



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

FACULTY OF COMMERCE, HUMAN SCIENCES AND EDUCATION
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**CONTESTED IDENTITIES, RACE AND CULTURE: AN ANALYSIS OF *THE LAST
RESORT: A MEMOIR OF ZIMBABWE* BY ROGER DOUGLAS, *BORN A CRIME:
STORIES FROM A SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDHOOD* BY TREVOR NOAH AND
NEGRO LAND: A MEMOIR BY MARGO JEFFERSON**

MASTER'S THESIS

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DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS**

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DECLARATION

I, Sesilia K. Namakasa, hereby declare that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part of this work has not been submitted for a degree in any institution of High Education. Any work that I have used has been acknowledged in the thesis.



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ABSTRACT

This study analyses contested identities, race, and culture in *The Last Resort: A Memoir of Zimbabwe* by Douglas Rogers, *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah and *Negroland: A Memoir* by Margo Jefferson through the lens of the postcolonial theory. One of the main focuses of the postcolonial theory is identity, and it is identity crises which give rise to multiple and fluid identities. Through the postcolonial theory the themes of race, culture, hybridity, and double consciousness are addressed. The study is a desktop qualitative research, and it uses content analysis to interpret and analyse the chosen autobiographies. The purpose of the study was to explore, the construction and contention of identity, race, and culture, as presented in the three selected text, through the lens of the postcolonial theory.

The study found that all the three texts that were analysed are testament to how identities were constructed during apartheid, slavery, or colonisation and how identities were contested in postcolonial societies. The aftermath of all forms of colonisation led to the rise in identity problems being faced by individuals in contemporary societies. The study also found that, colonisation impacted identities of both the colonised and the colonisers to a great extent.

The study recommends that more studies analysing identities in autobiographies using the post-colonial lens are conducted especially in African countries not covered in this study and that the black man's identity be analysed in other genres of literature such as poetry and drama using the postcolonial theory. Lastly, the study also recommends that more studies are conducted, analysing Namibian autobiographies to scrutinise the Namibian identity.

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DEDICATION

To my best friends, Mercia Kandukira.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the study by providing the background of the study, the statement of the problem and the objectives of the study. It also stipulates the significance of the study, limitations as well as the delimitations of the study.

1.2 Background of the study

Issues on cultural and racial identities have become important concerns in academic reflections (John et al., 2015). In literary studies, for example, there have been debates about identity construction and the correct labelling of individuals from interracial relationships, and the identification of these individuals has been a source of contention in most societies (Barn & Herman, 2016). Kiekergaard (2019) posits that race as a form of identity has no biological basis; it is fabricated with the intention of assigning status to some groups while other groups are permitted access to privileges, power, and wealth. The motive in such divisions is to classify people based on skin colour and other physical features. To trace the history of race, Smedley (1998) argues that the current ideology of race did not exist before the 17th century.

Exploring how race became part of our culture, Smedley (1998) argues that there is a need to disconnect cultural features of identity from biological. On the other hand, scholars such as Kim (2007) claim that cultural identities are broad and they designate both sociological and demographic classification, as well as an individual's psychological identification with a particular group. Considering this background, the study uses three autobiographical texts to further examine how identities we contested and negotiated through the apartheid system, immigration and based on colour. This impact will help address critical questions such as what happens to identity when one moves across borders and moves between different races and cultures. In other words, how do cultural and racial differences impact and affect one's identity?

As such, this study argues that racial identity is an area that is not fully understood, hence the need to further interrogate this concept.

Furthermore, since the outbreak of independence, liberated nations have been battling for their own identity, and with the expansion of the number of settlers and the constitution of countries with distinctive cultural diversity, the topic of identity has risen to the surface. Despite being independent, many nations especially African nations are facing political and economic issues, as such identity crises have risen to the surface, causing confusions about their identity and culture (Dizayi 2015).

In this context the concept of identity has become complex in contemporary society and there are different meanings assigned to it. For instance, De Souza (2009) claims that identities are social organisations capable of producing the normal and abnormal in the society. Expanding on this, Moore (1994) postulates that identities are processes of identification compelled with the desire to belong to distinct categories. The concept of identity comprises multiple practices of categorisation and regulation (Cohen, 1997). These categorisations and regulations constantly produce fluid, heterogeneous and political as well as antagonistic identities (Lovaas and Jenkins, 2004). Despite being at the personal level, identities are not individual but cultural, historical, social, and collective (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004). Castells (2010) regards identity as something that is constructed, and not something that is naturally inherited or created spontaneously. Identity as a construct refers to how an individual or a group, conceive, define, or represent themselves based on their position in society (Elison, 2013). According to Hall, this means that “Identity is not an already complete fact, but rather, it’s a production which is never complete, but always in the process and always constituted within, not outside (Hall, 1996, p.146). The three texts under study were analysed to show the complexity of identity formation, and how the fluid identities are constructed and negotiated.

Contested identities in this study were examined within the paradigm of the representations of the racial and cultural identities in the three autobiographies; *The Last Resort: A memoir of Zimbabwe* by Roger Douglas, *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African childhood* by Trevor Noah and *Negroland: A Memoir* by Margo Jefferson.

These autobiographies were selected because they represent diverse identities and how they are shaped and constructed. Using the three texts, the study analysed how identities are contested and challenged through the apartheid system, immigration, and hybrid nations.

Although there are ample studies on identity, not much has been done especially with regards to identity construction in biographical texts. Hence, it is important to investigate the contestation of identities in postcolonial African literature, and this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge about identity. As such, the three texts examine how the autobiographical genres address problematic identities in diverse cultures and races, and in different geographical spaces.

1.3 Problem statement

The major concern of this study is to analyse how identities are contested through race and culture in selected autobiographies. The representation of such problematic identities is of vital importance to this study. The study examines the plurality of identities in the colonial and postcolonial eras and across geographical borders. As such, identity can only be understood as a process of being and becoming. An individual's identity, who one is, is constantly multi-dimensional, singular, and plural; it is never a settled or a final matter (John et al. 2015). Individuals in postcolonial societies struggle to justify their existence, hence, are continually in search of 'themselves.' Through the process of decolonisation, the postcolonial subjects attempt to free their cultures and explore what is left of their original cultures as well as analyse or question their new identities (Asma, 2015).

Colonialism has affected the socio-political and the cultural life of the colonised people giving rise to racial, cultural, or general identity contestations.

This is commonly depicted in several autobiographies in which writers have a quest to negotiate and reconstruct their identities. As they narrate their experiences, they find themselves in the dilemma of finding a sense of belonging, questioning whether they can identify with a certain cultural group or racial group.

This study therefore established how identities are challenged and contested in the selected autobiographical texts; *The Last Resort: A Memoir of Zimbabwe*, *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* and *Negroland: A Memoir*. The study also examined how the authors negotiated and resolved identity related issues.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine contested identities in different racial and cultural contexts in the selected autobiographies. However, the specific objectives are:

1. To investigate the role played by race and culture in shaping social identities in the three texts.
2. To examine the impact of colonialism on identity construction in the selected texts.
3. To explore the complex ways of identity construction in post-colonial societies as portrayed in the selected texts.

1.5 Significance of the study

The study will enable researchers and students to explore the concepts of identity and post-colonialism. It also hopes to disseminate knowledge on the relationship between identity, race, and culture, to raise the readers' awareness on identity crises faced by many postcolonial societies. Lastly, the study aims at disseminating knowledge on the effects of colonialism on the identity of the people. It seeks to conscientise other scholars on the strategies used to resolve identity crises in the postcolonial societies as portrayed in the three autobiographies.

1.6 The delimitation of the study

The study analysed three autobiographical texts with the theme of identity from a post-colonial perspective. Autobiographies give a better insight into how individuals are shaped by their experiences. The autobiographies analysed in this study are limited to specific geographical

spaces; Zimbabwe, South Africa, and the United States of America, which allows for a diverse and distinct exploration of the individuals' experiences when negotiating their identities.

1.7 Definition of terms

7.1 **Post colonialism**-a theoretical approach in various disciplines that is concerned with the lasting impact of colonisation in former colonies.

7.2 **Contestation**-the action or process of disputing or arguing.

7.3 **Identity**- Who or what someone is.

7.4 **Autobiography**- the story of someone's life written by themselves.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature relevant to postcolonialism and identity construction. The literature review is divided into different subheadings, namely. Identity construction and representation, racial identity and cultural identity, self-narration, and identity construction: Autobiographical subjectivities and identity, race, and class: Postcolonial modes of identity in fictional imaginaries. The main purpose of the literature review is to review the existing knowledge, which in turn forms the basis for the study and helps to establish the research gap.

2.2 Literature review

The literature review is the most critical section of research (Kandemiri, 2018). The purpose of the literature review is to establish the uniqueness of one's study (Kothari, 2004). Similarly, Mouton (1996) believes that a literature review survey is an essential component of any study as it is the main gateway to the relevant body of knowledge. In other words, it seeks to contextualise research within the pre-existing corpus of related research. O'Leary (2017) posits that a well-constructed literature review is an essential requirement for establishing research credibility. It puts research into context by relating it to previous research. Denney and Tewksbury (2013) define literature review as a comprehensive overview of prior research regarding a specific topic.

Precisely, "The aim of the literature review is particularly to show the reader what is known about the topic and what is not yet known, thereby setting a rationale or the need for a further investigation, which is what the actual study to which the literature review is attached seeks to do" (p.1). The literature review section in this chapter examined and engaged previous research on concepts such as identity construction, forms of identity, identity, and race as well as identity construction in autobiographical fictional imaginaries.

Creswell and Poth (2016) observe that conducting a literature review is not limited to a single step. There are four types of ways used when conducting a literature review. The initial stage is to incorporate what other researchers have done. Another method involves a critique of previous scholarly work, and another category of literature review identifies the central issue in the field. A combination of both can assist the researcher to generate a detailed and comprehensive review. What other scholars have already investigated and established provided a basis on which the selected texts were analysed.

2.2.1 Identity construction and representation

The concept of “identity” is an elusive one to define. It has often been synonymised with concepts such as “self-referencing,” “self-definition” and “the self,” among many others (Schöpflin, 2001). At a basic level, identity refers to the parameters by which an individual sets themselves apart from others – how they view themselves in relation to others. In other words, it is the dissection between the “SELF” and “OTHERS. “Identities, in a manner of speaking, are anchored around a set of moral propositions that regulate values and behaviour which also manifest as both individual and collective. Ainsworthy & Hardy (2004) reiterate that although identities are at personal level, they are not individual, but cultural, historical, social, and collective. This is because whereas we are quite capable of carving identities for ourselves as individuals, we are born into and live in societies with others – communities often characterised by collectively shared traditions, norms, values, and beliefs that also influence how we imagine ourselves as the “SELF” amongst “OTHERS” (Schöpflin, 2001). Because of these shared existential experiences, we also tend to identify ourselves with a collective identity – a tribe, an ethnolinguistic group, a language, a race, a gender, religion, region, among others. The three texts analysed in this study demonstrate how individuals tend to identify themselves and are identified by others within a group of people.

They depict the concept of cultural identity historically as well as social identity. Cerulo (1997) further observes the same and argues that identity studies have been relocated to the side of the collective. Gender, race, sexuality, and ethnicity amongst others form part of the collective identity.

In *Born a Crime* by Noah, the concept of racial identities is tried, questioned, and contested. De Souza (2019) also asserts that identities are fragmented and fractured, never individual but always political, multiple, and built through difference and take several forms. These forms are encapsulated in the diverse number of parameters which are reflective of both individual and collective identities. For example, imagining identity in the broader context of national identity and cultural identity, the immediate implication thereof is that our identity is partly a matter of what we share with other people (Buckingham, 2008). Dowling (2011) asserts that constructing identity forms part of the integral part of human species which involves life experiences, relationships, and connections. This indicates that the construction of identity is much more complicated and convoluted. It becomes important to note that one form of identity is the one that is formed through memory. This includes both individual and collective memory. Such a source of identity is what often feeds the construction of autobiographical narratives.

Taylor (2015) also observes that “Identities are presumed to be multiple, complex, and situated; all identities are social including those personal identities which are experienced as unique e.g., who am I?” (p.1). the question “Who am I?” typifies the process of negotiation that often characterises identity formation. It represents in a manner of speaking, a quest for the modes as well as anchorages on which one defines the “self.” Often than not, it is a definition of the self which is guided by an individual’s imagination of the “self” in relation to “others” or aspects of his or her immediate environment. In the same vein, De Souza (2019) also notes that the process of identity creations and reconfiguration involves discursive practices by which people position themselves according to the position of others within discourses in a specific space and time. In other words, most times, our understanding, and constructions of individual identities are intricately linked to how we relate with the “others” of similar or different beliefs, traditions, cultures, genders, ethnolinguistic backgrounds, among others. Similarly, Hall (2003) also believes

that “Identities are so to speak, the position by which the subject is obliged to occupying the identity discourse” (p.19).

Speaking to the concept of identity as ‘difference,’ especially in relation to how individual identities are carved, Buckingham (2008) submits also that identity is something that we uniquely possess, and it implies both similarities and differences. This means that it is something that distinguishes us from others, yet it implies a relationship with a broader collective or social group of some kind (Taylor, 2015). Dowling (2011) further contends that Identity is linked to racial and cultural heritage. Complex as it is, the concept of “identity,” which mostly infers to a sense of self-definition and self-referencing is shaped thus by a multiplicity of both internal and external factors. As such, this study examined some of these factors as represented in the three autobiographical texts.

As intimated above, the perspicacity and reconstructions of individual identities are intricately linked to how individuals relate with the “others” of similar or different beliefs, traditions, cultures, genders, and ethnolinguistic backgrounds (external factors). It also involves how individuals think and believe who they are (internal factors, often conditioned by ego and esteem). In this regard, it is plausible to thus argue that some of these aspects of identity are constructed for individuals (external), while the individual(s) (internal) constructs others. Sometimes people silently hide parts of their identity, and at times they project them loudly. This process, influenced by sensitivities and sometimes the desire to be the same with others, is often because of selective projections of the ‘self’—the desire for the world to view individuals in a particular light, even if they are directly the opposite.

According to Taylor, (2015), people and institutions around us may have rigid ideas about who we are and how we should express ourselves. This results in individuals often shying away from their true selves in search for accommodation within the singularity of cultural identity. They in many cases attempt to block personal expression and even promote their own versions of acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour.

In contemporary society for example, queer sexualised persons, especially in African societies are afraid of identifying with their desired sexualities for fear of ostracisation resulting from non-conformity to imagined sexual, gender and cultural identities.

