies thus hold a particular place of importance in Decolonial theory and require further substantiation. This is especially the case because formal decolonization processes have occurred globally in previously colonized contexts. Formal processes of decolonization that have already occurred inherently beg the question of why Decolonial theory should even be spoken about. Formal decolonization processes can be described through analysis of South Africa as a nation. South Africa is not under European imperial rule any longer. Formal processes to shift to democracy have taken place. South Africa is a unique case in this context as well. It notably also experienced a form of ‘internal colonization’ under Apartheid. Rather than external imperial powers implanting colonies, the internal white minority in South Africa established a white supremacist state with much the same goals as Western colonization (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, p. 5). Even in this case South Africa has been a

³² Colonialism is experienced in distinct ways in the varying contexts that it was historically present. The South African context experienced an especially particular form of colonialism (West, 2021, p. 530). The goal in this section is to discuss general characteristics of colonialism and coloniality before specifically locating in the South African context.

democratic multi-racial state since 1994. It is because of processes of decolonization such as these that questions arise of Decolonial theory's place in contemporary discourse.

Decolonial theory acknowledges processes of decolonization that have already been explored and carried out. However, it also highlights the enduring legacies of colonialism by pointing to the realities of Eurocentrism, coloniality and modernity. Eurocentrism can be described as a construct of modernity that endures into the present which is constituted chiefly by prejudices held both presently and previously by Western nations (Amin as referenced by Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 331).³³ These prejudices are against a variety of groups and peoples deemed 'other', groups that were not reflections of the archetypical white male coloniser.³⁴ Amin (as referenced by Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 331) argues that these prejudices are racial, chauvinistic and xenophobic. They are ultimately, he suggests, designed to "confer the right" to "judge and analyze" any 'othered' groups (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 331). Further characteristics of past and present Eurocentrism include sexism, homophobia, heteronormativity (and general fear, dislike or hatred towards the entire LGBTQ+ community), hatred of non-Western cultures, classism and elitism (Kalua, 2019, pp. 58 – 59).³⁵ These characteristics can be grouped within the term 'colonial difference' (Icaza, 2017, p. 29). Colonial difference is used to describe the clear ontological distinction created between the

³³ It is worth noting that these prejudices should not be viewed as essential to Western (North American and European) nations as this suggests that they cannot change. It is also worth noting that, while there may have been changes, many Eurocentric realities can no longer exist as overt forms of discrimination. A common example of this is overt racism which is largely frowned upon (Steyn & Foster, 2008, p. 28). The fact that these prejudices can no longer manifest in overt ways does not, however, mean they do not exist. This is again chiefly proven in the case of racism (Steyn & Foster, 2008, p. 28). This will be explored further in this chapter and chapter 4.

³⁴ A clear goal of colonialism was the process of civilising, the turning of colonised contexts into reflections of coloniser society (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, pp. 4 – 5). The white male coloniser archetype reflects not only the society to be built but the basis on which people in colonised contexts would be excluded. This archetype is argued to endure in less overt forms into modern post-colonial contexts as well. This will be explored further in this chapter.

³⁵ Some of these realities exist within indigenous African tradition, cultures and groups. As such one might question whether Decolonial theory seeks to dismantle things like patriarchy which is, at times, found within indigenous African realities and constructs. African decolonial womanist and feminist reflections have engaged patriarchy as an example to highlight that though Decolonial theory recognises the value of indigenous African traditions, cultures and the like, they are not impervious to injustice and should be interrogated for injustices to be subverted as well (see Makama et. al, 2019, p. 62 – 63).

colonizer and colonized as it is framed by Eurocentrism. It is worth noting at this point that the notion of colonial difference plays a key role in decolonial conceptions of race and Whiteness, and this will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Eurocentrism informs coloniality. Coloniality refers to the enduring logics, structures, systems and institutions that uphold discrimination and create zones of being and non-being, humanity and non-humanity, based on colonial difference established through colonialism and various forms of modernity (Mignolo, 2011, p. 45). The various intertwining forms of coloniality form the global colonial matrix of power which exists for the exclusion and domination of all those deemed other by Eurocentrism (Zembylas, 2018, p. 2). Eurocentrism thus acts as a pivotal ideology which underpins coloniality. Coloniality is the actualising of the prejudices of Eurocentrism, creating in oppressive logics and lived realities based on what is abstractly thought and felt in Eurocentrism. Notably Eurocentrism and coloniality extend beyond the actions, thoughts and feelings of groups and individuals whilst being reliant thereon for existence. Though logics, systems, structures, institutions, and prejudices are upheld by individuals and groups, they are not necessarily essential characteristics thereof.³⁶ The implications of this will be discussed further when exploring social location as a phenomenon.

Eurocentrism as a phenomenon was not born in a vacuum. Discourse exploring it has highlighted the intimate relationship between Eurocentrism, colonialism, coloniality and modernity. Decolonial theorists go as far as to name Eurocentrism and coloniality the “dark side of modernity” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 46). Modernity is a complex construction, an import from the West that sought to bring order to the perceived chaos of the human world through universal truths and values (Triki, 2020, p. 10). Through the guising language of “salvation and progress”, the damaging and dangerous logics of Western domination and control are established and reinforced as inescapable and lived reality for all people (Mignolo, 2011, p. 46). Coloniality and modernity are thus regularly discussed in tandem: they do not exist without each other. Colonialism as a phenomenon was the most apparent actualisation of these logics of “salvation and progress” through which the reality of colonial difference was first established. Through colonial difference Western colonial projects legitimated processes of

³⁶ This is rooted in the logic that those who were previously colonisers can participate in the decolonial project if they do so from the underside of the colonial matrix of power (Ramantswana, 2016a, p. 186). This will be further discussed and substantiated throughout this chapter.

civilizing, Christianising, and establishing universal Western hegemony in thought, life, and society (Lugones, 2010, p. 744).

It is notable, however, that colonialism was not the only project of modernity as it is conceived within Decolonial theory. Later projects of modernity continued to produce logics that reinforced, produced, and reproduced coloniality. This includes new projects creating alternate forms of modernity such as post-modernism and globalisation (Icaza, 2017, p. 28). Such projects continue in the 21st century, often guised within language that suggest they are things that “just happen” (Mignolo, 2021, p. 721). Such language disguises that the underlying “salvation and progress” logics of earlier forms of modernity still exist therein. These logics continue to establish Euro-North-American-Centrism, reinforcing zones of being and non-being and continuing the reality of colonial difference. A key example is the present form of global capitalism and the varying institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which accompany it. These institutions under the guise of development and empowerment continue to prevent the genuine development and independence of the Global South (Vellem, 2012, pp. 1 – 2). Oppressive logics, structures, systems, groups and individuals continue to thrive in the 21st century in these new forms where they are often not held to account for their reinforcement, production and reproduction of coloniality.

Coloniality as a phenomenon is both global and local. Within Decolonial theory there is a distinct tension maintained between these two contexts in order to capture the nuance of coloniality as a phenomenon. Coloniality is observed as a global reality that has similarities across varying histories and contexts (Mignolo, 2021, p. 722). It is recognised as the underlying logic of all Western colonialism and is firmly linked to the projects of modernity and globalisation (Mignolo, 2021, p. 724). In acknowledging this, Decolonial theory recognises that coloniality seeks to create the world in a universal Western image. It also allows for intersectional discourse where previously colonized contexts share knowledge to subvert coloniality.³⁷ However, Decolonial theory also recognises the multi-faceted and heterogenous nature of coloniality at the local level and how these local manifestations seek to connect local contexts with the global reality of coloniality (Mignolo, 2021, p. 733). Decolonial theory thus frames coloniality as a phenomenon with particular contextual manifestations seeking to create a universal global order.

³⁷ This will be further discussed and justified later in this chapter.

Coloniality in Decolonial theory is broken down into a variety of forms in which it can be observed. The forms of coloniality that I will discuss are coloniality of power, coloniality of being, coloniality of knowledge, coloniality of gender, coloniality of sexuality and coloniality of nature. It is helpful to begin with coloniality of power considering that coloniality creates a colonial matrix of power. Coloniality of power speaks to intentionally created unjust power dynamics and hierarchies within systems, structures and institutions (Seroto, 2018, p. 4).³⁸ Coloniality of power is present both in the creation and the sustaining of unjust power dynamics (Seroto, 2018, p. 4). Coloniality of power is notably found in systems and institutions utilised to maintain the status quo such as the police force and the army (Mignolo, 2011, p. 45). While it is worth noting that these two institutions do not inherently act always in the interests of coloniality, many systems, structures, and institutions such as these two are regularly co-opted to maintain the coloniality-determined status quo. This is the case for any system, structure, or institution where power can be used to inscribe or reinscribe oppression based on colonial difference. Coloniality of power is also notably pervasive in modern economics. The enduring exploitation of labour “under the exclusive hegemony of capital” (Quintero et. al., 2019, p. 5) is a central characteristic of coloniality of power. Coloniality of power ultimately ensures the actualisation of particular zones of being and non-being for particular exploitative purposes (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 489), existing as the underpinning, driving impetus of the varying forms of coloniality that are observed.

Coloniality of knowledge is knowledge, knowledge production and knowledge systems that are utilised to preserve coloniality of power and zones of being and non-being (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 490). Coloniality of knowledge creates and controls epistemologies to ensure the sustaining of the imbalances and logics created by coloniality. This involves some critical tropes. European knowledge is given precedence and treated as universal both in coherence and in application (Quintero et. al., 2019, p. 7). Eurocentrism thus acts as an “epistemic locus” (Quintero et. al., 2019, p. 7), aiming to ensure all logic develops from that strategically chosen point of departure. In reinforcing these logics other non-colonial knowledge and epistemologies are eroded or wiped out entirely (Seroto, 2018, p. 4). Institutions like universities are key strongholds for coloniality of knowledge due to their influence in

³⁸ It is worth noting that coloniality of gender is recognised by feminist scholars as a form of coloniality of power (Lugones, 2010, p. 746). I will address coloniality of gender separately, not to divorce it from discourse of power but rather to acknowledge the particular nuance necessary to engage the gender dynamics of coloniality.

determining what knowledge is or isn't valid, true, or valuable and due to their direct transplantation from Europe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 229). Coloniality of knowledge is thus essential to produce and preserve Eurocentric knowledge, knowledge systems and epistemologies that continue to perpetuate the varying forms of coloniality.

Coloniality of being refers to the notion of colonial difference briefly noted above, specifically zones of being and non-being. Ontology is central to this discourse. Coloniality of being denies particular groups ontological density for the purpose of unequal power dynamics (Marzagora, 2016, p. 163). Ontological density refers to the inherent value and dignity of an individual or group of human beings. Denial of ontological density is the process of dehumanization, determining particular individuals and groups as less valuable on the basis of being non-human (Quintero et. al, 2019, p. 7). The notion of race is particularly important to understanding coloniality of being. Race was designed to determine who, according to coloniality, is human and who is non-human (Seroto, 2018, pp. 5 – 6). Those who were and are not fitting of the white European archetype are determined as non-human and thus exploitable by coloniality of being, and coloniality generally. This establishing tool of coloniality endures through phenomena like globalization which still establishes some humans and ontologically inferior (Mignolo, 2021, p. 728) and the enduring racial issues that plague many societies. The “abyssal line” created by coloniality of being (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 337) and the creation of mythologies regarding identity (Nzimande, 2008, pp. 227 – 228) preserve the conditions in which coloniality of power and knowledge can function.

The notion of gender, similar to that of race, has been leveraged for the creation of zones of being and non-being by coloniality. María Lugones (2010, p. 745) coined the term coloniality of gender as an extension to the understandings already extant of coloniality of power and being. Through this term the particular place of gender constructs and patriarchy within colonial matrix of power are brought into the open to be interrogated (Lugones, 2010, p. 745). This form of coloniality seeks to reinforce the gender binary leaving people fixed in place, unable to exist outside of the universalising and essentialising logics underpinning the colonial matrix of power (Makama et. al., 2019, p. 65). This carries particular complexity when discussed tandem with racialization in the broader network of zones of being and non-being created by coloniality of being. White women often experienced, and still experience, genuine oppression because of their gender. However, they do not exist in the same zone of non-being that comes with racialization and being a black woman. The coloniality of gender thus cannot be explored outside of racialization as well. The negation of black men and women as non-

gendered non-human beings (Mohlabane & Tshoaedi, 2022, p. 44) highlights the varying and intersectional nature of coloniality of being as each facet feeds into one another creating layers of oppression for particular groups of people.

Linked to the notion coloniality of being and coloniality of gender is the coloniality of sexuality. Coloniality of sexuality requires distinct categorisation due to the reality of heteronormativity. Heteronormativity extends into both gender and sexuality construction as a colonial notion contending that what is ‘normal’ is to be a straight, cisgendered person. Those who do not fit into this categorization have regularly been systematically oppressed and othered (Bakshi, 2020, p. 536). This has particular manifestation in the South African context that is worth noting due to the particular society Apartheid sought to achieve. In the process of “civilizing” racial division was essential. However, just as essential was the maintenance of particular archetypes of sexual behaviour marked by modesty and restraint (Robertson, 2020, p. 316). To be Queer, in any way part of the LGBTQ+ community, was a disruption of the order that Apartheid sought to build (Robertson, 2020, p. 316). This legacy, one present also in Colonialism in various contexts but given particular voice in Apartheid, endures in present day South Africa in spite of South Africa’s notably inclusive constitutional ideals (Seely, 2020, p. 1230).³⁹ Thus to be Queer, a member of the LGBTQ+ community in any way, is to be cast into the zone of non-being and coloniality of sexuality is a critical form of coloniality to note.

While coloniality fundamentally and inescapably affects human beings, it is not only relevant to human beings. It affects the entirety of the complex ecologies that constitutes earth as a planet. Coloniality of nature expands conversation of coloniality to include all of life and reality on earth. Scholars who reference this form of coloniality depart from the recognition that both humans and non-humans are exploited through coloniality and colonisation (Ramantswana, 2015, p. 808). A core example of this is the Berlin conference. In 1884-85 this conference divided Africa amongst European nations (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 338). This partitioning of land was done with total disregard for indigenous inhabitants (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 338). Through this colonial use and exploitation of nature, coloniality of being is reinforced. Those denied ontological density are not part of the conversation. Similarly, coloniality of

³⁹ African culture and tradition are not void of homophobia or Queerphobia and often these will manifest in cultural forms (Robertson, 2017, pp. 125 – 126). Similar to the issue of patriarchy, fear and hatred towards the LGBTQ+ is informed both by coloniality and African cultural traditions and norms. Decoloniality seeks to subvert Queerphobia as a reality both in its cultural and imported forms.

power is utilised because ‘your’ land will be taken without ‘your’ permission by those with oppressive power.

The actions of the Berlin Conference had lasting harmful effects not only for humanity but for the ecology of Africa which has been exploited to this day for the gain of those on the top of the colonial matrix of power. It notably forms part also of how those in zones of being continue to control those in zones of non-being by denying them access to resources and land. This is particularly important to discourse on land expropriation in the South African context. Coloniality of nature has resulted in the dispossession of black African peoples’ land and the inability for them to get back what was taken.

It is clear from the above discourse that coloniality is a complex phenomenon linked both to historic and present injustice. Fundamentally intertwined with colonialism, eurocentrism, and modernity in all its forms, coloniality seeks to create a world based on zones of being and non-being where those deemed non-human are exploited for the benefit of those who are deemed human. It exists in individuals, groups, systems, structures, and institutions, seeking to propagate and maintain life grounded in colonial difference and exploitation. This exploitation extends into nature which is used and abused for capital again and for enduring control of those deemed non-human. Decolonial theory seeks to subvert coloniality as a phenomenon and ultimately establish a new status quo. This section similarly highlights, considering my definitions offered in chapter 1, the relevance of Decolonial theory to discourse on race and Whiteness. Decolonial thought highlights that Whiteness, shaped and formed by Eurocentrism and modernity, dictates the creation of norms, values, and privilege that is made tangible by coloniality for the explicit benefit of those considered white, those within racially demarcated zones of being, in a given context. This leads me to discuss Decolonial theory’s response to coloniality, and Whiteness, which is decolonisation and decoloniality.

3.2.2. Decolonisation and Decoloniality

As mentioned in the previous section, Decolonial theory recognises that there have already been formal processes of decolonisation across the world like in the case of the South African context. Decolonisation refers to processes of liberation that result in the end of imperial rule in a given context. South Africa is no longer under formal imperial rule nor is it governed formally by Apartheid. However, again as noted in the previous section, colonialism, and Apartheid both have enduring legacies in the South African context. The enduring conversation around decolonisation exists today due to dissatisfaction with how far decolonisation processes

have gone to this point (Matiluko, 2020, p. 549) and the enduring existence of coloniality. Decoloniality is thus the pursuit of a complete, holistic decolonization where the harmful, dehumanizing, disempowering and destructive enduring legacies of colonialism are completely eradicated.⁴⁰ Decoloniality can be further described as the intentional disruption and subversion of the colonial matrix of power. Notably, Decolonial theory seeks to describe, explore, improve, and implement decoloniality but decoloniality is not held captive in academia and academic process.

It is notable that Decolonial theory is not the only framework that seeks to subvert coloniality. There are other frameworks that challenge and aim to subvert coloniality that use similar, and at times entirely different, tools and processes to achieve this goal. Postcolonialism, rooted in the philosophy of poststructuralism, is a notable example of a framework that offers differing tools and approaches to engaging coloniality. Various scholars give varying interpretations of the relationship between Decolonial theory, postcolonialism and poststructuralism. It is worth exploring this briefly as it will help to highlight particular concepts necessary to understanding decoloniality. Chiefly, it is important to note that decoloniality, postcoloniality and poststructuralism are not the same. While these tools and their surrounding frameworks engage with similar subject matter at points, largely regarding coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 490), there is substantial nuance that distinguishes them from each other. These nuances are not arbitrary difference either. They are sufficient to make Decolonial theory and these two frameworks mutually exclusive along particular conceptual lines. There are also distinct criticisms that emerge from postcolonial and poststructuralist theorists that challenge the work and emphases of Decolonial theory and decoloniality.

Postcolonialism grounds itself in Western theoretical frameworks and ultimately branches from the philosophy of poststructuralism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, pp. 490 – 491). This means postcolonialism engages coloniality from the position of an insider since it engages from within Western logic and thought (Marzagora, 2016, p. 175). Postcolonialism seeks to subvert enduring legacies of colonialism using poststructuralist logics which have been critical of the problematic logics and practices of modernity (Kalua, 2019, p. 51). Poststructuralism is a longstanding philosophical school of thought birthed in resistance to the hegemony of Western thought in metaphysical discourse. It forms part of the intellectual shift that birthed postmodernism. Postmodernism can be described as a complex, near impossible to define

⁴⁰ In the South African context this extends to the eradication of all harmful Apartheid legacies as well.

phenomenon that subverts the universality of modernity and emphasizes human individuality and subjectivity (Salhi, 2020, p. 1). Postcolonial scholarship offers a Western response to problematic Western logics and offers Western ways of thinking and being in resistance thereto. It is also notable that some within postcolonial scholarship have argued that Decolonial theory lacks the rigorous theoretical underpinning that postcolonialism has and is a hollow offshoot thereof (Kalua, 2019, p. 49). The newness of Decolonial theory, and the perception that decoloniality seeks to ‘recreate the wheel’ already formed in postcolonialism, are chief concerns of such postcolonial theorists.

Decolonial theorists reject the criticisms of such postcolonial theorists outright. Decolonial theorists argue that Decoloniality is not new and has existed since the very origin of coloniality (Mignolo, 2011, p. 46) within the complex networks of resistance that have come into being in resistance to colonialism in previously colonised contexts. Decolonial theory further asserts that postcolonial theory has sizeable problems meaningfully addressing coloniality because of its poststructuralist and western epistemological origins. Postcolonialism critiques coloniality from within Western logics making it more susceptible to reproduction and propagation of the coloniality that it seeks to engage and subvert. For example, postcolonialism notably focusses largely on linguistics, narratives and developing a universal and cosmopolitan human experience (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 491). Decolonial theory is critical of how this is a use of the “master’s tools” to deconstruct the “master’s house” (Lorde as referenced by Matiluko, 2020, p. 547), retaining Western ideas and constructs such as universality, which are part of the problem coloniality, to try and subvert or challenge it.⁴¹

Postcolonial theory ultimately reinscribes coloniality, as it is described by Decolonial theory, due to its theoretical grounding and methods of engaging coloniality. Decolonial theory takes a different approach to subverting coloniality grounded in varying epistemologies and directly addressing power imbalance in post-colonial contexts.⁴² This grounds Decolonial theory’s

⁴¹ Similar criticisms might be made of Decolonial theory. For example, through engaging in academia Decolonial theory uses the “master’s tools” for coloniality of knowledge to challenge the very same thing. As such, outright disregard of postcolonial theory and its contributions is not totally coherent based only on this logic. The complexity of the relationship between these two frameworks requires nuanced analysis and is ultimately beyond the scope of this dissertation.

⁴² It is worth re-emphasizing that post-colonial refers to the present era where formal colonialism is no longer extant and some processes of decolonization have taken place. This is the case unless clearly specified for an alternate use within the body of any particular argument in this dissertation.

epistemic locus outside of the colonial matrix of power and European logics (Marzagora, 2016, p. 175). This is an active choice that is necessary to prevent Decolonial theory becoming a reinscriber of coloniality itself.⁴³ Adopting this epistemic locus forms part of a process in which one actively disconnects from embedded Western hegemonic logics and grounds in epistemologies overlooked or silenced by coloniality (Ramantswana, 2017b, p. 6). This includes epistemologies historically unrecognised by academic spaces. Decolonial theory moves to the sources of new, and old, knowledge which are in the “border spaces” (Pacheco, 2017, p. 60) where non-humanity has been constructed. Through grounding in the zones of non-being, “border epistemologies” (Mignolo as referenced by Tonelli, 2020, p. 195) become the grounding for Decolonial praxis and theory.

A critical tool used within Decoloniality to establish itself outside of Western hegemonic thought are the related concepts of epistemic delinking and relinking.⁴⁴ This twofold process first involves delinking or disconnecting oneself from the colonial matrix of power and the complex network of knowledge that underpins it (Ramantswana, 2016a, p. 189). Epistemic delinking is grounded in the concept of epistemic disobedience which is to refuse to accept the ways of thinking and knowledge production that ultimately generate coloniality in its various forms (Ramantswana, 2016b, p. 419). Epistemic delinking is a process of re-orientation, approaching how knowledge and society’s underpinning logics are produced from an angle other than what is presently hegemonic (West, 2021, p. 548). Decoloniality thus requires the active pursuit of disconnecting from epistemologies that produce, reproduce or reinforce coloniality. Epistemic delinking is a task that requires practical engagement and must transcend beyond only theoretical engagement. It is also a process not bound to academic engagement. It is an act of resistance observed and enacted in society beyond academia as well as within it.⁴⁵

⁴³ The university is a problematic site for discussing coloniality, a reality that Decolonial theory has to also confront. Several active decisions need to be made by frameworks like Decolonial theory in the academic space to prevent co-opting of liberating narratives by the presently existing status quo. See Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2018) *Rhodes Must Fall*.

⁴⁴ It is also at times referred to as decolonial delinking and relinking as it was first coined by Anibal Quijano (Mignolo, 2011, p. 45).

⁴⁵ It is worth briefly noting the praxis of this within this dissertation as a contribution within Decolonial theory. I have sought to avoid this pitfall throughout this project by being distinct in my social location, critical of my potential pitfalls and taking active decisions to avoid only ‘lip service’. These decisions include intentionally listening to the voices of race-critical black men and women who have written on these issues, as well as relying on theoretical frameworks that listen to the voices of the oppressed such as SABB and Queer Theory. I have

Epistemic delinking is, however, only part of the twofold process. Epistemic delinking in Decolonial theory must be followed by epistemic relinking. Epistemic relinking is the active choosing of a new epistemic locale, pursuing the development of knowledge and logics from this new locale and using indigenous logics to subvert coloniality (Ramantswana, 2016a, p. 189). The epistemologies utilised in this process are not dictated by Decolonial theory. Rather there is an established umbrella of general characteristics within which various epistemologies can be considered. Generally, the approach of epistemic relinking is to use local epistemologies developed in resistance to coloniality by those affected by coloniality and colonisation. Diverse positions are invited openly in epistemic relinking as part of the process of resisting the oppressive nature of universal descriptions and meanings (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 489). The Decolonial option is thus one where epistemic relinking to resist coloniality builds a pluriversal response (Sakupapa, 2018, p. 418) which will then inevitably destabilise the hegemony of coloniality. Decolonial theorists seek to bolster this by also engaging between contexts affected by colonialism and coloniality. By engaging in “south-to-south dialogue” academic work builds a broader theoretical base for further engagement with coloniality from the underside of the colonial matrix of power (Maldonado-Torres referenced by Mashau, 2018, p. 2). Decolonial theory uses this to establish itself as a tangibly pluriversal frame that uses whatever tools are useful and compatible for subverting coloniality.⁴⁶

It is worth discussing further the point made above about epistemologies in epistemic delinking and relinking not inherently being academic phenomena. Coloniality of knowledge and indigenous knowledge are not realities held captive by academia nor are they only found therein. Similarly, the process of subversion should not be considered solely an academic task.

constructed my discourse based largely on these voices and used social location beyond just a denoting factor to recognising how it tangibly affects what I write and think about. I will explore the importance of this for white scholars in decolonial spaces later in this chapter.

⁴⁶ This willingness to utilise whatever tools necessary raises important concerns regarding what tools can or should be used within decolonial praxis. Academia is a clear example of using the “master’s tools”, tools of coloniality, to challenge and subvert coloniality as I mentioned in a previous footnote. The reality of local resources being affected by coloniality, how local resources are interfaced with because of coloniality and the likely impossibility of having total fissure with coloniality within local resources are notable concerns. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to argue what epistemologies should and should not be included in light of these complexities, but I will depart from the stance that the “master’s tools” can be co-opted for subversion of coloniality as is evidenced by Decolonial scholarship. I also depart from the position that indigenous resources can be meaningfully disruptive and be used to subvert coloniality and Whiteness.

Shifting epistemic locus to draw from indigenous knowledge that has often been silenced includes how academia has silenced varying kinds of knowledge that is not considered “good enough” for academia as well as how “informal” silencing of epistemologies has occurred in phenomena such as dominating Western narratives about norms, values, culture and the like (Pacheco, 2017, pp. 61 – 62). Epistemological delinking and relinking, whilst being an obvious academic framing, is a tool for all people, not just academics, to subvert coloniality. By reformulating knowledge and the way knowledge is produced it is possible to shift and subvert the various intersecting realities constituting the colonial matrix of power. These various realities are all grounded in particular knowledge, logics, that created and continue to create a world of inequality (Nkenkana, 2015, p. 46). Decoloniality is thus theorised by academics, but it is in its nature a grassroot movement intended for practical transformation of reality and how reality is understood in previously colonised spaces.

Decolonial theory and decoloniality are not received uncritically by contexts facing coloniality. Both have been interrogated and questioned by fields other than postcolonial theory that are also non-Western, particularly in Africa. African scholarship has asked questions about whether Decolonial theory is simply going to reinscribe hegemony from a place other than the West in Africa. This is suggested noting that Decolonial theory as a field originates from Latin America (Harding, 2017, p. 624). Decolonial theory also supports south-to-south dialogue for the development of deeper theoretical roots and conversation. This raises the concern that there could be a reinscribing of a new hegemony from the Global South as Latin America ‘dictates’ how coloniality should be addressed in Africa and other southern contexts. Though Decolonial theory engages with local epistemologies, these local frameworks are engaged and presented within a Latin-American framework when presented via Decolonial theory.

This concern of a potential Latin American hegemony has been addressed within African decolonial scholarship. Through deep rooted reliance on African ways of thinking and being that seek to recover what is indigenous to Africa, Africa’s voice is maintained according to African Decolonial theorists (see Ndlovu Gatsheni 2013, 2015).⁴⁷ Decoloniality also pursues a democratisation of knowledge by allowing local experiences equal weight within discourse (Marzagora, 2016, p. 175). Decolonial theory thus does not fall into the trap of essentialising the experience of coloniality. Similarly, it does not essentialise how coloniality can be

⁴⁷ Though this is not explicitly addressed by Ndlovu-Gatsheni, his arguments for a decolonial framework as the best option for the future of Africa highlight this position implicit within his work.

challenged or subverted. It opens room for dialogue between those affected by coloniality to build robust response, learn from each other and still retain their indigenous identity in the process.

The preservation of experiences in Decolonial theory is due to the importance of subjectivity to decoloniality. The local experience of particular groups of human beings, how they construct their view of the world, their epistemologies, ontologies and so on are of extreme importance. Social location thus acts as a pivotal reality in decolonial theorising. Social location was referenced in chapter two of this dissertation. I continue discussing it here due to its particular relevance to, and conceptualisation in, Decolonial theory. Decolonial theory argues that coloniality is not engaged in a vacuum. Recognition of one's positionality within the colonial matrix of power, how one has benefitted or been harmed by coloniality, is important (Ramantswana, 2016a, pp. 179 – 180). This has particular implications for those who have benefitted from coloniality as they engage in decolonial work. Decoloniality recognises that knowledge is embodied and thus never innocent (Icaza, 2017, p. 40). According to Decolonial theory, being able to articulate that one benefits from coloniality in its varying forms creates the foundation for moving away from entrapment in hegemony towards thinking and being from the underside of modernity. This becomes possible through bringing one's own logics into conversation with, and ultimately submitting to, logics from the underside of the colonial matrix of power.

Before I conclude this section, it is valuable to again note my social location considering the discussion to this point. Social location allows me as a particular middle class white male scholar to recognise that I engage from a position of power and privilege granted to me by coloniality.⁴⁸ This does not mean that I cannot then engage with coloniality as a phenomenon. Decolonial theory does not require that human beings are immutably stuck in place by coloniality. It does require, however, vulnerability and recognition of my positionality beyond simply naming it. Ramantswana (2017a, pp. 76 – 77) highlights that the possibility of engaging coloniality becomes real for the privileged only from this place of vulnerability. Similarly, Maluleke and Nadar (2004, p. 16) highlight within agency discourse how white male academics

⁴⁸ It is worth noting that I do not essentialise this positionality to all white male scholars. This is my particular social location based on my positionality in South African society. It is also important to note that the privilege and power granted to me by coloniality can be repurposed for constructive engagement and subversion of coloniality, thus I am not essentially defined by coloniality as an individual. Concepts underpinning this nuance will be further explored in chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

can and have used their engagement with frameworks that “benefit” the oppressed to avoid reparative action. I, as a white male scholar seeking to participate in decolonial discourse, need to take seriously these remarks and ensure that they form part of my discourse, and my life, in more than just ‘lip service’. I have done this so far by ensuring I submit to mainly black scholars of varying gender identities and sexual orientations and by listening to theoretical frameworks grounded in the experiences of those most othered by coloniality.

The above discourse on decoloniality continues to show the value of decoloniality as a tool for subverting coloniality, and Whiteness which is interwoven therein. The above discourse also highlights that, through meaningful engagement with the subjective, various indigenous epistemologies and various experiences of coloniality, Decolonial theory as it has been described so far is pluriversal and extends into various fields of academic enquiry. This is unsurprising because Decolonial theory was also birthed from various fields of academic enquiry, and because decoloniality as a phenomenon is not the creation of any given academic context. Liberation theology is a notable theoretical field from which Decolonial theory has drawn concepts and insights (Harding, 2017, p. 624). Decolonial theory and theology have a long, interwoven conceptual history. This interwoven discourse continues into the present in various forms in the theological space. I will now address Decolonial theology and the Fourth phase of SABB as a particular manifestation of this framework in theology.

3.3. Decolonial Theology and SABB's Fourth Phase

One of the most powerful weapons of modernity and coloniality historically has been the Christian faith. Christian theology and praxis have acted as vessels for producing coloniality and inscribing colonial difference since their arrival in previously colonized contexts. Christian theology in academia has, since the 1960s, wrestled with its relationship with oppressive forces through various Liberation theologies. Christian theology has asked critical questions regarding how it can be a meaningful force for rectifying the wrongs it has been part of constructing and maintaining in religious spaces and society generally. Through this kind of questioning, and through critical historical shifts in theological process and method, Decolonial theory has in various overt and non-overt ways formed part of Christian liberation theological discourses. Some key elements of Liberation theologies that are characteristic of decoloniality include the following. Liberation theologies embody decoloniality through more-than-preferential option for the poor and participation in discourse and praxis from the underside of colonial oppression (through discourses such as Black Consciousness) (Vellem, 2017, p. 8).

Liberation theologies shift from universality to pluriversality of beliefs (Urbaniak, 2019, p. 6), foregrounding local, indigenous, contextual knowledge in discourse (Sakupapa, 2018, p. 419). Liberation theologies often notably embody the pursuit of a non-Western new global order where identity and reality are not dictated by hegemonic ideologies (Tonelli, 2020, p. 183). This strong tradition-history suggests that a formal Decolonial theology field is a continuation of decoloniality already present in some Christian theological traditions like Liberation theologies.

While decoloniality has been present in various Liberation theologies, Decolonial theologies are carving out a unique space in Christian theological discourses. This is due to Decolonial theologies seeking to participate in the ongoing global pursuit of holistic decolonization that completes historic processes of liberation. In South Africa the Fallist Movements (#FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall and so on) played a critical role in shifting South African and African discourse generally to take decoloniality more seriously (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, pp. 221 – 222; Settler, 2019, pp. 1 – 2).⁴⁹ This shift in society and academia unsurprisingly included deeper emphasis on decoloniality in theological discourse. Decolonial theorising has taken an overt role in Christian theology in Africa, being argued as the future of African theological discourse (Sakupapa, 2018, p. 2018). African theological scholarship recognises the need to deal with the church and Christianity as sites of coloniality's production and reinforcement with a particular focus on decoloniality as a tool for subverting coloniality.⁵⁰ This recognition has taken a variety of forms in African theologies including naming African theology as inherently decolonial (Sakupapa, 2018, p. 406) and the development of various Decolonial theologies in and for Africa. The emphasis on decoloniality in contemporary theology arises in a contested space. African theology does not have a universal definition (Sakupapa, 2018, p. 407). As such, Decolonial theologies form part of the complex matrix of discourse surrounding what a truly African theology is and should be.

There is a vast network of relationships between African theologies, Decolonial theory, and Decolonial theologies. Due to the size of African theology as a field, I will focus specifically on the contribution of South African theological scholarship. South African theologies have

⁴⁹ Settler (2019, pp. 1 – 2) further highlights, referencing Bourdieu and Fanon, that these movements birthed in response to enduring “symbolic violence”, created by colonialism and Apartheid, still experienced by black students in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context.

⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that scholars similarly highlight the subversion of Whiteness in discourse on subverting coloniality (see Ramantswana, 2016a and Urbaniak, 2019).

drawn, as is common for Decolonial academic fields, from other nations and regions in the Global South who suffer under coloniality (see Ramantswana, 2017b).⁵¹ Through the creation of dialogue, greater clarity on the role of Christianity and various theologies in the creation and enforcement of coloniality has been established. It is argued within Decolonial theologies in the Latin Americas that Christianity supported colonisers both wittingly and unwittingly (Tonelli, 2020, p. 182). This is unsurprisingly the case within the South African context.

Nuancing Christianity's support to colonisers as both witting and unwitting is not stated to give the guise of innocence to Christianity. Rather, in noting active and passive participation it is possible to explore where coloniality, at times, co-opted Christianity to establish itself. In South Africa Christianity, through its doctrinal emphases during the processes of colonialism, modernity, and Apartheid, acted as a vessel to establish colonial difference and build distinct zones of being and non-being. This resulted in Apartheid, modernity, and colonialism receiving distinct attention in South African theological scholarship not only as institutions but as theologically supported institutions (Loubser, 1996, p. 321). Chapter 2 of this dissertation thus acts as an example of South African theological contribution to Decolonial theory and theologies. SABB, as an African theology, has offered Decolonial theoretical and theological insights based on South Africa's experiences of Apartheid, colonialism, Whiteness and coloniality.⁵²

South African theologies, including SABB, have also contributed to Decolonial theory and theologies through their turn to draw knowledge from the underside of the colonial matrix of power. The return to local indigenous knowledge, knowledge systems, faith, faith systems, political systems, and cultures is a prominent characteristic of South African theologies. This shift tends to rely heavily on precolonial indigenous history and experiences of indigenous black Africans. This is not done to romanticize the precolonial era but rather to explore the rich resources it offers to discourse on the future of theology (West, 2021, p. 548). In South African theologies the turn to indigenous knowledge, epistemologies, ways of being, and structuring life embodies the 'Decolonial Turn' and offers a distinct contribution to Decolonial theory and

⁵¹ Ramantswana does not explicitly note this, but he regularly draws on Latin American scholarship to assist in his conceptualising of decolonial sociological and theological ideas.

⁵² SABB also notably offers insight in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context in its fourth phase. This will be discussed in more detail in this section and the final section of this chapter.

theologies. Notably, shifts discussed in chapter 2 for various African theologies, including SABT, to draw from AICs and ATRs as critical dialogue partners embodies decoloniality.

In recent South African theologising there have been distinct shifts to develop explicitly South African Decolonial theologies. This is notably the case for SABT, the meta-theoretical framework of this dissertation, and its presently emergent fourth phase. As a descriptor, the phrase “SABT’s fourth phase” was developed from the work of Biblical Studies scholar Gerald West. In his book *The Stolen Bible*, West (2016, pp. 345 – 346) describes this turn in current post-colonial, post-Apartheid SABT scholarship. He goes further to unpack this fourth phase in his recent article *A Decolonial (Re)Turn to Class in South African Biblical Scholarship* (West, 2021). While it is not the common terminology necessarily used to describe the shift to decoloniality in SABT, the shift itself is visible and has various scholars engaging directly therein. The late Vuyani Vellem shaped and spoke into this decolonial transition in his later work. Notably he argued for utilising the “strong thought” of Black theology of Liberation (BTL) in resistance to the “weak thought” of the West, participating in the process of “decentralising Western canon” in theology (Vellem, 2017, p. 3).⁵³ Lerato Kobe offers a drawing together of decolonial reflection and Black Theology of Liberation in South Africa through reflecting on the experiences of black university students. She frames BTL as a voice that has been silenced by Western hegemony (Kobe, 2018, p. 298). She argues, utilising decolonial logic, that BTL is an example of indigenous knowledge to be used to subvert Western hegemony (Kobe, 2018, p. 298), what is described in this dissertation as coloniality. These two scholars highlight this phase of thinking in South African Black theological scholarship is strongly linked to Decolonial theory and theologies.

There are further key voices that can be noted who have contributed to the development of SABT’s fourth phase. Two such voices were introduced in chapter 2 of this dissertation: Hulisani Ramantswana and Makhosazana Nzimande. Within the field of Biblical Studies, these two authors have made important contributions towards developing South African Black Decolonial theology. Nzimande (2008, p. 224) utilizes a complex web of theoretical frameworks that contain decoloniality in conversation with indigenous knowledge and experiences of being a black woman in South Africa to build decolonial lenses for engaging

⁵³ Certain scholars such as Vellem refer to Black Theology of Liberation as opposed to SABT in their writings. I will treat these two as the same reality based on Vellem’s justification for the use of this terminology. He argues that BTL inhabits the same categories as I have described for SABT in this dissertation (see Vellem, 2012).

the Bible. She does so as part of the critical work of decolonising identity through building new, liberating knowledge of the self (Nzimande, 2008, pp. 227 – 228). Similarly, Ramantswana (2017b, pp. 1 – 2) has called for “remembrance” in the development of inculturated “African eyes” for reading life and Scripture in a way not controlled by Western white hegemony. Both scholars highlight the importance of an intersectional, inculturated, embodied method of SABT’s fourth phase and South African decolonial theologies generally.

Nzimande and Ramantswana offer many notable characteristics of SABT’s fourth phase. Ramantswana (2017a, p. 76) argues that Decolonial theology is inherently about restoration. This is not to suggest that Decolonial theologising is a revival of Western/colonial/coloniality/Whiteness structures to some restored greater standard. Rather it is a “resurrection” of those crushed by the oppressive weight of coloniality, granting new life to those on the margins (Ramantswana, 2017a, p. 76). This is especially notable because SABT does not exist to create knowledge for its own sake. Both SABT, as discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation, and Decolonial theory, as expressed earlier in this chapter, exist for liberation and justice to be actualised for the oppressed. This resurrection is complexly theorised in SABT’s fourth phase, embracing the nuance of oppression as a phenomenon to ensure holistic liberation and accurate analysis of the South African context. Nzimande (2008, p. 226) references Mosala’s critique for building a new, restored reality noting that even historic indigenous sources must be engaged critically to reveal their own toxic hegemony. This is framed in the logic that without change in indigenous black African consciousness, there will be enduring issues even when coloniality is undone (Masolo as referenced by Nzimande, 2008, p. 228). SABT’s emergent fourth phase thus recognises the role of multi-layered oppression as is common to Decolonial theory and other Decolonial theologies.

The fourth Phase of SABT is a presently emerging phase that is still taking shape, drawing on various Decolonial theorists and theologies in order to engage and subvert racism, Whiteness, and coloniality. SABT does this from a strong, multi-phased, complex theoretical tradition and a non-Western epistemic locus which facilitates pluriversal conversation. As discussed in chapter 2, through its varying phases SABT has existed as an epistemological alternative to dominating theological discourse from Western and white epistemic loci. The emergent fourth phase embodies many of the characteristics of SABT’s historic framing as well as the characteristics of contemporary Decolonial theorising and theologising. As a contribution to this emergent phase, it is useful to offer an outline of the characteristics of the fourth phase of SABT based on fourth phase characteristics of SABT that are already articulated by scholars

in this phase and other decolonial characteristics noted in this chapter that are relevant and coherent within an SABT frame. I now move to offer my suggested outline of characteristics for this phase of SABT based on Per Frostin's five key characteristics of Liberation theologies.

3.4. Per Frostin's Five Key Characteristics of Liberation Theology and SABT's Fourth Phase

Per Frostin's five key characteristics of Liberation theologies offer a helpful, concise reading of theological characteristics that will allow for further complex engagement of SABT's fourth phase later in this dissertation. It is worth noting again that Frostin has been engaged by several modern South African Black theologians as a meaningful interlocutor for SABT and other Liberation theologies. This includes scholars like Tinyiko Maluleke (see Frostin, 2021, pp. xvii – xx) and the late Vuyani Vellem (see Vellem, 2017). Frostin locates his work within the broad tapestry of Liberation theologies in the 'third world', making his framework coherent and incisive for analysis of Decolonial characteristics within SABT's fourth phase. Frostin's five key characteristics are: the choice of interlocutor, the perception of God, analysis of conflicts, social and theological analysis, and the relationship between theory and praxis (Frostin, 2021, pp. 6 – 9). I discuss each of these characteristics, seeking to draw through in each of my discussions relevant decolonial and SABT concepts. As mentioned at the end of the last section, the concepts underpinning these characteristics will be drawn from what has already been discussed in this chapter and in chapter 2.

In the fourth phase of SABT the choice of interlocutor, Frostin's first characteristic, are those 'damned' by coloniality, Whiteness, and systemic white racism.⁵⁴ Damned references those who are relegated to the zone of non-being, as framed by Whiteness, on the underside of the colonial matrix of power and are thus othered socially, economically, politically, culturally, epistemologically, and ontologically. The fourth phase of SABT takes particular cognisance of the intersectional, multi-layered nature of oppression. As such it makes particular effort to listen to those most othered by the colonial matrix of power. This includes noticing how race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality intersect to construct the identity of interlocutors. SABT in this phase is notably local and thus ensures interlocutors are those who have lived experience on the underside of coloniality of a given context. While this phase may borrow experiences from other contexts of oppression, these are used to enhance understanding of these

⁵⁴ More accurately, SABT in this phase engages many interlocutors not a single interlocutor. This is due to its pluriversal impetus. The terminology of the 'damned' by coloniality is used by Ramantswana (2017b, p. 7).

interlocutors in the South African context. Interlocutors in this phase are those who have experienced suffering under historic oppression (such as that under Apartheid when it was still extant) and present coloniality. This is done mindful that there are people who would be considered damned historically who now are on top of the colonial matrix of power and propagating coloniality at the expense of those at the bottom.⁵⁵

The perception of God, Frostin's second characteristic, in this phase of SABT is characterised by pluriversality. Indigenous knowledge about God is given precedent and white Western notions of God are critically engaged for their reinforcement of coloniality and racialisation. This critical engagement does not inherently suggest there is no overlap between Western and African perceptions of God. However, it is noted in this phase in tandem with its Decolonial emphasis that no knowledge is innocent. As such, Western notions of God are treated with suspicion and interrogated for where they seek to reinforce coloniality and Whiteness. South African indigenous notions of God are also given precedence due to the enduring silencing of such indigenous notions by white Western Christian perceptions of God. Western Christian perceptions of God have often notably been whitewashed, resembling white identity, culture and coloniality, which this phase of SABT seeks to challenge and subvert by offering alternate indigenous perceptions of God. These pictures are pluriversal but retain the core identity of preferential option for the damned. God is perceived as on the side of the damned and actively working to subvert coloniality with the damned.⁵⁶

Analysis of conflicts, Frostin's third characteristic, in the fourth phase of SABT revolves around interrogating colonial difference and the violences of coloniality. Conflicts are viewed as emanating from the creation of colonial difference which is framed by Whiteness. The creation of zones of being and non-being is inherently violent and creates distinct groups with conflicting interests, desires and needs. Notable zones of non-being include being othered on racial lines (in other words being considered black within a white system), gender lines, class,

⁵⁵ This addresses the reality of the rise of the black elites in the South African context. I include this not to avoid white responsibility and the overwhelming existence of white elitism in South Africa still in the present day. However, it adds further nuance to the conversation recognising that not all black voices should be given the same weight in discourse of decoloniality as discussed above in this chapter.