Vygotsky (as cited in Dowling, 2011) viewed the “self” as a complex emergent phenomenon which is consistently produced by individuals in their interactions with others and with the culturally transformed material world. In other words, it would be folly to imagine the individual identity outside of collective imaginations of identity. Even for those that refuse to conform to the ‘norm,’ their identities culminating from the non-conformity would need to be defined in terms of the others – the conformists. On the other hand, Erickson’s (1979) notion of constructing identity does not only reflect a culminating summary of past life, but also the ongoing construction created as the basis for future meaningful adult life. This observation views identity formation as always in a constant state of flux – mutating in line with both personal growth as well as being maturational. He proclaims that the function of identity is future oriented, and it is developed through life stages; and the successful orientation produces specific personality traits, which keep changing and building with experiences (Erickson, 1979). This is the process through which uniquely individual identities are carved. This therefore stipulates that; identities are dynamic and are constantly changing. This can clearly be seen in Roger’s *The Last Resort*, where we are presented with a society of multiple identities emanating from the past interactions of individuals. This too is true about Jefferson’s *Negroland*, and Noah’s *Born a Crime*, where new identities surface from the interactions of different people with different racial and historical identities.

Another important concern related to the foregoing is identity formation based on the need for a sense of belonging. This has often resulted in a conflict between the desired self and the need to conform – resultantly leading to identity crises. Asma (2015) contends in this regard that an identity crisis is a period of discrimination in which values and relationships are thrown into questions once taken for granted.

In addition, Ninkovich (2001) believes that these questions are not only normal kind of questions, but they are questions of self-adjustment which bedevils individuals that are caught up in identity crises. These questions include “Who am I?” “Where do I belong?” The need for an anchorage often provided by the cover of numbers is vital to understanding this diatribe. Asma (2015) further explains that while identity is shaped by external sources such as society and this conflict between the desired self and conformity leads to what he termed “split” in identity (p.45). Taylor (2015) further emphasises that the quest for the “self” often results in the construction of other identities, and this becomes a process through which social divisions and inequalities are established and reinforced. Some people are seen as “others” and are taken for granted and the representation of groups and categories are usually contested (Taylor, 2015). Writers in contemporary societies, find themselves in the same situation, asking the same questions, and the writers of the texts examined in this study are not an exception. Writers attempt to respond to the question of identity by reconstructing the ‘selves’ through fictional narration which are often speaking back power – the colonial cultures and influences that left them as cultural maroons. The current study thus examines how identities (real and imagined) are enacted and challenged in dissimilar ways leading to divided societies where inequalities are apparent.

2.2.2. Racial identity and cultural identity

As far as identity is intertwined with culture, Hall’s (2003) notion of ‘Representation’ becomes quite critical. The projections of individual and collective identities in fictional imaginaries are a process of representation, remembering and reconstructing the collectively shared modes of self-identity. Hall’s (2003) Theories of Representation are important especially when we observe the intentional and the constructionist approaches. Through the intentional approach we understand how individuals create and shape identities in relation to “others.” The constructionist approach helps us understand how socially constructed cultural practices inform ways in which individuals carve identities for themselves.

To understand racial identity, people need to be alert to the conditions and events that shape the way they define themselves in relation to others = represented by other races in the society that they live in. Racial identity thus represents a singular mode through which our perspicacity of the self is imagined in relation to other races (Hall, 2003). This often implies a criterion that is defined by the hierarchical social and economic ordering of people based on their race. Slavery and colonialism are the major events from which identities conditioned by race culminate from.

For example, in the aftermath of the slave trade and contemporary American society, one of the terms that references racial identity is "NEGRO." The term 'Negro' is used to refer to a member of a race of humankind native to Africa and classified according to physical features (such as dark skin pigmentation). "Negro" is normally not considered offensive in historical contexts or the names of organisations before the 1970s. In American and British English, referring to a person as "Negro" is now considered extremely offensive and carries with it negative political and racial connotations. The epithets or referents 'negro' and 'nigger' were derogatory names given to black people of African origin as a reminder of their inferiority to white people. Contemporarily black descendants of slaves, born, raised, and cultured in America, are referred to as African Americans, a constant reminder that before anything else, they are considered African. And the African American still occupies the lower strata of the social order in American context. The generic term African American becomes a form of identity – racial identity – and carries with it all the negative inferences of inferiority.

According to Appiah (2016), identity has been recognised as one of the most prominent causes of division and conflict in different societies. In the United States, racism has significant impacts on the racial identity development of Black Americans and has caused the deepest and sharpest divisions. As a result of these divisions, most Black Americans are faced with challenges of racism and isolation (Du Bois, 1903).

For instance, Jefferson in *Negroland* takes us through the history of black Americans and all the conflicts that emanate from the society of different identities. How the black Americans are divided into categories of those who are elites mostly, those who are mixed (Black and white)

and those who are not. Noah's *Born a Crime* is another example in which different racial groups are divided and not allowed to mingle. Racial segregation has become a continued part of the existential and lived realities of people of colour (Fanon, 1953). For example, the year 2020 marked a serious reconfiguration of race relations with the murders of several black persons at the hands of white police officers in the United States of America. Topical among them were of course Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Breonna Taylor was a 26-year-old woman who was fatally assaulted by police in Kentucky on 20 March 2020 while in her apartment (Nguyen, Criss, Michaels, et al. 2021). George Floyd who was suffocated by a white police officer, is one example of how racism is a widespread practice in the United States. Floyd died during an arrest by police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The death of Floyd sparked a barrage of protests both physical as well as on social media such as Twitter, Facebook etc. (Nguyen, Criss, Michaels, et al. 2021). Ultimate, such protests under the hashtag #blacklivesmatter have culminated in a global concern over race-based segregation of people of colour. Up to now, even world sporting disciplines have embraced the movements and in all disciplines of sport, before the commencement, players, spectators, and official go down on one knee as a form of protest racially motivated identities of difference.

Kierkegaard (2019) claims that the differences between human racial groups is the most controversial topic in all social sciences with every conceivable fact being contested by two or more opposing factors. The question of who is and who belongs is frequently addressed in the texts being studied. In the text *Born a Crime*, Noah grows up in a society where he is neither black, nor white, and must be subjected to a different identity which is coloured. On the other hand, Roger's in *The Last Resort*, is denied his rightful identity because of the colour of his skin. Hence, Kierkegaard (2019) acknowledges that the historical relevance of race as far as it implies identity is contested.

However, as observed from realities culminating from historical events such as slavery and colonialism, humanity does not merely exist in any biological sense but only has arbitrary categories of identity formation. The National Museum of African American History and culture (2014) notes that in the past decades, race was previously used to identify a group of people with kinship, however, it has been re-invented in such a way that it is now used to identify physical traits and appearances. All these changes came into existence in the 17th and 18th century, through false ideologies by European naturalists and philosophers who have argued that white people were inherently smarter, more capable, and more humane than people of other races. These notions were widely accepted and were used to justify colonisation and slavery of the people of Africa. Through the process of colonialism, the displacement and transformation of values, beliefs, and cultural standards is apparent. These values are forced upon the colonised subjects who have no choice but accept them, and this marks the beginning of the displacement of their culture, finding themselves unconsciously accepting and incorporating aspects of the colonial ways into their original identity (Asma, 2015). It is the latter that leads to the dilemma of identity.

Another scholar, Kotright (2011) argues that it is this process of colonisation that has created the identification of both the colonised and the coloniser with pathological effects by destroying both the lives and the cultures of the colonised while implanting a culture of destruction upon all inhabitants. This translates to transfigured imaginations of the self and the other. Colonial systems such as apartheid sought to locate the black person on the lowest rung of both social and economic hierarchies, and in the process, subjugation him to inhuman treatment and denigration (Friedman, 2011). They also sought to forcibly impose the cultural and religious beliefs of the coloniser on the colonised – creating a cultural maroon who no longer had the traditionally known spiritual and cultural anchorage. This resulted in a cultural mongrel whose identity is lucid and void of proper modes of definition.

Fanon (1961) also discusses the struggle for identity of the colonial subjects and the aftermath of colonialism. In the three texts under study, Noah, Jefferson, and Rogers depict how the apartheid system as well as colonialism and slavery have led to multiple, fluid identities that are constantly contested. As intimated above, this is often because of the coalescence of conflicting cultures and ideals which affect the existential realities of the colonised. In an almost comparable manner, Said (1978) also believes that a society builds up its identity by imagining the “other,” that the orient was viewed as culturally static and inferior. For instance, in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1993), the quest for identity marks one of Conrad’s fundamental themes which manifests itself in the lives of his fictional characters (Epp, 1996). The identification of the Africans as the uncivilised, uncultured and savages in the novel shows the complexity of identity formation in the sense that the African sees all he has believed as reality challenged and debunked. The African’s modes of self-definition are side-lined to the periphery – his religion, land, traditions, cultures, and dress are replaced. He thus contends with questions of who the “self” is in a newly created world in which he must embrace an alien way of life. There is thus an immediate shift of modes of self-description and referencing in the ‘new’ existential reality characterised by the coloniser’s way of doing things, of relating and of identity. As such, the quest for identity is a prominent theme in postcolonial studies and literature. Writers portray their cultural identity and that of their people, revealing the hybrid culture of the postcolonial societies (Asma, 2014).

In contemporary society, identity has taken up different meanings due to its expanding complexity. De Sousa (2019) claims that identities are social organisations which can produce the normal and the abnormal in the society. This is speaking to the often-existent fight between the desired individual identities versus the accepted ‘normal’ – a precondition through which society adjudges abnormalcy. For instance, *The Last Resort* by Rogers clearly indicates the fight between whose identities should be accepted in the society and whose should not. Noah is born a crime, as such his identity is not seen as normal, and it is punishable.

In explaining how race also becomes part of the battle for identity formation, Gilroy (2001), claims that race is an identity based upon which human beings are differentiated, classified and hierarchised. This is the reality lived by African Americans (Pilgrim, 2000) as well as Africans (Friedman, 2011) during the eras of both Slavery and Apartheid. This differentiation and classification of race is seen as a cultural and historical phenomenon (De Souza, 2019). This is corroborated by Acker (2011) who asserts that races are relationships, practices, and systems of meaning that permeate a structure of any society producing hierarchies and inequalities. Acker (2011) further defines race as “socially defined, differences based on physical characteristics, culture and historical domination and oppression, justified by entrenched beliefs” (p.444).

Culture has also historically shaped identities. Collisions of cultures too have been part of the problems of identity historically. Genovese (1990) in explaining this for example, first defines culture as a sum of any people’s activities, practices and beliefs that has questioned hierarchies that privilege some forms of cultural expression of others. This is implying that there is a sense of security that is always borne out of collective identities. Concurring, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) links culture to identity by defining it as a defining feature of a person’s identity, contributing to how they see themselves and the groups with which they identify. A person’s understanding of their own and others’ identities develops from birth and is shaped by the values and attitudes prevalent at home and surrounding community. Similarly, The National Geographic (n.d.), asserts that culture is the shared characteristics of a group of people which includes place of birth, religion, language, cuisine, social behaviour, art, literature, and music. Its value is not determined by the size, whether a culture is widespread or kept within a small region, whether it has changed overtime or remained the same, every culture can teach about others and the global community. Hall (2003), however, imagines that culture should not be conceptualised as stable and unchanging. It should be seen as negotiated; it is dynamic and cultural changes can be traced and analysed to better understanding why societies are the way they are. In other words, one needs to be awake to the fact that circumstances continue to reshape cultural identities – they do not remain stagnant.

For example, the cultural collisions emanating from slavery and colonialism have inclined the black man to reconfigure and reimagine their identities and embrace new modes of identity such as race and class.

Tracing the history of cultural identities, Kim (2007), claims that cultural identities are broad and may include concepts such as subcultural, national, anthropology and racial identities. Cultural identities designate both sociological and demographic classification, as well as an individual's psychological identification with a particular group. Kim (2007) adds that cultural identity provides a sense of common origin as well as common beliefs and values and serves as the basis of self-defining in groups. Germain (2004) asserts that cultural identity as a process, involves cognitive appraisal resulting from set awareness achieved either through the collective experience within a membership group or the individual perception as we compare ourselves to a reference group. In addition, Chiang (2020) informs that, it is worth noting that culture and identity were invented as static makers to identify biological and cultural characteristics of a specific ethnic or racial group. Racial and cultural identity contestations can be linked or be associated with immigrant generations, ancestry, and phenotypical characteristics (Vargas & Stainback, 2016). The three texts under study show typical example of identities rooted from ancestry as well as immigration generations. As such identities are still being contested or not accepted as belonging to the societies. Hence, this study is an effort to understand how complex identities are constructed and projected in the three autobiographies.

Collier (1996) further posits that the way of being and the social expectations for behaviour within the cultural identities do change over time but what separates, cultural identities from most social identities is the historical root. This means that cultural identities are not cast in stone as they are subject to malleability dependent on prevailing circumstances and events. If anything, as intimated earlier on, slavery and colonialism impacted the manners in which both the enslaver and enslaved as well as both the coloniser and colonised self-referenced in relation to each other.

Collier (1996) further contends that to be accepted as a member of a cultural group members must be acculturated; this implies learning and using a code which other group members will be

able to recognise. Hence, Martin & Nakayama (2010) postulate that cultural identities can be classified as ascribed identities as they can be imposed on us by other people.

2.2.3 Self narration and identity construction: autobiographical subjectivities

In analysing autobiographical fictional imaginaries, it is critical that one is awake to the vices that define the genre of self-writing specifically that “autobiographical writing is always a subjective enterprise—a highly selective use of linguistic resources in the narration of experiential processes. The autobiographical form thus, is partial with truth, especially so in the construction of self-identity” (Sabao & Javangwe, 2018, p. 39). Resultantly, autobiographical forms of writings are themselves not immune from the criticism of imbedded subjectivities as well as allegations of oftentimes, the peddling half-truths. Considering this, it can be argued that reading any autobiographical narrative should be done with one fully alert to the fact that:

The theory of self-expression that has driven various strands of autobiographical theory assumes that self-identity emerges from a psychic interiority, located somewhere “inside” the narrating subject. There it lies in a state of coherent, unified, evidentiary, even expectant, awaiting transmission to a surface, a tongue, a pen, a keyboard (Smith, 1995, p. 17).

In the same vein, Bourdieu (2000) further explicates this incongruity which characterises autobiographical fictional imaginaries by underscoring that the notion self-narration exhibits an “inclination towards making oneself the ideologist of one’s own life, through the selection of a few momentous events with a view to elucidating an overall purpose” (p. 300) is a controversial process as well as an act of political performativity.

Observing the same, Sabao & Javangwe (2018) submit that the entire process of self-narration represents a moment of rewriting in which the “narrator exercises authority over the subject matter, scaffolds one’s own image, authorises excisions, makes deliberate omissions, privileges

interpretations and views that promote certain desired images” (p. 39). Resultantly, the effect that such a writing enterprise would have been that the core defining trait claim that the genre of autobiography makes with regards to the reconstruction of truths, is at best, not sustainable. Functionally, autobiographical writing should therefore be imagined as merely partial as far as its representation of truth as well as its reconstruction individual identity (ies). This notion can be seen in Roger’s *The Last Resort* (2009) as he leans more on the white Zimbabweans making them appear innocent and not deserving the treatment they are getting in Zimbabwe; he is biased and defensive.

The construction of self-narratives is thus imbued with decisions and perspectives that characterise subjectivities in making personal decisions and subsequently permeates in the narration of the self – consciously or subconsciously. This subjective, and even imaginative aspect of self-writing has most notably been attributed to mediations of memory (Smith & Watson, 2001; Lessing, 1994; Obama, 2007). The self-writing genre is also attributed to:

“ideological and cultural biases that tend to promote the agenda of the individual subject. Life narratives are written in retrospect and therefore, depend on stoking memory. Past events and experiences are recreated based on memory, a process that also involves the imposition of preferred perspectives and interpretations on that memory (Sabao & Javangwe, 2018, p.42).

For example, in *Born a Crime* some of the stories told by Noah are from his childhood, as such he had to use his memory to remember everything that happened. However, the problem with memory is that it is not always dependable, and some truths can be distorted.

Concurring, Sabao & Javangwe (2018), note that this is because “the past is not stashed somewhat neatly in some memory bank where it can be neatly retrieved for present use” (p.45).

In the present, the past can only be accounted for through epistemic facilities of reconstruction, in the hope that memory will be faithful to history and the past. Recounts and accounts of the past are thus subject to the narrator’s capabilities to faithfully memorialise the past in the present. This process is often an incredibly difficult one as it “is often typified by enchanted visions of distant events, blank memories, and deliberate suppressions of undesirable memories, falsifications as well as omissions and commissions” (Sabao & Javangwe, 2018, p.45). As such, theorisations and/or analyses of self-writings often dictate that we commit to them fully awake to the fact that factuality of historicised narratives are very subjective.

Implied in this, which is overly critical to one’s understanding of the construction of identity in self-writings, is the fact that memories in autobiography writing are only useful to the extent to which they coincide with the act of the writer’s remembering, or preferred memories. As such in re-reading self-narratives, the keen eye should be alert and be appreciative of what they really represent – contrasting narratives of a similar subtext – only but moments of re-writing. This simply means that we need to be overly critical in our reading of the ‘truths’ of autobiographical writings, especially as far as they represent the attempt by an individual to tell their own story – often resulting in ‘blowing their own horn’ through sanitisation of their past. Noah was only six years old when apartheid was happening in South Africa, as such, memory is not completely dependable; not all facts and all events that happen in childhood can be remembered fully. This applies to Jefferson as well whose account also includes some childhood events.

2.2.4 Identity, race, and class: postcolonial modes of identity construction in fictional imaginaries

Two important historical events – slavery and colonialism – have forever shaped the way human beings define themselves with regards to gender, race, and class.

Within postcolonial imaginations of the self, especially in the context of life after the period of colonial encounter and settlement, the Black African suffered a crisis of identity. As Fanon (1952,

p. 83) would observe, “[t]he black man among his own in the twentieth century, does not know at what moment his inferiority comes into being through the other”. In other words, one of the resultant effects of slavery and colonialism was racism. For the Black man, the two epochs are characterised by severe methods of emasculation, segregation, dehumanisation, subjugation, exploitation and, ‘othering.’ Post colonially, African, Caribbean, and African American fictional writers have over the years endeavoured to capture this way slavery and colonialism mongrelised the individual as well as the collective modes of identity and identity formation for subsequent generations. This results from the observed distortions of the collective culture that shapes collective identities. In this case, both the domestic culture and the people are ‘polluted’ by the infiltration of new cultures and new forms of relating – which in turn reconfigures social relations and hierarchies. *Born a Crime* for instance, depicts a highly divided and hierarchised society, where privileged was given to certain races, like the coloureds who now feel they are more important and are whites or closer to whites.

Considering the above insights, Hall (1990, p. 225) observes that,

The inner expropriation of cultural identity cripples and deforms. If its silences are not resisted, they produce, in Fanon’s (1952) vivid phrase “an individual without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless – a race of angels.” Nevertheless, this idea of otherness as an inner compulsion changes our conception of ‘cultural identity.’ In this perspective, cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark.

Precisely, Hall (1990) admits to the role that history and by extension historical events have reconfigured traditional collective modes of self-referencing and identity.

In the process, the shared modes of identity become tempered with, and the essence of a unified and homogeneous identity fast becomes elusive. Quickly the individual becomes alert to the fact that cultural identity "... is not once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute return" (Hall, 1999, p. 225).

Fanon (1952, pp. 82 – 83) makes further submissions regarding how colonialism and slavery have also impacted the way the individual – the black man to be precise imagines the 'self'. With the cultural and spiritual anchorages eroded, the Black man can no longer identify collectively but individually. This individuation is born out of the diversity of existential experiences that have debunked all forms of collectivism and collective identity. Further to this, the individual post-colonially must now have self-reference and be self-defined through new modes of identity – in this regard in relation to the new 'other,' who is the white man and the shifting of cultural and existential landscapes that his intrusion into the black cultured world implies. This means that the Black man must now define the 'self' not in terms of their relation of the homogeneous others, but the new domineering 'others' – the white man. His fact of blackness thus is conditioned comparatively with regards to the white person. Negroland is a good example, where the black elites in America define their race based on the white man and not their fellow blacks whom they regard as the non-privileged. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it on themselves to remind us that this proposition has a converse. I say that this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they conflicted with a civilisation that he did not know and that imposed itself on him.

In the process of narration, including self-writing, the black people attempt to reconfigure their cultural and moral compass. These are attempts to redeem the self – individually and collectively.

For example, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* demonstrates this attempt to re-engage with African modes of identification. He believes that for example, the role of the novelist is to be a teacher of his culture (Achebe, 1973). Jefferson in *Negroland* (2015) tries to find her true self, hence, through her account, the search for who she is becomes obvious. She finds herself having suicidal thoughts due to the pressure of being conditioned to standards that are ridiculous and unnecessary. Hall (1990, p. 224) however warns against the dangers configuring cultural identity in the collective always. Hall observes, as Fanon (1952) has also done, that culturally, identity has through events in history become complex and diluted. Hall thus suggests that there is need to focus on a different conceptualisation of cultural identity. Hall thus submits that:

There is however, a second related but different view of cultural identity. This second position recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant differences which constitute 'what we really are; or rather – since history has intervened – 'what we have become'... Cultural identity, in this ...sense is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.' It belongs to the future is as much as the past (Hall, 1990, p. 224).

In this regard, one can imagine cultural identity, while having a history, as also quite mutating – and like everything with a history, also undergoes eventual transformations. Cultural identities thus need not be imagined in essentialised ways as some fixed hieroglyph drawing from the past (Fanon, 1952). They are thus experienced and reconfigured in line with events as they occur in the world. The colonial experiences of the natives especially through colonial systems such as assimilation (in Francophone Africa) and Apartheid (in some sections of Southern Africa) reshaped the relations between races and in the process the modes of identifying the 'self' in relation to the 'other. 'Within the context of African nations and the period of colonial encounter and settlement, the same conditions also manifest. Colonial modes of relations and political configurations speak to the segregation of black people at the expense of the pedestalisation of the white race as a superior race.

In South Africa and Southwest Africa (now Namibia), the political system of Apartheid legally elevated the white race over the black majority race solely based on race (Friedman, 2011). This form of racially identifying people is synonymous to the era of the Jim Crow Laws, immediately after the Abolition of the Slave Trade (Kousser, 2003). Slavery and colonialism have thus historically transfigured notions of identity – both individual and collective (Fanon, 1952). The two historical eras have also shaped the way individuals define themselves with the introduction of new modes of self-referencing – those of class, race, and culture (Hall, 1990). Tiffin (1987) also summates the inherent problems of identity within postcolonial cultures – complexities resulting from the clash of races and cultures. For example, Noah in *Born a crime* (2016) gives an account of how the blacks and the coloured hate each other. Each race is made to hate the other race since they all want to be recognised by the whites but in reality, no one makes it to the high table. This situation then influences the processes through which individuals then create modes of self-identity individually and collectively. Tiffin thus observes:

Post-colonial cultures are inevitably hybridized, involving a dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology and the impulse to create and recreate independent local identities....Since it is not possible to create or recreate national or regional formations wholly independent of the historical implications in the European colonial enterprise, it has been the project of post-colonial writings to interrogate European discourses and discursive strategies from a privileged position within (and between) two worlds: to investigate the means by which Europe imposed and maintained its codes in the colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world (Tiffin, 1987, p.17).

In other words, in creating fictional narratives, African writers and other writers from the African Diaspora are also often confronted with the need to re-engage with Eurocentric discourses – a process of re-claiming the self, individually and collectively, culturally, and politically.

This process is thus evinced through two broad imminent processes of re-reading and re-writing the European fictional imaginations of the self (Fanon, 1953). In this light, this becomes one of the most difficult and yet inescapable tasks of the writer (Tiffin, 1987).

2.3 Conclusion

The chapter presented a discussion of related literature. It discussed the manners in which writing is a form of representation. It also explained and engaged with scholarship on how concepts critical to the study such as gender, race, culture, and class are critical in shaping the manners in which individuals carve for themselves identities – both individual and collective. The chapter further discussed the manners in which the historical events of slavery and colonialism have shaped and influenced individual and collective cultural behaviours and, in the process, inform identity formation processes.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology, research design, data analysis as well as ethical consideration. It also examines the theoretical framework, which was employed to analyse the autobiographies in this study.

3.2 Research methodology

Rajasekar et al. (2013) define research methodology as “a systematic way to solve a problem; it is a science of studying how research is to be conducted. It is the procedure by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining, and predicting phenomenon. It is also defined as the study of methods by which knowledge is gained. Its aim is to give the work plan of research” (p.5). It includes the research design, the research method, the research procedure as well as ethical considerations.

3.2.1 Research design

The nature of this study calls for qualitative research. The study is based on a literary analysis of three autobiographical texts. These texts were analysed and critical concepts in the selected sample, pertaining to the subject being investigated were identified, and interpreted using the postcolonial theory. The qualitative research methodology is a vital method for this study as it assessed the subjective views of the autobiographies selected by the researcher. According to Andimba (2017), “A qualitative study is concerned with non-statistical methods and a small purposefully selected sample (p.31). This means that the autobiographies were purposively selected. According to Hashemnezhad (2015), texts that best inform the research questions being investigated, are purposefully selected by the researcher.

Du Plooy (2002) asserts that qualitative research focuses on interpreting and constructing the qualitative aspect of communication and language experience. The phenomenon in question cannot be reduced to numbers, however, it can be explored, and therefore qualitative research was used. A qualitative researcher studies things in their natural environment or settings, by attempting to make sense of, or interpreting a phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers need to collect data in a natural setting, be sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive. They also need to establish patterns or themes. The researcher investigates the issue that is being analysed or evaluated and then communicates the data using words allowing the researcher to conduct an inductive analysis of data and extracting the information from a variety of sources (Kandemiri, 2018).

Qualitative research is concerned with the meaning of experience, language and symbols, and its aim is to enrich our understanding of human experience (Cohen et al., 2011). Thus, qualitative research helped the researcher to reflect on how the authors of the autobiographies being studied, negotiate their identities, as well as how identities are constructed and contested. In qualitative research the researcher analyses, describes and reports objectively as they are constructing an essence from the population or sample being studied (Andimba, 2017).

A common characteristic of qualitative design as identified by Creswell (2013) is that the researcher is the key instrument. For the current study, the researcher collected data through reviewing documents, observing behaviour, and interviewing participants. It is for this reason that this study is qualitative in nature, as it is the researcher herself that collected and analysed the data. Data collection in this case was done through reviewing and examining relevant documents. Also, qualitative research involves complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic. Data is organised inductively into more abstract units of information, and this is how qualitative researchers build themes, categories, and patterns. This process involves the researcher working back and forth between the themes and the database until a comprehensive set of themes is established.

The researcher through interpreting the autobiographies used an inductive reasoning where themes and categories rose from the data through guided explanations and comparisons. Lastly, qualitative research is conducted when one needs to write literary, flexible styles that convey stories, or theatre or poems without the restrictions of formal academic structures of writing. This is relevant to the current study as it also requires the researcher to thoroughly analyse the texts being studied.

3.2.2 Data analysis procedure

This study used a desktop qualitative content analysis to explore the theme of identity, how it is constructed and contested in the selected autobiographical texts. A desktop design is comprised of an extensive analysis of journal articles and critical works on literature in the form of secondary literature, which were examined to understand the views of other scholars in literary studies. Precisely, a desktop literary study involves the collection of data through critical reading and analysis of selected texts and the application of the specified literary theory (Simaata, 2019).

Anderson (as cited in Kandemiri, 2018) states that “data analysis is the interpretation and exposition of the data collected for the study. Kothari (2014) also observes that, “Through content analysis the content of materials such as documents books and magazines are examined or evaluated.” While Coher et al. (2004) expands that, “Content analysis has been defined as the multipurpose research method, developed specifically for investigating a broad spectrum of problems in which the content of communication serves as a basis of inference, from word counts to categorization” (p.197).

The researcher read the selected autobiographical texts intensively and critically to determine how the postcolonial theory could be used to interpret the texts and examine how identity construction and contestation are depicted throughout the texts. After identifying the relevant information, a detailed analysis and evaluation was done, and the information was then categorised thematically. This procedure assisted the researcher in ensuring that selected texts are analytically examined.

Hence, content analysis was used to gather information which was scrutinised to write a comprehensive and sound research study. Findings were derived from the discussions, interpretations, and the analysed information.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Research ethics is specifically interested in the analysis of ethical issues that are raised when people are involved as participants in research (Walton, 2016). However, since the current study is a qualitative desktop analysis, it does not use human participants, but autobiographical texts were analysed objectively. This study is solely desktop research which does not bring the researcher into direct contact with participants. Sources used are acknowledged to uphold the ethics required of an academic to maintain transparency and honesty. A NUST Ethical clearance was also granted.

3.4 Theoretical framework

The study is couched within the theoretical explications of postcolonial theory as explicated by a multiplicity of scholars such as Bhabha (1985), Fanon (1953), Achebe (1973), Tiffin (1987), Walcott (1974), Spivak (1988).

3.4.1 Post coloniality

The term “post coloniality,” while sometimes exceedingly difficult to define, should not be limited to the former colonial states and peoples and their experiences and reactions to colonialism (Radhakrishnan, 1993). It is an all-embracing theoretical view with attempts to understand voices emanating from all forms of society in which inequality and injustices exist (Prakash, 1996). The term can also be used to describe the current study to reclaim and rethink the history and agency of people subordinated under various forms of imperialism. Postcolonialism signals a probable future of overcoming colonialism, yet new forms of domination or subordination can come in the wake of such changes, including new forms of global empire.

3.4.2 Postcolonial Theory

In adopting the theoretical framework of post colonialism, the study seeks, guided by postcolonial thinkers, to examine the way the selected texts exhibit a grappling with new forms of identity formation. Postcolonialism here is perceived as a study of the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies and which in the process is also concerned with both how European nations conquered and controlled the cultures of the Third World. It also examines how these groups have since responded to as well as resisted those encroachments.

As a theoretical approach, postcolonialism is interested in an examination of the manners in which political and cultural changes have occurred and continue to happen. It does this by examining specifically the inferiority complex that results from being in a colonised state (Fanon, 1952), and the desire to preserve and retain cultural, ethnic, and political identity and autonomy and finally the ever-increasing alertness to the hybridity resulting from cultural collisions and how this has shaped the manners in which individuals and groups now imagine themselves in the face of such a hybridity of culture (Bhabha, 1984). As such, the current study argues that the forms of identity that culminate from such imposed hybridity are shaped by new modes of identity such as class and race. In the process, the study argues that representations of the 'self' as depicted in the three autobiographical texts are shaped and conditioned by these new modes – and the new normal of 'hybridity.'