⁵⁶ Jesus Christ is noted under this characteristic in phases 2 and 3. He is omitted here because he does not regularly feature in the discourse of this phase. This does not mean that Christology and soteriology are no longer valuable to SABT discourse. However, there is more work to be done to explore the value of these fields to SABT's fourth phase that is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

and culture lines. Importantly, coloniality creates power relations that are greatly imbalanced which then birth conflicts. This phase acknowledges that resolving conflicts requires addressing their root cause. As such, conflicts are analysed for where coloniality is present and how it can be subverted. This includes categorising coloniality in its varying forms (coloniality of power, gender, knowledge and so on) so that it can be subverted in various contexts with greater nuance. As noted in the previous characteristic, no knowledge is treated as innocent. Subjectivity is an important component of the analysis of conflicts. As such, recognising that coloniality does not exist in a vacuum and it inherently affects the humanity and dignity of those it is imposed upon, and those who impose it, is notable.

Social and theological analysis is intertwined in SABT's fourth phase. This is common across SABT's history as it is notably a framework interested in liberation from racism throughout South African society and not just in religious spaces. This phase embodies Decolonial theory's intersectional nature and will utilise whatever tools are useful for subverting coloniality in all its forms. Notable fields of study that tools are drawn from include Liberation theologies, Feminist theory, Queer theory, Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, Black Consciousness, Marxist analysis, African theologies and the like. These frameworks offer tools for engagement such as meaningful ways to epistemically delink and relink, how to highlight noticeable patterns of enduring colonial and racial domination and how to create more nuanced insight into the relationship between various intersecting layers of oppressive structures and systems.⁵⁷ This phase is notably cautious of using Western theoretical frameworks and concepts due to their potential to reinforce coloniality, Whiteness, and systemic white racism. As such even critiques from helpful Marxist frameworks, which have been historically helpful in SABT for critical analysis of class, are treated with suspicion as potential carriers of coloniality.⁵⁸

Theological analysis in this phase emulates the intersectional analysis common to Decolonial theory. Notable fields producing critical tools for this phase's theological analysis include South African Decolonial Biblical studies and African Feminist and Queer theologies. These are particularly notable for several reasons. South African Decolonial Biblical Studies in this

⁵⁷ The intersections between all these fields are still presently being explored, such as the relationship between Decolonial theory and Critical Whiteness Studies which will be discussed in the following chapters of this dissertation.

⁵⁸ This suspicion does not rule out the use of these tools or frameworks. It rather ensures that they are not used uncritically.

phase addresses the Bible, an important collection of books to the Christian faith, and its role in reinforcing coloniality. South African Decolonial Biblical Studies has also offered helpful hermeneutical tools for noticing and subverting systemic white racism and coloniality which can be translated across theological fields for ‘reading reality’. African Feminist and Queer theologies ensure that Decolonial studies are not dominated by heteronormative white male voices as the varying layers of oppression are explored therein. Finally, theological analysis in this phase seeks out how to make abundance of life accessible most meaningfully to those damned by coloniality in South African society. This is ultimately for total transformation of the status quo and society generally, hence the strong overlap between social and theological analysis in this phase.

Frostin’s fifth characteristic is the relationship between theory and praxis. Praxis is granted greater importance than theory as is the case historically for SABB. This is grounded in the reality that Decolonial theory and theologies, and SABB, are not the property of theorists. Decoloniality is embodied in the resistance of people oppressed by coloniality, Whiteness, and systemic white racism. Theory adds value and reflection to this praxis but is not primary. Theorising is not done to valorise the experience of the oppressed or to absolve those benefitting from coloniality from substantive change. Rather it seeks to displace power and control within knowledge, currently remaining in the hands of the elite, for the active pursuit of meaningful liberation for people at the grassroots in South African society. This is done not only through challenging coloniality, Whiteness, and systemic white racism but continuing to build the humanity, dignity, and capacity of those oppressed by them. This phase of SABB is notably more concerned with transformation of South African society and the way all South Africans live and think than it is with theoretical and abstract engagement. Similarly, the engagement offered in this chapter is required to translate tangibly into my academic work as a scholar.

The crucial practical application of this praxis, in closing for this chapter, is for me to again engage my social location. The complex interlacing network of subjectivity and intermingling subjectivities is essential to this phase of SABB. Meaningful work with social location makes it possible for those who have benefitted from coloniality to shift from engaging from above to engaging from below the colonial matrix of power. This is not achieved by simply noting one’s social location, but rather embodying a clear epistemic delink from coloniality and relink to the underside of the colonial matrix of power. Also essential to this process is a hermeneutical posture of humility. For scholars such as myself who engage as those who have benefitted from

coloniality, it is important to adopt a posture of humility which informs how we read and engage texts, people, and reality. It also entails adopting particular theoretical positions such as submitting to black-led race-critical theory and actively engaging with queer and female voices in the theological space. I have sought to carry this out throughout this chapter.

3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the second theoretical framework of this dissertation Decolonial theory after having briefly introduced it in chapter 2 of this dissertation. I first discussed critical concepts to Decolonial theory generally before moving to discuss Decolonial theory in theology. I then addressed Decolonial theology/ies' relationship to South African Black Theology. I followed this discussion by offering my outline of SABB's fourth phase based on Frostin's five key characteristics of Liberation theologies. Having discussed the first two frameworks of this dissertation, I now explore the third framework of this dissertation South African Whiteness Studies.

Chapter 4: Whiteness in the South African Context

4.1. Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation introduced the first two frameworks of this study South African Black Theology and Decolonial theory respectively. In this chapter I explore the third theoretical framework of this study South African Whiteness Studies.⁵⁹ I begin this discussion through clarifying key conceptual terms to discourse on Whiteness in South Africa. I then offer discussion on key theoretical frameworks that inform the birthing and development of South African Whiteness Studies. These frameworks are Black Consciousness, Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies. I follow this by discussing South African Whiteness Studies particularly and exploring concepts and tools it contributes to discourse on Whiteness. I conclude this chapter by briefly discussing some critical contributions to discourse on Whiteness in South African theological reflection.

4.1.1. Introducing Race, Whiteness and Blackness

Race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness are contested terms.⁶⁰ What each term means and how each is understood in various discursive contexts is the subject of rigorous debate. The complexity of this discursive context necessitates a brief introductory section to clarify and further nuance what is meant by each of these terms in this chapter and dissertation. I will begin my discussion of these terms with race, arguing within theoretical frameworks that conceptualise race as the core phenomenon from which Whiteness and Blackness as phenomena emanate. These frameworks include Black Consciousness, Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, and South African Whiteness Studies.⁶¹ Each of these frameworks will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter and will clarify the definitions that I explore in this section. Race in the post-Apartheid South African context is most commonly understood, by the average person, as a term that refers to human categorization based on skin

⁵⁹ The choice of interrogating Whiteness in the fourth chapter of this dissertation is done in tandem with my commitment to submitting my Whiteness, and interrogation thereof, to black-led theory. Whiteness is thus framed in this chapter, and dissertation, by black-led theory in South African Black Theology, Decolonial theory, and the various frameworks that constitute this chapter.

⁶⁰ Though this chapter is chiefly focussed on Whiteness, it is argued throughout this chapter and dissertation that Whiteness cannot be interrogated or explored in isolation from race, racism, and Blackness.

⁶¹ See (Kritzinger, 2007, pp. 2 – 3), (Erasmus, 2010, pp. 247 – 248) and (Milazzo, 2017, p. 557) respectively as examples of these frameworks departing from this position.

colour. This chapter will explore how race carries deeper intellectual, psychological, social, economic, and ontological baggage than just being categories for grouping.⁶²

The complexity of race, racism, Whiteness, and Blackness as terms is grounded in the history of race as a phenomenon, which takes particular shape in the South African context. Race was a term foreign to South Africa until the arrival of Western colonisers. No such broad categorisation existed in pre-colonial South African indigenous groups who acted as “the source of their own identity” (Abdi as quoted by Gartushka, 2019, p. 40). Race was thus established through colonisation as a categorisation system that, through time, became part of subjective reality for indigenous Africans and colonisers alike. Race being a critical element of social imagination was a slowly achieved reality through the regular reinforcement of various mythological constructs. These mythological constructs, made bureaucratic and legislated clearly by Apartheid, eventually became largely unquestioned norms of the South African context. This chapter is not focussed on how race, Whiteness, and Blackness manifested and were engaged during Apartheid and colonialism. However, these historic realities are important because it is from them that contemporary racial construction and identity emanate as legacies. Whatever form race takes now is not extricable from historic racial distinctions and categorisation. Similarly, Whiteness and Blackness in South Africa, while they may be more complex or different in shape and tone today, exist as continuations of their construction in colonial and Apartheid history.

This historic legacy in the South African context re-emphasizes that race is a phenomenon which references not only skin pigmentation but also hidden agendas and underlying factors (Erasmus, 2010, p. 247) that are more insidious and problematic. Notably, race notably cannot be separated from discourse on racism. Many scholarly fields have engaged around the relationship between race and racism, whether one precedes the other and whether the two can exist separately from each other (Heschel, 2015, p. 3). In this chapter I adopt the position that race constructs and is constructed by racism (Biko, 1987, p. 23). Race and racism are thus inextricable and constantly shape and reconfigure one another. Racism, discrimination against an individual or group based on their race, in the South African context is white racism. It was imported by white people, constructed by white people, and designed to benefit those

⁶² This has already been highlighted comprehensively in chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation and this chapter will continue to contribute to this framing of race as a phenomenon.

considered white within this construction (Biko, 1987, pp. 24 – 25).⁶³ This characteristic of racism highlights the necessity of clear conceptualising of Whiteness within this discursive context.

Whiteness must be thoroughly conceptualised to understand race and racism in the South African context. Whiteness refers to the phenomenon of privilege, high-status, economic benefit, social inclusion, and comfort for those considered white within racialised systems (Steyn, 2005, p. 121; West & Schmidt, 2010, p. 10). Whiteness is a phenomenon that is both global and contextual, manifesting in local forms to connect to broader global manifestations of Whiteness (Steyn, 2005, p. 124). Whiteness as a phenomenon challenges essentialist views on race and racism. Whiteness is a notoriously fickle phenomenon designed to maintain socio-political, cultural, and economic benefit for a minority elite group in the South African context.⁶⁴ Whiteness in this conception does not apply to all white people. As such, Whiteness in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context can be described as fractured, non-essentialist and non-homogenous. Whiteness highlights that white racism can be perpetrated by those historically considered black in South Africa as well.

Discourse on Whiteness in the South African context necessitates discourse on Blackness.⁶⁵ Whiteness requires Blackness to exist. Blackness is the phenomenon that Whiteness establishes itself upon. Blackness describes being denied access, underprivileged, low-status, poor, socially excluded and uncomfortable. Blackness is the ascription of an “ontological dirtiness” from which the “pure” white ideal can be established (Yancey, 2012, pp. 3, 41 – 43). Whiteness thus exists *via negativa* Blackness. Blackness, like Whiteness, needs to be discussed with nuance in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. As was discussed in chapter 2 regarding Blackness, not all black people experience and are reflective of Blackness in post-colonial post-Apartheid South Africa. Blackness as a relevant descriptor requires considering factors such as race, class, gender, socio-political status, and sexual orientation. Blackness is

⁶³ “Those considered white” recognises that Whiteness co-opts people of various racial groupings to maintain the status quo. This will be discussed in detail further on in this chapter. It is worth noting that it is not a phrase designed to absolve white people of Whiteness. Rather it seeks to recognise the complex and enduring nature of Whiteness in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. This includes recognising the rise of the black middle class and the black political, economic, and social elite in South Africa post-Apartheid.

⁶⁴ Sebidi’s (1986) conceptualising of racial capitalism is worth noting here. It was discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

⁶⁵ This is the case both during and post-colonialism and Apartheid.

thus also non-homogenous, non-essentialist and fractured as a phenomenon. I now move to map the theoretical frameworks on which this discussion of terms is based.

4.2.1. Black Consciousness

Various approaches and frameworks exist in academia for addressing race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness in the South African context. Conversations on these phenomena are not new in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context due to South Africa's heavily racialised history. There are critical contributions in both Apartheid and post-Apartheid discourse that assist in better understanding race, racism, Whiteness, Blackness and the phenomena they describe. Amongst these critical contributions is the work of Black Consciousness. Black Consciousness has already been briefly discussed in this dissertation in chapters 2 and 3. It is a central component to early and modern South African Black Theology and to Decolonial theory. I will not restate what has already been discussed about Black Consciousness in previous chapters but rather highlight Black Consciousness' particular contribution to understanding Whiteness in South Africa. Black Consciousness offers key insight into meaningful approaches to dealing with race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness in the South African context.

Some approaches to interrogating and exploring race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness begin by interrogating the periphery and looking to those "othered" by racialised systems (Steyn, 2005, p. 120). Whilst Black Consciousness builds its understanding of race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness from the periphery, it intentionally draws resources from the periphery to interrogate and subvert the centre. Black Consciousness has always concerned itself with addressing the source of these phenomena which is white racism (Biko, 1987, pp. 23 – 25). As such, discourses on race within a Black Consciousness trajectory seek to address the problems cause by race and racism by interrogating those who benefit from white racism and the systems which continue to produce, reconstitute and reinforce Whiteness. This is not to say that Black Consciousness exists for those considered white in the South African context. The core work of Black Consciousness remains the building of new black identity, a new Blackness, not dictated by Whiteness. Simultaneously, Black Consciousness sharply critiques white people, white racism, and Whiteness. It demands that white people be willing to deal with white racism and address issues in their own camp before seeking to assist black people (Biko, 1987, p. 25). This is not to establish some new form of separate development in dealing with race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness. It rather recognises that the difference in experiences and need for

accountability regarding race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness is different for white people and black people.⁶⁶

Black Consciousness establishes that the point of departure for subverting race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness is dealing with the “original sin” of white supremacy (Biko, 1987, p. 21). This was argued within the frame and experience of Apartheid where white people all benefitted from white supremacy (Biko, 1987, p. 19). The privilege created during Apartheid was not always homogenous, but the fact that privilege was created in some form for all white people, even the most impoverished white person, is an essential point of departure for Black Consciousness discourse on Whiteness in South Africa. Post-colonial, post-Apartheid Whiteness is not the same as Whiteness during Apartheid, however inherited privileges in the current context cannot be ignored or understated. This is particularly pertinent for us as white scholars who seek to engage race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness. It is necessary to not assume that I and other white scholars engage racial oppression from the same point of departure as black people. Nor should the strategy of engaging these phenomena be the same for white people. White people must engage white racism as a problem caused by white society without adopting the same approach as black people (Biko, 1987, p. 23). Black Consciousness thus suggests distinct approaches for white and black people to subvert the various phenomena necessary to maintain race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness in the South African context.

Critical to note from Black Consciousness is its discourse on liberating Blackness from Whiteness. As noted in the discussion of terms at the beginning of this chapter, Whiteness establishes itself through the negation of Blackness. Black Consciousness is designed to reveal that Blackness being an “aberration from the ‘normal’” is a fallacy (Biko, 1987, p. 49). Black Consciousness creates tools for resistance against the mythology of white racism that seeks to keep Blackness and black people subservient and ‘less than’ white people and Whiteness. These tools extend into every sphere of life, recognising that race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness are phenomena that penetrate “religion, economics, education and culture” (Biko, 1987, p. 51). Liberated Blackness thus acts as a pivotal tool for subversion in Black Consciousness. Blackness is liberated from its harmful white construction not only for the

⁶⁶ It is worth noting that early Black Consciousness work did not explore race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness through a post-colonial, post-Apartheid lens. As such there are places where current discourse may disagree with historic discourse. This is particularly the case when exploring Whiteness and Blackness as essentialist or non-essentialist realities.

purpose of internal freedom but external freedom in all spheres of life for those considered black in South Africa.

Derek Hook engages Biko to highlight a critical point in discussing Whiteness in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa from a Black Consciousness position. As a white scholar Hook explores engaging his own Whiteness, recognising and attempting to avoid the pitfalls Biko highlights for white liberals in such spaces (Hook, 2011, p. 24). Hook notes that white scholars, at times, avoid critical destabilizing points in contemporary discourse on Whiteness due to the discomfort they elicit. One such point is Biko's notion of white terror and the violence that Whiteness enacts both physically and emotionally (Hook, 2011, pp. 26 – 27). Such a notion “introduce[s] a discordant note into post-Apartheid platitudes” and demands recognition that Whiteness as a phenomenon has caused and causes real, tangible fear and harm (Hook, 2011, p. 27). He also emphasizes that Biko acknowledges the relationship between race and class and that South Africa is a microcosm of global capitalistic exploitation between those historically called “third world” and “first world” (Hook, 2011, p. 29). This reinforces that Whiteness is inescapably linked to class struggle and the creation of an elite who thrives on the back of the poor, those who are considered black.⁶⁷

Hook notably highlights that when it is in vogue to be anti-racist there are dangerous pitfalls for white people. Hook (2011, p. 30) highlights that in-vogue anti-racism can result in “anti-racist narcissism” where the ultimate goal is the gain of social capital rather than tangible transformation. This is a critical practical point for me as a white scholar to notice. The present cultural and social zeitgeist in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa is commonly seen and understood as progressive, interested in things like anti-racism, anti-homophobia, anti-sexism and so on. This is a phenomenon observed in many nations across the world, especially those with large global influence such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The danger for this chapter and dissertation is that it can also become a form of narcissism and,

⁶⁷ As noted in chapter two, Sebidi (1986), as referenced by Maluleke, highlights the reality of South Africa functioning through a system of “racial capitalism” (Maluleke, 1996, p. 315). Maluleke (1996, p. 315) further describes the creation of a “buffer class” within this racial capitalism that blurs the lines between those considered white, in terms of their class and social status, and those considered black. This “buffer class” propagates the false narrative that for black people to access the economy they need only work hard, ignoring that the general systemic trend is economic benefit for white people and loss or lack for black people (Maluleke, 1996, p. 315). The complex and interweaving relationship between race and class cannot be understated. Further discourse on this matter has been explored in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

rather than moving me and others towards a genuine reconstitution whiteness and identity, potentially re-centering Whiteness in the South African academic and theological context. I note this reality and will continue to seek throughout this chapter, and the totality of this dissertation, to avoid such pitfalls and to meaningfully participate in challenging and subverting race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness in contemporary South Africa. I now move to address the next two frameworks for engaging Whiteness in South Africa, namely Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies.

4.2.2. Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies

Modern South African Whiteness Studies shares a close relationship with Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS). Both South African Whiteness Studies and CWS share theoretical grounding with Critical Race theory which preceded them (Akom, 2008, p. 258). It is important to dedicate time to discussing Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its influence on these two fields. Critical Race Theory seeks to describe race as a social construct and does so for the purpose of subverting race as a phenomenon (Guess, 2006, p. 649 – 650). Social construct suggests that the differences race seeks to inscribe between people of differing pigmentation are not themselves real but created as part of a specifically designed social imaginary. Race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness are thus mythological constructs not grounded in biology and science. Race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness are not biological fact, they do not describe actual biological difference between racial groupings. Though these phenomena are not biological fact, they form part of human social imaginary and thus directly and tangibly affect reality. Social imaginary refers to how human beings understand and make sense of their reality. Social imaginary is constituted by how people understand their interrelation with others, their general expectations of life and reality and the various norms and values that underpin these expectations (Griffiths & Prozesky, 2010, pp. 29 – 30). Race thus, in this discourse, is not a biological fact but rather a mythological construct designed as part of a particular network of ideas used to make sense of, and live congruently with, reality as Whiteness desires for it to be constructed.

Critical Race Theory explores social imaginary through intersectional lenses. It seeks to understand the various constructs that build race into what it is, noting race's relationship with racism and its enduring "appeal" in the world today (Heschel, 2015, pp. 3 – 4). CRT highlights that the social imaginary race constructs is vast and present in a variety of phenomena. Race pervades and is affected by various phenomena and realities within society and human identity.

One cannot address race without addressing other characteristics of identity or without addressing the institutions through which race functions and is enforced (Modiri, 2011, p. 180). Framings of race that do not do this, according to CRT, would miss the nuances of human identity and the nuances of human social systems. Similarly, race cannot be treated as a means to its own end. Racialised social imaginary has a clear goal in mind according to CRT. In South Africa this involves mining the concepts of race to see what inequalities are pursued through racial categories (Erasmus, 2010, p. 245). CRT thus seeks to ‘unmask’ the agendas race seeks to hide, revealing its real intentions and how it interfaces with various elements of identity, systems, and institutions to achieve its goals.

CRT notably addresses the systemic nature of racism. This is the recognition that social systems, structures, and institutions have been shaped by racial prejudice that result in structural discrimination against those considered black within a given racialised context (Modiri, 2011, pp. 178 – 180). This description of systemic racism correlates to the enduring but changing nature of racism. In a context such as South Africa racism is not the same currently as it was in history past as has already been argued in this chapter. However, though South Africa is a post-Apartheid and post-colonial context, it has not sufficiently excised systemic injustices that are designed around racial discrimination. An example pertinent to the present South African context based in this logic is land expropriation. The current distribution of land is reflective of enduring injustice and lack of reparations towards black South Africans who were forcibly removed from their land by white people through colonisation and Apartheid. The continued resistance towards reparations and various forms of land expropriation highlights the enduring systemic discrimination towards black people in South Africa.⁶⁸

Critical Whiteness Studies came into being as an offshoot of CRT. CWS embraces CRT’s theorisation that race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness form part of social imaginary. CWS seeks to focus on Whiteness as a phenomenon as the reality from which these other constructs emanate (Chen, 2017, p. 3). CWS as a field is notoriously contested along with CRT due to the slippery nature of defining issues like racism and Whiteness. CWS acknowledges that,

⁶⁸ This is a nuanced example where systemic racism largely directly affects black people only and cannot necessarily be considered as affecting those considered black, a categorisation which can include white people. However, to test the veracity of this claim about land it would need to be explored as to whether a white person’s land was ever unjustly taken by the Apartheid or colonial government in such a way that reinforced the racialised status quo. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore this.

while Whiteness is a hegemonic phenomenon, it is enduringly difficult to accurately and completely define (Pedersen & Samaluk, 2012, p. 9). However, as a field CWS largely argues that Whiteness is observable, nameable and can be subverted. The work of CWS scholars is this naming: it is making Whiteness, which tends towards invisibility, visible and making abnormal what Whiteness seeks to frame as normal (Pedersen & Samaluk, 2012, pp. 9 – 10). Scholars therefore interrogate various systems, structures, groups, individuals, and institutions to understand Whiteness, how it manifests and how it can be subverted. This subversion is viewed as necessary, as pivotal, to the subversion of race, racism, and damaging forms of Blackness.

Like the intersectional nature of CRT, CWS is intersectional in its nature. To explore and understand the dynamics of Whiteness CWS utilises various frameworks and concepts from various sources. Notably CWS explores the intersectionality of racism with other forms of oppression (Akom, 2008, p. 247). It is recognised in CWS that race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness have underlying goals that are political, social, economic, and cultural (Guess, 2006, pp. 650 – 651). Furthermore, CWS acknowledges that other forms of oppression increase the oppressive weight of Whiteness, such as being a woman in a patriarchal system or being LGBTQ+ in a queerphobic system. CWS seeks to explore how these intersecting realities of oppression can be made visible in systems, institutions, structures, groups, and individuals for the sake of transformation (Charbeneau, 2015, p. 657). CWS focusses on those at the center of Whiteness, those considered white, for the purposes of liberation. White people are invited in CWS to recognise how they benefit from Whiteness and how they can be part of transformative work (Charbeneau, 2015, p. 657). CWS is thus a framework concerned with making oppression and privilege visible and transforming the reality of the oppressed by confronting, subverting, and transforming the oppressor and oppressive systems and structures.

Chief amongst the tools for the transformative work of CWS is the un-silencing of voices. The greatest strength of Whiteness, according to George Yancey (2012, p. 8), is that it controls narratives and ensures dissenting voices cannot be heard. Yancey continues that response to this silencing must be not only rendering visible but the fissuring of Whiteness and white identity to render Whiteness both historical and problematic (Yancey, 2012, pp. 7 – 11). As such, CWS seeks to create tools of discomfort that make Whiteness problematic and do not allow problematic white identity constructs to exist unchecked. This is known as reversing the white gaze, rendering visible in white people their privilege and status whilst also subverting the silencing and inscription of violence and aberrance by the white gaze on black bodies

(Yancey, 2012, p. 8). Through rendering visible, the phenomenon of white privilege is made clear. White privilege refers to the reality that those considered white have access to assets and resources that are unearned due to systemic racial discrimination (Chen, 2017, p. 3). White privilege must be, as a starting point, made visible so that ultimately it can be challenged and subverted as a phenomenon. CWS thus un-silences the silenced to highlight where invisible privilege, Whiteness, exists for those considered white due to racism. It does this as a means to demand and create a more equitable world.

White people and white scholars can participate in the work of CWS. Like Black Consciousness, CWS maintains that white people should not leave the task of subverting Whiteness in the hands of those oppressed by racism to deal with (DiAngelo, 2018, pp. 140 – 142). However, subverting Whiteness by white scholars must be done with nuance. There is the potential for such work to slip into “speaking on behalf of the oppressed”, putting words into the mouths of those affected by racism and ultimately perpetuating Whiteness (Chen, 2017, pp. 17 – 18). Listening to silenced voices is thus of the utmost importance for white people engaging Whiteness. In academia this takes the form of not just including scholars of other races but allowing one’s work to be constituted thereby and to translate one’s work into more than abstract theorising.⁶⁹ Beyond this, white people who are not scholars are also invited to allow the perceptions and experiences of the silenced, those considered black, to reconstitute their understanding of Whiteness, the world, and the self. As James Perkinson (2004, p. 3) puts it: “daring to look into black eyes and not deny the reflection”.⁷⁰ This reconstitution must come with the recognition that racialisation will be context specific, no position that is essentialist regarding race can be maintained and not every person’s experience will be the same whether white or black (Pedersen & Samaluk, 2012, p. 11).

CWS maintains that race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness are non-essentialist, non-homogenous phenomena (Pedersen & Samaluk, 2012, pp. 10 – 11). CWS explores how these phenomena operate in contexts and ways that are overtly different from one another. For example, though South Africa is no longer under Apartheid rule CWS asks critical questions of what enduring legacies of the systemic racism of Apartheid exist in present day South Africa. These legacies may be compared and contrasted with the USA and its experiences, but they are

⁶⁹ The “more” referenced here is transformative action that subverts Whiteness.

⁷⁰ Perkinson also highlights (2004, p. 3) the importance of submitting Whiteness to Blackness, which is the framing of this dissertation.

not treated as the same. Similarly, the shift in form of these phenomena in societies where racism is no longer allowed to be as overt adds layers to the nuance and complexity of CWS discourse.⁷¹ The enduring social, economic, political, and cultural presence of Whiteness is interrogated, as well as its enduring relationship with race, racism and Blackness, in contexts where these things are no longer supposed to exist or matter (Guess, 2006, pp. 650 – 651). CWS thus conceptualises racism as existing presently both by unintentional systemic continuation and by overt personal choice. Individuals and groups are at times overtly and intentionally racist, whilst at other times race and racism are perpetuated by systems that transcend individuals, groups, or institutions (Guess, 2006, pp. 651 – 652).⁷²

To subvert Whiteness, race, racism, and harmful forms of Blackness CWS employs a variety of tools. CWS tools highlight how Whiteness seeks to preserve structural privilege for white people and maintain the notions of race, racism, and harmful forms of Blackness. Various examples of emotional, ideological, and intellectual turns and tools are raised by CWS in this regard. White fragility references the lack of “racial stamina” that white people have for conversations about race (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 2). This lack of stamina results in conversations and actions for progressive change being cut short as white people, or those considered white more broadly, get defensive, aggressive, or apathetic when race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness are raised in discourse in varying contexts. White guilt references a similar adjustment made by white people, or those considered white more broadly, when such issues are discussed. Rather than actively participating in transformative discourse and action, white guilt is pacifying guilt that results in white people feeling sorry for themselves (Yancey, 2012, p. 12). Both white fragility and white guilt are used strategically, at times knowingly and others unknowingly, to prevent meaningful progress on issues of race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness.

Both white guilt and white fragility stem from an underlying phenomenon described as the ‘white turn to innocence’. The white turn to innocence involves processes through which those considered white absolve themselves of responsibility or accountability for racial injustices

⁷¹ I am referencing again progressive social and cultural zeitgeists that have determined overt racist comments and action as problematic or improper. The condemning of racism generally in many contexts has resulted in it, and its various intersecting phenomena, changing shape and form so as to still operate without being noticed.

⁷² It is important to note that this does not absolve individuals, groups, or institutions of Whiteness. Rather it highlights once again that individuals, groups, and institutions can be co-opted without realising this has occurred or without intentionally seeking to achieve this outcome.

(Yancey, 2012, p. 8). It is also the inscribing of mythology within white spaces that denies the reality of “what has always been” for black people (Yancey, 2012, p. 8).⁷³ Regularly history and experiences of black people are revised by this turn to innocence (Yancey, 2012, p. 63). White fragility and white guilt are means of reinforcing innocence for those considered white, either through deferring conversation away from race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness through defensiveness and aggression or through preventing transformation thereof because of guilt immobilising action. White fragility and white guilt also act as tools to utilise when the myth of innocence is challenged. They act as means to re-establish equilibrium, preventing Whiteness being destabilised or undermined in any way.

The goal of transformative work with Whiteness in CWS is contested. Scholars do not entirely agree on whether Whiteness is salvageable. Whether or not producing “good white identity” will bring about meaningful change, or whether this is a matter of importance is questioned by scholarship (Goss, 2020, p. 13). The end goal of subverting Whiteness and white identity often lacks discussion of a new transitioned white identity and Whiteness, and new societal institutions and structures that will exist without the prevalence of Whiteness are not clearly conceptualised. Similarly challenging for CWS is addressing the problem of re-centring Whiteness, the problem I have already briefly addressed in this dissertation and chapter. CWS has the potential for, in driving to a place where there is responsibility for Whiteness (Andrews, 2016, p. 438), changing Whiteness into a new form where it can perpetuate itself because CWS does not have clarity regarding what should become of Whiteness and white identity. CWS has notably encountered challenges in this regard due to lack of sophistication around its conceptualising of race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness. Contextual forms of Whiteness Studies often are essential to addressing the gaps in broader CWS scholarship. This leads me to now address South African Whiteness Studies.

4.2.3. South African Whiteness Studies

South African Whiteness Studies draws on Black Consciousness, CRT and CWS to form its theoretical grounding. South African Whiteness Studies specifically seeks to understand race,

⁷³ Yancey as a scholar speaks in the context of the United States of America. His discourse is an example of some sources I have included who may not entirely support the notion of those considered black including white people. The difference in experience of race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness in the South African context, I contend, allows for the translating of some of his terminology to relate to South Africa where Blackness and Whiteness are conceived more complexly.

racism, Whiteness and Blackness as they exist in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. It adopts the same approach as Black Consciousness, CRT and CWS of subverting Whiteness as the central phenomenon from which race, racism and Blackness emanate for the purpose of transformation (Steyn & Conway, 2010, p. 284). Engaging Whiteness in this framework relies on understanding the social imaginary of South Africans, in particular those South Africans that are considered white. The social imaginaries of Colonialism and Apartheid in South Africa were designed not to be coherent with reality but to allow for exploitation, to be formed by Whiteness. The “homeliness” provided by these imaginaries was inherently mythological, designed to create perceptions that would make exploitation feasible for those considered white (Griffiths & Prozesky, 2010, pp. 30 – 31). As such, Whiteness is understood as a mythological construct designed to benefit those considered white in the colonial and Apartheid South African context socially, culturally, economically, and politically. It is notable that this social imaginary has changed with the shift from colonialism to post-colonial Apartheid to post-Apartheid in South Africa. South African Whiteness Studies seeks to explore and understand the legacies of colonial and Apartheid Whiteness in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context.

The contemporary experience of Whiteness in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa is characterized by two losses according to South African Whiteness Studies. The first loss is of the homeliness created by Whiteness during colonialism and Apartheid. The second loss is the collapse of a coherent understanding of what it is to be white. Both losses emanate from jarring realisation that the world during the Apartheid and colonial eras was monstrous and evil (Griffiths & Prozesky, 2010, p. 31). Melissa Steyn relates the experience of these losses to that of being a diasporic people. Though white people in South Africa are not truly disempowered as those in diasporic scenarios, the inertia of losing the overwhelming political and social power once held by whites results in feelings similar to that of being a diasporic people kicked out of their homeland (Steyn, 2005, pp. 124 – 125).

Whiteness in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa takes on a particular shape and form in the broader context of Whiteness as a phenomenon globally according to South African Whiteness studies. White people, and to a degree those considered white who are not white people, form part of a minority who still maintain a great deal of economic and cultural power, maintaining some social power, but no longer have overwhelming political and social power. From this position of loss of privilege white people, having once been conceived as a homogenous group, experience complex fissures in identity that were not as extant or visible

historically. The encroachment on the white supremacist mythos created by Apartheid and colonialism, and the uncertainty in a pluriversal context of being white, result in white people experiencing and displaying general discomfort, anger, white guilt, white fragility, white turns to innocence and various other tools for preserving Whiteness particular to the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context.

Whiteness and white identity in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa have a complex relationship according to South African Whiteness Studies. This is due to the enduring legacy of Apartheid on white identity construction and the creation of zones of belonging and being, who is “in” and who is “out” (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010, p. 88). Apartheid portrayed the myth of absolute racial categorization being essential to human identity, particularly for the absolute purity and clarity of white identity and Whiteness. However, more recent research done into Apartheid racial categorization has found that the parameters for Whiteness were regularly shifted for maintaining status quo (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010, p. 95). This is further complicated by the relationship between race and class as well as race and social or cultural status. Whiteness will suppress and oppress white people at the bottom of South African socio-economic stratification in order to maintain the status quo (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010, p. 95). This existed irregularly during Apartheid and has become increasingly prevalent in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. As such, Whiteness in South Africa cannot be said to benefit white people universally economically, socially or culturally in the present day.⁷⁴ Though white people at the bottom of class stratification will often receive greater support and have their needs met more regularly (this being observed even as early as during Apartheid by Biko, 1987, p. 50), Whiteness as a systemic reality will not adjust itself to preserve those at the bottom. Whiteness in South Africa will also co-opt black people maintain, reinscribe, and reconstitute itself.

The role of those considered black must be given consideration in this discourse. It is recognised in Black Consciousness, CRT and CWS that Whiteness exists through the negation of Blackness. It is also acknowledged that far too often discourse on Whiteness totally ignores Blackness and is dominated by white people and white voices. This is an enduring concern in

⁷⁴ This is a phenomenon that still needs to be researched further. Historically there was more direct support for impoverished white people, this was an ostensible reality during Apartheid. This preferential support is now, however, no longer the case. The abandonment of certain white people by Whiteness for the maintenance of the status quo is complex in tandem with the fissuring of white identity that has occurred in the post-Apartheid era.

South African Whiteness Studies (Phiri, 2013, p. 163). South African Whiteness Studies seeks to emphasize that Whiteness relies on black bodies and harmful conceptions of Blackness in order to maintain the status quo (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010, p. 96). Importantly, Blackness is conceived with similar complexity to Whiteness. Whiteness in South Africa will arbitrarily shift the parameters for Blackness, those considered black, in order to maintain social, economic, cultural and political benefit for the minority elite, those considered white. This shifting of parameters results in dual identities in black bodies that undermine the Apartheid notion of racial binaries (Phiri, 2013, p. 167). Whiteness thus constructs Blackness to be the object of negation for positive white identity in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. At the same time Whiteness will shift parameters of Blackness arbitrarily for the sake of maintaining the overall status quo.

South African Whiteness Studies has offered key insight into understanding Whiteness as it presents itself in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa as well as its links to broader Whiteness globally. A key contributor to this is Melissa Steyn. Steyn highlights, as mentioned in the discussion on homeliness earlier, that white identity is fissured and dislocated from what it once was, seeking to preserve homogeneity and stability in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. In this process of recovery, the goal of Whiteness is both to connect to broader realities of privilege for white people globally as well as to preserve South African Whiteness as created by colonialism and Apartheid for as long as possible (Steyn, 2005, pp. 125 - 127). Whiteness in contemporary South Africa recognizes that it is on the proverbial backfoot and seeks out options and opportunities to maintain itself in the wake of destabilisation from being in total control politically, economically, culturally, and socially. For the purpose of preservation, Whiteness in contemporary South Africa as functions within the fissuring and complication of white identity to preserve unbalanced power and privilege for those considered white.

As framed by Kevin Durrheim, Xoliswa Mtose and Lindsay Brown (2011, pp. 194, 199), Whiteness and Blackness no longer function as certain hierarchical structures between races nor are they necessarily distinct, consistent forms of categorisation. These authors introduce the notion of “race trouble” into current South African race discourse, highlighting that in the fractured and complex spaces of race there exists broad inequality that overshadows inequality between races (Durrheim, Mtose & Brown, 2011, p. 17). Race trouble leads some scholars to argue that Whiteness in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa differs from Whiteness in other parts of the world. Where Whiteness is arguably very discrete in other contexts,

Whiteness in South Africa is obvious and South Africans who benefit from Whiteness take obvious actions to preserve obvious privilege (Milazzo, 2017, p. 558).

Whiteness thus exists as a more complex, shifting, dynamic and contextual phenomenon in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context.⁷⁵ Whiteness can, according to this conception, co-opt any person, group, system, structure, company, religious organisation, academic framework and the like which benefits from the enduring norms established by Apartheid and colonialism for privileging the elite, those considered white, at the expense of the poor majority, those considered black, in South Africa.⁷⁶ Whiteness in this conception is no longer confined to just racial categorisation and necessitates exploration of the various systems and structures that function together to produce oppressive contexts and realities. The phenomena to be explored include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, social status, political power, cultural power and the like.

Preserving Whiteness for those considered white in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa can be conceptualised as an act of managing the collapse of the world as it has been constructed within the social imaginary of Whiteness. Whiteness being preserved ensures that, though this collapse has occurred, those considered white can remain connected to the broader global networks of Whiteness as instituted by colonialism,⁷⁷ neo-colonialism and globalism (Steyn, 2005, pp. 124 – 125). Colonialism and its legacies are centrally important to the global network of Whiteness as conceived by South African Whiteness Studies. This being so important begins first with the assertions of Black Consciousness (Biko, 1987, p. 46) and endures into current discourse on Whiteness in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa (Steyn, 2003, p. 20; Abdi as referenced by Gartushka, 2019, p. 40).

Through the historic and present establishment of global colonial and neo-colonial hegemonic devices, institutions, systems, and ideologies, Whiteness is able to continue existing in local

⁷⁵ As part of this discourse scholars note overt social realities such as private schools in predominantly white areas. White areas are more costly to live in, are predominantly populated by white people and are largely considered safer. Black people are not entirely welcomed in such spaces, and in schools black students are observed as facing greater stress because of being unwelcome than their white counterparts (see Gqitibole, 2019, p. 240).

⁷⁶ Durrheim, Mtose and Brown (2011, p. 43) highlight the fissure of black identity and its complexity in post-Apartheid South Africa. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation and this chapter to fully engage this, however it is notable that Whiteness within the discourse of this chapter relies on Blackness and creates itself *via negativa* Blackness. As such, it is unsurprising that race trouble has resulted in fractured Blackness and black identity.

⁷⁷ In particular, colonialism that has occurred in other nations and contexts.

contexts. The global network of privilege and imbalance towards those considered white, those considered white in this instance being predominantly Western white majority nations who have benefitted from imperialism and colonialism in its various forms, creates enduring pressure for local contexts to adopt local forms of Whiteness which conform to general characteristics of Whiteness globally. Necessary imbalances for enduring colonial differences include realities like economic disparity for the benefit of those considered white, social, political, cultural, and economic exclusion of those deemed black and so on.

South African Whiteness Studies thus recognises that engaging race, racism, Whiteness, and harmful forms of Blackness outside of global Whiteness constructs is not helpful. Whiteness exists globally intentionally, such that local contextual forms of Whiteness can exist and pervade even when white people move from place to place (Majavu, 2018, pp. 187 – 188). While this is the case, it is worth re-emphasizing the critical value of understanding local manifestations of Whiteness. Granting precedence to global, rather than local, manifestations of Whiteness prevents contextual transformation being understood, and happening, effectively. This is especially notable for the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context in which Whiteness is fissured and non-homogenous. Addressing post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African Whiteness in the same way as North American Whiteness when it has a distinct history, cultures, experiences, systems, institutions, structures, legislation and environments with race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness is unhelpful. South African Whiteness Studies seeks to engage these various realities contextually and with nuance.⁷⁸

The unique manifestation of Whiteness in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa has resulted in the development of unique tools used by those considered white in this context to preserve Whiteness. These tools operate in a context where white people no longer hold political power, not all white people benefit equally, or at all, from Whiteness as a phenomenon (Gartushka, 2019, pp. 32 – 33) and those considered white are not only white people. A critical contribution within Steyn's work is her discourse on white language and rhetoric as tools for maintaining Whiteness. As noted in the section discussing core concepts of CWS, Whiteness seeks to control voices and narratives. As such, language and rhetoric are powerful tools of both subjugation by Whiteness and liberation therefrom. Steyn discusses linguistic tropes used by white people to preserve Whiteness in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa under the

⁷⁸ I contend that this local disturbing of Whiteness inherently disrupts global Whiteness as well due to its inherent disruption of universal, homogenous societies that benefit those considered white.

term ‘white talk’. White talk broadly references the “discursive repertoire [used] to manage the intersectional positionality of white South Africans to their (perceived) greatest competitive advantage... making clear what is advantageous to reveal and hiding what is advantageous to conceal” (Steyn, 2003, p. 3). White talk thus acts as a key mechanism for enacting various other turns to white innocence, white guilt, and white fragility.⁷⁹ Through various discursive tropes white talk allows for Whiteness in South Africa to be both preserved and reinforced.

A critical challenge, therefore, is engaging the ways in which white talk perpetuates and preserves Whiteness. White talk is notably also, in its essence, a tool for knowledge and knowledge production. Language acts as a critical tool of creating and preserving knowledge. A great deal of destructive knowledge is described and created using the language and discourses of Whiteness (Milazzo, 2017, p. 560). To subvert knowledge that creates and preserves Whiteness requires complex engagement with the linguistic tools employed by white talk. While Whiteness is more obvious in the South African context, discursive tools are still complex and will not often or necessarily have overtly racist remarks to label them as white talk. White talk reinforces the enduring legacy of what can be termed race aversion in the South African context. This is the process of avoiding, as often as possible, meaningful discourse on race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness (Gqitibole, 2019, p. 239). Race aversion thus demands particular nuanced insight from South African Whiteness Scholars to highlight how language and knowledge are being carefully used to reinforce, recreate and reconstitute Whiteness.⁸⁰

An essential component to nuancing discourse on post-colonial, post-Apartheid white talk is distinguishing white talk from and amongst English South Africans versus white talk from and amongst Afrikaans South Africans. White identity is not homogenous in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. These two groups are the most distinct categories of

⁷⁹ Some key examples Steyn (2005, pp. 127 – 128) offers of white talk include use of language and discourse that appropriates being African when it is strategically beneficial, insisting on homogenous use of language for communication (such as it is only coherent to use English as a language for business or academics) and privileging global realities and experiences over local ones. It is notable that my conception of Whiteness differs from Steyn’s and as such I contend that these tropes are used by those considered white and not just white people.

⁸⁰ Careful use does not inherently imply intent. It is notable that white talk is not always overtly desired or used intentionally by those considered white. This is not mentioned to deny intent, but rather to nuance the phenomenon of white talk within the broader context of Whiteness in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa.

white identity, though they themselves are also not homogenous.⁸¹ These categories are worth noting because white talk often presents differently in, between, and from these two groups. The differences in white talk from these groups grounds itself in the differences between Afrikaner and English white identity. Ostensibly, English and Afrikaans white South Africans engage with their European heritage in different ways. English white identity was cast into flux and uncertainty with the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism in 20th Century South Africa (Steyn, 2004, pp. 147 – 148). The history of oppression of the Afrikaners by English white people also results in a conflicting internal struggle in Afrikaner white identity. Afrikaners pursued being a supreme nation having faced genuine oppression and exclusion at the hands of the English in South Africa (Steyn, 2004, pp. 148 – 149). It is unsurprising that these varying perceptions and constructions of white supremacist identity for English and Afrikaans white people result in different forms of white talk to preserve their respective white identities.⁸²

The difference in perception and construction of reality and identity from Afrikaner and English South Africans in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid context is worth exploring further. Though both have similarity, English and Afrikaner South African social imaginaries make sense of reality differently. It coherently follows that the tools used to preserve and reinscribe the various myths and conceptions for these distinct social imaginaries will have overlap but not be the same. Afrikaner white talk often takes up a more aggressive stance due to the particular anxieties and complexities of post-Apartheid Afrikaner social imaginaries and identity (Steyn, 2004, p. 153).⁸³ English white identity preserves a strong sense of superiority but does so from a less aggressive and less righteous-centric position. Afrikaner white identity, bearing the baggage of Afrikaner Nationalism in the form of Apartheid, seeks to reinscribe and recover Afrikaner moral superiority and righteousness (Steyn, 2004, p. 154). English white identity, located in the global experience of white identity in the 21st century, maintains the upper hand on the global scale and is still a dominant force. Afrikaner white identity has to

⁸¹ When referencing English South Africans this is an umbrella term to refer to the South Africans who are first language English, largely from England or the United Kingdom but at least having heritage from Europe that are not part of the distinct Afrikaner group in South Africa. These English-speaking groups can be generally discussed as having distinctions, but there are notable overlaps between them. There are also exceptions to distinctly forming part of just the English or Afrikaans grouping. South Africans who have one parent who is an Afrikaner and one who is from a different European context are an obvious example of this.