In the same vein, in examining the manners in which the autobiographical narratives reclaim the 'self' and carves identities, the study is also guided by observations by Fanon (1952, pp. 82 – 83) regarding how the historical events, colonialism and slavery have both distorted the culture and identity of the slave and colonised, respectively. In the process, the study examined how the texts impacted the ways through which the 'self' – the black man to be precise defines the 'self.' 'In this way, the cultural collision which debunked the cultural and spiritual anchorages for the black become critical in understanding how the black man can no longer identify with the collective culturally, but only individually.

This individuated identity is born out of the hybridity characteristic of the new existential realities that have upended all forms of collectivism and collective cultural identity.

This means that the black man now needs to identify through new modes of viewing the self in relation to the other – race and class. Further to this, the individual post colonially is expected to self-reference and self-define through new modes of identity – in this regard in relation to the new ‘other,’ who in this study is the white man and the shifting cultural and existential landscapes that his intrusion into the black cultured world implies. Thus, the black man should now define the ‘self’ not in terms of their relation of the homogeneous others, but the new domineering ‘others’ – the white man. His fact of blackness thus is conditioned comparatively with regards to the white person. The autobiographies studied here, this study argues, are representative of new identities carved from the experiences of this hybridity. Hence, the postcolonial speaks to the effects that the two historical events had on not only the psyche of the oppressed but also shaped the ways they thought of themselves – self-defined and self-referenced.

The postcolonial theory examines how characters operating within colonialism are reflected in literature, and how they depict the complicated arguments that are related to the reflection of injustice (Césaire, 1955). It is used to analyse literature written in countries or regions that are former colonies, and examines what happens when two diverse cultures collide, and when one of these cultures is dominant and perceives itself as superior to the other. However, even after gaining independence the former colonised are still deeply immersed in the culture of the colonised (Bressler, 2003). It is this impact that is reflected in postcolonial literature. The postcolonial literature, as well as the critics focus on the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. One of the great thinkers of post colonialism is Said (1978). In his work, “Orientalism,” Said focuses on how the west views the orient, and notes that they are perceived as primitive. They are also viewed as savages, as such they need western education; they are not capable of managing themselves and their resources properly as such, they need to be controlled.

The black race is seen as inhumane and inferior such that they are seen as a threat to the entire world and themselves. Said's orientalism describes a set of concepts, assumptions, and practices that the coloniser used to produce, interpret, and evaluate about the orient or the east, which in this case includes Africa. Other thinkers whose ideas are similar or related to Said's, are Spivak and Fanon. Spivak's Subaltern theory focuses on how the colonised are marginalised and oppressed. They have no voice as such they cannot speak for themselves; they are governed, exploited and decisions are made for them. Similarly, Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask* (1952) is a testament of how the colonisers have changed the black man's identity who now sees himself through the image of a white man. He is black but he wears a white mask. Fanon maintains that the white man through religion and education, transforms the black man into an object that craves for the white man's identity abandoning his own identity, as it was seen as primitive and evil. The black man seeks validation by imitating the white man's way of living. He wants to speak like a white man, dress like a white man and achieve everything that a white man sees as superior, but even after doing all that he is still just seen as a black man.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter outlined and summarised the overall research methodology of this study. It focused on the research design suitable for this study, and the data analysis procedures to be used in collecting and interpreting as well as synthesising the data. The qualitative approach was used for this study. Content was analysed thematically because this is a desktop study. Finally, the chapter explained the theoretical explications in which the study is couched – Postcolonial Theory.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses and discusses the selected novels; *the last resort: A Memoir of Zimbabwe* (2009), *Born a crime: stories from a South African Childhood* (2016) and *Negroland: A memoir* (2015). The discussion is informed by the literature review of the study as well as the postcolonial theory. The chapter will first provide the synopsis of each novel followed by the analysis and discussion based on the objectives of the study.

The objectives of the study remain unchanged. The study intends to:

- To investigate the role played by race and culture in shaping social identities in the three texts.
- To evaluate the impact of colonialism on identity construction in the selected texts.
- To explore the complex ways of identity construction in post-colonial societies as portrayed in the selected texts.

4.2. Synopsis of selected texts

4.2.1. The Last Resort: A Memoir of Zimbabwe

The last resort is based on a true story about a family in a country under siege as well as a testament to the love, perseverance, and resilience of the human spirit. Born and raised in Zimbabwe, Douglas Rogers is the son of a white farmer who lived through the country's long and tense transition from colonial rule to independence. Rogers is a journalist who leaves Zimbabwe and tries to find a home in Europe and America.

When President Robert Mugabe launched the violent programme to reclaim white-owned land Ros Rogers and his parents are caught in the crossfire and everything changed.

His parents were owners of the Drifters, a famous game farm and backpacker lodge in the eastern mountains. This place was one of the most popular budget resorts in the country. Rogers found their home and resort under siege, their friends and neighbours expelled and their lives in danger. Their son pleaded with them to leave, but they decided to stay because they too were Zimbabweans.

When Rogers returned to the country of his birth, he found his once orderly and progressive home transformed into something different, which he described as a mess; He found hookers, soldiers, spies, teenage diamond dealers, traditional healers, and armed war veterans loyal to President Mugabe. Despite it all, his parents with the help of friends, farm workers and the lodge's guests continued to hold on as they believed that Zimbabwe was their home and they had nowhere else to go.

4.2.2. Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood

Trevor Noah's *Born a crime: Stories from a South African childhood*, is an account of the comedian's experiences growing up in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. It gives insights into South Africa's culture, system, and history. Born in 1984 to a single parent, Patricia, during the time of racial segregation, Noah describes his mother as a strong, driven woman who paid little attention to the racist laws against the blacks in South Africa. Noah's father, a Swiss immigrant who does not subscribe to racist laws agreed to give Patricia a child even when sexual relationships between blacks and whites were a crime.

Noah grows up being hidden from the public as a young boy, as it was dangerous for his parents. After apartheid ended, he grows up struggling to fit in, and as a mixed race in South Africa, it was hard for him to determine which group would accept him. He learns multiple languages such as Zulu, English, Afrikaans and Xhosa which allowed him to move among different racial and cultural groups in school. Even though he felt out of place in many social settings as a mixed-race child, his ability to talk and empathise with many diverse types of people served him well throughout his life.

4.2.3 Negroland: A Memoir

Negroland: A Memoir focuses on Jefferson's childhood in a community of affluent African Americans in Chicago. It is also a reflection on the history and status of America's black elites.

Born into an affluent family in Chicago, to a father who was a paediatrician and a mother who was a socialite, Jefferson questioned her mother about her exact status and learned that her family was upper class by Negro standards and upper-middle class by white standards however her mother kept on emphasising that despite all those standards they are just more Negroes to most whites. Jefferson's Negroland is a name she gave to a small region of Negro America where residents had a certain amount of privilege and plenty. Children in Negroland were warned that few Negroes enjoyed privilege or plenty and that most whites would be glad to see them return to poverty. Jefferson and her sister were told to hold themselves to impossibly high standards of conduct and presentation and that the future of their race depended on their ability to maintain the respect of their white peers.

After the opening of the autobiography, Jefferson gives a history of the black upper-class writers starting from those whose work is less known demonstrating that the work of major black writers like Ida. B. Well and W.E.B Du Bois emerge from this tradition and speak back to it.

Jefferson narrates her years at a private school where majority of students were white. Although she was a popular, academic, talented actor she struggled to make lasting friendship across racial divides. They (Jefferson and her sister) endure racist remarks and incidents. She begins to struggle; she is coupled with anger after she realises that the standards she has held to are misguided and it leads her into depression. She discovers that she is not the only good Negro girls giving in to the psychic pressure of their restricted lives. As she begins drafting suicidal notes, she discovers a rash of suicide in her Negroland community.

4.3 The role played by colonialism in shaping racial and cultural identities of individuals as depicted in the three autobiographies.

4.3.1 The impacts of colonialism on identity construction in *The Last Resort* (2009)

The colonial period was the era when several European powers established colonies in Africa, Asia, and America. It was a form of domination or the control of individuals or groups over the territory or the control of behaviour of other individuals (Putri & Clayton, 2020). *The Last Resort* (2009) is a postcolonial text highlighting the impacts of colonialism and post colonialism on the African societies.

Rogers is a descendant of the European settlers who came to settle on the African Land. He gives much emphasis on the years his ancestors came to settle on the Rhodesian land and how much he, his parents and their friends or their race are Zimbabweans. While describing his mother, Rogers highlights the reasons why the white Zimbabweans deserve to be Zimbabweans. He states that their ancestry can be traced in Africa around the 18th and the 19th centuries, and that his mother was born in Zimbabwe, creating a notion that, she has the right to live in Zimbabwe too. He proclaims that.

The deep lines on her tanned face told the story of thirty years spent on African farms, and yet she was still strikingly beautiful. She had grey eyes, an aristocratic nose, and a theatrically English accent, she had been an artist, actress and drama teacher before she was a farmer. Although she had been born in Mutare, our hometown over the heels, in 1941 and could trace her ancestry in Africa as far back as the 1820s, her elegant, stagey manner would not have been out of place in a Home Countries village or on west end gate. (*The Last Resort*, p. 9)

Historically a lot of changes have happened as far as, linguistics, cultural, as well as racial leanings of the African identity. The contacts between Europeans and the African people, created new multicultural societies, forming new identities. The new identities include national identities.

In the new post-colonial societies, individuals must constantly justify their identities due to the rise of identity crises. Rogers gives emphasis to the ancestors who came to occupy Africa in the 18th century justifying his belonging to the Zimbabwean nation and his right to own and stay on the African soil.

Identity can be politically and socially constructed placing emphasis on nationalities and citizenships (Gracia-Olp, 2018). Citizenship is viewed as an identity that entails a sense of belonging to a certain state. For example, the white Zimbabweans feel alienated from their state, by being told to leave the land that was passed on to them by their ancestors. They justify their belonging through nationality or citizenship. Rogers describes how his father's parents had settled on the African soil in the 16th centuries, trying to emphasise that he is also African just like all the indigenous people. He informs that.

His mother, Gertruida Johanna Gauche was an Afrikaner a Dutch and Huguenot descend whose ancestors arrived in the cape in the mid and late 1600s he had roots here, blood in this soil. (*The Last Resort*, p.12)

With this he is implying that he is African. The "roots" are a symbol of origin, as such Rogers claims that his race has an origin in Africa. Colonialism has influenced the African identity to an extent that the identity in the postcolonial era is heterogeneous (Egunlusi, 2017). The stay of the colonial masters in Africa gave birth to more racial identities (Turkmen, 2003). In the case of Zimbabwe, the two races were fighting for who should be the rightful owners of Zimbabwe and who has the right to live on the Zimbabwean land. While the white people in Zimbabwe were claiming to belong to Africa, the blacks did not view them as Africans simply because their ancestors forcefully settled on the African soil by forcefully removing the African ancestors from their land. This entails that by ancestry they are not Zimbabweans.

Rogers claims that his parents had settled on virgin land which they had to reconstruct. Virginity signifies that something is not touched and is not belonging to anyone. With this claim Rogers is stressing that they are the owners of the land, and they should not be removed from it because they built it from scratch.

He postulates that; “My parents have taken a barren range of hills in Africa with nothing on it but bush and stones and turned it into a thriving resort.” (*The Last Resort*, p.13) this entails that, he is claiming that the land was not useful, and they turned it into something useful.

Although *The Last resort* is more of a political account of the events after colonialism, this study argues that it also gives more insight on how post-colonial identities existing in former colonies came about. Identity is one of the crucial components of colonialism. This is because the exploitation and domination of the indigenous people by the colonisers resulted into the new world with identities that keep mutating, and these identities are being challenged and interrogated. For example, in *The Last Resort* (2009) the white people’s identity is being challenged by the indigenous people. They claim they are Zimbabweans but what makes them Zimbabweans if their ancestors came to forcefully settle on land that was not their own? It is for this reason that they are being removed from the land which once belonged to the ancestors of the black people.

During colonialism, there was a certain desperateness between the colonisers and the colonised, the colonisers kept a distance for a purpose. The colonised meant little to the colonisers. They lived among them, but they did not care to know them. Similarly, the whites in Zimbabwe had lived all their lives distancing themselves from the blacks. They saw them as servants and nothing more. They never had an interest in getting to know them. However, during the Mugabe regime, when the white people had to be removed from the land, they once called theirs, the black people became especially important. The whites needed them for their survival. Rogers narrates how his parents never knew the names of their workers; they could not distinguish between them. However, this had to change, the black people who were once nothing become everything they needed to remain on their land, they become extremely useful to the whites.

This depicts the fluidity of identities. In colonial times the blacks were seen as inferior, in newly independent societies, like Zimbabwe, the whites are at the verge of losing their land, so the black people become more valuable. Identities are social constructions, and they are not created once and for all. The construction is an ongoing process, and it is never fixed.

The *Last Resort* (2009) also depicts how the Identity of the white Zimbabweans is changing drastically, from landowners and masters who give orders, to those not owning land and are being ordered to leave the land which they had claimed to be theirs. Rogers speaks to one of the white farmers Tess who narrates how land was cheap when they came to settle on it. Tess justifies that they never stole it. They never found anyone on the land in so saying, she is claiming that they are the rightful owners. Tess narrates how they had recruited black Mozambicans and Malawians to work for them revealing change in their identity. They had land and people who worked for them, but now they do not. Tess Narrates that.

Land was cheap then, A pound an acre. This government say we stole it, but the country was empty back then, no one around we had to recruit workers from Mozambique and Malawi, we cleared the bush and planted tobacco, we were the only family in the whole area to have a car, an old blue Essex, which you had to crank to start, it would take us two days to drive to umtali [Mutare]. Strip roads. We would pack a picnic those were the days.

(The Last Resort, p.103)

This depicts the identity of the white people then, the privileges they had, and how they lost all the privileges. They must assume this new identity and part ways with all the privileges they once had. The excerpt also depicts how colonialism affected the identity of the black people. It shows that most black people were mostly just farm workers while the white people owned farms. The *Last Resort* therefore depicts how colonialism impacted the identity of both the colonised and the colonisers.

The colonisers who had come to settle in Africa saw themselves as superior, they were in charge, and gave orders; a trait they passed on to their generations. The black people on the other hand had to work on farms and had no privileges. However, in the newly independent Zimbabwe the blacks who were once silenced have found a voice and they are claiming back what belongs to their ancestors.

According to Spivak, the oppression of the colonised stole their dignity thus stealing their voice and identity. They were silenced and could not speak for themselves. In *The Last Resort*, Rogers describes how his ancestors came to settle on land that was unsettled. However, History reminds us that the Europeans found the black ancestors and enslaved, dehumanised and removed them from their land. President Mugabe was trying to reclaim back the black people's identity. He decided to remove the white people from the land that was passed on to them by their ancestors who happened to steal from the black people's ancestors.