⁸² This does not absolve either group from their overall participation in Whiteness as a phenomenon. It does, however, further nuance the relationship between Whiteness and white identity/ies.

⁸³ These particular anxieties derive from Apartheid being a form of Afrikaner nationalism.

contend with once again being beaten out for the position of superiority in South Africa by English hegemony in this 21st century context (Steyn, 2004, p. 159). English white identity can strategically defer to this global hegemony and more easily connect itself thereto. This is a challenge for Afrikaner white identity in particular because of the global shunning of Apartheid and general global concern regarding Afrikaner Nationalism.

With these differences between groups in mind, it is worth exploring the general tools and tropes of white talk used to preserve, reinscribe, and rebuild Whiteness in contemporary South Africa. Steyn and Foster (2008, pp. 26 – 27) begin analysing white talk by recognising two distinct forms thereof, namely New South Africa Speak (NSAS) and White Ululation (WU). NSAS can be described as white talk in its most palatable and strategically non-confrontational form. NSAS avoids all forms of open and readily nameable racism whilst still reinforcing structures, ideals, practices, and norms that preserve Whiteness in a given context (Steyn & Foster, 2008, p. 29). NSAS is designed to make privilege and injustice unremarkable, reinventing and mythologising reality and history through language and discourse to shift collective memory within a given context (Steyn & Foster, 2008, pp. 32 – 33). It is reflective of what might be deemed “everyday racism”, where discriminatory language is covert and subversive (Majavu, 2018, p. 192).⁸⁴ WU is the more aggressive form of white talk. Often involving heightened emotions, WU is verbalising responses to threats to Whiteness and delegitimising such threats so as to prevent transformation (Steyn & Foster, 2008, pp. 35 – 37). NSAS thus acts as the default point of engagement for white talk subtly shifting narratives away from engaging privilege. WU is the confrontational voice, adopting more direct language for the purpose of redirecting transformative efforts.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ An example of NSAS would be discourse that defers to the prevalent notion of non-racialism and a “rainbow nation” in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa to deny the need for affirmative action because affirmative action is ‘unfair’. NSAS also seeks to make history and oppression unremarkable and as such will name oppression as simply a fact of reality and of history rather than recognising it as the huge problem it was and is (Steyn & Foster, 2008, p. 32).

⁸⁵ Examples of WU would be the following: using aggressive sarcasm or humour to denounce work towards reparation and transformation of South Africa as a context post-Apartheid. Acts of transformation would be labelled as worse than the “original sin” of Apartheid. WU would suggest that any attempts towards a united Africa and black empowerment are failing whilst white action to resolve historic injustice is the only example of working, transformative action (Steyn & Foster, 2008, pp. 38 – 40).

NSAS and WU require nuanced engagement to be revealed and subverted. This is especially the case for NSAS which functions from within norms and standards of South African society. Steyn (2004, p. 152) offers key critical questions for exploring where white talk may be present, namely: what hegemonic/monolithic meanings are created, preserved or reinscribed that discredit or disregard the possibility of alternatives; what meanings are created, preserved or reinscribed that are not critically engaged or contested; what is inscribed as dangerous, damaging or “other”; how are varying subjectivities described and by whom; what mythologies are essential to the social imaginary being explored and how are varying groups constructed within this mythology. By asking such questions one can begin to unearth where Whiteness is present within a given discursive context and how said discourse is seeking to preserve Whiteness. Such questions also allow distinguishing between what form of white talk is being utilised based on how language is used to construct mythology, what white identity/ies are being preserved or portrayed based on the tone and style of the language vis-à-vis the tropes relevant to Afrikaner and English white identity, and how does the local manifestation Whiteness within the given discourse relate to broader global systems of Whiteness.

Steyn (2005, p. 127) offers further insight into white talk by exploring notable tropes that are discovered through such questioning of language and discourse. They include phenomena such as “strategic antiessentialism” (choosing to deny characteristics as essential when it is strategically convenient); appropriation of African-ness when strategically convenient, connecting local manifestations of Whiteness to global realities (deferring to global authority, prioritising the global over the local); reinforcing the use of English as a universal language and particularly the language of economics and business; giving greater focus, energy and attention to Western issues; strategically avoiding or reducing history; adopting premature colourblind philosophies of race; minimising inherited privilege; appropriating progressive language to disguise more damaging intents; participating in global afro-pessimism; painting oneself or one’s group as a victim in the new dispensation (such as being at the mercy of reparative actions) and legitimating denial which buries necessary emotions for transformative discourse and actions (Steyn, 2005, pp. 127 – 132). These tools are utilised in tandem with phenomena such as white fragility and white guilt and presented via NSAS or WU based on what will result in the best outcome in the given context. Ultimately, they act as linguistic tools for the enduring purpose of preserving, creating and reconstituting Whiteness in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context.

A critical closing point to highlight in this discussion on South African Whiteness Studies relates to the place of Blackness in this field. White voices dominate South African Whiteness Studies similarly to CWS (Phiri, 2013, p. 163). Often South African Whiteness Studies lacks black voices and neglects comprehensive understanding of Blackness (Gartushka, 2019, p. 34). This results in Blackness becoming a backdrop for discussion on Whiteness (Gartushka, 2019, p. 35), inadvertently recentring Whiteness in academic discourse. This is obviously problematic as it goes against the inherent goals of South African Whiteness Studies to subvert and dethrone Whiteness. Similarly problematic with this phenomenon is that it results in condescension from white thinkers. The very white people who carried out exploitation against those considered black become those who are now experts, “saviours in transformation” (Makgoba as referenced by Steyn & Foster, 2008, p. 40). White people within South African Whiteness scholarship thus must be continually mindful of adopting positions of superiority in the process of transformation. This entails critical turns from white scholars to listen to black scholarship and black voices whilst maintaining a posture of humility and openness.

South African Whiteness Studies, as noted at the introduction of this section, is an intersectional field that draws on various academic fields of study to engage, reveal, and subvert Whiteness in South Africa. One such field is academic theology. Academic theology has participated in engagement with Whiteness for decades as is evident from my discussion on Black and Decolonial theologies in the previous two chapters. South African Whiteness Studies, in combination with its complex theoretical relationships with Black Consciousness, CRT and CWS, has been engaged within current South African theological scholarship. I will not offer my own theological reflection on Whiteness in this chapter but will rather focus on some post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African theological inputs on Whiteness that are already published. I offer my theological reflection on Whiteness in chapter 5 by bringing the concepts of this chapter into conversation with SABB's decolonial fourth phase. I now address some of the critical contributions for engaging Whiteness in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African theology.

4.3. South African Theological Reflection on Whiteness

South African theologians have historically engaged with the notions of race, racism, Whiteness, and Blackness, particularly in the 20th century. Chief amongst theoretical contributors has been SABB as discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation. There are notable scholars, however, who have homed in specifically to the notion of Whiteness in the post-

colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. These scholars have also engaged with current Whiteness scholarship in South Africa and globally to assist in their reflection, as well as the resources of black philosophies such as Black Consciousness and Black theologies.⁸⁶

Johannes ‘Klippiers’ Kritzinger utilises Black Consciousness as a critical dialogue partner for engaging Whiteness in contemporary South Africa. Notably, he explores Biko’s “anti-racist dialectics” in attempts to map what meaningful resistance against Whiteness can look like in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa (Kritzinger, 2008, p. 3). Kritzinger (2008, p. 14) concerns himself with the necessary process of white liberation and allowing black-led theory to be the driving force underpinning this liberation. This discourse on liberation is located, by Kritzinger, within the broader context of Black theological reflection in South Africa and North America (Kritzinger, 2008, pp. 11 – 12). This chapter and dissertation form part of ongoing work in this trajectory, seeking to explore what liberation from Whiteness entails from a decolonial South African Black theological perspective.

George ‘Cobus’ Van Wyngaard (2016, p. 478) reinforces the importance of theological reflection on Whiteness departing from the foundation of Liberation theologies. He engages with particularity around Whiteness in the public space. He argues that public theological reflection can devolve into reinforcing Whiteness if not grounded in black-led theory and theologising (van Wyngaard, 2016, p. 485). He highlights important practices and tools necessary for meaningful theological reflection on Whiteness by white scholars in public theology, namely: avoiding speaking on behalf of those on the underside of power dynamics, being open to criticism and listening, exploring earnestly the role of social location in public discourse, embracing the process of conversion from Whiteness to something else, acting as listeners in public spaces rather than talkers and openly engaging as a traitor to Whiteness through interrogating one’s own position of privilege (van Wyngaard, 2016, pp. 485 – 490). Whilst this dissertation is not within the discipline of public theology, van Wyngaard’s contributions remain relevant to the theological task of this dissertation. He affirms the importance of Liberation theologies in theological reflection on race and Whiteness specifically, the role of “deep listening” to black voices, and the pivotal importance of white

⁸⁶ It is worth noting that the following scholars are all white. One could argue that this is a recentring of Whiteness in discourse critiquing and subverting Whiteness similar to that which I critique in the previous section. It is notable that each of these scholars submit their work to black-led, race-critical theory, scholars, and voices. As such, I contend that they embody and present Whiteness scholarship that is subversive, disruptive, and valuable to this dissertation.

people recognising social location beyond simply naming should they seek to meaningfully theologically reflect on Whiteness in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context.

Van Wyngaard (2014, p. 194) also engages within the realm of missiology, exploring the notion of Whiteness and its relationship to Christian mission. He brings to light the danger of diversity devolving into reinforced Whiteness through discourse on borders. He argues that it is inherently a position of white privilege to cross borders with ease, and that present missiological constructs inadvertently absolve white people of Whiteness because “if these white people are so good for black people, how can anyone still critique [W]hiteness?” (van Wyngaard, 2014, p. 196).⁸⁷ He highlights that crossing borders for the sake of deep listening to black voices can be a rich resource, but the paradoxical relationship between crossing borders to have Whiteness unmasked when crossing borders is grounded in white privilege still reinforces the same problem (van Wyngaard, 2014, pp. 197 – 198). In this contribution van Wyngaard begins shifting to address white talk within theology, and how theological language (and praxis) results in the reinscribing of Whiteness. This is essential to note: theological reflection with good intentions can still reinforce the rationales it seeks to dismantle. Theological reflection on Whiteness in the contemporary South African context must therefore be critical of where it draws resources from and how, even when helpful, those resources reinforce unhelpful ideologies and practices.

Van Wyngaard (2015, p. 97) further notably grounds discourse on Whiteness in theology in the history of colonialism. Whiteness as a “marker of salvation”, the defining feature of those elect by God (van Wyngaard, 2015, p. 97), functions as a critical theological tool for unmasking the Whiteness hidden in Christianity in post-colonial contexts. Theology and mythology, relying largely on social imaginary and discursive tools, have acted as critical tools in building and maintaining Whiteness in South Africa particularly as a context (van Wyngaard, 2015, p. 98). Van Wyngaard (2015, pp. 99 – 100) homes in on Afrikaner mythology, identity, and discourse to explore the discursive tools of white talk used by Afrikaners to preserve their theology, mythology, and social imaginary in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. Van Wyngaard highlights in this contribution the ongoing need for subversive

⁸⁷ More specifically, his discourse on borders is located the traditional notion of mission that is common to many white evangelical churches which entails travelling to a needy community, often black communities, to do outreach work (see van Wyngaard, 2014). White privilege that allows such mission work to take place inadvertently makes privilege a normative thing rather than problematising it.

Whiteness research in South African theology, specifically the need to explore the complex relationship between legacies of colonialism in conjunction with Whiteness studies. Van Wyngaard also offers meaningful, critical application of South African Whiteness Studies in a theological context which establishes a strong precedent for further interdisciplinary dialogue between these fields.

Gerald West (2021, p. 534) concurs with van Wyngaard in that white theologians are invited to a process of deep listening, being summoned by black voices rather than white ones for the process of theologising in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. West (2021, pp. 533 – 535) offers a helpful rationale for the necessary work of decolonizing white identity and white culture through the scholarship of Gunther Wittenberg. West (2021, p. 535) locates Wittenberg within the enduring legacy of Black and Contextual theologies that have meaningfully sought out tangible liberation politically, socially, economically, and culturally for those considered black in South Africa. This process of listening should continue into a process of collaboration in which the summoning and challenge of Blackness led projects shapes and disciplines the projects of white theologians. West's work affirms the rationale of this dissertation that Whiteness in theology and post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African society can be meaningfully engaged when brought into dialogue with Decolonial and Black theological scholarship. West similarly reaffirms the summons of black scholarship that calls white theologians to engage Whiteness, racism, and oppression from a posture of humility.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I explored Whiteness in the South African context. I began first by describing key terms to the discourse of this chapter, namely race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness. I then moved to discuss the key frameworks that informed the descriptions offered. These frameworks were Black Consciousness, Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, and South African Whiteness Studies. I concluded this chapter by discussing post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African theological contributions to discourse on Whiteness from white scholars who have, to various extents, engaged and been shaped by Black Consciousness, CRT, CWS and South African Whiteness Studies. Having discussed the three theoretical frameworks of this dissertation, I now move to bring them into dialogue and produce a frame for South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness.

Chapter 5: A Potential Frame for South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness

5.1. Introduction

In chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this dissertation I discussed the three theoretical frameworks of this study. These frameworks are South African Black Theology, Decolonial theory, and South African Whiteness Studies. In this chapter I bring the characteristics of the fourth phase of SABB, the product of dialogue between SABB and Decolonial theory, into dialogue with discourse on Whiteness as discussed in chapter 4 with particular focus on the concepts of South African Whiteness Studies.⁸⁸ I produce a distinct framework through this dialogue, outlined within the structure of Per Frostin's five key characteristics of Liberation theologies, for South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness.⁸⁹ I bring my new framework into dialogue with two case studies from the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). Through dialogue with these case studies, I test the validity and veracity of my framework and I note potential contributions of the case studies to my framework. I conclude this chapter by outlining the contribution my framework makes to South African theological scholarship on Whiteness.

5.2. South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness

It is worth noting again Per Frostin's five key characteristics of Liberation theologies. These are choice of interlocutor, perception of God, analysis of conflicts, social and theological analysis and the relationship between theory and praxis (Frostin, 2021, pp. 6 – 9). It is also worth re-emphasizing that Frostin is a white scholar submitted to black-led theory and referenced by black scholarship as a meaningful interlocutor for liberatory theological engagement in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. Frostin's value to this discourse has been highlighted in chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation. In this section I bring

⁸⁸ In this dissertation I have nuanced the distinction between personal and systemic Whiteness. I will, at times, in this chapter emphasize Whiteness as a systemic injustice. However, unless I state otherwise for a particular argument, whenever I reference Whiteness in this chapter I am referencing systemic Whiteness.

⁸⁹ This framework exists in a summarised form under Frostin's five key characteristics because the broad bodies of information constituting the three frameworks discussed all remain helpful, constitutive, and informative for my newly developed frame. However, for the sake of clarity and due to the constraints of a Master's dissertation it is necessary to reduce the information into more easily accessible applicable characteristics and concepts.

SABT's Decolonial Theological characteristics as discussed in chapter 3 of this dissertation, produced through dialogue between SABT and Decolonial theory, into dialogue with the discourse of chapter 4 on Whiteness specifically focussing on concepts from South African Whiteness Studies. The dialogue between frameworks in this section is ordered and outlined under Frostin's five key characteristics.

Frostin's first characteristic is choice of interlocutor. Interlocutors in the Decolonial phase of SABT are those 'damned' by coloniality. This damning is notably intersectional and includes factors that are social, political, economic, cultural, epistemological, and ontological. These factors manifest in those damned by coloniality as the denial of ontological density, social exclusion, economic exclusion, political exclusion, denial of dignity and value, erosion of epistemology and the like. SABT's Decolonial phase further recognises the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. These intersecting realities of identity are shaped by the intersecting elements that constitute coloniality such as coloniality of power, knowledge, being and nature.

When this phase is brought into dialogue with Whiteness studies as explored in chapter 4, the interlocutors of a South African Decolonial Theology of Whiteness can be described as those damned by Whiteness and coloniality. In other words, those characterised by Blackness or considered black within a white system shaped by colonial legacies. This description of interlocutor necessitates clarity regarding the relationship between Whiteness, Blackness, and coloniality. Due to overlap in concepts and characteristics, as well as clear discourse pointing to the relationship between Whiteness and the legacies of colonialism in chapter 4, Whiteness and coloniality should be engaged as intersectional realities. Whiteness is the norms, values and privilege within a white, historically colonial system and coloniality is the various manifestations power to establish, preserve and propagate these norms, values and privileges within a white, historically colonial system. Considering coloniality is a broad term that encapsulates the enduring legacies of colonialism and their varying manifestations, Whiteness can be accurately described as an element of coloniality in the South African context both during and post colonialism and Apartheid. This coincides with the definition of Whiteness I offer in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

Whiteness and Blackness thus act as tools of coloniality to maintain the colonial matrix of power in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. Whiteness and Blackness within my frame of Decolonial theological reflection in South Africa are complex and non-essentialist

realities. Whiteness, Blackness and coloniality are contextual in nature, bound up in the various intersecting realities that constitute oppression in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. Their applicability to a given individual, group, or phenomenon requires analysis of race, class, gender, social status, political status, cultural status, and sexual orientation. Whiteness and Blackness are not, in my frame, ontological realities bound to white or black people respectively. Whiteness, in tandem with coloniality in its varying forms, constitutes and co-opts individuals, groups, systems and structures strategically to maintain privilege, power and status as desired and designed by coloniality.⁹⁰ Similarly, Whiteness and coloniality are intentionally bought into by individuals, groups, systems and structures to maintain positions of privilege and control in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African society. As such, poor black people of various gender identities (in particular women and those who do not identify within the traditional gender binary) and sexual orientations (particularly those who are not heterosexual) are critical interlocutors as those who are most condemned, most damned, by Whiteness and coloniality. However, not every black person is a critical interlocutor and not every black person's experience is that of being damned by Whiteness and coloniality according to my framework.⁹¹

My frame for South African Decolonial theological reflection on Whiteness also engages white people also as interlocutors. This is done for two distinct reasons. The first is grounded in an ethic of responsibility for white people that embody Whiteness and benefit from coloniality. It is necessary, in my frame, for such white people to be interlocutors for the sake of subverting race, racism, Whiteness and coloniality. White people, white groups and white institutions must

⁹⁰ Certain systems and structures were, and are, designed with Whiteness at the centre. I am suggesting here that the process of subversion, and the creation of new systems and structures, is often from positions still shaped by coloniality and Whiteness so as to continue these phenomena in new forms and new spaces. Whiteness and coloniality thus constructed (and construct), maintain and propagate their own systems and structures whilst also seeking to co-opt any system or structure aimed to be outside of, challenge or subvert coloniality and Whiteness.

⁹¹ This perception of Blackness is notably discussed by Tinyiko Maluleke (1996b) as critical to post-Apartheid discourse on Blackness and Whiteness. He specifically locates his contribution within the discourse of SABB (Maluleke, 1996b, p. 303) and raises several challenges that exist in nuancing black experience and Blackness in the South African context when it comes to offering reparations for historical racial injustice (Maluleke, 1996b, pp. 311 – 312). Mindful of these challenges, he reaffirms the development in SABB thought to recognise that Blackness and black experience is not monolithic or homogenous (Maluleke, 1996b, p. 313). He also argues that the choice of interlocutor within SABB must take into account the various intersectional phenomena that constitute black experience, reality and identity such as race, class, culture and gender (Maluleke, 1996b, p. 316).

be able to engage their own Whiteness and be part of the work of taking responsibility for white racism. By engaging white people as interlocutors, further nuance regarding how Whiteness and coloniality present themselves together can become clear. This choice of interlocutor also opens the possibility for individuals, groups, and structures to subvert their own Whiteness and challenge coloniality. For white people characterised by Whiteness and benefiting from coloniality, the point of departure for participating in this subversion is first to engage with the experience of Blackness and those considered black within their white system. This allows for deepened understanding of the activity and effects of coloniality and Whiteness. Through this deepened understanding, white people as interlocutors in my frame are then able to engage where these realities are present in their person, group, structure, or system and explore how they should be subverted.⁹² The second reason is that Whiteness does not benefit all white people in the 21st century South African context according to my frame. Not all white people experience Whiteness the same way due to their culture, language, class, gender, social status, political status, and sexual orientation. Critical groups of white people are thus engaged as interlocutors to highlight how Whiteness and coloniality will arbitrarily change lines of who is “in” and who is “out” to preserve the status quo.⁹³

The perceptions of God, Frostin’s second characteristic, in SABT’s Decolonial phase are pluriversal, indigenous, and suspicious of conceptions inherited from the West. Though indigenous perceptions of God are turned to as valuable sources, it is recognised that indigenous perceptions of God may also be harmful. Indigenous perceptions are seen as capable of reinforcing problematic stereotypes, biases, discrimination and systemic violences

⁹² “Those considered white” begs the question of who does the considering within the present South African context. While Apartheid categories of race have been re-inscribed in post-Apartheid South Africa for the purpose of transformation, this framework details that Whiteness is more complex than just a categorisation based on race. As such, “those considered white” are considered so by the enduring systemic Whiteness in the South African context that transcends basic racial categorisation. It references a given individual, group, structure, or institution that has been co-opted by, designed by, or bought into by Whiteness and coloniality for the continuation of inequality that benefits an elite minority at the expense of the majority who are considered black by systemic Whiteness.

⁹³ I make this point cautiously knowing that there are still privileges experienced by poor white people that are not experienced by poor black people. However, this observation is best explored when it is acknowledged that race and class are inextricably linked. By giving due credence to this phenomenon, more accurate reflection on the present manifestations of Whiteness and Blackness in South Africa is possible. If this nuance is ignored, the reality of race and/as class and the intersectional nature of oppression is erased in the process.

such as patriarchy (see Nzimande, 2008). As such, the ‘preferential option of the damned’ remains critical to SABT Decolonial perceptions of God to subvert oppressive elements within indigenous and Western perceptions of God. In dialogue with Whiteness studies as explored in chapter 4, my framework for South African Decolonial theological reflection on Whiteness explores how Whiteness and coloniality have shaped perceptions of God. My framework interrogates how coloniality has used Whiteness to reinforce universal, homogenous pictures of God that are steeped in Western culture and thought. My frame uses this analysis to explore where indigenous and Western perceptions of God remove room for critique or engagement and/or produce power and privilege imbalances as reflective of coloniality and Whiteness. My frame interrogates perceptions of God that reinforce the privileging of some at the expense of others, doing so by maintaining perceptions of God that depart from a preferential option for those damned by coloniality and Whiteness. My framework is similarly critical of perceptions of God that seek to reinscribe any characteristic of historic Blackness like denying ontological density. My frame interrogates perceptions of God that have been established as the norm with suspicion especially if they are inherited from the West, noting that it is in the seemingly normal, unharmful, and uninteresting that coloniality and Whiteness are produced, reinscribed, and reinforced.

Analysis of conflicts, Frostin’s third characteristic, as discussed in chapter 3, in SABT’s fourth phase highlights that coloniality acts as the emanation point for various violences. Coloniality’s creation of zones of being and non-being, and unbalancing of power, creates various manifestations of this violence such as coloniality of gender. When brought into dialogue with Whiteness studies, South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness suggests that a critical site for interrogation for the emanation of violence in its various forms is Whiteness. Through the norms, values, and privileging of Whiteness coloniality produces zones of non-being for those considered black and, through this negation of others, zones of being are created for those considered white. Conflict particularly emerges, according to my frame, when these zones of colonial difference are defended by those considered white using tools such as the white gaze, white turns to innocence, white guilt, white fragility, and white talk. These tools inflict violence on the bodies, minds, lived experiences, dignity and being of those considered black. Conflict is also not always overtly offensive according to my framework. Conflict can, at times, take a passive defensive stance to quietly preserve Whiteness and coloniality as they are hiding within the norms of South African society and lived experience.

Social and theological analysis, Frostin's fourth characteristic, in chapter 3 revolved around using whatever viable tools are available to subvert coloniality including various sociological and theological frames and tools. When brought into dialogue with chapter 4's analysis, South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness is positioned to use tools availed within Whiteness studies in tandem with other decolonial, sociological and theological tools for the subversion of Whiteness and coloniality. For my frame, social analysis includes various tools. These tools assist in de-centring Whiteness and coloniality, challenging both in their local and global manifestations. Chief amongst these tools includes listening to narratives that have been historically silenced by Whiteness and coloniality. Listening to silenced narratives forms part of a broader network of tools in my frame for rendering Whiteness, coloniality and white identity visible through the highlighting of enduring privilege and exploitation in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. My frame also adopts tools for noticing and challenging white turns to innocence, white fragility, white guilt, and various forms of white talk. My frame does this whilst also engaging the various the forms of coloniality these various phenomena link to such as coloniality of being and knowledge. My frame uses these tools as means of subverting harmful white social imaginaries and the colonial mythos they are constructed by.

In my framework theological analysis particularly relies on the use of liberation theologies to engage the presence of coloniality and Whiteness in various contexts. The tools of decolonial theological reflection are thus critically helpful for noticing where Whiteness and coloniality are present and exploring processes of their subversion. My South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness explores where Whiteness acts as a 'marker of salvation', seeking to establish the elect of God who are beyond and above their fellow humanity. The languages of theologies should be engaged by South African Decolonial theological reflection on Whiteness, noticing how doctrine and belief are structured to preserve control, create, and preserve elite minorities, reinscribe coloniality and colonial difference, and maintain privilege and universality that excludes indigenous African theological experience and thought. Critical to South African Decolonial theological reflection on Whiteness is refusing to speak on behalf of black people as white scholars. My frame's reflection on Whiteness should not result in taking over black spaces, re-centring Whiteness and coloniality in discourse and society or silencing those considered black to speak on their behalf. South Decolonial theological reflection on Whiteness offers insight into Whiteness and coloniality in theological and social spaces in harmony with other voices addressing similar issues, relying as a frame on having

earnestly listened to, been shaped and disciplined by those on the underside of the colonial matrix of power.

The relationship between theory and praxis, Frostin's fifth characteristic, explored in SABB's Decolonial phase, emphasizes praxis over theoretical engagement. The subversion of coloniality in people's lived experiences is of greater importance than academic discourse, and academic discourse begins first with that which is lived and embodied. Whiteness Studies similarly emphasizes that the subversion of Whiteness is not only an exercise of theory or of academics. South African Decolonial theological reflections on Whiteness thus feeds into and is informed by praxis. This leads me to establish the case studies of this dissertation for the purpose of applying this framework, in other words engaging in praxis.

5.3. The Black Methodist Consultation

The source of the case studies in this chapter will be the BMC. This choice is grounded in the decision made throughout this dissertation to submit to black-led theory and black voices. This choice is also made based on this dissertation being grounded in the field of African theology. The BMC has, since its inception, been a part of transformational discourse regarding race, racism, Whiteness, Blackness and the enduring legacies of colonialism and Apartheid in the South African context.⁹⁴ The BMC has been, and still is, focussed on listening to black voices, understanding destructive conceptions of Blackness both historically and presently, building new conceptions of Blackness in resistance to harmful ones for the purpose of liberation and developing black academic thought in South Africa. The BMC has done so from an explicitly Black theological position, as will be highlighted in the discussion to follow, making it an ideal site for research into Black theological engagement with Whiteness. Through engaging with discourse from the BMC I continue the process of submitting my thinking to the discipline of black voices and I create critical space for the framework I have developed in this chapter to be engaged, challenged, and shaped by black thinking and black voices. It is helpful to discuss the origin and development of the BMC to give further clarity to the choice to use it as a source for case studies in this chapter.

The BMC was started as a "convention/consultation" within the MCSA in 1975 (Black Methodist Consultation, 2020). The BMC was not birthed in a vacuum. It came into being at

⁹⁴ This claim will be justified by the discussion of the BMC's history and development and the exploration of the case studies below.

the same time as Black Theologies and Black Consciousness were gaining traction and voice in the South African context. I noted the dual emergence of SABT and Black Consciousness in South Africa's history in chapter 2 of this dissertation. The BMC affirms and participates in this historic legacy, noting the inspiration of Black Consciousness, African theology, and Black theology in its inception (Black Methodist Consultation, 2020). It is notable that the BMC states it started as a form of protest within South African Methodist clergy. The BMC stirred outspoken resistance and action against "white superiority in the MCSA" during Apartheid (Black Methodist Consultation, 2020). This resistance movement amongst the clergy then broadened to include lay people, expanding the movement to include all black men and women in the MCSA who wished to join it (Black Methodist Consultation, 2020). The BMC is thus an institution that was birthed with South Africa's political, social, economic, and religious experience seeking to engage in particular with those most oppressed by the injustices of our past.

The BMC during Apartheid can be succinctly described as a consultation designed for Black Methodists to speak their voice in the MCSA, to address issues affecting black people, to pursue ongoing justice and liberation in the MCSA and South African society at large and to "relate the Gospel effectively to... Black people and their situation in South Africa" (Black Methodist Consultation, 1991, p. 3). Practical steps to achieve these various goals included providing witness, speaking to a particular set of values and norms that resisted the values and norms of Whiteness⁹⁵, in MCSA spaces, making MCSA spaces safe and accessible to black members, creating space for black Methodists to participate in liberation and justice work, developing local black MCSA churches, deepening black Methodists' understanding and celebration of African history and heritage, networking and connecting with other political and Christian organisations with similar values, and creating space for meaningful dialogue between black and white Christians (Black Methodist Consultation, 1991, p. 4). The BMC pre-1994 embraced the logics of Black Consciousness for developing Black dignity and "humanhood", pursuing the Africanisation of the MCSA and tangible improvement in the economic, social, political, cultural and religious lives of black Methodists (Dandala, 1987, pp. 1 – 3). The BMC thus acted as a part of the voices and movements for liberation from Apartheid and racism in the 20th Century in South Africa. It also acted as a vehicle for equipping black

⁹⁵ The term 'Whiteness' is not present in this source, however the norms and values highlighted are reflective of white superiority which is coherent with my definition of Whiteness provided in chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter.

South Africans, particularly black Methodists but not exclusively so, granting them voice and pursuing holistic liberation with them.

Unsurprisingly, the BMC has had to change in its shape, form, and ideology since the end of Apartheid. This is coherent with the general shifts Black and African theologies and philosophies have taken since the collapse of Apartheid and the beginning of democracy in South Africa in 1994. The BMC offers two critical reasons for its continued existence in the 21st Century. The first is that it seeks to still act as a vehicle for communicating the aspirations, needs and experiences of black Methodists who continue to suffer under the enduring legacies of various forms of oppression such as colonialism and Apartheid (Black Methodist Consultation, 2017). The second reason is argued to stem from the first, being that the BMC seeks to still be an empowering agent for black people for the purpose of liberation and meaningful equality in the contexts in which it works (Black Methodist Consultation, 2017). The BMC seeks to act as a space creator for “thinking together, not to feed pathologies, but to liberate each other for strong and powerful leadership” (Black Methodist Consultation, 2017). The BMC thus continues to exist for the purpose of liberating and equipping black Methodists in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context.⁹⁶ It creates sites of discourse and agents of transformation within the MCSA.

The BMC has noted that it seeks to embrace diversity within its modern approach to liberation and equipping people within the MCSA and the Southern African context. It seeks not to be bound by divisions within institutions nor does it seek to utilise resources offered only by black Methodists (Black Methodist Consultation, 2017). This is part of an endeavour described as being “salt and light”, being a “laboratory” for the creation of thinking, cultures, structures, practices and the like which can then be enacted in the “theatre” that is the MCSA (Black Methodist Consultation, 2014, p. 1). This comes with clear prophetic undertones as the BMC seeks to be openly critical of itself and those in leadership, whatever race they may be, to produce the excellence that is envisioned by the BMC (Black Methodist Consultation, 2014, p. 1). It is notable for this project that the BMC has made the cry for deepened understanding of Black theology in a 21st century context (Black Methodist Consultation, 2014, p. 2). It is within this context that this dissertation participates in BMC discourse, seeking to be part of modern

⁹⁶ The BMC at times references Southern Africa due to the MCSA being comprised of 6 Southern African nations. The scope of this project is only inclusive of South Africa, and as such I will only make reference to South Africa as a context.

SABT discourse and participate in its application in the context of the MCSA. With this context in mind, I move to describe the two case studies of this chapter.

5.4. Case Studies: BMC Chairperson Addresses from 1990-91 and 2019

The case studies that will be used in this chapter are three addresses presented by chairpersons of the BMC throughout its history. Case study 1 will be comprised of two addresses given by Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala in 1990 and 1991. These addresses are titled *Restating the Case for the BMC* and *A Ministry for a New South Africa*. Case study 2 will be comprised of a single address given by Rev. Mzwandile Molo in 2019. This address is titled *Burning to Light Up for God's Justice*. These addresses serve as part of decolonial praxis in this dissertation, decentring academic literature as a dialogue partner and drawing from non-academic addresses to shape my academic theological reflection. It has also been noted in the discourse above on the focuses of the BMC that it, in part, seeks to displace and dismantle “white superiority”, legacies of colonialism and Apartheid within the MCSA. I thus use these addresses as case studies to explore how Whiteness, white supremacy, race, racism, coloniality and Blackness are explored as phenomena pre- and post-Apartheid in the BMC. Following this exploration, I engage these case studies using the South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness offered within this chapter. The dialogue between my frame and these case studies highlights the validity and veracity of my framework, and my frame’s potential contribution to South African theology on Whiteness in the 21st century. I begin first with the addresses from 1990-91 and then move to the address in 2019.⁹⁷

The first of the two addresses comprising case study 1 was delivered by Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala (Black Methodist Consultation, 2020). The first address is titled *Restating the Case for the BMC* and it was delivered in 1990. Dandala (1991, p. 1) begins this address by re-affirming the purpose of the BMC: “rallying Black people within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa for the development of their self-confidence”. In the process of celebration of previous chairpersons, Dandala (1991, p. 1) particularly affirms the work of Itumeleng Mosala, specifically noting the importance of the “intellectual basis to all facets of our struggle for

⁹⁷ The rationale for using two addresses from 1990-91 is due to the nature of their publication. These addresses were initially published together as a group resource for clear understanding of the BMC and its objectives (see Dandala, 1991). This means that a clearer case study can be presented from engaging with more than just one of the addresses in this period. Though not every detail of each address will be engaged, critical points that are necessary for this discourse will be lifted from the various addresses offered.

liberation” that Mosala offered. Mosala’s intellectual basis is reinforced by Dandala (1991, p. 1) who contends theological reflection must be grounded in the regular experiences of those most often excluded in such discourses in Apartheid South Africa. Dandala (1991, p. 1) reflects on the enduring presence of the BMC, celebrating its endurance being due to its pursuit of meaningful black development and “authentic liberation”. Though this is the case, he highlights that the BMC’s work is ongoing and that there are important goals still to achieve (Dandala, 1991, pp. 1 – 2). This section of the address highlights that Blackness is conceived by the BMC at this stage through the lenses of Black Consciousness at the time: a phenomenon to be claimed back for “authentic liberation”. BMC discourse is particularly shaped along the lines of the work of Itumeleng Mosala. Noting Mosala’s work means logically the BMC would include economic liberation as critically linked to liberation from racism.

Dandala then moves to reflect more intimately on what has been achieved by the BMC. He echoes the historic goal of the BMC which is “promoting black leadership within the ‘one and undivided community of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa’” (Dandala, 1991, p. 2).⁹⁸ This goal, Dandala (1991, p. 2) argues, raised questions regarding what methodological approaches should be taken by the BMC to actualise this goal. He highlights that this first began with organising amongst the black clergy of the MCSA for participation in transformative action within the leadership and structures of the MCSA (Dandala, 1991, p. 2). This work with ministers would then be continued by ministers in conversation with the laity, which forged more trusting and effective relationships between black clergy and laity and inevitably resulted in the inclusion of black laity within the BMC (Dandala, 1991, pp. 2 – 3). This section of the case study highlights the BMC’s core focus on engaging with black interlocutors and making black spaces within the MCSA for black thought, black action, and black leadership. Black distinctly means the racial category as it was conceived in Apartheid. This section notably recognises the need to challenge the MCSA systems and structures of the time which were designed to benefit white people and grant white people overdue space in leadership and decision making.

Dandala then moves to engage another critical goal of the BMC. This goal is to achieve non-racialism (Dandala, 1991, p. 3). Dandala (1991, p. 3) engages the question of whether the

⁹⁸ The “one and undivided” phrase makes reference to a MCSA statement against Apartheid in 1958. This statement was that the MCSA would be one and undivided, refusing the ideas of separate development prevalent at the time and establishing a mandate of racial equality and justice for those oppressed by Apartheid.

existence of the BMC resists the progress towards non-racialism, noting that the BMC has always argued that black people's experiences and voices cannot be drowned out in a truly non-racial context. This, he continues, benefits not only black people but white people who also need help transitioning into a non-racial context (Dandala, 1991, p. 3). He contends that the purpose of the BMC should always seek to assist in this regard helping people of all races in the MCSA reach a place of acclimation to non-racialism (Dandala, 1991, p. 3).

While this is the case, Dandala argues positively for the role of the BMC because it allows for black people to realise how "White Western context" has influenced their thought and action detrimentally, and ultimately produce knowledge and action consistent with black Methodist experience in Southern Africa (Dandala, 1991, p. 4). The extents of conversation, he suggests, should not be limited for the BMC to fulfil this purpose and should result in engagements on doctrine, socio-political, economic and other issues (Dandala, 1991, p. 4). This section of the address articulates that the BMC plays a unique strategic role in assisting the MCSA to become a manifestly non-racial space. This is argued as requiring the subversion of white control and "White Western context" influence not only in the MCSA but in every facet of South African society, this concept being reflective of what I define as Whiteness in this dissertation. This section of the address also notably frames and engages Whiteness through the lens of Blackness as I have sought to do in this dissertation by engaging the concept of the "White Western context" on the backdrop of Black Consciousness. Dandala positions the BMC as assisting all racial groups to acclimate to a non-racial space and deconstructing historic notions of "us and them", producing new racial identities and relationships not grounded in the notions of Apartheid.

Dandala follows this by highlighting some of the challenges of building a culture of tolerance. He notes that conversations are at times clouded by impatience as people within the BMC struggle to reach the same position on critical points of liberation discourse (Dandala, 1991, p. 4). The BMC, he insists, is a body for consultation and engagement as opposed to a body for legislation and, as such, should preserve and create spaces for dialogue that may be uncomfortable amongst the pluriversity of views that exist in its spaces (Dandala, 1991, p. 4). He further argues that the violence the country faced at the time of the speech was reflective of "impatience with differing opinions prevalent in our society" (Dandala, 1991, p. 4). As such an important turn for the BMC is to develop members of the BMC to engage with complex positions well, to listen with patience, and build common ground without causing harm (Dandala, 1991, p. 5). This section of the address provides critical insight into the approach to

non-racialism offered by the BMC at this stage, namely building capacity for robust engagement on complex topics where members hold incredibly diverse positions. Dandala suggests the BMC continues to create meaningful spaces for internal and external transformation, allowing for identities to be re-shaped in the process of engagement. He notably pushes back against the idea of universal voice that silences alternative voices and experiences, an approach that has led to division and violence, arguing for the continued building of pluriversality in the BMC.

Dandala highlights critical challenges to be addressed in future by the BMC. Chief amongst these is making the BMC into a more accessible platform for black Methodists across the board (Dandala, 1991, p. 6). Similarly important is to not shift from the role and structure of being a consultation and to keep in sight the importance of being impactful within the broader institution of the MCSA (Dandala, 1991, p. 7). Impact, he contends, should be measured through the creation of leadership at local and national levels who speak the voice and experiences of black Methodists (Dandala, 1991, p. 7). Impact should similarly be measured through the use of finances to explore further research into “Black Methodist work” (Dandala, 1991, p. 7). Dandala (1991, pp. 7 – 8) concludes this address by highlighting the importance of deep thinking and strategic management of methodology and opportunity to meaningfully transform the MCSA and South Africa. This section of this address re-emphasizes the practical focus of the BMC, that the ideologies that inform the BMC seek tangible outcomes. It similarly pushes forward the desire of the BMC to build its understanding of black Methodist experience, and to impact the broader MCSA and South African society to shift its shape into a non-racial inclusive space.

The second address I use is titled *A Ministry for a New South Africa*. This address begins with Dandala (1991, p. 31) celebrating the work of the BMC in creating new leaders and building practical transformation in the MCSA based on the ideology of Black Consciousness. He clarifies the BMC’s positionality on Black Consciousness as “a foundation for self-respect, rather than an antagonistic stance to anything” (Dandala, 1991, p. 31). This self-respect, he continues, allows for black people to be present in any circumstance or context without “self-destructive aggression” or any sense of inferiority (Dandala, 1991, p. 31). He celebrates tangible work done by ministers of the BMC to build this confidence, and the connections that were built between the BMC and liberation movements of the time (Dandala, 1991, pp. 31 – 32). This section of the second address highlights the framing of Black Consciousness within the BMC, namely not basing black identity on antagonism of white identity, Whiteness,

coloniality or the past but the on development of self-understanding and respect. It also shows the connection of BMC work to liberation movements in South Africa, highlighting the BMC's intentions for racial transformation are both within and outside of the MCSA at this time.

Dandala (1991, p. 33) then shifts to ask critical questions of the notion of a “new South Africa”. He laments the tragedies that unfolded post the release of Mandela in 1990, including huge amounts of black-on-black violence, the phenomenon of the “third force”, and the lack of accountability for white people's involvement in the violence of the time (Dandala, 1991, p. 33). He highlights these realities whilst calling also for the building of a “culture of democracy” and begins to explore the necessary characteristics of what might be called a “new South Africa” (Dandala, 1991, pp. 33 – 34). The characteristics he names are as follows: a “common and equal” vote for all adult South African citizens, collective consciousness of the “value and obligation” of this vote, access to both the means and work of production for all South Africans, a universally accessible, free and quality education system, complete equality before the law, equal access to facilities, essential basic facilities such as health care be free, equitable land redistribution with “special obligation” to ensure those who can use land most effectively do so for the collective benefit of all South Africa and total freedom of religion (Dandala, 1991, p. 34).

These nine characteristics from Dandala highlight the clear ideological underpinning of socio-political and economic liberation for black Methodists, and black South Africans, as pursued by the BMC. This section also highlights tangibly what Dandala noted as the BMC not grounding itself in antagonism. The BMC approach of not being grounded in antagonism manifests itself through Dandala's pointed remarks challenging unequal realities created by Apartheid, white superiority and Whiteness in South Africa without building his critiques or his solutions on the foundation of hostility towards white people and Whiteness. An example of this is Dandala's call for universally accessible, free and quality education. The reality during Apartheid was unequal education that was partially accessible, costly and of varying quality. Inequality in education was distinctly along racial lines with white people having access to superior education whereas black people were given sub-standard education in separate schools to white people. As such, through claiming universally accessible, free and quality education as a necessary component for a “new South Africa”, Dandala is critical of the established norms of Apartheid, white superiority and Whiteness that are exclusionary of black people. Simultaneously he does not construct his image of a “new South Africa” through aggression or hostility towards Whiteness or white people. He rather moves towards a

constructive solution, one that subverts the status quo of the time without building from the foundation of antagonism.⁹⁹

Dandala (1991, p. 34) offers these characteristics as essential points that should be debated for the sake of clarity and transformation of the South African context. The BMC, he argues, should not be left confused: it should be prepared to meaningfully assist South Africa transition into a new democratic dispensation (Dandala, 1991, p. 35). Reliance on a deeper community led vision and praxis is essential for this process, not leaving some at the top to make decisions while enduring tensions exist between laity and clergy (Dandala, 1991, p. 35). He calls on local black Methodist churches to take accountability and responsibility for transformative action in communities, recognising they are part of the collective body that needs healing and restoration (Dandala, 1991, p. 36). The weeding out of corruption, true development of members to resist those leaders who want unquestioning sheep to follow them, and general empowerment of black people are noted as critical acts for the building of a “new South Africa” (Dandala, 1991, p. 37). Dandala in this section outlines the BMC’s role more particularly again as a space creator for dialogue, challenging injustice and oppression within church and societal spaces and pushing self-awareness and accountability. He highlights that within the ranks of black leaders there are troubling actions reflective of economic exploitation and other markers of oppression.

He concludes this address noting that there are instances where some of the greatest resistance to the work of meeting the needs of the downtrodden emanates from some black Methodists (Dandala, 1991, p. 37). He does not absolve white people in this regard, but he focuses on challenging local black contexts to take responsibility of the transformative action that lies at their feet (Dandala, 1991, p. 37). Taking transformational matters to be of “critical importance” to the life, function, growth, mission, and direction of local churches is the crux of the call

⁹⁹ It is worth reinforcing that this does not suggest black people have no right to have hostile emotions towards these phenomena or that Apartheid, white superiority and Whiteness were not meaningfully addressed. Rather, it is grounded in Dandala’s (1991, p. 31) and the BMC’s thinking that the greatest asset for transformation for black lived experience is the creation of a new Blackness rooted in dignity and self-confidence. This is reflective of the position of Black Consciousness which is also sharply critical of Whiteness and white people but does not seek to establish meaningful solutions to Apartheid injustices through hostility and antagonism towards these two things. Black Consciousness is a direct critique of Whiteness as a phenomenon which establishes itself *via negativa* Blackness, and as such Black Consciousness suggests the creation of an alternative not reliant on negation but on positive upliftment, dignity and self-respect (see Biko, 1987).