4.3.2. The impacts of colonialism on identity construction in *Born a crime* (2016).

Trevor Noah begins his autobiography with the history of apartheid. How and why, it was a success. He especially deliberates on how apartheid convinced the people of South Africa who were the majority to turn against each other. He gives an example of the two largest groups, the Xhosas, and the Zulus. The Zulus were known as the warriors and the Xhosa were more on the intellectual side. He highlights how apartheid therefore used language to separate the black people. Languages form part of identity and culture as such a shared language would mean "we are the same, a language barrier means we are different." (Noah, 2016, p.44). School children were only taught in their home languages, e.g., the Zulus learned Zulu, Xhosas learned Xhosa, and this led to division between the different ethnic groups because they could not understand each other. As such the whites were able to rule and conquer. This is portrayed below.

At the time, black South Africans outnumbered white South Africans five to one, yet we were divided into different ethnic groups with different languages: Zulus, Xhosa, Tswana,

Sotho, Vendas, Ndebele, Tsonga, Pedi, and more. Long before apartheid existed these tribal factions clashed and warred with one another. Then the white rule used this animosity to divide and conquer. All non-whites were systematically classified into various groups and subgroups. Then these groups were given different levels of rights and privileges to keep them at odds (*Born a Crime*, p.1).

Spivaks' subaltern theory speaks to this claim. In her essay, *Can the Subaltern speak?* She refers to the people of the third world and the orient as *Subaltern*. Can the subaltern speak if divided or can they defend themselves? According to Spivak, it is impossible for the subaltern to speak when he is divided, by region, gender, or class or even religion. Division did not allow them to unite and stand together. This entails that the coloniser's way of exploitation and domination during colonialism was by division and in this way, they were able to rob the indigenous people of their voice. The black people were unable to stand together and were robbed of the confidence to represent themselves.

The Dutch colonists who took over from the British and made South Africa their rightful own, developed a set of laws to enslave the native people. The laws were designed to keep black people under total control. One of the worst crimes they could commit was to have sexual relations with a person of another race. Mixed people were thus not accepted, they had to be classified as their own separate group, which was neither white nor black thus creating a different identity. This is depicted below.

In South Africa mixed people came to be classified as their own separate group, neither black nor white but what we call coloured." Coloured people, black people and Indian people were forced to register their race with the government." (*Born a Crime*, p.18)

This gives emphasis on how colonialism impacted the identity of the people, the categorisation of people according to their race led to different racial identities of those who had different beliefs and way of living.

The South African coloureds had all the privileges. They were second class and lived in better neighbourhoods. Although they were denied the rights of white people, they still had privileges that black people did not have. They would get promoted to white, based on physical

appearances such as straight hair, light skin, and polished accents. These led to division, those given privileges felt like they were better, and more superior to those who had no privileges. Moffat (2020) reiterates that colonialism to a great extent had a major hand on the issues of identity construction and the division led to multiple identities and conflict. Those given privileges by the colonisers began to feel more important than the others thus creating an identity that was more superior or having a feeling of superiority than the others. For example, in *Born a Crime* (2016), the white people dominated all the races, followed by the coloureds. This means that they felt like they were better than the others. As such they used their superiority to try and dominate the other races.

Noah depicts how apartheid aimed at stripping the indigenous people of their rightfully citizenship, thus exploiting them and controlling them. They were relocated to places with no favourable conditions, and they were guarded by the military. Black people had to work on farms and in factories. Black women worked as maids. The white –collar jobs and all the skilled jobs were reserved for the whites even though some were not skilled. The blacks lived in the homelands which Noah refers to as “ghettos” and had no proper housing nor sanitation. The separation prohibited them from mixing with other tribes. Black people were needed to work for the whites and so were allowed to live nearby towns. They had to be given passes with ID[Identification] numbers which they used to enter the city. Without the ID numbers they could risk being arrested. This is portrayed in the following excerpt.

The goal of apartheid was to make South Africa a White country, with every black person stripped of his or her citizenship and relocated to live in the homelands, the Bantustans, semi sovereign black territories that were puppet states of the government in Pretoria.

But this so-called white country could not function with black labour to produce its wealth. Which meant black people had to be allowed to live near white areas in the townships, government planes ghettos built to house black workers like Soweto. The township were you lived but your status as a labourer was the only thing that permitted

you to stay there. If your papers were revoked for any reasons, you could be deported to the homelands. To leave the township for work in the city, or for any other reason, you had to carry a pass with your ID number; otherwise, you could be arrested. There was also curfew after a certain hour blacks had to be back home in the township or risk arrest. (*Born a Crime*, p.19)

Noah describes how the people in Soweto had to find a way to make life for themselves. Some people had to set up day cares, others had to sell refurbished tires, they sold groceries, they opened shebeens, garages and they built kiosks. Despite the curfew, some blacks were determined to stay in town, they became prostitutes and had to find ways to navigate the city without being caught. It is this kind of treatment that created the identity of the Black people.

Friedman (2011) argues that colonial systems such as apartheid sought to forcibly impose the cultural and religious beliefs of the coloniser on the colonised, creating a cultural maroon who no longer had the traditionally known spiritually and cultural anchorages, resulting in a cultural mongrel whose identity is lucid and has no proper modes of definition. For example, in *Born a Crime* (2016), Patricia Trevor's mother became so much of a Christian to an extent that she even had to attend three churches in one day. She was a deeply religious person, with no reservation, this religion was adopted by the black South Africans from their colonisers. This entails that it was forced on the Black people as depicted below.

Like Indigenous people around the world, Black South Africans adopted the religion of our colonisers. By Adopt I mean it was forced on us. The white man was quite stern with the native. "You need to pray to Jesus," he said. "Jesus will save you." To which the natives replied, "Well, we do need to be saved –saved from you, but that's beside the point. So, let's give this Jesus thing a shot. (*Born a Crime*, p.2)

Nobay (2017) states that one of the effects of European colonialism on Africa is the formation of the new African identity, through the introduction of Christianity leading to cultural alienation and colonial mentality. This entails that the colonisers through religion were able to force their cultural identity on the people, who ended up adopting a culture that is not theirs. The Black people who once believed in ancestral spirits and prayed to their own Gods began to pray to the

white God because they were made to believe that their God is evil and cannot answer their prayers and that the only way to heaven is through Jesus. Noah doesn't shy away from emphasising how the Indigenous people's cultural identity was altered due to religion. He however also gives reference to those who did not completely convert to Christianity. While his mother converted fully and was "Team Jesus all the way" (*Born a Crime* p.3) his grandmother had to balance her Christianity faith with the traditional Xhosa beliefs she had grown up with, she communicates with the spirits of their ancestor (*Born a Crime* p.3). Noah highlights how he came to understand that most African beliefs were considered as primitive thus giving way to the colonisers to impose their own. He narrates that.

For a long time, I didn't understand why so many black people had abandoned their indigenous faith for Christianity, but the more we went to church and the longer I set in those pews, the more I learned about how Christianity works: If you are native American and you pray to the wolves, you are a savage, if you are African and you pray to the ancestors, you are primitive. But when white people pray to a guy who turns water into wine, well that's common sense. (*Born a Crime* p.3)

This means that, it is the coloniser who attributed or created this identity of the Black people or African people by alienating his indigenous identity, calling it savage, giving it an extremely negative connotation, for him to hate who he is and try and be like his master who in the end doesn't even accept him.

Born a crime gives reference to the missionary education that existed before apartheid where the natives were westernised and they learned English, European literature, medicine, and the law.

According to Fanon (1952) by assimilating language of the coloniser, the Black person assimilates the culture of the European. By adopting the culture, the colonised can be elevated above his jungle. Noah narrates how the colonisers drastically changed the Indigenous people's culture, through language and the manner of dressing as well as religion. If they spoke good English, Dress well, Christenise and civilise themselves one day they would be welcomed in the society.

The British racism gave the native something to aspire to. If they could learn to speak correct English and dress in proper clothes, if they could anglicise and civilize themselves, one day they might be welcomed into the society. (*Born a Crime*.58)

Said's *Orientalism* (1978) also highlights how the empire, the west created or recreated the identity of the orient which includes Africa. Emphasis is placed on how the west dominated, restructured, and had authority over the orient which is static and cannot define itself. It is for this reason that the west took upon itself to represent the orient thus subjecting it to exploitation. Noah perfectly highlights this notion. He reiterates how apartheid was perfect racism, and how the whites imposed the white rule by going to war with the natives. "Racism teaches us that we are different, because of the colour of our skin, if you are racist and you meet someone who doesn't look like you, he is different and less intelligent." (*Born a Crime*.44)

Race is an identity upon which human beings are differentiated, classified and hierarchised. This is the reality lived by the Africans during the era of slavery and apartheid (De Souza, 2019). Races are socially defined differences based on physical characteristics, culture and oppression leading to inequalities. Colonialism created diverse cultures and identities. Due to contacts with whites, Negroes adopted certain identities.

Colonialism left incredible marks that shape many aspects of the lives of the individuals across the world (Reddy & Gleibs, 2019). It has influenced the psychology of individuals about race and culture, as depicted in *Born a Crime* (2016). Noah tells a story of how his mother had to raise him like a white child, she moved to a neighbourhood where there are coloureds and sent him to schools where there are white children.

This reflects the identity that apartheid has created. Black people had to raise their children like white people because they believed it was a way to recognition and to get more opportunities, the apartheid regime have created mentalities that believe that, living in white neighbourhoods or sending children to schools where the white children go was an elevation to glory. This is because during colonialism blacks were seen as savages and everything associated with the black race had no value, as such black people had to try and adopt the white people's way of living which was perceived as valuable. Noah describes how living in a coloured neighbourhood

boasted their confidence, this is where freedom was, and freedom is what they were looking for. They could own what other blacks didn't own, like a car, unlike the black people who had to take public transport. He says.

We weren't black people stuck in the townships, waiting for public transport. We were black people who were out in the world. We were black people who could wake up and say where do we choose to go today? (*Born a Crime*, p.67)

This implies that living in coloured neighbourhoods, meant they had privileges and could choose, where to go and what to do, unlike the blacks who still lived in areas that were designated for only blacks. Although Noah does not present this notion negatively and claims that it was the only way to freedom, it reflects the mentality that apartheid has created of which people had no choice but to do what would elevate their statuses like in the case of Patricia, Noah's mother who refuses to be limited by the colonial authorities, she refuses to be reduced to nothing because of the colour of her skin. She fights her way to the top just like the other races and the only way she saw fit was raising her child like the whites, living like them and with them.

4.3.3 The Impacts of colonialism on identity in *Negroland* (2015).

Negroland (2015) provides a western perspective of the identities of privileged black Americans in the post-slavery era. It provides a holistic picture of slavery. Despite having been written by an American the experience is very closely related to that of the Africans. This study thus can argue that the black race regardless of the part of the world, shares the same history.

It is this history that has had a very profound effect on their identity. Jefferson sets of with what the *Negroland* identity entails, already giving insight on this new identity that was imposed on her.

"I was taught to avoid showing off. I was taught to distinguish myself through presentation, not declaration, to excel through deeds and manners, not showing off." (*Negroland*, p.1.). Although this identity was imposed on her by her own race or her own people, she does make it clear that, her enemies took too much, "My enemies took too much, my loved ones asked too much." (*Negroland*, p.127)

The enemies that Jefferson is referring to here are the colonisers. It is therefore vital to also understand that the reason her race had to force every person of their race to act a certain way, or adopt a different way of living, is because of their contact with the white civilization. A perfect explanation is in Fanon's *Black skin white masks*, who discusses the different attitude adopted by the Negro due to his contact with the white man, Fanon gives an example of how a black man, must walk, and try to talk like a white man hoping that he can be promoted to being white (Fanon 1952).

Jefferson defines Negroland as a name for a small region of Negro America where residents were sheltered by a certain amount of privilege and plenty. She uses the word "Negro" throughout the memoir unapologetically, and she associates Negro with all the positive and negative things.

A word of wonders, glorious, terrible runaway slave posters and civil rights proclamations; for social constructs and street corner flaunts. A tonal-language word whose meaning shifts as setting and context shift, as history twist, lurches, advances, stagnates. As capital letters appear to enhance its dignity as other nomenclatures arise to challenge its primacy. I call it Negroland because "Negro" dominated our history for so long; because I lived with its meaning and intimations for so long; because they were essential for my first discoveries of what race meant, or as we now say how race was constructed (*Negroland*, p.3.)

This entails that Jefferson uses the word "Negro" because it simply represents history, who she is today started with the word "Negro" and when the word existed racial identity was born. Fanon (1952) in *Black skin White mask* sets off by considering the origin of the word "Negro" and its purpose, he attributes the notion of blackness to the European (*Black Skin White Masks*, p.83). He followed the ideologies of early writers such as Dubois who argue that black people only know that they are black by seeing themselves through the eyes of white people. That black people realise their blackness when told by white people that they are not white, as such Jefferson gives her memoir the title "Negroland" and uses the word "Negro" freely because throughout the memoir she emphasises that nonmatter how they "Negros" tried to work hard to reach up to the standards of the white people they were still "Negros" in the eyes of the white people.

While looking at the history of how “Negros” worked hard to change their identity to try and match up to the white people’s standards, Jefferson gives an account of a Negro writer Wilson who writes Formal, eighteenth-century prose quoting Shakespeare, Alexander pope, and Thomas Gray, using highly constructed metaphors. For example, he wrote.

The Machinery of the watch will not fulfil its intent, unless the impulse of the spring be applied; and, though things inanimate are not to be compared within human soul, yet, neither can a man be expected to rise to eminence in a given department, where, as is the case with men of colour, there is not only an absence of all encouragement- all impulse-all definite motive to cheer him onward-but from the exercise of the legitimate functions of which, even where he fitted therefore, he would be absolutely excluded!
(*Negroland*, p.10)

This book disappeared after receiving some reviews of which white people only commented on its outward appearance which according to them seems creditable, and that the author himself a coloured man showed some writing ability (*Negroland*, p.11). This signifies that even though they tried to do better for themselves the white people still didn’t see them worthy of being their equals. Black people do not only seek recognition from their masters, but they wish to enter humanity to be seen as human, whiteness is synonymous to being human (Fanon, 1952).

Slavery had altered the identity of the privileged black Americans to an extent that they do not want to be associated with the weak race, the savages, as such they had to try and work hard, hoping to free themselves from all the stereotypes and finally become human. Jefferson gives reference to how their identity came to exist, by referencing the work of Cyprian Clamorgan “*The Coloured Aristocracy of St. Louis*” stating that.

Clamorgan opens by making clear that he is a man on intimate terms with all kinds of important people, from “Fred. Douglass and his able compatriots to eighteenth-century voyageur grandees like his grandfather, who was among the first white families of St. Louis. In In their travels, Clamorgan explains, such men, while trading in land, fur, slaves, sometimes “obtained wives” with the blood of Africa in their veins and from this comingling came the coloured aristocracy of the city: “those who move in a certain circle,

who by means of wealth, education, or natural ability, form a peculiar class-the elite of the coloured race. (*Negroland*, p.11)

Like Fanon (1952) puts it, when black people came into contacts with the white people new identities emerged and this is depicted right in Jefferson's *Negroland* "Such men obtained wives with the blood of Africa" (*Negroland*, p.11) here Jefferson is referring to the black people. White men exploited slaves, enslaved people were not seen as people at all but as commodity, to be bought, sold, and exploited (Elliot, 2019). This implies that the women that bore children with these white men were many times exploited. This happened out of their will, the masters made young, single slaves the object of their sexual pursuit. They also on occasion raped married women (Educational broadcasting cooperation, 2004, p.1.)