Dandala (1991, p. 37) makes. As such, as the transition to freedom approaches, he suggests that black people ultimately take responsibility and offer ministry that meets people's real needs together with the broader church and MCSA (Dandala, 1991, p. 38). Through this conclusion Dandala reinforces an ethic of responsibility in the BMC. He urges local people to participate in the work of building a culture of democracy that is tangible and lived. He similarly situates this work as critical to the future life and function of the MCSA in a "new South Africa". He notably highlights the co-option and buy in of black Methodist ministers in economic exploitation. This is reflective of Whiteness as I have defined and described it within this dissertation, as it embodies the co-option of those who were historically considered black by Whiteness, socio-economic privilege at black people's expense, for the continuation of the status quo.

These first two addresses give helpful insight into BMC views on Whiteness, Blackness, race, racism and coloniality during Apartheid. Race and racism are addressed within the context of Apartheid and the approaches to challenge Whiteness are grounded in socio-political and economic liberation of black people from Apartheid. The approaches taken by the BMC are not grounded in particularly describing or antagonising Whiteness, coloniality or white people. Rather, they address the problems being created within a white supremacist state and seek to address those problems for the betterment of the black experience in South Africa and the MCSA. Through critical engagement of realities produced by Apartheid and colonialism, the BMC pursues tangible solutions as well as new ways of thinking and being that are not grounded in hostility towards the status quo. Though anger is entirely justified, the approach of the BMC is to produce solutions that do not rely in negation of or hatred towards the status quo or the white producers of the status quo. Rather they pursue and create a new kind of Blackness grounded in dignity and a "new South Africa" that subverts the hostility and systemic violences of Whiteness at the time. Steps to right the imbalances of power, denial of ontological density and erosion of local epistemology include forming black leaders, building up black thought and creating a new dignified black identity.

Blackness in this case study is framed through the logic of Black Consciousness: it is reclaimed by the BMC as a liberative tool as opposed to being a tool to oppress and silence as it was originally designed. Race is viewed through the early stages of race and/as class discourse as presented by Mosala, however it is clear that nuanced theorisation on these realities is still being explored. Theoretical exploration was ultimately secondary to tangible transformation of black lived experience at the time. Notably, Dandala highlights the arrival of black leaders and

voices who are corrupt and who continue the white supremacist status quo, buying into or being co-opted by Whiteness as I describe it in this dissertation, at the expense of other black people. It can be concluded from this case study that the BMC at this stage were implicitly critical of Whiteness and coloniality, but their approach relied less on naming and subverting and more on taking tangible steps towards liberation from Apartheid. Through defeating Apartheid and preparing local black and white people for transition to democracy, the BMC's envisioned non-racial South Africa could be birthed.

Rev. Mzwandile Molo gave the 2019 chairperson's address to the BMC (Black Methodist Consultation, 2020), which constitutes case study 2 of this chapter. This address is given in a very different socio-historical, political, cultural, and economic context to the first two addresses of case study 1. This address is given twenty-five years after the end of Apartheid and the establishment of democracy in South Africa. It is also given nearly thirty years after the addresses of case study 1. The notions of race, racism, Whiteness, Blackness and coloniality have been developed substantially over this time. Similarly, the experience of these phenomena has changed drastically in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. Post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa has seen total shift in the racial demographic of the political elite from majority white representatives to majority black. There has been the rise of a black middle class. There has been the total removal of racist legislation. There is a generation of young adults who had no experience under Apartheid, including myself. This address is given in the context of addressing legacies of Apartheid. Rather than engaging Apartheid itself and seeking to subvert it, it is presented in an era where the enduring legacies of Apartheid are explored, challenged, and subverted.

In this address, titled *Burning to Light up for God's Justice*, Molo (2019, p.1) establishes the tone of his presentation, speaking of Christ as "liberator". He writes in two black vernacular South African languages, isiXhosa and SeSotho, using these languages as tools to lead those present to reflect on those black Methodist clergy and laity who established the BMC and the "mothers' voices" who established many black Methodists as people of faith (Molo, 2019, pp. 2 – 3). This address is given following the election of the first female Presiding Bishop of the MCSA Rev. Purity Malinga, Molo (2019, p. 5) notes, and the BMC openly celebrates the support they offered to achieve this election result. Molo (2019, pp. 5 – 6) also highlights how in this moment of election the boundaries of "patriarchy, race and tribalism" were overcome for a higher, divine purpose.

In this opening sequence Molo highlights that the BMC remains committed to raising black leaders for the purpose of transformation of historically and presently oppressive white spaces in the MCSA and post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African society. He also encompasses the ideal of Africanisation through the intentional inclusion of languages other than English in his address. This is notable, particularly, as reflective of Decoloniality. He uses indigenous language and knowledge openly within an inclusive frame, challenging the notion of communicating public addresses in English only. He relates his message to theological characteristics of SABB, in particular those pertinent to phases 3 and 4 through his references to patriarchy and tribalism, and celebrates the enduring work to transform the MCSA into a new form different to its present one where realities such as racism, patriarchy and tribalism exist. He also acknowledges that oppressive structures are intersectional and need to be subverted at various levels.

Molo (2019, p. 6) continues and celebrates the election of other female leaders into bishop positions in the MCSA. This moves him to reflect using the words of Ben Okri on the value of those present at the address and how God will transform black people's experience of suffering into "wonders of the earth" (Molo, 2019, pp. 6 – 9). Molo (2019, p. 9) directly attributes the reflection on these words to the need to celebrate Blackness and being African in a context that hides its "white supremacy, privilege and neo-liberalism" in the dangerous notion of "neutral universalism". He builds an image of Blackness that bursts forth life where it seems impossible, recognising through reference to Achille Mbembe that those who are black in current day South Africa have been made "ghost[s] of modernity" that are denied ontological density and thus this new Blackness is necessary (Molo, 2019, pp. 9 – 10).

Molo (2019, p. 10) further emphasizes the BMC vision of new Blackness through visions of a black Africa beyond subjugation. He visions this whilst openly reflecting on his complex relationship with the Christian faith and the Bible because of the horrors inflicted by them on black Africans (Molo, 2019, p. 10). He lists not only the loss of ontological density but the loss of land, language, dignity, value beyond being a pawn for the "gods of the market" and the holistic exclusion of black people from various elements that make reality what it is (Molo, 2019, pp. 10 – 11). Molo in this section gives further detail to his ideological and theological stances, as well as those of the BMC, in the 21st century. He highlights that the BMC directly acknowledges white superiority, what I frame as Whiteness, in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa, challenging its hiding and subversive nature. He further highlights that the BMC recognises the direct role of modernity in the continued propagation of white superiority, its

effects on black people in current day South Africa and the various injustices it intersects with such as classism. The BMC as he describes it is openly critical of Christianity's relationship to the historic and enduring "dark side of modernity", lamenting various lingering legacies of colonialism and Apartheid on ontology, epistemology, economics, socio-political and cultural life particularly for black people in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa.

Molo (2019, pp. 11 – 12) invites the 2019 consultation to wrestle with the theme of "Burning to Light Up for God's Justice". This theme reflects illumination, potential being accessed and used, resistance and rebellion and standing for something as opposed to choosing neutrality (Molo, 2019, pp. 12 – 13). He reinforces that God's justice is not impartial in spaces and contexts of oppression and celebrates the defiant voice that can be found in Scripture denouncing empire, a theme that can be related to the empires of slavery, colonialism, and Apartheid (Molo, 2019, pp. 13 – 15). Molo (2019, pp. 15 – 17) utilises Matthew 5, framing Jesus Christ in this text as a figure of rebellion against status quo and empire in his time. Molo (2019, pp. 17 – 19) particularly emphasizes the importance of the challenge made to those with religious and socio-economic power in this Biblical text, as well as the notion of the Divine subverting human notions of power. Molo in this section adopts the position that God is on the side of the oppressed and highlights the essential work of subverting power structures and systems that cause the oppressed to be oppressed. He affirms that the fight for liberation is not yet over and that the work of denouncing historic empires like slavery and colonialism endures into the present with the legacies of these empires. He recognises this as both a sociological and theological impetus and uses theological and sociological tools to highlight enduring injustice in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa and what BMC response to this should be.

Molo (2019, pp. 19 – 21) further explores the theme of being the light in the world that burns for justice, translating this into the work of the BMC to be light within the MCSA and the broader Christian church. He contends that what is necessary for this work is prophetic witness: challenging openly injustice as it appears and manifests, being the very material that is burnt up for the sake of justice and casting aside security for transformation (Molo, 2019, pp. 21 – 22). He notes and celebrates achievements of the BMC that have embodied these things to the point of practical action such as work for gender justice and leadership training (Molo, 2019, pp. 22 – 26). Simultaneously to this celebration, Molo (2019, pp. 22 – 26) implores that further work be done in developing black thought, challenging enduring racism and tribalism, and

acknowledging internal shortfalls of the BMC in achieving tangible justice in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa.

Molo particularly condemns paying lip service to transformative action for the needs of the least. He highlights instances of the BMC failing to challenge racism, economic exploitation and general inequality, this failing being related to people growing comfortable with the status quo in the BMC (Molo, 2019, pp. 26 – 27). He extends this critique to the broader church who silence and marginalise the poor in their midst and fail to meaningfully engage matters of injustice that are pertinent and contextually relevant (Molo, 2019, pp. 27 – 28). Molo, in this section, emphasizes the need for tangible response to enduring injustice in Southern Africa and the MCSA. The BMC's framing of injustice is once again framed intersectionally and as a multi-layered reality. He celebrates that there has been growth and transformation in the MCSA in response to injustice, and that the BMC has played a critical role in this, but notes the enduring challenges that continue to not be addressed or insufficiently addressed. Molo highlights that the BMC particularly is critical of itself and the Church, Methodist and beyond, for participating in the exploitation of the vulnerable.

Molo (2019, pp. 28 – 29) engages critically with participants regarding their lack of criticality towards certain black individuals and groups who have been given undue voice and space to cause harm and perpetuate injustice in the MCSA and current South African society. He continues that this lack of criticality is an extension of the enduring decay in the work of forming transformative groups and institutions that the BMC should participate in, decay that has informed and been informed by a lack of urgency in the BMC (Molo, 2019, p. 30). Molo (2019, p. 30) laments how this sluggishness has prevented the BMC from shaping discourse on MCSA internal structures, shaping inclusive doctrine on the LGBTQI+ community and noticing the injustices that have infiltrated the BMC's ranks. He charges the BMC with meaningful pursuit of poverty eradication, building thinkers and intellectuals who can engage reality and its challenges accurately (particularly theologians), subversion of patriarchy within the MCSA and BMC, creating meaningful dialogue spaces to address the MCSA's stances on the LGBTQI+ community, creation child inclusive and safe spaces in the MCSA and pro-active engagement in internal MCSA structural discourse (Molo, 2019, pp. 31 – 33). Molo's concluding section emphasizes critical points of engagement for the BMC in the 21st century, highlighting particular injustices such as economic disparity and discrimination against the

LGBTQ+ community as primary areas of engagement.¹⁰⁰ He highlights how black people are participating in harm towards other black people, and again draws into frame how unjust treatment of some ultimately reflects as unjust treatment by the church holistically. He highlights the enduring work of the BMC to theorise about issues of injustice to better understand and subvert them.

Case study 2 captures the growth and shift in the BMC's stances on race, racism, Whiteness, Blackness, ethnicity and coloniality. It highlights that the BMC conceptualises race as an enduring legacy of colonialism and Apartheid and its subversion is no longer tied only to the fall of Apartheid and preparing people for democracy. Race is viewed in tandem with various elements such as gender, class, and sexual orientation as the basis on which the various intersecting layers of oppression function. Greater recognition is given by the BMC to the enduring role of modernity, specifically its proverbial "dark side", the present imbalances of power and privileges, ontological damage, epistemological destruction and oppression in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. White superiority, what I term as Whiteness, enduring from racialised systems and structures is recognised as an underlying driving force that has created and sustained the injustice current day South African society faces. Ethnicity is notably celebrated in this case study as evidenced by Molo's use of several vernacular languages in drawing people to reflect on and remember parents and leaders who paved the way for the BMC to this point. Ethnicity is also recognised as central to racial discourse in light of growing tensions, in the forms of xenophobia and tribalism, between ethnic groups in the MCSA and Southern Africa generally.

Whiteness and coloniality are largely still not present as terms for the BMC, and Blackness still applies distinctly to black people. The church's role, often specifically the MCSA, in supporting enduring evils from modernity is highlighted and the need for the church to change as well as society is centrally important to the BMC in this case study. Though it remains focussed on building Blackness and black identity, the BMC adopts a more openly critical voice towards colonial and Apartheid legacies that continue to affect the MCSA and the current day South African context. The BMC's approach of developing theorising that assists practical liberation is maintained, along with producing black leaders and black thought with continued

¹⁰⁰ It is notable that Molo views these challenges as not isolated to the MCSA. Though he does not always explicitly state it, the goals of the BMC continue to be transformation of the MCSA and post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African society more broadly.

emphasis on understanding the critical phenomena that the BMC, MCSA and Southern Africa face in the 21st century.

5.5. Case Studies in Dialogue with South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness

These case studies will be engaged by locating the core points of the addresses within the framework of Per Frostin's five key characteristics of liberation theologies. My South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness framework will then be brought into dialogue with these case studies to test its veracity and validity. It is worth noting at the outset that my frame for South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness allows for contextualising the addresses of these two case studies within their historical location. The language of the Black Consciousness Movement and SABB in its four phases are a core part of my framework and, as such, the understandings of race, racism, Blackness, Whiteness and coloniality presented in these case studies can be located within their broader discursive context. I will now address case study 1, ordering its core claims using Per Frostin's five key characteristics of Liberation theologies.

Frostin's first characteristic is the choice of interlocutor. In case study 1 the BMC's interlocutors are those considered black within Apartheid South Africa's framing. However, as this is done it is recognised that not all black people embody Blackness, nor do they experience it in the same way necessarily. This is made clear from the celebration of Mosala and the critique of select black leaders at the time within case study 1. This choice of interlocutor correlates slightly with my frame for South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness. My frame also acknowledges particular people considered black as central interlocutors but does not do so within Apartheid framing. This case study critically reveals that the conception of Whiteness and Blackness at the time of this case study in the BMC was reflective of the 1990s as a historic context. As such, there is unsurprising distinction between who should be treated as interlocutors in 21st century scholarship particularly in current SABB, Whiteness and Decolonial discourse. The South African Decolonial framework I have developed in this chapter maintains that interlocutors should be both white people and black people due to the contextual and changing nature of Whiteness, Blackness, and coloniality.

Frostin's second characteristic, perception of God, within this case study is grounded within the tenets common to SABB reflection at the time. Perception of God revolves around the liberation of black people and a God who is real, accessible to and on the side of black Africans.

The particular language of Africanisation and recognising the value of African spirituality in case study 1 frames God as one who was present in Africa before the influence of Christianity. There is also notable influence of pluriversality on perceptions of God in this case study. This pluriversality is evidenced by Dandala's explicit call for dialogue within the BMC that allows for varying viewpoints to exist in dialogue with one another. Dandala goes as far as to argue that inability to engage with complex differences in viewpoint, both regarding theological and sociological issues, resulted in some of the violence within black communities at the time of the case study. Dandala draws the need for pluriversal discourse into the theological space by highlighting that the church has been entrenched in "White Western context[s]" in its thinking, being and action in South Africa. He makes the explicit call for unthinking this influence and control, grounded in an open dialogical consultation method that listens to the varying voices that constitute black Methodists to shape pluriversal perceptions of life, faith and God.

This perception of God is similar to my frame of South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness. My developed framework suggests the need to unthink white Western influence on God and the church through listening to pluriversal indigenous voices, experiences, and perceptions of God. My framework also argues for noting where Whiteness is present within a particular conception of God and subverting it. Though this is not stated using the same language in this case study, Dandala's suggestions of pluriversal dialogue that subverts Whiteness as it is found traditional notions of God and faith, as well as society generally, carries similar impetus. Though this case study does not engage the reality of Whiteness or coloniality explicitly, it does so implicitly through mining for traditional African perceptions of God, critiquing perceptions of God that are not liberatory or on the side of the oppressed and suggesting pluriversal lenses for conceptualising God. My frame for South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness reflects these same notions and offers more complex insight from Decolonial and Whiteness scholars to further explore how "White Western context[s]" have influenced and shaped thinking about God and faith.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ This complexity is highlighted in my developed framework through explicit naming of various characteristics of Whiteness and coloniality. Examples of these characteristics include white innocence, white guilt and how white Western notions of God may reinforce these phenomena. This explicit naming in my framework also includes coloniality of power. This is naming how damaging perceptions of power enduring from colonialism and Apartheid shape how God's power is perceived in Christianity as well as how particular conceptions of power from Christianity's perception of God has shaped coloniality of power.

Frostin's third characteristic, analysis of conflict, in this case study is grounded in the black experience of Apartheid. Socio-political and economic conflict both from Apartheid legislation and the "third force" are particularly notable. This case study notes that there is both violence between races and violence within races and thus conflict is not only along white and black lines. It is not referred to explicitly, but the notion of denial of dignity and humanity is unambiguous in the critiques Dandala and the BMC offers of South African society at the time. The realities of Apartheid and white superiority are acknowledged as sources and causes of conflict and violence that are physical and metaphysical. Through engaging explicit realities at the time, such as the 9 necessary characteristics for a "new South Africa", this case study suggests that injustice at the time was linked to historic injustice. Particularly, this case study argues that injustices of the present that it spoke into were legacies of historic injustice.

This analysis of conflicts in this case study is similar to my frame for South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness. Though it again does not use the same language, this case study conceptualises systemic violences as from the same original sources and causes, Apartheid and colonialism, as my framework. My framework agrees with and expands upon the nuanced discourse beginning to take place in this case study regarding the intersectional and multi-layered nature of oppression, the role that Whiteness and coloniality play in the creation of a "new South Africa" and the role of Whiteness and coloniality in seeking to prevent the creation of a "new South Africa". It is notable that the sites of conflict remain along race, culture, and class lines in this case study and do not go deeper necessarily into gender and sexual orientation. Intersectionality as offered by my framework, as well as modern Decolonial, SABB and Whiteness frameworks, is more complex and pushes for the inclusion of other categories of oppression.

Frostin's fourth characteristic, social and theological analysis, in this case study is reflective of relatively early Black Consciousness and SABB thought. The emphasis of this case study is that transformation for society and the church, sociologically and theologically, rests in empowering black thought, black action, and black leadership. Transformation, according to the case study, is ultimately grounded in the development of an ontologically dense black identity. This emphasis on transforming Blackness recognises, as explored through my frame of Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness, the denial of ontological density by white systems and structures. My framework proves helpful in locating this case study's sociological and theological discourse within the broader relevant sociological and theological discourse of its time. Similarly, there continue to be agreements between my framework and this case study.

These agreements include the need for developing new conceptions of Blackness, building and using tools for transformation of theological and sociological spaces and challenging systemic violence and injustice in social and theological analysis. My framework is, however, notably more vocal about the realities of Whiteness and coloniality where they are often only inferred in this case study. This is due to shifts current SABB, Decolonial and Whiteness discourse to name particular realities using these terms. My framework also notably is not chiefly focussed on the task of shaping new Blackness itself. Though it may be useful in such a task, my framework is built recognising that black spaces such as those being advocated for by the BMC in this case study should not be overwhelmed or silenced by the work my framework can participate in.

Frostin's fifth characteristic is the relationship between theory and praxis. The BMC is notably, throughout case study 1, framed as chiefly concerned with liberative praxis. Whilst there is a clear call for complex theorisation from the BMC, the call is grounded in the need for transformative action. There is a clear desire for theorisation which helps the BMC better understand the beasts it seeks to defeat in its time in the form of various systemic violences and a still extant Apartheid government. My frame for South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness allows for key insight into these realities both at the time of case study 1 and in the present through its mapping of South Africa's experience with realities like race, racism, Whiteness, Blackness and coloniality. My framework also forms part of the necessary enduring work called for in this case study for complex discourse on the various phenomena that contribute to injustice and oppression in the South African context. My framework offers insight into how to confront the systems and structures, informed by Whiteness and coloniality, that are producing the problems which are being symptomatically addressed to be fixed in this case study in the transition to democracy. My framework is also praxis oriented and grounds within the visible traditions of SABB present in this case study.

The above discourse on case study 1 highlights that there is validity and veracity to my frame for South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness. At the outset my framework assists to locate this case study in its discursive context in the 1990s. My frame also offers key insight, not yet present at the time of this case study, into how Whiteness and coloniality function and how they should be engaged. My framework offers the language and terminology of later discourse on race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness to tease out realities of Whiteness and coloniality that were not yet named as such but were engaged and noted as needing to be

subverted in this case study.¹⁰² My framework shared overlap with this case study in its conception of how to respond to several unjust phenomena such as adopting pluriversality, engaging in processes of Africanisation, assisting South Africans to meaningfully transition away from the realities and legacies of Apartheid and pursuing more complex thought regarding race, racism, Whiteness, Blackness and coloniality.

My framework diverged with this case study on several fronts. The divergence is often grounded in historical distance between the South African academic and socio-political contexts of the addresses and the contexts of my framework. Shifts in SABC, Decolonial and South African Whiteness discourses in the 21st century resulted in my framework maintaining different conceptions of Whiteness and Blackness,¹⁰³ the choice of interlocutors through my frame's inclusion of white people, different approaches to analysing conflict due to my framework's discourse being grounded in the post-Apartheid context and general difference in terminology due to my frame's engagement with distinct or newly developed theoretical frameworks. Difference in terminology between my frame and case study 1 often revolved around my frame having language to describe coloniality and Whiteness when it is only inferred and its symptoms described in the case study. For example, Dandala would reference injustices and what should be done to fix them, such as injustice in the education system at the time, which within my framework would be described as a manifestation of Whiteness and coloniality of knowledge, being and power. The differing language used to describe these phenomena notably did not necessarily result in divergence between my frame and the case study in how these phenomena should be addressed.

Though there is notable divergence in conceptualisation and terminology between case study 1 and my framework, their similarities highlight more than just their shared origin. Divergence also acts as an embodiment of pluriversal engagement as encouraged both by my framework and this case study. Pluriversality is grounded in differing conceptions of complex phenomena being brought into meaningful dialogue with each other. This case study highlights that my framework was designed through intentionally listening to black voices and black-led theory regarding race, racism, Whiteness, Blackness and coloniality. While there is limitation in how much this case study can affirm this due to the historical distance between the two addresses

¹⁰² Later discourse meaning discourse published after the case studies.