Cyprian, the writer referred to by Jefferson in *Negroland* had a grandfather who, although it is not clear if he raped the women also obtained and owned a series of black wives. He owned them all, but he married none of them. This may also mean that he exploited them, but he did not marry any of them. It is through the exploitation of the slaves that the coloured or black Americans came into existence.

Jefferson's *Negroland* even emphasises the notion of how colonialism had impacted the identity of the black elites (coloureds) further. The coloured affluent community of blacks had to try and imitate the whites as they felt it was the only way to be closer to being white. They had to adopt a different identity contrary to the black identity that was associated with everything savagery, and incapability. They even had to work on their looks to an extent that, some had to use creams, to change their colours or make them lighter while others had to use hair relaxer to make their hair soft. Jefferson recalls an advertisement she had seen when she was young, a *Kongolene* hair cream which was first advertised in 1914. Jefferson (2016) reiterates.

Men of colour wanted to wear their straight hair brushed back, hair that could divide itself into fine long strands and whip from side to side. The straightening cream assaulted the indigenous kinks with potassium or sodium chloride, the black rinse, which erased the residues of crinkly, faded discoloured hair (*Negroland*, p.156)

By seeing this the Negroes whose hair has been depicted as ugly cannot help but get tempted. Jefferson states that for years the Negroes had to fight for white hair in their homes, they had to mix eggs, potatoes, and toxic burning lye, and apply the portion to every hair follicle, enduring the pain of hot, singed, even burning scalps. So, the *Kongolene* cream was like a life saver. Jefferson also talks about the skin advertisement directed at women, which promises lighter skins and a brighter life. The slogans include.

Beauty is skin deep. Begin now to have lighter, smoother, softer skin that attracts admirers. Nadiola Bleaching Cream: Have you noticed that the nicest things happen to girls with lighter, lovelier complexions. (*Negroland*, p.157)

This depicts how the black skin, black hair, and everything black was seen as unfit, ugly, and not capable, which damaged the black people psychologically to an extent that they felt that being white is more beautiful than being black, the advertisements present how the white identity is viewed as beautiful and as a symbol of superiority. Supporting this claim is Edward Said's theory of orientalism which focuses on how the west view the orient.

According to Said (1978) the west has created assumptions and practices to interpret and evaluate the identity of the orient, one of such practices is the one described above. In other words, the west has created inferior images of the black race, the black people end up despising who they are and try to recreate their image into white people's image to gain value. The white man knowing that the black man hates himself, uses that to his advantage to sell him products that can get rid of his "ugly" skin and turn him into a white man. However even after doing so he is still rejected by the same white man. This implies that the colonial administration created insecurities amongst black people, which have had prolonged effects on the perception of black identity.

4.4. Contested racial and cultural identities in postcolonial societies

4.4.1. The construction of complex, fluid racial and cultural identities in postcolonial societies as depicted in *The Last resort* (2009)

The last resort is a post-colonial text that depicts the problems of identity in an independent Zimbabwe. Appiah (2016) argues that identity has been recognised as one of the major causes of division and conflict in different societies. As such the identities are being challenged, they keep mutating in *The Last Resort*.

According to De Souza (2019), identities are fragmented, fractured, never individual but always political and built through difference and take several forms. The politics and contestation of identities are depicted in *The Last Resort* when the whites are denied land in Zimbabwe, they are being taken out of the land they call their own through force and violence. Their ancestors can be traced in Africa, they came to Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries, they themselves were born and raised in Africa and they can identify themselves as African. This leads to complex and problematic identities. Questions such as who is a true African, arise. The Africans are claiming that the whites are not African, and they have settled on land which is not theirs.

However, the whites also try to justify their belonging by claiming that they were born in Zimbabwe and have nowhere to go.

When Rogers asked one of the representatives of the opposition about the plight of the white farmers who are not wanted in Zimbabwe, he is told that they too are as much Zimbabweans as the blacks in the country. They know the Zimbabwean culture; they were born here, and their generations are Zimbabweans. Rogers is told that.

White farmers are Zimbabweans, some are third, fourth generations in this country. They know the climate, the soil, the agriculture, it is not like they can come here and just start

ploughing, and it needs a culture, long-term understanding of the culture. White farmers had this. (*The Last Resort*, P.180-181)

This further complicates Identity. How then is one defined? Does knowing the Zimbabwean culture make them African? How about their race? Identity is not fixed, it keeps mutating and identities are dynamic and are constantly changing (Erickson, 1979). This can be seen with the white race in Zimbabwe Apart from the fact that their ancestors had come to settle on the African soil with the intention of ruling and taking over a territory that belonged the ancestors of the black people, their generations born in Zimbabwe became Zimbabweans by nationality or citizenship. They also tried to learn the culture of the indigenous people through language and other customs. Some of them could speak Shona. Culture is a defining future of someone identity, it contributes to how they see themselves and the groups with which they identify a person's understanding of their own and other's develop from birth and is shaped by the values and attitudes prevalent at home and surrounding community (Kroeber & Kluckholm 1952).

For example, the white Zimbabweans like Rogers were exposed to the Zimbabwean culture through their black workers. Roger narrates how he had started sharing traditional meals with their black workers. He also narrates how his parents had consulted a traditional healer when they opened their lodge to bless the lodge and give them luck. Another account was when his father and Mrs Money Penny had to consult traditional healer after she finds herself in money and housing conflict with another person (*Negroland*, P. 94, 59, 263). Culture is comprised of a belief system of a people.

Traditional healers are associated with the African culture. Before the Europeans came to settle on the African soil, they found the black people with their own cultural beliefs. One of them is that of the traditional healing. The whites do not believe in these practices however the Rogers had to practice it. This complicates identities even further and makes them even more complex. Language forms part of the culture and they had learned how to speak Shona.

Their identity is mutating, they assume new identities in the postcolonial Zimbabwe for survival. Hall (2019) states that culture should be seen as negotiated, it is dynamic and cultural changes can be traced, and analysed to better understand why societies are the way they are now.

Circumstances, even continue to reshape cultural identities they do not remain stagnant. To be accepted as a member of a cultural group one must be acculturated, this implies learning and using a code which other group members will be able to recognise (Collier, 1996). *The Last Resort* (2009) presents to us how the white people are trying to assimilate the African culture, from eating the African food, to adopting the African people's way of living, which include farming and other African customs for their own survival. However, having adopted or assimilated the culture of the Black people, does not make them Black people, as such they are not accepted and they face rejection, in independent Zimbabwe. The white farmers had found home in Africa, in fact they were born in Africa, and some have never been to any other places, they became comfortable. This leads to questions of who truly African is. Does race determine who is African and who is not? Racial and cultural identity contestation are associated with immigrant generations like in the case of the white farmers, ancestry as well as phenotypical characteristics (Stainback, 2016).

When Rogers, had to get married in America, he invited his parents. His parents did not feel at home, and they looked forward or were happy to go back to their home, which is Africa. This is depicted in the following narration.

I dropped my mom and Dad off at the airport bus to Newark in lower Manhattan days later, it had been a whirlwind week, but I hadn't seen them this happy since that millennium family reunion five years earlier, I imagined they would be devastated to be leaving, to be going back there, but it turned out they were quite excited or rather relieved. It's lovely here, darling, mom sighed as she hugged me goodbye, but really, it does make your head spin. The noise, the traffic. So many people. Phew! I don't know how you do it. We are looking forward to some peace and quiet. (*The Last Resort*, p.120)

The statement "Home is where the heart is" is very much relevant here, despite all the chaos they had to go through in Zimbabwe, the political instability, they were still happy to call it their place of peace and quiet. That is the home they knew, the only home they had known since birth.

The memory theory by John Locke, stipulates that, identity can be linked to memory. The person's identity only reaches as far as their memory can extend in the past (Azarian, 2015). An autobiography is a memory and Rogers takes us through memory lane. He remembers growing up in Zimbabwe; the house they lived in and the people who took care of him. He recalls growing up in Zimbabwe with his sisters and parents, the schools he attended and the friends.

This memory therefore can signify who he is, and where he is from. He goes back to the old chicken farm where he used to live. He remembers all the happy times he has had on the farm, listening to African stories, and eating African food. Rogers states that.

I remember Lawrence, our Shona gardener, peeling oranges for me in the shade of those trees and telling me magical tales of Manyika kings and the Shona princesses as he stirred a pot of sadza on a wood fire during breaks from slashing the grass. (*The Last Resort*, p. 190)

This depicts the complexities of identity. Memory may be used to negotiate identity. However, because of race he is rejected. Race thus shapes how individuals are defined in a social setting. While Douglas claim he is Zimbabwean, by justifying this with the Zimbabwean Memories, His race ties him back to his ancestors who are white and are not descendants on the African soil.

Before independence, the colonisers dominated the black people. So many of them were denied schools while others had to be in military to fight for the liberation struggle. Some black people worked on farms. Rogers remembers his childhood he also remembers the blacks that worked for his parents on the chicken farm. He also meets a woman who had taken care of him growing up.

Rogers who hardly had an interest in speaking or having a conversation with the blacks who worked for his parents, began to have an interest in talking to them. These are people who have worked for his parents for years, but they did not even know their names. They called them "John Orange and John Old" (*The Last Resort*, p.24). However, he began to learn their names, John Muranda, and John Agoneka. This entails that the identity of the black people suddenly became

known to them. The existence was starting to interest the Rogers because they saw how important they needed them to stay longer in Zimbabwe, or on their farm.

Douglas, began to sit with them and have conversation with them, he is a journalist and he needed them to give him information about which he could write. Before or during the colonial era, black people were not that important to their masters. They didn't really consider them and had no interest in getting to know them. The chaos in Zimbabwe reminded the white people of how useful and visible as well as human the black people were. It reminded them of who were the real owners of the privileges they had enjoyed for long. From being seen as inferior to becoming almost equals. They shared meals and conversations with Douglas, and he became interested in knowing them for his own good.

I had hardly spoken to the two Johns on my previous visits but now I got to know them around the desert bar we will prop up the counter whole Naomi- Mrs Johns we called her, an old, shy, bird like Malawian woman who always wore a neat red head scarf- shuffled in head down with, bowls of warm sadza. (*The Last Resort*, p.50)

This depicts how the identity of the black people is changing from being normal workers whose masters, or bosses had no interest in knowing to becoming close to their bosses, sharing food, conversation, and a lot more. Dowling (2011) asserts that constructing identities forms part of the integral part of human species, which involve life experiences, relationships and connections, the construction is much more complicated. Mr Rogers, Douglass's father, had to become friends with a lot of blacks, including Ms Money Penny to survive the violent attacks. He gets involved in the black market of changing money, the blacks who had no significance, no privileges during the colonial times became incredibly significant to the whites.

The colonisers where never interested in the black culture, instead blacks were forced to adopt a new culture which was Christianity (Dirar, 2007). Rogers gives an account of how they went to a hill for the African ancestors. The land belonged to the ancestors and the white people came to settle on it, disrupting all the African beliefs, and customs which were considered not useful. These are African practices which were considered evil and false by the colonisers, but they began to gain importance in post-colonial Zimbabwe as the significance of ancestral spirits began to

surface. Ancestral spirits play a very vital role in identity. Through the ancestral spirits Africans were able to construct their identities which continue to be maintained today. Racial identity finds its roots in Ancestry. Individuals are defined based on their ancestors. The ancestors play a role in defining what places are considered home (Lopez, 2020). It is because of ancestral spirits that the black Zimbabweans were able to trace their identity and claim their homes back.

While most blacks worked on the farms and where working for the whites in the past, in the independent Zimbabwe Douglas Rogers highlights some powerful blacks, who were business minded. They had their own businesses, they were educated, they had money and others owned farms. So, blacks are no more the slaves who work for others, but their identity keeps fluctuating, it keeps developing into characters that are hardworking and own companies. For example, Dawson Jombe who leased the lodge out was described by Rogers' mother as a very lovely person who was once a manager on the DE Klerk farm. After losing his job, when the farm was taken, he decided to rent out the restaurant bar. Dawson was educated too. According to Douglas Rogers, "He attended the college of Horticulture in Chipinge." (*The Last Resort*, p.74) another skilled black Zimbabwean was the electrician, Brian Ndlovu, who was fixing the wiring in the lodge. Brian was an electrician for the Zimbabwe Railways.

John Agoneka considered himself middle-class "He was educated, had worked at successful tourist resort as a safari guide, He earned a good salary and had food to eat and a place to stay." (*The Last Resort*, p.227). Rogers also briefly mentioned some Black farmers such as Ernest Muzorewa, Margaret Matongo, and Dr John Pfumojena.

This implies that Black people were not only working on farms, but they were also empowered to run their own businesses which they ran successfully. As such this study argues that the identity of the Black Zimbabweans had mutated from being ordinary, uneducated people who worked for the whites on farms, to being identified as businesspeople and women, who were skilful and owned their own farms.

4.4.2. The constructions of complex, fluid racial and cultural identities in postcolonial societies as depicted in *Born a crime* (2016)

Born a crime dwell on the struggle to negotiate identity in a newly formed South Africa. It is a true testament of how apartheid in South Africa had shaped the way individuals see themselves and others. Trevor Noah narrates how identities were being contested in a newly formed South Africa, in different settings, for example, home, schools and even jails.

Trevor Noah highlights how he had to struggle to fit into the society as a mixed child. He struggled both at home and in school. Even though he saw himself as a black person, other people in the society did not see him that way. Trevor had to look for a coping mechanism to survive. He had to learn different South African languages. He could speak, Afrikaans, Zulu, and even Tsonga. Even though his colour did not change he could at least be perceived as one of them if he spoke their language. He tells a story about one of many incidences where some Zulu boys were trying to assault him and after he spoke Zulu, they felt he was part of them.

The South African mixed people who were born from blacks and whites were classified as their own separate group as such they were neither black nor white but were called coloureds. "Under apartheid, the government labelled everything on your birth certificate: Race, tribe, nationality. Everything had to be categorized." (*Born a Crime*, p.17)

In identity constructions, there are those identities that are constructed for us (external). People and institutions around us may have a rigid idea of who we are as such they construct the identities for us (Taylor, 2015). This is the case with South Africa, the classification of individuals into separate groups and forcing them to register their race, led to a few identities.

Trevor Noah sees himself as black, but his community does not categorize him as black. He narrates a story where his grandmother could not beat him, even when he did something wrong because she didn't know how to beat a white child, and she said if she beats him, he will turn pink. These were the words of Trevor's grandmother.

Because I do not know how to hit a white child, she said a black child you hit them and they stay black, Trevor, when you hit him, he turns blue, green, yellow, and red, I have never seen those colours before, I am scared I am going to break him, I do not want to kill a white person. (*Born a Crime*.48)

Whilst Noah sees himself as black, his grandmother still refers to him as white because of his colour. He is still not regarded as one of them. This indicates the role played by race in identity construction. Trevor was being defined by his grandmother based on his physical traits. She says “she has never seen those colours before” this gives reference to contested identities in the newly formed societies. It refers to other identities that people have never seen, however due to the contacts of different races these identities begin to rise. His grandmother treated him like he was white, so was his grandfather. He narrates how his grandfather was so extreme to an extent he called him “Mastah” he insisted on driving him in the car as if he was his chauffeur. This Portrays what Fanon (1952) referred to as inferiority complex. Apartheid shaped the way human beings defined themselves with regards to race. The black Africans had suffered a crisis of identity. They were segregated and dehumanised to an extent that they perceived the whites as more superior than them. This explains the attitude of Trevor’s grandfather towards him.

Noah was not only treated special by his family because of his colour. He remembers how his skin colour made him famous.

When people gave directions they used him as a landmark, for example they would say, “The house of Makhalima Street. At the corner you will see a light skinned boy.” (*Born a Crime*, P. 49). When the children in the streets saw him, they would yell “Indoda Yomulungu!” which translates to the white man. This reflects the role played by race in shaping the identity of individuals. His skin colour attributed him the identity that was perceived different to that of the Black people.

He received special treatment even at funerals, while everybody else ate outside, including adults he ate indoors. This also portrays the colonial mentality that Fanon speaks about in *Black skin white masks* (1952). For a Black man is made to believe that the white man is the ultimate stage in evolution as such he must be treated special. Trevor Noah at that point was still young and all he had to do was enjoy the rewards of being perceived as white. He writes.

At that point I didn't think of the special treatment as having to do with colour. I thought of it as having to do with Trevor. It wasn't Trevor doesn't get beaten because Trevor is white, it was Trevor doesn't get beaten because Trevor is Trevor. Trevor can't go outside, Trevor can't walk without supervision, and it is because I am me; that's why this is happening. I had no other points of reference. There were no mixed kids around so that I could say "Oh this happens to us. (Born a Crime, p.49)

When Trevor started school, he was placed at a school with children from different races. Black kids, white kids, Indian kids and coloured. He felt it could be a comfortable place where he didn't have to negotiate his identity, however he realised that "Racism exist and it doesn't go away" (*Born a Crime*, p.52), at some point he had to "choose black or white. He had to pick a side and he could not hide from it, life had to force him to do so." (*Born a Crime*, p.53). When he left this school, he goes to a government school where majority of the school children were blacks, he was so delighted, but he noticed that the white kids went in one direction, so were the black kids and he found himself being left standing alone in the middle feeling confused. He wanted to belong, but he could not fit in because he was not seen as belonging to any of the races. Identity formation is based on the need for a sense of belonging and this has resulted into identity crises (Asma, 2015). Noah had to face identity crises.

This is a period where values and relationships are thrown into questions. The questions which Nonkovich (2001) regards as questions that bedevils individuals that are caught up in identity crises. These questions include who am I? Where do I belong? It is this search for the self which complicates identities, establishing and reinforcing social division, where some people are taken for granted. Relevant to the above claim, is the story of how Noah became anomaly for not belonging. Even though they lived in a white area, nobody looked like him, in Soweto in a black area, no body looked like him, in Eden Park a coloured area, everyone looked like him, but he felt the animosity from the coloureds. The social division can clearly be seen here. This animosity taught him that "It is easier to be an insider as an outsider than to be an outsider as an insider." (*Born a Crime*, p.109).

According to the history the coloured people received privileges that black people didn't get, they thus felt superior and felt like if they worked hard, they could be promoted to being white. They married each other to maintain the race, but despite the efforts they were still not seen as whites. According to Fanon (1952) the arrival of colonisers in a country created social and psychological wounds. The colonised people have stopped existing in their own rights and are faced to exist in relation to the Europeans. The colonised people do not suffer because they are inferior to white people, they suffer because the white people treat them as inferior. Thus, they try to make themselves white to prove to the white people that they are human. Fanon writes.

The alterity of a black man is not black man but the white man. If he is overwhelmed by the wish to be white, it is because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible. In a society that derives its stability from the perception of this complex. In a society that proclaims the superiority of one race; to the identical degree to which that society creates difficulties for him." (Fanon, 1952, p. 100).

This explains why the coloured people of South Africa were obsessed about becoming white. They wanted to prove that they are human, however they failed to do so. When this happened, they started suffering from identity crisis.

According to Fanon (1952), when the colonised forgets his place and takes it into his head to be the equal of the Europeans and he is rejected, his inferiority complex begins to trouble him, giving rise to identity crises. Trevor Noah further explains how the coloured people of South Africa were faced with identity crises. He states that; "Many coloured people live in Limbo, always yearning for the white fathers who disowned them, they could horribly be racists to one another. The worst way to insult them was to refer to their blackness.

They refused to be black because they felt like the blacks held them back. This is what apartheid taught them. They were taught that the reason they could not have the first-class status was because of the blacks. So, after apartheid the hate continues. The social division is apparent.

Every race feels like their race is better than the other. Identity becomes complicated and problematic. However, despite the hate, none was going to be promoted to white.

Homi Bhabha as cited in Rezande et al. (2016) calls this strategy that the coloniser's used "mimicry." This is a strategy where the coloniser has control over the colonised to prove their superiority, Homi Bhabha calls this strategy the most effective strategy of colonial power and knowledge, they want to civilise the colonised by making them repeat and imitate their cultures, but they do not mean to adopt them into their equals, so this is what happened in South Africa, the different racial groups, created by the colonisers, tried to imitate the white people hoping to be accepted but they are not even seen as close to being humans.

So, Noah finds himself being hated by the coloureds in his neighbourhood, he is mixed just like them, has the same colour but he is not accepted. Fanon (1952) reiterates that, "majority of South Africans feel an almost physical revulsion against anything that puts a native or a person of colour on their level" (*Black Skin White Mask*, p.90). Noah was just like them, he too was coloured, but they refused to accept him, or see him as one of them. Fanon claims that racism in South Africa doesn't originate with certain groups of people but the entire country is. This racist culture encourages different ethnic groups to hate and look down on each other. For example, the coloureds bully and mock Noah because despite having the same colour he associates himself with the black culture where he was raised within.

He was proud of his afro, and he spoke African languages. When they hear him speak Xhosa, they would say he is trying to be black. Other coloureds hated him for having a white father. He spoke English and not Afrikaans their language. Appiah (2016) states that identity has been recognised as one of the most prominent causes of division and conflict in different societies.

The coloureds had to assume a certain Identity. According to Noah because their mothers who were blacks had passed on, they now had to identify with their fathers, who were Afrikaners. Noah describes them as the most confused race with no clearly defined heritage to go back to, they don't speak their mother's language and their culture was shaped by everything Afrikaner, as such they do not know who they are as depicted below.

The curse that the coloureds carry is having no clearly defined heritage to go back to. If they trace their lineage back far enough, at a certain point it splits into white and native and a tangled web of “other.” Since their native mothers are gone, their strongest affinity has always been with their white fathers, the Afrikaners. Most coloured people don’t speak African languages. They speak Afrikaans. Their religion, their institution, all the things that shaped their culture came from Afrikaners. (*Born a Crime*, p.107)

Noah (2016) asserts that, “The coloured’s strong affinity has always been with their white fathers” (*Born a Crime*, p.107) as a result they were a privileged race during apartheid, they remain faithful to this identity to an extent that they view themselves as whites. They try to maintain this identity in a post-apartheid South Africa where blacks become leaders, and this frustrates them because they had worked hard to be almost white and it was all in vain, they are still not promoted to being white even after all the effort. Being white meant power, and opportunities however despite all the effort of trying to be white they remain coloured and on top of it all, the black race ends up occupying the positions of power as Noah puts it.

Coloured people had it rough. Imagine: You have been brainwashed into believing that your blood is tainted. You have spent all your time assimilating and aspiring to whiteness, then just as you think you are closing in on the finish line, some *fucking* guy named Nelson Mandela comes along and flips the country on its head.

Now the finish line is back the starting line was, and the benchmark is black. Black is in charge. Black is beautiful. Black is powerful. For centuries coloured people were told Blacks are monkeys. Don’t swing from the trees like them? Learn to walk up straight like the white man. Then suddenly it’s *Planet of the Apes*, and the monkeys have taken over. (*Born a Crime*, p.112)

This therefore means that the identity of the coloured who were seen as second class in the apartheid era had to change after apartheid, they had to assume new identities, a process that Noah refers to as frustrating for the coloureds, because of this they become even more racist and begin hating the other race. The black people’s identity on the other had to change from being seen as monkeys to now leading the country and this depicts the fluidity of identity.

Strengthening this claim is Cohen (1997) who claims that Identity is comprised of categorisation and regulations which are constantly producing fluid, heterogeneous and political as well as antagonistic identities, this was the case of South Africa as presented in *Born a Crime* (2016).

In Chapter 2 of *Black Skin White Mask* (1952), Fanon presents the black woman's desire to marry a white man because she hopes to become white through his whiteness. He considers the ideas that associate whiteness with virtue and beauty. He posits that black people have been taught to believe that their race will be saved by being white. Trevor Noah portrays this in a story of how on Valentines, the white girls in his school had to paired him up with another coloured girl because they are all coloureds. Trevor went ahead to ask the girl to be his valentine partner and she accepted. He was surprised to know that on Valentine's Day, the girl left him for a famous white boy in school. Trevor suffers rejection throughout his school years, to an extent he develops fear of rejection, and he decides not to ask girls out anymore. Black people are led to believe that the only way to escape their sufferings is through becoming white. As such they become desperate for white approval

Noah felt unwelcomed in groups, especially the coloureds, they would bully him for being black, he could not be with the whites because they had money and he didn't have so to fit in he needed money too to buy snacks and do other things that other kids were doing.

He became "a tuck-shop guy." (p.129). He became everything, since he belonged to no group, he learned how to blend in, and he floated. He could play sports, joke, talk computers with the nerds, dance with the township kids, he could do multiple things, and had developed multiple identities, his identity kept on changing, fluctuating, and developing.

Born a crime as stated in the previous examples depicts contested identity in post-independence periods, the diversity has led to the formation of new societies with individuals who are not certain about their belongings, it depicts multiple identities, which are continuously fluid, heterogeneous, and political (Cohen, 1997).

4.4.3. The constructions of complex, fluid racial and cultural identities in postcolonial societies as depicted in *Negroland* (2015)

Negroland is a depiction of the result of hybridity, a concept, coined by Homi Bhabha, referring to the creation of new cultural forms or identities, which are result of the contacts with colonialism. The interdependency of the colonisers and the colonised lead to new identities. Jefferson expands on the notion that, her race which is the black elites, had to suffer identity issues. They had to try and maintain as well as develop this culture that had been imposed on them during slavery, to keep up and to reach the standards of the white people. Like Homi Bhabhas strategy, "mimicry" they start to imitate the coloniser's culture, hoping that they will be accepted but, the coloniser did not even see them as equals. (Rezazade et. al., 2016).

When slavery ended in America, the free slaves also known as the black elites had reconstruct themselves. Jefferson takes her readers through all the achievement of the "Negros" in Negroland. They wanted their children to go schools that were mostly white schools. They become writers, they worked extremely hard to uplift their race. This implies that they had to rebuild their race into affluent black Americans and not the ordinary blacks who were defined as; "The lowly, the illiterate, and even the vicious to whom they are bound by the ties of race and sex." (*Negroland*, P. 21). This description of the black race can be linked to Said's theory

of orientalism. The black people are defined as inferior, they are illiterate, and they are cruel or violent. This is how the colonisers dehumanised the black race. Their culture is depicted as cruel and alien as such they had to be controlled.

Jefferson admits that even though they belonged to the high class of black people, they still knew their connection to the black race. They strive to change the world view of the black people by working hard. They form clubs, set up schools, kindergarten, and nurseries. They set up coloured women clubs with mottos such as "Lifting as We Climb, Virtuous, High-minded and High-handed." (p.21), the aim was to escape their rightful self which has been wounded and damaged.

During slavery, the oppressed did not have a voice to speak for themselves. Spivak's Essay "*Can The Subaltern Speak?*" depicts how the colonised had no voice to stand up for themselves because they were divided (Kilburn, 2017). After becoming free, the affluent Negroes were able to stand up for themselves and speak for themselves. They aspire to be like the white people,

they send their children to school, and they open businesses as well as become writers. They found themselves being caught up in conflict with the self which Jefferson referred to as double consciousness. She describes this double consciousness in the excerpt below.

This is the double consciousness they must bear. Or one form of it. The other is the double consciousness that comes from knowing history has bound them to cruelties and calumnies that many hours of the day, many days of the week, and many weeks of the year they want to feel little attachment to. No but they tell themselves, I have worked to earn the right to go about the business of my well- appointed life, to fulfil my professional obligation, social aspirations, familial responsibilities, I do not want to think constantly about them as us. (*Negroland*, P.21-22).

This implies even though they want to forget about who history created them to be. History always takes them back and they are reminded of the identities forced upon them by the colonial administration. Jefferson thus claims that who the illiterate blacks are is what slavery has created.

They are now in conflict with who the experts wanted them to be and who they want to be. Hall (1990) stipulates that history or historical events have reconfigured traditional collective modes of self-referencing and identity.

The shared modes of identity become tempered with, and the essence of unified and homogeneous identity becomes elusive (p.225). This implies that the blacks that shared the common identity had to single themselves out. They did not want to be associated with the rest of the blacks. Like in the case of the black elites of *Negroland*.

According to (Friedman, 2011), Slavery elevated the white race over the black race. Slavery has transfigured the notion of identity both individual and collective identity. It has shaped the way individuals define themselves with the introduction of new modes of self-referencing. Those of race, class, and culture (Hall, 1990). *Negroland* depicts a society defined by class. The blacks from “*Negroland*” set themselves apart from all the other blacks because of their class. “They call themselves strivers not aristocrats, arrivistes with no point of arrival, their inferiority complex

shows itself in a pathological struggle for status within the Negro world and craving for recognition in the white world." The double consciousness now become reduced to imitation and compensation" (Jefferson, 2015, p.22). This means that they had to try to imitate the whites, in a way to compensate for what they have lost during slavery. Slavery has impacted the way through which the blacks define the "self." The black man can no longer identify with the collective culturally, but now individually. The black man now needs to identify through new modes of viewing the self in relation to the other "the white" and not the homogenous other "the black" as such his fact of blackness is now conditioned comparatively with regards to white." (Fanon, 1952, pp. 82-83). This is what happened in Negroland. The Negroes in Negroland began to define themselves as compared to whites and not blacks. They began to wear white masks in their black skins.

The black writers used white publishers, to attract white media attention. They send their children to white prestigious schools. They live in white neighbourhoods and even make friendship with the white elites and top celebrities. However, most whites knew little about them.

In other words, they were not at all interested in knowing them, only a few cared to know. They were told that they were the better version of blacks. They were told to crave more attention. Also, that they were better than the blacks who looked down on them.