¹⁰³ This case study engages race and/as class but does not capture fully the multi-layered nature of oppression as described within my framework which includes phenomena such as gender and sexuality.

that constitute it and my framework being developed, the clear overlap between my frame and case study 1 highlights that my framework is grounded in the same traditions of thought as the BMC which overtly grounds itself in SABB and Black Consciousness. My framework is helpful for noting the shift in trajectory in scholarship in SABB that was occurring at the time of the case study and can be said to be, considering this case study, a potentially useful dialogue partner for 21st BMC, SABB, Decolonial and South African Whiteness discourse.

Case Study 1 contributes two potential conceptual insights to my framework. First it highlights that there is a critical need to assist people of all races to adapt to democracy in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. Dandala in this case study emphasizes that the pursuit of non-racialism requires tools to assist people acclimate to a non-racial space when all they have known is racialism. My framework thus can be shaped as a tool for assisting people, in particular those considered white, within the present South African context to acknowledge Whiteness and coloniality, explore both phenomena with greater nuance, and ultimately pursue a non-racial South African future. The second conceptual contribution is that this case study emphasizes building new identity not out of antagonism but of the building of a new way of living and being. Dandala emphasizes this in the black context through the building of a new kind of Blackness. This can be translated into my framework, arguing that South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness does not exist to antagonise Whiteness or ground itself in antagonism. Rather, my framework can be explicitly rooted in the process of building new identities and shifting Whiteness from creating itself through the negation of Blackness. I now move to engage with case study 2 to explore the validity and veracity of this framework for engaging with Whiteness and coloniality as engaged by the BMC in the 21st century.

I turn now to case study 2. For the second case study Frostin's first characteristic, the choice of interlocutor, remains black people. However, this choice of interlocutor is expanded to not only to include race, class, and culture but gender and sexual orientation as well. Conceptions of Blackness are deeper and more nuanced in this case study compared to case study 1 as evidenced by Molo's direct reference to the multi-layered nature of oppression and the importance of engaging race in tandem with realities such as tribalism, patriarchy, and homophobia. The influence of modernity, colonialism, Apartheid, and white superiority on the identity of the BMC's interlocutors are openly acknowledged and engaged in this case study. Molo openly embraces decolonial tactics to subvert these phenomena and relates the experience of Blackness and black suffering directly to colonialism, Apartheid, modernity, and

their enduring legacies today. This is done in tandem with open recognition of the varying languages and cultures that constitute a black interlocutor's identity in the MCSA and South Africa generally in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid context.

Internal inconsistency within traditional notions of Blackness and all black people being interlocutors are acknowledged in this case study. The BMC clearly notes black people who cause economic exploitation, ignore the plight of the oppressed and live comfortably within the status quo of post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. These black people are not treated as interlocutors by the BMC. My framework for South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness diverges with this case study in its choice of interlocutors to include white people due to how I conceptualise Whiteness, Blackness, race and coloniality. This is a notable difference that also existed in case study 1. Though this is the case, case study 2 maintains a lot of similarity in how it conceptualizes multi-layered nature of oppression and the essential positioning of interlocutors being those most oppressed by the enduring realities of coloniality and Whiteness with my framework.

Frostin's second characteristic, perception of God, in case study 2 is grounded in SABB notions. Jesus Christ is referred to as "liberator" and the point of departure for God-talk is pluriversality.¹⁰⁴ Resistance to white Western Christianity's traditional notions of God as products of colonialism is openly stated in this case study, and the call for tools to further disconnect Christianity from perceptions of God that are Western is clear. Particular perceptions of God are rejected, such as those that are not for the liberation of the oppressed, and there is noticeable argument for common "gods of the marketplace" to be resisted with liberative perceptions of God and faith. This case study resists the harm of universal, homogenous perceptions of God and faith, calling for further healing and liberation of perceptions of God through turns to indigenous knowledge and Africanisation processes. My frame for South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness departs from an almost identical position in its perception of God. My frame gives distinct and helpful language and tools for describing and engaging the problems raised by this case study regarding harmful white Western perceptions of God through discourse on Whiteness and coloniality. My framework is also pluriversal in its perceptions and argues in the same vein of drawing from

¹⁰⁴ Jesus Christ's person and work do not form part of my framework at this stage. The inclusion of Jesus Christ as "liberator" is a potential contribution of this case study to my framework, however it is not as noteworthy as other contributions that I list later in this section.

indigenous knowledge to subvert the enduring effects of Whiteness and coloniality on perceptions of God. My frame further elaborates how perceptions of God are used to cause harm in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa and it offers particular avenues for holistic and liberative alternate perceptions.

Analysis of conflicts, Frostin's third characteristic, in this case study begins with recognising conflict emanates from the creation of zones of being and non-being. Black people are framed as having been made the "ghost[s] of modernity". This ghostly nature is framed in this case study as imposed on black people through colonialism, Apartheid and their enduring legacies. The role of the church is distinctly acknowledged as a critical vessel of Apartheid, Colonialism and modernity in inflicting violence both internally and externally for black people and is a critical source of conflict in this case study. It is notable that systemic violences, elements of the conflicts analysed in this case study, are recognised as subversive and hidden within certain norms of post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. My framework for South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness disagrees with this case study because it recognises that not only black people are denied ontological density by Whiteness and coloniality realities due to the opaque, contextual, and changing nature of Whiteness and coloniality.¹⁰⁵

Though these two positions are distinct from one another, there is clear overlap in other regards between my framework and this case study in analysis of conflicts. Their overlap is grounded in their shared conception of colonialism and Apartheid as creators of zones of being and non-being, as well as the legacies of these two phenomena continuing the creation of these zones post their formal ends in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. My frame acknowledges, like this case study, that this is made manifest in norms and enduring power imbalances, Whiteness and coloniality, intersecting within the various layers of oppression as a phenomenon in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. The role of the church is similarly critiqued in my framework, as in the case study, as being in some ways a product

¹⁰⁵ It is worth re-emphasizing that my framework does not do this to deny the experience of black people in South Africa both during and post-Apartheid and post-colonialism. Rather it adopts this position to ensure it nuances sufficiently the total system of race and Whiteness in South Africa today. This system is notably dynamic and will regularly change parameters and boundaries, co-opting and inviting buy in from those considered black during Apartheid and trampling those considered white during Apartheid for the maintenance of preserving Whiteness and coloniality.

and tool of colonialism, Apartheid and their legacies whilst also being a tool for liberation therefrom.

Social and theological analysis, Frostin's fourth characteristic, in this case study begins with recognising the enduring realities of white superiority, modernity, universalism and various forms of oppression. Oppression is conceived as complex and multi-layered and the tools and languages of various frameworks such as queer theory, liberation theology, SABB, Marxism and feminist theory appear in the address to highlight where injustice is found and what action must be taken by the BMC to subvert still extant injustices. The reality of epistemicide and denial of ontological density is more distinctly acknowledged in this case study than case study 1 and analysis pivots around what structures and systems have eroded indigenous African epistemology and created zones of being and non-being. Molo in this case study explores epistemicide and ontological density through his self-described complex relationship to the Bible and Christianity. He highlights elements of what he has lost in himself and what other indigenous black Africans have lost through the impositions of Christianity and Western ways of thinking and being. This includes, he notes, the erosion of language and culture and extends also into the loss of land and the transformation of black people in South Africa into objects for financial gain amongst the elite.

The case study partners these observations with suggestions of how they should socially and theologically be responded to such as through reclaiming indigenous African language and culture, challenging enduring injustice in church and societal discourse and praxis and actively transforming the structures of the MCSA and South African society in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid context to be less reflective of their white Western origins. My frame for South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness departs from the same place regarding social and theological analysis as this case study. Though the use of coloniality and Whiteness as terms for analysis, and as critical frameworks for subverting enduring injustice, is not explicit in this case study, it is implicit in the approaches of this case study. This is notable in approaches explored in this case study like using indigenous African resources to challenge and subvert enduring legacies of Apartheid and colonialism. My framework adopts a similar posture of intersectionality to this case study and notes how race, gender, sexual orientation, class, social status, political status, and the like form part of the various grounds on which Whiteness and coloniality oppress and marginalise people. My framework notably concerns itself with reflection that results in transformation and offers similar tools for achieving this goal.

The relationship between theory and praxis, Frostin's fifth characteristic, in this case study is clear: reflection is grounded in praxis. In this case study efforts to better understand various phenomena such as Blackness and race post-Apartheid have been shaped by practical efforts and theorising informed by the praxis that has been transformative. The chief concern of this case study remains coherent with the BMC's long-term vision of tangible transformation of lived experiences and the systems and structures of both the MCSA and broader post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African society. My framework for South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness embraces the same approach of being theory shaped by praxis and experience for the purpose of shaping better praxis. This is manifest through my frame being shaped by, submitted to, and disciplined by those who have suffered under coloniality and Whiteness. My frame similarly emphasizes the need for lived transformation both in the Christian Church and society and offers deeper insight than the case study into how Whiteness and coloniality can be subverted practically through various tools as availed by Whiteness, SABB, and Decolonial scholarship.

This case study, case study 2, affirms similarly to case study 1 that my framework for South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness has veracity and validity. This is made clear through the overwhelming overlap in content and engagement of phenomena between this case study and my framework. Areas of overlap include recognising the overlap between modernity, colonialism, Whiteness, and the enduring effects of Apartheid; the effects of coloniality such as the denial of ontological density and epistemicide; the need for indigenous knowledge as a resource for informing subversive action and theory; the multi-layered nature of oppression and the role of Christianity in creating and preserving both coloniality and Whiteness. This case study calls for continued theological and social analysis to better understand race, racism, Whiteness, Blackness and coloniality which my framework offers.¹⁰⁶ Both case study 2 and my framework depart from the position of praxis taking precedence over theory. This case study highlights that my framework engages in relevant and necessary discourses, namely SABB, Decolonial theory and South African Whiteness Studies, to move

¹⁰⁶ This again remains the case if this framework is used for the creation of another frame that disagrees with some of my frame's core premises. This case study highlights that my framework is an effective dialogue partner that engages necessary realities that are prevalent in the 21st century post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context.

closer towards liberation in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa from Whiteness and coloniality.

The validity and veracity of my framework are affirmed through this dialogue with case study 2 even though there are distinct differences in conceptualising of core issues between case study 2 and my framework. My framework maintains white people as interlocutors whereas this case study maintains it should be black people only. My framework highlights that zones of being and non-being are not distinctly occupied by only white or black people. My framework for South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness specifically maintains that white people can be trampled underfoot in the present South African context for the purpose of maintaining coloniality and Whiteness as they are presently extant. This differs from the case study which maintains that the “ghost[s] of modernity”, those denied ontological density, are black people only. My framework specifically uses more jargon from Decolonial theory and South African Whiteness Studies than this case study to describe particular phenomena, though this does not necessarily result in divergence between my frame and this case study regarding how to subvert various forms of injustice. My framework also notably does not focus on the work of building new conceptions of Blackness which remains a primary focus of case study 2 as an embodiment of the work of the BMC.

This case study offers two potential conceptual resources to my framework. The first is its engagement with the notion of empire. This is a notion that is not uncommon to liberation theologies in the 21st century (see Carvalhaes, 2020). The notion of empire could be further intertwined with my framework for unpacking the present “empires in the room” that shape global realities of Whiteness and coloniality which post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa links to. The second is that this case study is notably intersectional in its approach to doing theology. It embraces the use of academic frameworks, lived experience, the Bible and Methodist doctrine together in its complex web of analysis. In doing this it challenges Whiteness and coloniality in these various theological frameworks, shifting traditional interpretations of Biblical texts and doctrines. This offers the potential contribution to my framework of becoming more intersectional within theology as a field, drawing on various theological disciplines more rigorously. My framework could be brought into dialogue with particular doctrines and Biblical texts for both sharpening how it conceives Whiteness and coloniality and for noticing and subverting Whiteness and coloniality in particular doctrines and Biblical texts.

5.6. The Contribution of My Framework to Theological Reflection on Whiteness

Considering these case studies, the contribution of my framework for South African Decolonial Theological reflection on Whiteness to theological reflection on Whiteness can be summarised as the following. My framework offers insight into Whiteness from the combined insights of three frameworks that are useful in studying Whiteness in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa, namely SABB, Decolonial theory and South African Whiteness studies. My framework particularly draws Decolonial theory and South African Whiteness Studies into dialogue with each other and with theology in a distinct fashion that has not been done before in theological reflection on Whiteness in South Africa. My framework allows for South African theological analysis of Whiteness that is not divorced from the multi-layered nature of oppression in the South African context, noting various phenomena such as gender, class, culture, sexuality and coloniality as necessary to incisive and comprehensive analysis of race, racism, Whiteness and Blackness. My framework facilitates greater nuance in South African theological reflection on Whiteness through noting the opaque, shifting, and contextual nature of Whiteness in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid context. My framework allows for theological reflection on Whiteness that also has strong conceptualising of Blackness rooted in South African post-colonial, post-Apartheid conceptions of Blackness. This strong conceptualisation of Blackness is produced by black scholarship and so my framework offers this contribution without speaking on behalf of those considered black.

My framework prevents ahistorical theological analysis of Whiteness in current day South Africa, grounding reflection in work already done in academia and theology reflecting on Whiteness and coloniality. My framework forms part of the theological tradition that shows the potential for white people to participate in discourse on Whiteness which listens to and is shaped by black voices and black-led theory. My framework can be used as a tool for building further resources for assisting white people to engage with Whiteness in theological spaces. My framework offers helpful continuation of the work in SABB's present fourth phase, forming part of SABB's contribution to theological reflection on Whiteness in post-Apartheid, post-colonial South Africa. My framework provides helpful language for exploring the relationship between power and norms, values, and privilege within theological reflection on Whiteness through clarifying the relationship between Whiteness and coloniality. My framework participates in filling the gap in the literature I noted in chapter one of this dissertation. My framework offers useful contributions to SABB, Decolonial theory and South African Whiteness Studies whilst also existing as a unique frame.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I brought the three theoretical frameworks of this dissertation SABB, Decolonial theory, and South African Whiteness Studies into dialogue to produce my own framework for South African Decolonial Theological Reflection on Whiteness. This was done through bringing SABB's fourth phase, formed through dialogue between SABB and Decolonial theory, into dialogue with concepts of Whiteness studies focussing particularly on South African Whiteness Studies. I brought these concepts into dialogue with two case studies from the BMC, noting how these case studies informed my framework whilst also affirming its validity and veracity. I concluded this chapter by summarising the contribution my framework makes to theological reflection on Whiteness. This moves me to offer a summary of the work done in this dissertation and concluding remarks based on the research conducted.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

In this concluding chapter of my dissertation I offer a summary of the research done in this dissertation. I also offer summary of the conclusions reached in each of the previous chapters. I conclude this chapter by reflecting on my experiences carrying out the research, the limitations of the research and my recommendations for further research.

6.2. Summary of Research and Conclusions

In this dissertation I sought to answer the following research question: what would a potential Decolonial theory of Whiteness situated in South African Black Theology look like? In attempting to answer this question I broke it down into four critical sub questions:

1. What are the relevant discussions on Blackness/Whiteness in literature on Black Theology in South Africa?
2. What are the relevant discussions in literature on Decoloniality in academia with particular emphasis on discourse in theology?
3. What are the relevant discussions on Whiteness in Black Consciousness, Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness and South African Whiteness Studies?
4. What theologically useful theoretical concepts and frameworks on Whiteness can be derived from bringing South African Whiteness Studies and Decolonial theory into dialogue within the context of South African Black Theology?

These four sub-questions were addressed in their own respective chapter. Chapter 1 was used to introduce the research problem, giving background to the research question and sub-questions, introducing this dissertation as a theory crafting project and introducing the theoretical frameworks and methodology of the dissertation. I began the exploration of the relevant theoretical frameworks of the dissertation in chapter 2 through the exploration of historical and contemporary discourse in South African Black Theology (SABT). My discussion began with an explicit discussion of my social location in the South African context. Following this, I discussed the development of SABT in three phases as mapped by Tinyiko Maluleke. The concepts of these three phases were organised using Per Frostin's five characteristics of liberation theologies from his book *Liberation Theologies in Tanzania and*

South Africa: a First World Interpretation. I briefly introduced SABB's fourth phase at the end of this chapter.

Discourse on the first phase of SABB focussed on the birthing of Black theology and Black theological concepts in North America and South Africa. Discourse on the second phase of SABB focussed on the notable shift in SABB discourse on race to recognise race and/as class. Discourse on the third phase focussed on the inclusion in SABB of further components of identity and reality that inform the multi-layered nature of oppression such as culture and gender. This chapter concluded with a brief discussion of the emergent fourth phase of SABB, the Decolonial turn. This concluding section introduced concepts that would be further unpacked and explored in chapter 3 of this dissertation, such as coloniality.

In chapter 3 I discussed the second theoretical framework of this dissertation Decolonial theory. I focussed first on discussing Decolonial theory generally in academic scholarship, unpacking critical theoretical concepts of Decolonial discourse such as colonialism, coloniality, decolonisation and decoloniality. Within these discussions I analysed the several forms of coloniality that exist such as coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge, coloniality of being, coloniality of gender, coloniality of sexuality and coloniality of nature. I also explored the various means by which coloniality is challenged and subverted according to Decolonial theory, the processes and tools of decoloniality. I then shifted the discussion to explore Decolonial theology, analysing the relationship between decolonial sociological and theological scholarship. I then specifically located Decolonial theoretical discourse in the meta-framework of SABB, specifically SABB's fourth phase. I did this in the final section of this chapter organising the theoretical concepts of this fourth phase using Frostin's five key characteristics of Liberation theologies.

In chapter 4 I discussed Whiteness in South Africa, specifically focussing on the third theoretical framework of this dissertation South African Whiteness Studies. I began discussion in this chapter by first clarifying the core terminology of race, racism, Whiteness, and Blackness to ensure that the discourse that would follow incorporating these concepts would be coherent. I then established the theoretical background to the development of South African Whiteness Studies, particularly noting the contributions of Black Consciousness, Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies to understanding Whiteness in South Africa both during and post-Apartheid and colonialism. I then engaged South African Whiteness Studies, particularly highlighting the complex, fractured and heterogenous nature of Whiteness in South

African in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context. I especially noted the relationship of Whiteness to various other forms of oppression and the ability of Whiteness to co-opt those historically considered black, and to disregard and trample those historically considered white, for the maintenance of the status quo in accordance with South African Whiteness Studies. I concluded this chapter through brief discussion of the work already done in South African theology to explore Whiteness in conversation with South African Whiteness studies, noting critical concepts and insights relevant to the discourse that would follow in chapter 5.

In chapter 5 I brought the three theoretical frameworks of this dissertation, SABL, Decolonial Theory and South African Whiteness Studies, into dialogue to produce my own South African Decolonial frame for theological reflection on Whiteness. I structured my framework using Frostin's five key characteristics of Liberation theologies. I then introduced the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) as the source for case studies to test the veracity and validity of my framework, as well as to draw potential contributions from the BMC to my framework. I briefly justified the choice of the BMC as a source for these case studies before summarising the two case studies used and drawing out important concepts for analysis from them. I then brought the critical concepts of the case studies into dialogue with my theoretical framework, once again using Frostin's five key characteristics as an organising frame for the concepts, noting both the agreements and disagreements between my framework and the BMC in conceptualising and working to subvert, race, racism, Whiteness, harmful conceptions of Blackness and coloniality.¹⁰⁷ I also briefly noted potential contributions each of the case studies made to my framework. I concluded this chapter by noting the contribution my framework offers to theological reflection on Whiteness.

The discussion of chapter 5 sought to answer the initial research question presented in chapter 1 of this dissertation. I contend that the aims that underpin this initial research question have been achieved and that this dissertation offers a response to each of the research sub-questions presented in chapter 1. Further research is both possible and necessary for the further development of my theoretical framework. However, this dissertation provides a foundation for further discourse in this regard.

¹⁰⁷ This work of the BMC is notably grounded in building notions of Blackness that are self-determined by black people, dignified, and liberatory.

6.3. My Experiences Carrying Out the Research

I have found carrying out the research of this dissertation to be fruitful and challenging. I have found that the research has been transformative for me as an individual and thus my choice of methodology was appropriate and helpful. I have found myself growing in my thinking about the complex issues I have explored, and I have opened myself to be transformed by the insights of black-led theory and black scholarship to engage my own Whiteness. I have found this project helpful to my journey of being a “white in transition”, a white person who seeks to acknowledge Whiteness in themselves and society and participates in liberatory and transformative work to change the status quo. I found the opportunity to be present in my research particularly helpful for this. While it could at times be painful and challenging, it was a gift that the research did not remain purely an intellectual task but transcended into something that has shaped how I live and interact with the world.

I at times struggled with the research because it regularly revealed my limitations as a scholar. I particularly found the process of analysis challenging. This revealed to me the gift of being able to do a Master’s degree. It reminded me that the purpose of carrying out this research was both to try and produce new theoretical information and to grow me as a thinker and scholar. I have wondered whether or not I had the capacity to do the work and have enjoyed the process of embracing growing and learning as opposed to feeling like I need to have already arrived at the place of being an excellent scholar. The research has stirred me to be excited to keep looking, keep exploring, keep questioning and keep pursuing. Though this dissertation has left me with a great deal of questions, the research has further sharpened my desire to seek further questions and, perhaps from time to time, a few answers.

6.4. Research Limitations and Recommendations

This research was limited by a few factors. The first is the length of a Master’s dissertation. Whilst noting again that this has been a necessary limitation for my own growth as a scholar, it became clear very early on in the research process that a study of this nature will require more complex analysis than what can be offered within the constraints of a Master’s dissertation. The research was also limited because I was doing it whilst also working a full-time job as a probation minister within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. There were times where the research process was inhibited by other responsibilities that I have. I could not always commit as much time or energy as I would like to the various processes of research. Finally, though I believe it is overwhelmingly to its benefit, this research was at times limited

because of the number of frameworks I used. Having so much theoretical information to condense was, at times, a sincere challenge. The study may have benefitted by bringing only two of the frameworks into dialogue and then expanding with a third framework at PhD level.

I recommend that this research be continued to further explore the validity and veracity of South African Decolonial theological reflection on Whiteness. I recommend that I continue to expand upon the framework I developed in chapter 5 of this dissertation at PhD level. I recommend two potential approaches for further research. Both approaches are grounded in first expanding the theoretical base of my framework through more complex dialogue between SABT, Decolonial theory and South African Whiteness Studies. The first recommendation for application is to bring my framework into dialogue with various doctrines and polity in historically white English-speaking churches to highlight where Whiteness and coloniality may be present and to explore how it might be subverted. The second recommendation is that my framework be translated into community engagement programs that challenge and subvert Whiteness and coloniality in local South African church communities.

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