However, this was only possible if ever the white people acknowledge them. As a race, they then had "to work hard, scrape for privilege, gobble it down when those who would snatch it away weren't even looking." (*Negroland*, p.24)

While in school Margo Jefferson is constantly asked by her white peers if they are upper class. She comes home and ask her mother who responds that "We are considered upper-class Negroes, and upper-middle class Americans but most people would like to consider us just Negroes." (*Negroland*, p.28) This signifies that she is aware that they are high class Negroes and middle-class Americans. However, she acknowledges that they are still perceived as Negroes by many. Every time she wrote a letter to a friend, she ended it by saying "Sometimes I almost forget

I'm a Negro" (*Negroland*, p.26). This entails that despite being immersed in this image of who they were. They were still and always remained "Negroes."

Margo narrates how her white friends at school asked them petty questions which she did not appreciate because she didn't want to be associated with every "Negro." She was a Negro with standards, that's what they were conditioned to in Negroland.

In Negroland we thought ourselves as the Third Race, poised between the masses of Negroes and all classes of Caucasians. Like the Third Eye, The third race possessed a wisdom, intuition, and enlightened knowledge the other two races lacked. Its member had education, ambition, sophistication, and standardized verbal dexterity, if as we said, too many of us ached, longed, strove, to be White White White WHITE (*Negroland*, p.33.)

The white friend asked if she knows their Janitor, Mr. Johnson who was a "Negro" and lived near them, implying that they are all "negroes" so they should know each other, in fact they are the same. They also asked her if she had Indian blood. One day in school, when they had gone to a camp a Negro called R arrived, Jefferson was asked to help R fit in better because everyone was still calling him the new kid. Jefferson says that she "hated it, she was supposed to be having fun and race had to single her out." (*Negroland*, p.32). This implies that she was still seen as a "Negro" and because R is a "Negro" too he would better feel at home with another "Negro."

There was another Negro called Philip, but he was not singled out to help R because he looked closer to white. He had curly hair and fizzy hair he looked whiter so they could not single him out.

Jefferson's race placed too much value on their looks, manners, and morals, for that is what could equate them to being white. She recalls how her uncle Lucious had lived all his life as a white person because he had more white features. He avoided "Negroland" until he retired as a salesperson. Their cousin Lilian Tompson who also had whiter features was told by her farther "The best blood of Mississippi runs in your veins" (*Negroland*, p81). Implying that she was or could pass for a white person. So many Negroes had relatives who would spend their lives shopping at white only stores, going to white only restaurants living in English towns. This depicts, the identity crises they had to face after slavery. They wanted to fit in, they wanted to belong to the superior race.

The black elites were taught the way they can comport themselves. There were books written, stipulating all the things they should do and not do, how to act, walk, dress, talk. Jefferson tells a story of the book written by one of the Negroes, Charlott Hawkins Brown. She published an etiquette book titled "The Correct Thing: To do-to say-to wear." (*Negroland*, p.139). According to Brown "The correct Things were.

Buy mother a box of handkerchiefs and father a tie when you get your allowance. They will appreciate it thoroughly. Eat slowly and noiselessly, excessive movement of the body are very ungraceful, dancing should be done with the feet not the torso, do not use the train or public conveyance for grooming which should be done in private quarters. (*Negroland*, P.139-140)

In this book she tries to give the readers a practice and faith that will shield them from the practical and emotional assaults of bigotry, from the slights and threats of white strangers

Jefferson (2015). This entails that she is training them to behave like whites. They were a third race, they cared about their people, they loved their people, but they refused to be held back by the lower element, they did not love nor care for white people, but they envied them, they feared them, and hated them, they practiced suspicion and caution.

Jefferson refers to an account where the Hyde Park neighbourhood had produced strategies for a socially stable neighbourhood. "They proposed, amended and negotiated housing acts and redevelopment plans, which ensured that it remained intellectually, economically, socially, and culturally desirable." (p.106). their goals where

To remove low-income Negroes who lived there.

To prevent low-income Negroes from moving there;

To convince upper-middle-class whites to remain there

To permit small numbers of upper-middle class Negroes to move there
(*Negroland*, p.106).

They worked so hard in making sure their race was accepted, recognised, and equated to the white race/ However, it was all in vein. The whites still saw them as “Negroes.” Jefferson recalls an incident where she was with her white colleagues and a fellow Negro who is a secretary calls out “sister.” She looked at the expression of the white people. They didn’t show that they thought he could be calling one of them. So obviously, they thought since he is Negro, he can only be referring to another Negro as “sister.” (*Negroland*, P. 146). This implies that in as much as black elites wanted to identify themselves with white standards, in as much as they worked hard to match up with the standards of whites, the whites still saw them as Negroes and never as equals or even as human as they are (the whites). Even after slavery the identity constructions become problematic. The struggle to fit in, the insecurities, and the identity crises are obvious in the postcolonial societies and Jefferson presents this in *Negroland*.

In *black skin white Mask* (1952), Fanon explains this notion. A Negro thinks that he can break the barrier between him and the white man by mastering the language and assuming the culture. Similarly, the black elites in *Negroland* strive so much to speak like the whites, with good diction. Fanon continues by saying, the black man renounces his native language and culture and attain a position of honor among his fellow beings, in this way he will be closer to whites or in other words-a man.

Jefferson depicts this as she narrates her life story including that of her fellow black elites in America. They tried so hard to attain position of honour by doing everything that the white people deemed honorary, however despite all the effort they remained Negroes in the eyes of the white Americans. This complicated identity even further, Jefferson had to try so much to internalise this new identity to an extent that her mind is in chaos. She began to contemplate suicide. She goes through depression, due to the expectations that were placed on her race. They were expected to adopt an identity of a white man, which put so much pressure on them. Jefferson realised that she was not the only one. Everyone in “*Negroland*” had tried it. Although identities are at personal level. They are not individual but collective. Jefferson is trapped into this collective identity that leads to her mental problems. Communities are often characterised

by collectively shared traditions norms and values as well as beliefs which influences how individuals belonging to such societies imagine themselves (Ainesworthy and Hardy (2004). People in Negroland had these shared beliefs, shared ideas of who they wanted to be. They had this shared identity that was imposed on every black elite, which in turn caused pressure and depression.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the major findings of this study. It analysed the three texts, namely; *The Last Resort* (2009), *Born a Crime* (2016) and *Negroland* (2015) based on the literature review, the theoretical framework, and the objectives of the study. The discussion was informed by the post-colonial theory.

CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 focuses on the conclusion and recommendations. The analysis was guided by the postcolonial theory and ideologies on identity, the texts were analysed through the lens of the post-colonial theory. The study discussed the theme of identities and the constructions of both cultural and racial identities in colonial and post-colonial societies. It expanded on how colonialism brought about changes in identity constructions in post-colonial societies and the problems faced by the post-colonial subjects in constructing complex identities in the selected autobiographies.

5.2. Findings

5.2.1. The role played by race and culture in shaping social identities in the three autobiographies.

After analysing the three autobiographies this study found that, the autobiographies portray the major role played by race and culture in shaping the identities of the individuals. In *The Last Resort* (2009), both culture and race form the basis of how the individuals are defined. For example, Douglas Rogers and his family as well as friends are whites who descend from the European settlers who came to settle in Africa in the 17th and the 18th centuries. It is for this reason that they are being removed from their land in Zimbabwe because they are perceived as non-Africans. Race is linked to one's ancestry. It influences how individuals are defined by others. The rejection of the white people in Zimbabwe is justified by the notion of ancestry. The land that the Europeans settled on belonged to the ancestors of the black people as such they cannot claim that they are Africans and have the right to the land. It is their race that allows people to alienate them. As such this study concludes that race does play a role in shaping people's identity.

In *Born a Crime* (2016) race becomes the major theme of the autobiography. It is race that led to complex identities in South Africa. Individuals were defined by the colour of their skin (physical traits) and were divided according to their race. Blacks, Indians, Coloureds etc. Trevor Noah who is born by a black woman and a white man had to be classified as a coloured because he was lighter than his black mother but not as light as his father so he could not be classified as white. The coloureds who looked like him rejected him because he had some physical traits that were not associated with the coloured which are the colour and the texture of his hair. The separation based on physical traits led to alienation. This was observable in different institutions such as schools, jails and even churches. School children would group themselves according to their race. There were white churches and black churches. In jails, people were defined according to the colour of their skins. When Trevor was arrested for driving a car that his stepdad was fixing, his inmates feared that he had knives and that he was ruthless because that is how all the coloureds were defined and his skin is what made them think he was culturally coloured.

Jefferson's *Negroland* portrays how race influenced the identity of the affluent Americans. They alienated themselves from the other black people because they looked different. They were lighter and they called themselves coloureds. They are the mixed blood who descent from the contacts between the Europeans and Africans, as such they are perceived, or they perceive themselves as different from the rest of the black race. The whites did not recognise them as being part of them. This is because as a mixed race there are features which were not up to the standards of the white features, such as the hair texture, the nose, and the shade of the skin. Similarly, in *Born a Crime* the South African Coloured suffered the same fate. They were told they could qualify to be white. They were promoted by means of their physical traits, such as hair. Trevor describes a test they called a pencil test. If they put a pencil in your hair and it gets stuck, you fail the test. All these explain how race shaped the identity of individuals in the three autobiographies. Individuals were defined depending on ancestry as well as physical traits. Culture refers to ideas, behavior, believes and traditions shared by a large group of people and passed on from one generation to the next.

Cultural differences may include race. In all three autobiographies these beliefs play a role on how individuals are identified and defined.

The white Zimbabweans in *The Last Resort* (2009) learned the native languages, they ate native food, and they also practiced some of the customs of the black people. Some black people believed this could qualify them to Africans, but they were still not considered to be Africans based on race and ancestry. In *Born a Crime* (2016) different racial groups share similar beliefs. The blacks for example believed in ancestors and prayed to their ancestors. This subjected them to discrimination. The coloured wanted to adopt the culture of the whites because they wanted to belong to the whites. Similarly, Jefferson also portrays how the affluent black Americans were trying to live like whites, speak like whites hoping that they could be assimilated in the white culture. However due to their traits they were rejected. This study therefore argues that race plays a very major role in identity construction while Culture may play a role in construction of identity as well, its racial constitution influences whether one is accepted as belonging to a certain class or group of people. Individuals are defined mostly based on their racial traits but also in *Born a Crime* (2016) the study found that one is also rejected because of their way of living. Noah despite being coloured is rejected because based on culture he was black; he speaks native languages and English. However, the Black people also rejected him based on his skin, but they eventually accepted him when he spoke their language. The study therefore concludes that race as a component of culture influences how individuals are defined in the contemporary society.

5.2.2. The impacts of colonialism on identity construction in the selected texts.

The three autobiographies present the impacts of colonialism on identity. It is because of colonialism that individuals are facing identity issues. The domination of Europeans on the African continent have led to several identity crises on black people as depicted in *Born a Crime* (2016) Noah gave ample evidence of how the process of colonialism created different racial groups. These groups were divided and given different privileges. This division is the cause of all the identity crises that individuals were facing.

The coloured who had all the privileges had to deal with the frustration of being led by a black man who was at the bottom of the ladder. All along they fought hard to be promoted to white, but they still find themselves at the bottom of the ladder. The black people who once believed in

praying to their ancestors have assimilated the culture of the European people. Their own culture was seen as evil and to make it to heaven they had to convert to Christianity.

Similarly, *Negroland* (2016) accounts for all the consequences that the black Americans had to face after slavery. They find themselves under pressure where they must compete with the whites because they want to occupy the top of the ladder, but all effort was in vein. Slavery has taught them that their black counterparts are illiterate, violent, and different. Colonisation dehumanised their black ancestors to an extent that they want to change history. To change this ugly history, they try to alienate themselves from their black counterparts who are illiterate and try to adopt the white people's way of living.

The Last Resort (2009) gives a perspective of European descendants born on the African soil who were being removed from the land which was "stolen" by their ancestors from the black people. They refused to leave because they were also Zimbabweans by birth. As such they fought to remain on their land. These are the complications that were brought forth by colonialism. In *The Last Resort* (2009) the question of who is African is asked? Is one African by the colour of their skin, by their way of living and customs, or by ancestry? The dilemma of identity is depicted. This shows how colonialism influenced identity.

This study thus concludes that the three autobiographies depict the complicated identity construction which is because of colonialism.

5.2.3. Complex ways of identity construction in post-colonial societies as portrayed in the selected texts.

All the three autobiographies attest to how identity is complex, not fixed, keeps fluctuating, and how colonialism created the identities that are now present today. *The Last Resort* (2009) gives an account from the white man's perspective.

It portrays how identities are fluid, and keep on changing from generation to generation, through immigration and Ancestry. Different forms of identities that are now present in post-colonial societies are presented and challenged. Questions about who belongs to which society are asked. It is also an account of the progress in the black identity, who from being slaves take charge of their lives, gain a voice, and want to get back what rightfully belong to them. This portrays the mutation and fluidity of identity. The white people of the other hand must learn the black culture, interact with the black people for their own survival. There is thus a shift in Identity. Unlike colonial times when they were seen as superior, in the independent Zimbabwe, they are not feared.

Born a Crime (2016) is a clear account of the complications faced by the post-colonial subjects in trying to construct their identities or trying to belong. It gives a much clear insight of how apartheid have contributed to these complicated, fluid, fluctuating and forever changing identities. Individuals are struggling to belong, they are rejected, and rejection leads them into constructing other identities that can help them cope, in a society where everyone feels like their race is more important than the other. The social division caused by these multiple identities is portrayed. People fight those who do not look like them, talk like them and do everything like them. Conflict arises due to different racial and cultural identities. The inferiority complex among the black race that is a result of colonialism is also depicted. The black people give special treatment to the white people.

Lastly *Negroland* (2015) reflects on the problems of identity in developed nations such as America. It gives a holistic picture of slavery in western world. It also provides an account of the consequences of slavery and the inferiority complexes faced by those who suffered slavery. They try so much to separate themselves from their fellow blacks because they want to be close to the

whites or even do better than the whites. Identities are challenged and imposed on them. They keep on changing. When complicated identities are imposed on the individuals, it leads to a double consciousness where individuals are trapped between who they are and who they are trying to become.

5.3. Recommendations

This study recommends that:

1. More studies analysing identities in autobiographies using the postcolonial lens conducted especially in African countries not covered in this study.
2. The black man's identity be analysed further in other genres of literature such as poetry and drama using the post-colonial theory.
3. Namibian autobiographies be studied, to scrutinise the Namibian identities.

5.4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the three texts depict the problematic nature of identity construction in Post-colonial societies. Every individual in the post-colonial society must negotiate their identity. They must assume new identities; they are rejected, and their identity keeps on mutating. *Negroland* and *Born a crime* depict how colonialism and slavery led to the complicated and complex nature of identities. Blacks were discriminated, they were alienated and dehumanised, and they were stripped of their culture. In the post-colonial societies, they are faced with a lot of identity crises, they struggle to belong. Race and culture shapes how people are defined in different societies. The Last resort gives an account of how the whites are rejected based on their race.

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